

Polls show a tight 3-way race

If the polls are right, we may either have a minority Liberal or PQ government, or even a minority ADQ led by Mario Dumont. How accurate are these predictions? Are voters influenced by these surveys?

Actually, many believe that it is still too early to know for any measure of certainty who will be our next government. . After all the election is still about one week away and within that time, experience tells us that nothing is carved in stone. Something may happen that will easily change the situation. But the question remains - which of the candidates can pull it off to victory?

Premier Jean Charest is counting on his record as something that voters can see as being a good one and they may give him another chance to govern the next four years.

André Boisclair, the PQ chief, performed better than expected, hence, he gained some points in



Quebec Liberal leader Jean Chareset,left, Parti Quebecois Leader André Boisclair,center,and Action Democratique leader Mario Dumont, right, pose for the camera during a photo-op before the leader's debate in Quebec City, Tuesday, March 13,2007.

winning over some supporters who had previously gone to the ADQ..

During the campaign, Charest has promised more tax cuts and day-care spaces, while the PQ sees climate change, the fiscal imbalance and education as key platforms. The ADQ has proposed setting "reasonable limits" on accommodating minorities and policies to boost family sizes.

Perhaps the hardest blow was landed by Dumont, who in a direct showdown with Charest produced a transport department report warning of structural weaknesses in the Concorde overpass in Laval that collapsed last September, killing five people.

Charest responded that he had never seen the document and that it should be submitted to the inquiry commission the Liberal government has appointed to investigate the incident. When Dumont persisted, an



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Mr. Marcel Tremblay, Councillor, and member of the Executive Committee responsible for intercultural relations and citizen relations, and Mme Lise Thériault, Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities, delivering their speeches during the launching of Action Week Against Racism at the Ecomusée on Friday, March 16, 2007.

Action Week Against Racism

Montreal, March 14, 2007 - Mr. Marcel Tremblay, member of the executive committee responsible for intercultural relations and citizen relations, today took part in the launching of Action Week Against Racism. Attending the ceremony were the Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities, Lise Thériault, officials of the Office franco-québécoise pour la jeunesse, Agence Québec-Wallonie Bruxelles pour la jeunesse, Conseil des relations interculturelles, Tolerance Foundation, Images Interculturelles and several other Montreal organizations. The fifth edition of Action Week Against Racism is held from March 15 to 25, 2007, with "The Workplace: A Racism-Free Zone" as a theme.



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EDITORIAL

What do we have to look for in a political leader?

It's that time again when all citizens must work hard to get all the information they need in order to use their right to vote to the best of their ability. Needless to say, the task of electing a new government for the next four years must be taken seriously if we want to be sure that we live in better conditions, improve our standard of living, and promote not only social justice but also economic freedom.

With modern technology and the availability of information at one's fingertips, there is really no excuse not to be involved in what is going on around us. Debates of leaders, political experts analysis, interviews on TV and radio provide us with an insight that will help us in reflecting upon the choices we have to make. Do we give the Liberals another four years to finish what they began as they say, or take our chances on the ADQ for the sake of trying out someone who has not had the experience to govern? Or do we again allow the PQ to hold another referendum?

At first glance, it seems that all of the parties are presenting similar platforms with a different degree of emphasis and style of presentation. By way of summary, we can say that the Liberals are focusing more on health while the PQ is focusing on education, and the ADQ on the family. On the other hand, the Green Party, as its name implies, is focusing on the environment while the Quebec Solidaire is focusing on sovereignty.

But is it only the platform we should look at? Certainly, there is something more than this. We have to select a leader who has a vision of the future and the ability to communicate his ideas to his members, the knowledge and the wisdom to make proper choices, and to balance theory with practice, to be perceptive and sensitive in order not to lose sight of common sense solutions to complicated everyday problems. In brief, a good leader must not only have ideals but must also have his feet on the ground. We also must choose a leader with unquestionable integrity, high moral standards, and a strong character which is usually founded upon

experience.. As we often say, experience is the best teacher. We may also include it as one of the criteria for selecting a good leader. Of course, it can be argued that it depends on the quality of that experience, if it is an experience that builds character, or if it is simply a common experience that many young people go through like experimenting with drugs, alcohol and the like.

As the polls suggest, Jean Charest seems to fill up the bill of a good leader for the so-called "distinct Quebec society." Given the choices of party leaders who have not really done anything extraordinary yet, it seems easy to select one who has led the government over the past four years. Even though people may criticize him for not fulfilling all his promises, we should not be quick to judge him on that reason alone. Many politicians in general are often criticized for making promises they cannot keep but there may be compelling reasons behind their inability to do so. In the case of Mr. Charest, the failure to cut taxes was apparently due to the big hidden deficit of the previous government. It would therefore seem unwise to cut taxes just to pacify the electorate temporarily.

As election day approaches, are we able to choose who will build up this province for both the present and future generations? Which leader can propose measures for the most serious problems? Which leader can establish priorities among competing issues - health, education, environment, or family welfare?

Based on what we have seen, heard or read about, we surmise to say that there seems to be one leader who stands out. In our estimation, Mr. Charest, who has a relatively clean record of government, deserves another chance to continue and to prove he can provide political stability that will ensure our economic prosperity. By exercising our right of suffrage on Monday, March 26, let us elect a leader who will lead us in the right direction. ■

Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi

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Ocampo arrested after surfacing from hiding

March 16, 2007

A prominent Philippine left-wing lawmaker, who went into hiding after being charged in a 22-year-old murder case, was taken into police custody Friday after filing a court petition to dismiss the accusations against him.

Representative Satur Ocampo of the left-leaning Bayan Muna (Nation First) political party, claiming the charges were trumped up as part of a crackdown on left-wing activists, told reporters at the Supreme Court he was ready to face the arrest warrant, which was issued on March 6 and had prompted him to go into hiding.

"I am not running away from this case," he said. "If they will arrest me, let them arrest me. We will just show they are lying."

Ocampo went to the Supreme Court building in person, accompanied by dozens of activists and opposition lawmakers.

Moments later, while the judges were to consider Ocampo's petition for a temporary restraining order, Ocampo boarded a car and headed to the nearest police station with his lawyer and a police officer.

The court later set a March 23 hearing and ordered Ocampo's lawyer and government prosecutors to present their arguments.

Ocampo, 67, said he had been in military detention under former dictator Ferdinand Marcos when the alleged killings took place near Inopacan town

in central Leyte province, about 610 kilometers (380 miles) southeast of Manila.

Ocampo becomes the second left-wing lawmaker in police custody. Rep. Crispin Beltran was arrested on



Satur Ocampo is escorted by Philippine police after appearing at the Supreme Court in Manila March 16, 2007.

Authorities dug up the remains of at least 15 people who were allegedly killed as suspected government spies by communist rebels in May and June 1985. Ocampo was a former communist rebel who later became a legislator.

Ocampo's lawyer, Romeo Capulong, said the charges were based on "clear fabrication and perjury," and were legally defective because the required forensic identification of the bodies has not been performed.

rebellion charges over an alleged coup plot to topple President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo last February. Ocampo, too, faces the same charges of rebellion, in addition to the murder case.

He and several other lawmakers evaded arrest when Arroyo declared a weeklong state of emergency in February by seeking refuge in the House of Representatives until a local court ruled they should not be arrested. ■

Philippine police shoot ex-marine, end courtroom hostage drama

March 14, 2007

An elite Philippine police team on Wednesday stormed a government building and killed an ex-marine to end a 24-hour courtroom hostage drama caught live on national television.

After a series of explosions, black-clad police officers hauled out two of four hostages held by Almario Villegas from inside the Hall of Justice in suburban Taguig city near Manila.

Two court employees who were among the hostages were later freed while the suspect's girlfriend and alleged accomplice, Delia de la Cruz, was detained.

"The crisis is over, the good thing is all the hostages are safe and only the hostage taker is dead," said Manila police commander Chief Superintendent Reynaldo Varilla.

"We exhausted all means possible, all legal means so that no one will be hurt but he fired at one of our policemen so we have no other recourse but to fire back."

The four hostages were taken by ambulance for a medical checkup, with two reported to be suffering bruises after being beaten by the hostage taker.

Villegas, a former soldier and a movie stuntman, and his girlfriend had appeared in court on Tuesday over an eviction notice filed against him by Gina

See Page 18 STANDOFF ENDS

Zhao Xin Wu takes a bold step in running for election



PQ candidate for the Town of Mount Royal, Zhao Xin Wu, (right) called on the North American Filipino Star editor, Zenaida Kharroubi, March 15, 2007, to let her know that her editorial writings have influenced her decision to get involved in politics.

Ms. Zhao Xin Wu appears to be an extraordinary woman who has made a lot of progress academically and politically in a short period of time since her arrival in Canada in 2001 from Northern China. She settled in Montreal, pursued her studies and obtained a master's degree in business computing. At present, she is working on a doctorate degree in cognitive computing. She studied French and

obtained her certificate with honors from the University of Quebec where she has a teaching contract and gives conferences on Chinese culture to Quebecers of all ages.

Her most important cause is the situation of the immigrants in Quebec, since she is an immigrant herself, and so are a large part of the voters in the Mont-Royal riding. She denounces the cuts

made by the Liberals in the Ministry of Immigration and the lack of visibility and availability of resources for francization and integration of immigrants. She also fights for the recognition of post-secondary diploma obtained abroad. The fact is that a big percentage of immigrants living in Mont-Royal riding have a university diploma, but their unemployment rate is higher than the rest of Quebec.

Education is also a major issue for Zhao Xin. She witnesses the lack of financing of our Universities and the increase of the students debt ratio. She is convinced that education shouldn't be considered as an expense, but as an investment. However, the Liberal government, by unfreezing the universities semester fees, can jeopardize post secondary studies universal accessibility. It also shows the lack of ability to discuss and negotiate of the current government.

For the Parti Québécois, education is the main issue. They vow to increase financing from primary to university and implement many programs that will help the young ones to have access to a better education and a better support.

The slow down in private investments in Quebec also worries Zhao Xin. The Liberal Party lacks long term vision, because there is no way

we can sustain a economical growth if we have less and less investments.

Zhao Xin believes that a good government must listen, discuss and work with the population to face the different issues the Quebec may face, like health care, education, economy and environment.

It is indeed the position that Zhao Xin defends, in order to represent Mont-Royal riding. She wants to listen to her fellow-citizens and fight for their causes at the National Assembly of Quebec. She is very sensible to the local issues. Furthermore, she would like to open the Asian market to the local businesses.

Source : Exécutif du Parti Québécois de la circonscription Mont-Royal

Information : Press communication : Martin Boyer Phone :514-575-9288,

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From Page 1

DEBATE

an exasperated Charest maintained, "Pulling a rabbit out of a hat like this is not appropriate in a debate." recent poll, taken



Premier Jean Charest exchanging arguments with Andre Boisclair

before the leadership debate, suggested the Liberals had 33 per cent support, while the ADQ and PQ were virtually tied at 26 per cent and 29 per cent respectively. The CROP poll was based on interviews conducted with 1,000 Quebec adults between March 1 and March 8 and is considered accurate within three percentage points 19 times out of 20. During the debate, the leaders squared off in separate segments on the themes of health and social services, environment and sustainable development, government



Mario Dumont, ADQ

administration and the economy, education and child care, and Quebec's political future. Dumont, who led off, said his party's priority is to help Quebecers raise healthy families. He also went straight to the attack, saying that Charest made unrealistic promises in the last election campaign that his government didn't keep. "If he could have promised the moon he would have done it" said Dumont. "Jean Charest's word weighs little."

Meanwhile, Boisclair said the PQ will keep its promise to hold a sovereignty referendum in its term in office if elected to govern. He said this will give Quebec control of its resources and ensure its position internationally.

On the other hand, Dumont focused on the ADQ's "common sense approach to family and education, including non-taxable child allowances and abolishing school boards that would give money to families instead of bureaucrats."

The Liberal leader asked Dumont how he planned to pay for these policies.

"It's contradictory, for someone who

calls him an autonomist, to have to wait for the federal budget to decide on its election promises."

Charest said Quebec's parental leave program has helped contribute to the province's highest birth rate increase in years. He also cited his government's accomplishments such as shrinking the public sector and investing in Quebec's hydro energy industry. He underlined his government's action on climate change. He blamed Boisclair for not participating in a commission on greenhouse emissions.

No clear winner emerged from the political debates. Experts' impressions vary slightly in terms of rating the performance of each one, scoring Dumont a little higher than the other two leaders.

As premier, Jean Charest spent most of his time defending the past while the Action Democratique du Quebec's Mario Dumont scored points with aggressive animated swings.

The PQ's André Boisclair asked pointed questions and annoyed Charest on several occasions by interrupting him.

In the end, none of the leaders was left in tatters by a deadly attack. On March 26, 2007, voters will decide which one of these political leaders will celebrate. ■

Commissioner of Lobbying Must Investigate Link Between Prime Minister and Lobbyist

Ottawa—Prime Minister Stephen Harper must account for why his personal lawyer was allowed to lobby—including directly lobbying the Prime Minister's Office for nearly eight months—while being paid to represent Mr. Harper in a wrongful dismissal case, said Liberal House Leader Ralph Goodale.

"It would appear hypocrisy knows no bounds in this Conservative government. Just days after the so-called Federal



Ralph Goodale

Accountability Act was tabled, and continuing until after it received Royal Assent, the Prime Minister would have

been aware that his own lawyer was lobbying his office," said Mr. Goodale.

"The Prime Minister needs to come clean, appoint a Commissioner of Lobbying, and immediately ask him to investigate this potential conflict of interest," said Mr. Goodale.

In March 10, 2006, Mr. Harper's former chef, Henrik Lundsgaard, filed a wrongful dismissal case against the Harpers and on March 29, 2006, Emanuel Montenegro filed a notice of intent to defend the case in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. Mr. Montenegro, alongside Michael Rankin, then remained the solicitors of record until the case was settled out of court in this past January.

On May 17, 2006, Mr. Montenegro registered to lobby the Prime Minister's Office on behalf of the Air Canada Pilots Association. This registration remains active along with eight other registrations to lobby government departments and MPs.

Other potential conflicts recently have come to light in the media regarding the link between Mr. Montenegro's legal and lobbying activities. On February 9, 2007, he registered to lobby the PMO, Environment Canada, the Department of Justice and Members of Parliament over two bills dealing with cruelty to animals, on behalf of the Canadian Sportfishing Industry Association. Four days before this registration took effect, Mr. Montenegro represented Environment Minister John Baird in a potential defamation case.

He is also acting in another defamation case on behalf of Conservative Nepean-Carleton MP Pierre Poilievre who has been served a notice of legal action over comments he made during a Feb. 22 CFRA radio interview.

As well, Mr. Montenegro is a long-time friend and financial supporter of Prime Minister Harper's having been a political organizer and fundraiser for the Reform, Alliance and Conservative parties stretching back to the middle 90s.

In his official biography, Mr. Montenegro refers to himself as an "emissary in taking concerns to the forefront of government circles" who can "reduce delays and alleviate bureaucratic confusion," resulting in "immense financial and organizational rewards for those he represents."

"The Federal Accountability Act has provisions that would directly address such potential conflicts of interest, and this perhaps explains why the government is in no hurry to bring it into force. The Conservatives want to extract the maximum political advantage for themselves before becoming subject to their own rules," said Mr. Goodale.

The Federal Accountability Act calls for the creation of a Commissioner of Lobbying, who would be empowered to investigate conflicts of interest with respect to registered lobbyists. Despite repeated attempts to portray the Official Opposition as delaying the passage of the FAA, the government itself has delayed bringing certain sections of the act — including the lobbying restrictions — into force for over 90

days.

A photo for media use is available at: http://www.liberal.ca/images/pages/Goodale_Ralph.jpg

Contact:

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From Page 1

Racism

"Montreal is a city that is committed to fighting racism. Montrealers and members of civil society must become involved in Action Week Against Racism, to raise public awareness of the issue of discrimination. Finding solutions to eliminate discrimination and racism is up to Montrealers as a community. That is why it is so important that we take part in the city's democratic life," said Mr. Tremblay.

Montreal is a cosmopolitan city and a city that is proud of its cultural mosaic. Montreal is also a fine example of diversity in Quebec, but faces many challenges to ensure harmony among citizens of all ethnic backgrounds. Montreal is home to 1.6 million people, more than 25% of whom were born outside the country.

The city administration has been a supporter of Action Week against Racism for eight years, and has injected \$10,000 in this year's event. Last September, as part of a government draft policy, Montreal became a major partner in the fight against racism and discrimination. The city administration uses an action-oriented approach and prioritizes employment, housing, inclusion for young people and a better living environment.

Over the past few years, Montreal chose a framework for its actions against racism and discrimination, including the 2004-2009 action plan as part of the equal opportunity employment program, the Montreal Declaration for Cultural Diversity and inclusion (2004), Montreal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities (2006). Also, last October, it joined the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination and the International Coalition of Cities against Racism, under the aegis of UNESCO. ■

Source: Cabinet du maire et du comité exécutif
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Young Filipinos play active role in election process, see it as tool for change

March 19, 2007

Young people in the Philippines are getting involved in the election process as campaigning for the May elections get underway.

Armed with their laptops, a group of teenagers looks like they are just discussing a school project.

But this is no ordinary after-school meeting.

This group of teenagers have banded together to create www.ivotte.ph, a voter's education website designed to guide voters on their choices for the upcoming May 14 elections.

"What we want to do with this website is to raise the level of debate and discourse for the elections because more than choosing our leaders, the elections is about an exchange of ideas between the citizens and who would potentially lead them," says Gabriel Nacianceno of I-Vote.

With about 40% of the 43 million voters under the age of 30, the group believes that now is the time to harness the power of the youth and help

change the landscape of Philippine politics.

"In the past, we only vote for who our parents vote for. It is time now for us, the youth, to participate for our friends, for fellow youth, and for our generation," says Maite Calero, I-Vote.

Aside from educating voters via the Internet, young people are also going house-to-house to help ensure a clean and honest election.

They formed "YOUTH VOTE" or Volunteers for Orderly and Transparent Elections.

Armed with placards and leaflets, the students go out of their way to visit depressed areas and talk to the community after school.

"Vote buying happens in depressed areas because some people don't believe in the elections anymore. They would sell their vote to get money to buy food," says Jose Cosido from YOUTH VOTE.

But they know it will take some time to fully realise their goals.

"If someone offers me money for my vote, I will take it but the decision is

up to me. We know who we should vote for," says a Filipino.

The country's young people hope that through their voter's awareness

campaign, they will be able to effect change in the people's lives here. ■

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Sweet enough for you?

A few weeks ago I received a phone call from an interested reader of this column whether I could report on the natural sweetener, stevia. I decided to take the opportunity to write a piece on sweeteners in general, both natural and artificial. I thank the reader for his suggestion.

Research done almost 30 years ago suggests that the sweet taste may be an instinct necessary for survival in infants. By definition, an instinct is a natural, does-not-have-to-be learned response to a particular stimulus. For example, a newborn baby when hungry will cry by instinct. The baby did not have to be taught how to cry. We could say that hunger-stimulated crying has survival value because it signals to the mother that the baby has to be fed. In 1977, JE Steiner of the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare, by studying facial expressions, reported that newborn babies instinctively like the sweet taste. This was understood as an

instinct necessary in order for the newborn baby to drink milk, which is critical for survival. Mother's milk contains lactose, a type of sugar, which gives it the sweet taste. In truth, we never really lose the appetite for the sweet taste and some have argued that this is also necessary in the sense that sweetness signals the presence of carbohydrates which is a source of quick energy necessary for survival.

This predilection for sweetness could be a contributing factor to the increasing incidence of chronic disease such as type II-diabetes and obesity. Sugar contains 4 Calories per gram. The one teaspoon you put in your coffee will have 16 Calories. A can of regular soda will have around 140 Calories due to the sugar. Two cans of regular soda will already give about 10% of the average daily energy requirement of an 80-kg middle-aged man, or about 16% of that of a 60-kg middle-aged woman. Now if we consider a typical fast-food meal

consisting of a Big Mac (468 Cal), medium fries (384 Cal) and a medium soda (150 Cal), we come up to a total of around 1000 Cal for a combo which is already close to one-half of an individual's daily energy requirement. That person who had a fast-food meal for lunch also probably had breakfast, a big dinner, and perhaps some snacks in-between. Thus, we can see that today it is very easy to eat more than we really need to live. That excess energy we take in we do not burn but turn into fat that could end up in obesity. Furthermore, excess carbohydrates, particularly table sugar, place a strain on our body's insulin system that could contribute to the development of type II-diabetes.

The concern for excess energy intake has led to efforts to reduce the calories we eat per day. The food industry has taken the approach of developing low-calorie foods, among which are those where sugar is replaced by non-caloric sweeteners. Practically all non-caloric sweeteners are synthetic or artificial. There are some sweeteners of natural origin, such as stevia, for which caloric values are not yet available. I will discuss stevia later in this column.

Artificial sweeteners do not resemble at all any of the natural sugars in chemical form, but they are intensely sweet, many more times than table sugar. As such, much lower amounts are required to produce the same level of sweetness as regular table sugar. However, one must understand that the sweet taste interacts with other flavour components in food and therefore, we

understand why more often than not, we are able to tell whether a food substance or drink is sweetened with regular sugar or with artificial or substitute sweeteners. In fact, some people find that certain artificial sweeteners give objectionable tastes or aftertastes. For example, personally, I perceive saccharin to have a bitter, rather than sweet taste. Besides saccharin, other examples of artificial sweeteners used in food today are: aspartame (NutraSweet? or Equal?), acesulfame potassium and sucralose (Splenda?).

There is much concern over safety issues concerning artificial sweeteners. The saccharin story is a classic. Saccharin has been used in food products and other types of comestible substances for many decades. However, in the 1970s, this artificial sweetener was shown to induce bladder cancer in rats. As a result of this, the US government required that products containing saccharin intended for oral consumption must bear the warning label: "Use of this product may be hazardous to your health. This product contains saccharin, which has been determined to cause cancer in laboratory animals." Subsequent to this, studies of human populations did not support the theory that saccharin causes cancer in people. It was concluded that only rats are susceptible to saccharin-induced bladder cancer and this at very high and unrealistic doses of saccharin.

See Page 9 Sweet Enough



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COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

Bigger than what you think

By Jerry Estrada
Philippine Correspondent

The Forerunners of Cooperatives in the Philippines

Center (NORLU), Tagalog Development Center (TAGCODEC), Bicol Cooperative Development Center, Inc. (BCDC), VICTO, MASS/SPECC, Credit-Life Mutual Benefit Services (CLIMBS) and associate affiliate Cooperative Education Center, Inc. (CECI).

In 1979, Assemblyman Luis Taruc initiated the organization of the National Market Vendors Cooperatives Federation (NAMVESCO) by market vendors from Manila (Quinta, Baclaran, Paco-Soriano and Divisoria), Quezon City (Novaliches), Rizal (Malabon, Marikina and Tanay), Laguna (San Pedro), and Batangas (Lemery). Its services included education and training, inter-lending and management consultancy and auditing. By 1991, NAMVESCO's assets were P 300million and loans granted have reached P 700 million.

Also, in 1979, electric coops providing electricity in provinces and cities and municipalities were established. As of 1985, there were 16,000 SNs, 1,456 credit coops, 300 marketing coops, 132 producers coops, 284 service coops, 50 coop federations, one super-palengke (under KKK which later failed), and one national coop insurance.

For the third time, since the government-initiated coops were too politicized, the programs for the coops and SNs were both failures again. Part 3 (1986 – present)

During the Aquino Presidency, a new constitution was framed. This new constitution was cooperative-friendly but the mistake of the past in organizing government-initiated cooperatives for political and anti-insurgency purposes was avoided.

The 1987 Constitution provided for the promotion of growth and viability of cooperatives as instruments of equity, social justice and economic development under the principles of subsidiarity and self-help. Under the said principles, the government recognized that cooperatives are self-governing entities, which shall

initiate and regulate their own affairs to include education, training, research and other support services with the government giving assistance when necessary.

President Aquino's cooperative development program learned from the past failures of excessive government loans or credit support to cooperatives as in the FACOMAs and the SNs.

During Pres. Ramos' administration, it continued the cooperative development program of the Aquino administration. The coop movement became the largest socio-economic institution in the Philippines. It has a total membership of 3.2 million and 19.2 million family beneficiaries.

This resulted to the tremendous growth of the cooperative movement. However, there was still a high rate of coop failures. But those that were viable grew tremendously since the total assets of the coop movement grew from P 1.05 billion in 1985 to P 118.4 billion in 1995.

In 1996, the Department of Education issued an Order converting all school canteens in all primary and secondary schools into teachers' coops. Pres. Estrada's administration created development programs tasked to implement an action plan to ensure the provision of houses, jobs and health assistance to the poor with the help of coops as the main vehicle.

During the party list elections of 2003, Coop-NATCCO Network Party List, the coops' political arm in Congress, won one seat. The incumbent Congressman Guillermo Cua represents the coop sector. Considering that the coop movement has barely flexed its muscles and still fettered by the "non-political" myth, the coop movement is still capable of a stronger showing in future political exercises.

The number of operating cooperatives in the Philippines reached 28,555 in December 2004. Today, there are cooperatives in almost all barangays or villages in the Philippines. Coop membership has grown and it is estimated that the family beneficiaries of the coop movement are around 25 million. These numbers, aside from being an economic and socio-cultural power center, can also be transformed into a political power

center.

It is hoped that this trend continue and be further enhanced by researches and documentation of the best cooperative success stories or "best practices". These documented researches should be disseminated to other coops for their guidance and inspiration to uplift the Filipino people from poverty. The Forerunners of Cooperatives in the Philippines

Cooperatives or Credit Unions are attuned to the Filipino traditions because of our "bayanihan" (cooperation) concepts and practices. After the colonization of the country by the Spaniards and the transformation of the economy from subsistence agriculture to a feudal and commercialized economy, middle class ilustrados (professionals, merchants and artisans) emerged. These ilustrados were the organizers of the "gremios" (local crafts unions and guilds), which were the initiators of cooperatives.

Despite its positive prospects in economic development, the Philippines is seriously confronted with the continuing problems of poverty and income inequality. Income inequality comes in two dimensions - the inequality among classes (or the poor becoming poorer and the rich becoming richer) and inequality among regions (or the poor regions are being left behind by the fast paced development of the richer urbanized regions). Part 1 (1896-1941)

During the latter part of the Spanish colonial regime, Dr. Jose P. Rizal in 1896 initiated an agricultural marketing cooperative while in exile in Dapitan in Mindanao. In 1898, another national hero Emilio Jacinto organized another failed commercial marketing cooperative in San Pedro, Laguna.

In 1913, Irish-American missionaries and teachers organized some Raiffeisen-type rural agricultural cooperatives after the Americans replaced the Spaniards as the new colonial administrators.

Prantel (or Prauter) was among the early rural credit coop organizers. He came in 1898 after many years of credit coop involvement in India. He supported the Sandiko bill in 1907 through various articles in Manila newspapers.

Gov. Teodoro Sandiko of Bulacan and Rep. Alberto Barreto of Zambales introduced a rural coop training centers or federations which serviced only their own primary coops. The government, on the other hand, was also disorganized in supervising and coordinating the various cooperatives in the country.

In order to rationalize the coop movement, President Marcos, using martial law powers, created apex organizations. Its aim was to centralize the coordination of all education and training programs of all cooperatives in the country. However, coop education, training and organization have been haphazardly carried out by poorly trained, underpaid and ill-motivated government technicians with the cooperation of poorly-funded but motivated NGOs (non-government organizations) personnel. Hence, poor coop theory and practice; weak monitoring, evaluation and auditing, poor accountability, unsound business practices, inaccurate statistics and lack of professionalism pervaded the coop sector. Presidential Decree No. 175 in 1973 aimed to "strengthen the coop movement" was tied-up to the Marcos land reform program (PD No. 27), which made it compulsory for a tenant-farmer to join farmer's cooperative or Samahang Nasyon (SNs). Benefits would include the right to borrow funds from government banks through the local rural banks, assurance of being supplied with

farm inputs such as seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, etc. Because the formation of the SNs and primary coops of the farmers were haphazard, they were few and weak. The Samahang Nayons peaked involving at least 3 million farmers. Only 3%, however, survived. The 14-year program reportedly utilized billions of dollars in loans and grants from the World Bank and other international financial institutions.

In 1974, only 41% of the average 118 rice farmers per barrio in 512 barrios surveyed had joined the SNs, while in Japan almost 100% of Japanese farmers became coop members. In all the regions, only 45% of all the respondents understood the coop principles and the loan repayment rate of the SNs was a low 58.3% for all 12 regions. Coops do not have capital and savings programs to become self-reliant. In short, the cooperative thrust of the Marcos land reform program was not widely supported by the farmers who are supposed to be the beneficiaries.

In 1977, NATCCO or the National Confederation of Cooperatives (Atty. Cua was one of the co-founders) was organized as a tertiary-level organization and operates based on the best practices of the Raiffeisen-bank and the Desjardins. Among its services are training and education, research and publication, auditing, etc. and programs such as coop financing for small-scale industries, extension work, women in development, coop insurance promotion, and the inter-coop trading. The NATCCO members include Northern Luzon Cooperative Development Center (NORLU), Tagalog Development Center (TAGCODEC), Bicol Cooperative Development Center, Inc. (BCDC), VICTO, MASS/SPECC, Credit-Life Mutual Benefit Services (CLIMBS) and associate affiliate Cooperative Education Center, Inc. (CECI).

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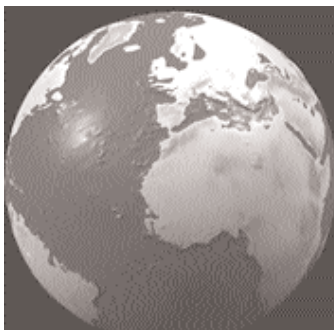
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EARTH TALK

Dear EarthTalk: Where can I find non-polluting alternatives to those foam "packaging peanuts" used for shipping fragile merchandise?

--Brian Smith, Lynwood, WA

Those little white polystyrene-foam packaging peanuts are nearly ubiquitous in our pack-and-ship culture, but they are no good for the environment, let alone human health. The basic building block of polystyrene is the non-recyclable chemical compound styrene. Chronic exposure to styrene is associated with central nervous



The best way to prevent foam peanuts from contaminating the environment is to reuse them in an outgoing package, and include a note asking the recipient to do the same. (©Cambridge Dept. of Public Works.)

system damage as well as skin, eye and respiratory irritation, depression, fatigue and compromised kidney function. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the International Agency for Research on Cancer both consider styrene a possible human carcinogen.

Consumers who occasionally deal with foam packing peanuts shouldn't worry too much over such intermittent exposure, but should be alarmed at the health effects on the workers making the material and on the quality of the soil and groundwater near landfills where most of it ends up. Some locales—including Portland, Oregon and Orange County, California—have even banned the use of polystyrene foam in homes and businesses.

So what's a conscientious shipper to do? Luckily alternatives abound. For

starters, old newspapers, which are inherently recyclable and biodegradable, make for great padding when crunched up and used liberally inside boxes. Another smart choice is PaperNuts, an alternative to foam peanuts made from recyclable, biodegradable post-consumer corrugated cartons and post-industrial paper processing production waste.

And starch-based peanuts, such as those available from Starch Tech's Clean Green Packing, protect and pad fragile items during shipping but can be dissolved in water and washed right down the kitchen sink. Or, like their chemical counterparts they can be re-used in the next outgoing package. Some other manufacturers of biodegradable packing materials include Minnesota's NatureWorks, Italy's Novamont Spa and the German industrial behemoth BASF.

But sometimes it's not up to you what kind of padding is protecting the products you mail-ordered and had sent to your home or business. If the box contains polystyrene foam peanuts, you can call the company that sent it and ask that they switch to a more environmentally friendly alternative. With more and more companies looking for ways to "go green" these days, they might just take heed.

Regardless, the best way to prevent such peanuts from contaminating the environment is to reuse them in an outgoing package, and include a note asking the recipient to do the same. If you have no use for them, many businesses that do shipping will take them if they are in good condition. And most managers at UPS, Mailboxes Etc. and other pack-and-ship shops will gladly save a little money and accept a donation. And if no local businesses will take your foam peanuts, those staffing the phones at the Plastic Loose Fill Council's Peanut Hotline (see contact info below) will be happy to help find one that will.

CONTACTS: PaperNuts, www.papernuts.com/; Starch Tech, www.starchtech.com/cgp/cleangreen.html; Plastic Loose Fill Council Peanut Hotline, (800) 828-2214, www.loosefillpackaging.com.

Dear EarthTalk: Do buildings with various "green" features cost more to build and operate than traditional buildings?

-- Chris Wiedemann, New York, NY

It is difficult to do an apples-to-apples cost comparison of a "green" structure against one that is not due to differences in design, materials and other factors, including the location. But the general consensus is that a green building might well cost slightly more up front, but it will very likely reap the rewards of lower operating costs going forward.

The U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental

Design (LEED) program is the standard-bearer used today in evaluating the relative green-friendliness of building projects. A 2004 nationwide study conducted by Greg Kats of the research and consulting firm Capital E found that structures that qualified for the lowest LEED rating ("LEED Certified") cost builders less than one percent more up-front than equivalent non-green buildings. For projects with more ambitious green features that qualified for higher LEED ratings (silver, gold and the highest, platinum), the cost premiums went up from between 1.9 percent and 6.8 percent, still surprisingly low.

What surprised Kats even more,



Green building costs are kept lowest when features are incorporated into a project's design as opposed to added later. (Getty Images.)

though, was the value of the payback. Overall, Kats found that the average cost premium for building green was about \$4-5 per square foot, while the financial benefits derived over 20 years from incorporating sustainability features—such as lower energy and water bills—was in the range of \$49-65 per square foot, or about 10 times the value of the initial investment. Another 2004 study by Lisa Matthiessen of the consulting firm Davis Langdon came to similar conclusions. According to Matthiessen, incorporating sustainability elements in a project's design from the get-

go—not layering them on later in the process—is essential to keeping the costs down.

Despite these financial benefits, Kats points out that there is unfortunately a "consistent disconnect" in peoples' minds between the higher up-front costs of building green and the ensuing savings in operating costs. He says that overcoming this is fundamental to understanding the value of green building.

And, of course, money is not the only issue. Transitioning to a greener built environment is important for the conservation of natural resources as well as for reducing pollution. According to statistics gathered by the U.S. Green Building Council, the 76 million residential and five million commercial buildings in the U.S. collectively consume 65 percent of America's electricity, 37 percent of its energy, 25 percent of its water supplies and 30 percent of its wood and materials. Likewise, buildings account for 35 percent of the nation's solid waste, 36 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, 46 percent of sulfur dioxide emissions, 19 percent of nitrous oxide emissions and 10 percent of fine particulate emissions.

Sustainable buildings, such as those that qualify for LEED certification, consume fewer resources, generate less waste, cost less to operate and provide healthier living and working environments for everyone—both indoors and out.

CONTACTS: U.S. Green Building Council, www.usgbc.org; Capital E's "Green Building Costs and Financial Benefits," www.cap-e.com/ewebeditpro/items/O59F3481.pdf.

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- * 3 EGGS
- * 200 GRAM GREEN BEANS
- * 200 GRAM CARROTS, cut in strips
- * 1 CUCUMBER, cut in strips
- * SOME GREEN ONIONS, cleaned
- * 200 GRAM BEEF, cut in thin strips
- * SOME LETTUCE
- * 3 TBSP SWEET CHILI SAUCE

Brown the pork fillet 5 minutes on both sides in the hot butter. Reduce the heat, add the other ingredients to the side of the meat. Simmer for 15 minutes until the meat is well done. Spoon the sauce on top of the meat.

Mix flour, milk and eggs and bake 8 crepes (small pancakes). In the meantime, cook the beans for 10 minutes and fry the meat for 10 minutes. Add salt and pepper. Put some leaves of lettuce on top of the crepe, arrange the vegetables and beef on top of it, spoon the chili sauce on top and roll the crepes up.

Stuffed Shrimps (Rellenong Hipon)



INGREDIENTS:

- 12 very large shrimps or prawns
- 12 tablespoons ground pork or ham
- 1 tablespoon minced scallion
- 1 cup grated carrots
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh mushrooms
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 4 tablespoons cornstarch
- salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 12 strips bacon

Shell the shrimps, leaving the tails on. Slit the back of each and devein. Combine ground pork or ham, scallion, carrots and mushrooms in a bowl. Mix the eggs and cornstarch and combine with the ground pork mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Fill each shrimp with the mixture and wrap with a strip of bacon. Fry. Drain and serve hot.

Cont. From Page 6 "Sweet Enough?"

Thus, since 2000, the US government no longer requires warning labels on saccharin-containing food products. Saccharin is now considered safe for consumption.

In contrast to saccharin, aspartame is embroiled in more controversy and heated opinion-making. Aspartame is made from the combination of two amino acids, aspartic acid and phenylalanine. It is interesting to note that both these amino acids are naturally present in food protein. Thus, aspartame is absorbed and used by the body and contributes some calories. However, this substance is 200-times sweeter than table sugar so in principle, for the same degree of sweetness, it would account for 200-times less the calorie contribution compared with natural sugar. A major disadvantage with aspartame is that it breaks down when heated. Therefore, aspartame cannot be used for cooking purposes. Personally, I would not use aspartame products for hot drinks either (coffee, etc) because at 30 degrees Celsius, it starts to break down and lose its sweetness. Furthermore, there is concern that the breakdown product, a substance called diketopiperazine, might have negative effects. There is so much heated debate on safety issues around aspartame. In fairness, the most recent scientific study (2006) showing ill effects of this artificial sweetener in laboratory rats has its validity immediately questioned because the test doses were too high, covering an equivalent of drinking 8 to 2000 cans of soda per day over an extended period. Furthermore, detailed statistical analyses of the data suggest that the cancers observed to have developed in the laboratory animals were not related to aspartame.

The remaining two common artificial sweeteners have not yet generated as much controversy as aspartame or saccharin. Sucralose is particularly interesting because it is made of ordinary sugar that has been rendered non-absorbable in the human body. The way this is done is to chemically bond chlorine atoms to the ordinary sugar molecule. Sucralose has the advantage

of heat stability – you can use it for cooking – and a one to one equivalence with ordinary sugar. As controversy is never far behind anything that concerns additives in food, internet traffic has now begun to raise concerns over the safety of sucralose, particularly over the presence of chlorine atoms. I must say that the fears are so far based only on unscientific grounds.

Finally, a word about natural sweeteners. Today, "natural" is a profit-generating word; consumers seem to be taken in by the belief that anything natural must by definition be healthier. This is not necessarily true. For example, the internet labels honey as a "natural sweetener" but this does not mean that this is a "safe" form of sugar that can be indiscriminately consumed even by diabetics. However, the natural sweetener stevia is an interesting case. Stevia is also called "sweetleaf" or "sugarleaf" and is native to Central and South America. It is about 300-times sweeter than table sugar. Even if it contributes calories to food, for the same sweetening power, you would use 300-times less of stevia than of table sugar. Therefore, its caloric contribution in food would be very minor. Its flavour profile is different from ordinary sugar in that sweetness perception is not as immediate, and it could give some aftertaste that certain people might find undesirable. There have been scientific studies conducted on both safety issues and potential beneficial effects of stevia. The World Health Organization reviewed the data on safety and health issues and concluded that stevia is neither carcinogenic nor genotoxic. What is interesting is that in fact, stevia might have some pharmacologically useful properties that are potentially useful in the management of hypertension and type-II diabetes. The FDA has banned the importation of stevia on the basis that not enough data or studies are available to make a decision on its safety. Sweeteners derived from stevia (stevioside) are sold in Asia. Perhaps eventually, in the search for new ways to combat chronic disease, researchers in North America might become interested in the potential beneficial effects of this natural sweetener. ■

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Zambales has been gifted with the natural beauty of its surroundings. It has been touched by civilization yet has maintained its rustic glory and beauty. The Zambales coastline is most famous for its sandy beaches and deep blue sea teeming with coral reefs.

The province is historical. Located here is the ancestral house of the most beloved Philippine President, Ramon Magsaysay, situated at Castillejos. Mt. Pinatubo, world-famous for its 1991 catastrophic eruption, can be found in the vicinity.

Zambales is perfectly suited for visitors seeking an authentic view of the Philippines without going too far from the national capital, Manila. It is located at the western part of Luzon, 210 kilometers or approximately a three-hour drive from Manila.

The province has little lowland along the narrow coast where the town centers are located. The northern part is basically swampy. Mountain ranges containing vast precious mineral deposits, as well as some volcanos, are found in the eastern portion. The recent eruption of Mount Pinatubo, on the the boundary between Zambales and Pampanga, has changed the landscape of the province. Certain parts are submerged under lahar and have sometimes given rise to lakes.

There are two pronounced seasons: dry from November to April, and wet the rest of the year.

Steeped In History

The name of the province is derived from its earliest inhabitants, the Zambals. The Spanish found them worshipping spirits called anitos, they were referred to as "Sambali" from the Malay word samba, meaning "to worship". The term was later Hispanicized to "Zambal".

When Juan de Salcedo came to explore the area in 1572, he landed at Cape Bolinao, then a part of Zambales. The Spaniards drove back a group of Chinese pirates of the coast of Bolinao thereby earning the goodwill of the natives.

Zambales was one of the earliest provinces created during the Spanish rule. As founded in the 16th century, it comprised an area extending from Cape Bolinao in the north to Subic Bay in the south. Due to their inaccessibility to the capital, seven towns in the northern portion of Zambales, from Bolinao to Infanta and including Alaminos, were

later ceded to Pangasinan, forming that province's western part.

The People

The inhabitants are composed of three principal ethnic groups: the Ilocanos, Tagalogs and Zambals.

The forebears of the Zambales where the Malay migrants from Celebes who settled in the north.

The Tagalogs came from the east and settled at the southern end, while the Ilocanos occupied the areas between. These newcomers drove the aborigines, the kinkyhaired Negritos or Aetas to the hinterlands.

Tagalog is the predominant dialect, followed by Ilocano and Zambal.



Zambales mangoes are considered as the sweetest mangoes in the Philippine. A celebration that revolves around the mangoes of Zambales is the Dinamulag-Mango Festival held every April in Iba.

Tourist Attractions

Subic Bay is a deep natural harbor protected by mountains on three sides and guarded by Grande Island at the entrance. The USA maintained a naval base here for three quarters of a century.

Subic Naval Base, the lifeblood of Olongapo, was turned over to the Philippine Government when the Americans left in 1992. It is a huge



area, including an international airport and docking facilities which attract foreign companies who want to establish business there.

The Spanish Gate that once served as a main entrance to the fortified Spanish settlement that was Olongapo, still stands inside the base. It has been restored as a symbol of the Spanish might over Subic Bay until the turn of the century. The Subic Bay Lighthouse as seen on many postcards, stands on a small precipice along the northbound national highway. It commands a panoramic view of the city, the base and the bay.

Numerous bays and coves line the shoreline. Coral reefs are good for snorkeling and there are fine diving sites and offshore islands.

Fine Beaches & Diving Spots:

Definitely the best all-around diving along the coast, Subic Bay in

Olongapo also has the best infrastructure and facilities, with the major pull being the wrecks. The star attraction is the USS New York, a battleship scuttled during World War II, to keep her 17in main guns from falling into the hands of the Japanese. A rare, fine example of an 1899 dreadnought, she lies on her port side in 27m of water, cannons intact.

Another great dive, the El Capitan is a 130m-long, 3000-ton freighter that went down in the mouth of Ilanin Bay. As the top of the wreck is just 12m below the surface, it is an easy dive. Marvel at the incredible array of marine life, and a swim-through amid shafts of light beaming down through gaping holes in the side.

Subic also has some good coral dives. Grande Island, formerly an exclusive US military R&R resort, has some worthwhile wall diving, and Triboa Bay has a good coral garden at



Iba Beach, Zambales

Nabasan Point. The best time to dive is between February and June. Accommodations are plentiful between Olongapo City and Barrio Barretto, a popular laid-back tourist retreat.

San Salvador Island is famous as a scuba diver's paradise in Central Luzon, thanks to its abundance of marine resources. The island is located in Masinloc. Others worthy of mention here are **Snake Island** and **Capones Island**, idyllic for aqua activities, while **Silanguin Bay** has been developed into a fish sanctuary.

In fact, Zambales is abundant in a multitude of natural attractions as visitors soon find out. From Balon Falls to Sto. Niño to Sagrada Familia Caves and Baloc-Baloc Spring, light trekking becomes a popular activity. The wide ranges and mountains dotting the landscape, with their beautiful beaches in front of them also offer wonderful journeys.

Mount Pinatubo is one of a chain of composite volcanoes that constitute the Luzon volcanic arc. It is among the highest peaks in west-central Luzon. Its former summit rising to 1,745 meters elevation. Pinatubo's eruptions were so massive that its top was simply blown away, reducing its height by 300 metres. Rainwater formed a crater lake. Tours now offer first hand experience of the bizarre canyons it has formed just like those in the primitive ages. Spectacular lahar formations beyond imagination give tourists insight on how the earth was formed.

Kalighawan (4th Week of April)

A summer festival that seeks to develop a keener awareness in the richness of a heritage that best expresses the strength of the Zambaleño character. A province-wide celebration which showcases, among others, a cultural presentation, an agro-industrial fair, a grand reunion of the Zambales people, variety shows capped by the coronation of Miss Zambales Tourism.

Dinamulag-Mango Festival (Iba; April)

A celebration that revolves around Zambales mangoes, considered as the sweetest mangoes in the Philippine archipelago.

Caracol Boat

(Subic; second Sunday of May)

Coincides with the barangay fiesta of Calapandayan, Subic. An image of the town patron, San Roque, is paraded at sea on a basing or big boat with banda.

Binabayani Festival (November 30)

The Zambales version of the world-famous Ati-Atihan. It is a war dance between the Christians and Aetas that is performed on the feast day of San Andres, patron of the town of Masinloc. The townspeople believe that, by performing the Binabayani, they are assured of a bountiful harvest. ■

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Mt. Pinatubo, made famous by its catastrophic eruption in 1991, is now a source of travel and study for tourists and travelers visiting Central Luzon. It is located in San Marcelino.

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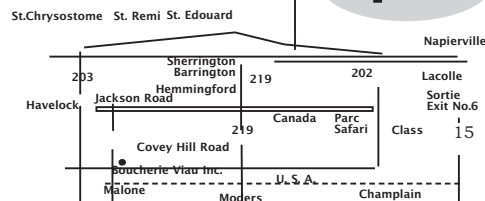


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Laging Handa Scouts Group 0592 Photo Gallery



All the children pose for souvenir with the Stoney Point Area Commissioner Mark Brenchley and the Scotia Bank representative, Mr. Patrick Bedekian, during the Scouts Fun Night held on Saturday, February 24, 2007



Area Scout Commissioner of Stoney Point, Mark Brenchley gives a Scout souvenir to Mr. Patrick Bedekian who represented the Scotia Bank during the Laging Handa event



Laging Handa Scouts did it again - they gave their Group Commissioner, Zenaïda Kharroubi, a surprise for her birthday last March 2nd during their weekly activity on Saturday, March 17.



How many objects can one remember in 30 seconds? Head Scout leader Claro Bermudez gives instructions to the kids while Anna May Tappan, Richard San Miguel and Romy Valenzuela stand by



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There's hope in Kris-James marriage



The latest saga in the Kris Aquino teleserie has enthralled the entire nation, pulling up the ratings of her Sunday show, *The Buzz*, as well as the

rival network's *Star Talk* and *S-File*, and relegating the circus that is the election to second-rate entertainment.

At the center of the real-life soap is

Kris's hubby James Yap, who reportedly had a 10-month affair with Hope Centeno, a receptionist at the Belo Medical Group where the basketball pro regularly visits for his facials.

The 28-year old Hope stoked the fires of controversy when she insinuated that like Kris, she could be pregnant with James' child. She said sorry to Kris but at the same time appealed for understanding. "I also deserve the same sympathy as Kris," saying "Kris that she also fell in love with the wrong men" in the past. On the same slot over at her home studio, Kris, who had just checked out of the hospital two days earlier, blamed Hope for her "false labor" and hospitalization. "How dare you say sorry to me?" a fuming Kris told Hope.

According to *The Buzz* co-host Boy Abunda, Kris "collapsed" last Feb. 21 after she had learned that Hope was coming out on GMA-7. "Now, people are feasting on what is happening . . . I admit that this is one of the saddest moments in my life," Kris told Boy. "Kris still has many questions to James . . . But the decision to hold on and to let go is hers alone," said Boy. Kris told Korina Sanchez in an interview that "staying married is a day-to-day decision." Earlier, Kris said, "It was not an easy decision. Sinasabi ko po sa inyo, umaamin ako, there were moments in the past few weeks, I wanted to give up. What held me there is that faith, na kung may trial man na dumating ngayon, it's not always going to be bad. Kung may moments ng pagsubok, ng masakit, may moment naman na naging maligaya."

Hope claimed that her relationship with James started in March 2006 and lasted until January this year. She said she called him "Big Bird" and he referred to her as "Hopia." She and James allegedly found time to share intimate moments inside a cubicle in the clinic whenever the basketball player would drop by for his twice-weekly facials.

James has apologized to Kris on *The Buzz*. "Yon nga talagang nagkaproblema kami so humihingi talaga ako ng tawad sa kanya. Sinabi ko na, 'Gagawin ko ang lahat para mapatawad mo ako.' And siyempre gagawin ko dahil mahal na mahal ko ang asawa ko 'tsaka si Josh 'tsaka 'yong baby so handa ako kahit mahirap." Turning to Kris, James said, "Babe, sorry talaga na 'yon nga nasaktan kita pero sinasabi ko nga na handang-handa ako na pagbayaran ito. Kahit anong mangyari, ipaglalaban kita 'tsaka hindi ako gi-give-up . . . 'Tsaka gusto ko lang sabihin na nahirapan ako talaga. Hindi ako sanay sa mga ganito, so talagang hindi na mauulit."

Kris is into her seventh month of pregnancy with her and James's first child. She was due to give birth to a baby boy (to be named after James) on May 13 by Caesarian section but has decided to do so on May 6. Kris turned 36 last Feb 14 and James turned 25 the next day, Feb 15. ■

Pacquiao throws towel

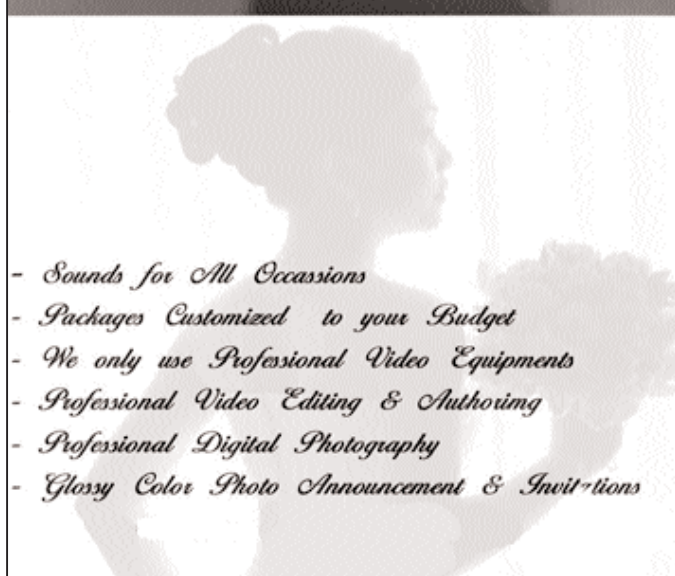


Boxing champ Manny Pacquiao has come to his senses and is abandoning his ambition to become a congressman. Pacquiao's patron and close friend, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, has announced that Pacquiao was not pursuing his political plans. Another of Pacquiao's close friend, Rex "Wakee" Salud, had confirmed that the boxer had thrown the towel in his quest to become a congressman.

According to Salud, Pacquiao changed his mind about mixing boxing and politics after he was booed by boxing fans at the Cebu City Sports Complex last Feb. 24 where he watched a boxing event. Pacquiao was with Atienza, election lawyer Romy Makalintal and Salud when the incident occurred. In a separate interview, Pacquiao confirmed that he had sets aside his bid for a congressional seat in the first district of South Cotabato so he could focus on his fight on April 14 in Las Vegas. But he did not categorically say whether he would pursue his candidacy. "Sa ngayon, ang masasabi ko lang po ay hindi ko sinasarado yung pintuan sa pulitika. I-set aside ko muna dahil may coming fight ako, mas mauna yung laban ko," he said.

Filipinos from all walks of life have expressed disapproval over the boxer's political ambition. Veteran sportscaster Ed Picson said Pacquiao should focus on his boxing career. "Right now Manny's career is on the rise. Right now he is at the peak of his strength. It will be unfortunate if it goes to waste," Picson said. UP Professor Randy David warned Pacquiao against entering politics because he lacked expertise in governance. He said Pacquiao was being used by desperate politicians for their own selfish interests. ■

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Ogie and Regine Test of vote-getting prowess in Business



Ogie Alcasid and Regine Velasquez have formed a business venture -- a recording company called IndiMusic. Regine said the thrust of IndiMusic is to help out young artists, particularly newcomers, enter the music industry. The company's first released album was the original soundtrack of the movie *Till I Met You* (2006), which starred Regine and Robin Padilla. The second project launched last February features actor Dennis Trillo in his debut album. Another IndiMusic-produced album in the pipeline is that of Mum's Cake, an alternative rock band that Ogie discovered. "Ako, artistic lang talaga," said Regine. "I like producing albums, I like developing new talents. Siya (Ogie), sa business side naman. Magaling siya doon. Siya, bata pa lang, entrepreneur na!" Regine and Ogie sang the title track of the movie *The Promise*, which stars the six-time love team of Angel Locsin and Richard Gutierrez. "The challenge is for it to sound new, but not to over kill the song, 'cause it's the type of song that you don't over-exaggerate," says Ogie. Asked by reporters if they have a promise to each other, Regine blurted, "Hindi ko kaya!" Ogie begged off, "Saka na lang." Their business partnership will surely add fuel to the lingering rumors that there is more than friendship that ties the two. Ogie has promised to make an important announcement in June, which many surmise has something to do with the real score between him and Asia's Songbird. ■



The Genuine Opposition (GO) has finally dropped Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan from its senatorial line-up after the husband of Megastar Sharon Cuneta had persistently refused to join the GO senatorial candidates in the campaign trail. But Pangilinan is unperturbed. He said he was running as an independent and would continue to campaign all by himself. Go leader and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay said, "... don't expect us to say bad things about him because we share the same position (on some political issues). We won't say bad things about him and he won't say bad things about us." GO campaign manager San Juan Mayor Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito said the GO ticket would not campaign for Pangilinan. A member of the Liberal Party (Drilon wing), Pangilinan said in a statement, "I understand, accept and respect the decision of GO. I hope they also understand my decision. I was ready for whatever decision made by GO because I was not really an official member of their senatorial slate. Pangilinan feels awkward being with the opposition after he was criticized for his role in the canvassing of votes in the presidential elections of 2004, which proclaimed the victory of President Arroyo. At the same time, he refused to join the administration slate because he had called for the resignation of Mrs. Arroyo in the aftermath of the "Hello Garci" election scandal. Pangilinan, however, remains a formidable candidate simply on account of the massive popularity of his wife. The

Megastar has been a very active and vocal campaigner for her husband during the past year. On her TV shows and in her concerts, she never fails to plug in her husband. Come election time, we shall see who has the stronger drawing power: Sharon or the opposition. ■

Who's romancing Loren?



People had talked about it in whispers for years but it was only recently that Senator Edgardo Angara frontally addressed his rumored romance with ex-senator Loren Legarda. Angara, who is running for reelection in the administration ticket, confirmed that the rumor started about three years ago, spread via text message and coffee shop talk. He said he ignored it because nobody believed the story. Angara said, "It's really ridiculous. It's not true." Asked why he did not deny it earlier, he said: "Because the more you comment on it, the more it will spread." He explained that he was quite close to Legarda when they were colleagues in the Senate. Legarda, who is estranged from husband, former Batangas Gov. Antonio Leviste, is running for senator under the opposition. He blames his political enemies for spreading the "canard." He said, "You know, these are just being made up by the camp of Ping Lacson," with whom he has a long-running feud. Lacson said he himself did not believe the rumor because "Loren is too pretty for Angara." ■

"The Pinay can do it. We won't be left behind. We can do what they can do," the 28-year-old Belarmino said. "We may be different from men, but we are equal."

Wenceslao, 27, sounded equally confident minutes before boarding the team's Bangkok-bound flight.

"We are not different from other Filipinas. We are normal Filipinas. We don't have special skills, special talents or special anything. We just want to show that we are normal people who ride the jeep, but we can dare to do something that seems impossible and we will make it possible," said Wenceslao.

The team plans to train for a month and a half in high altitude conditions before making the attempt to reach the summit.

The three mountaineers hope to duplicate the feat of at least three other Filipinos who conquered the Everest, also in May last year.



JANET Belarmino (left), Noelle Wenceslao (center) and Carina Dayondon pose during their departure at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

The three Everest conquerors were Leo Oracion, who began his assault on May 13 and reached the summit on May 17, Erwin Emata, May 15-18, and Romeo Garduce, May 14-19.

Set sometime in May, the climb will mark a year since Leo Oracion and Pastor Emata, fellow climbers in the First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition Team, made history by being among the first Filipinos to scale the mountain.

The two summiteers left Manila with the all-woman summit team on board Philippine Airlines Flight PR 730 at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday. They joined the team as expedition leaders who will stay at the Mt. Everest base camp to direct the Filipino women climb.

Expedition physician Ted Esguerra also joined the group to be on medical duty throughout the summit attempt.

From Thailand, the expedition team will change planes to get to the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu. They will then travel to the Solu Khumbu area in Nepal for two weeks of acclimatization, and then to the Mt. Everest base camp for another month of adapting to the mountain's weather, according to Belarmino. ■

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3 Filipino women off to Everest

An all-women team comprised of three Filipino women named Carina Dayondon, Janet Belarmino, and Noelle Wenceslao on Sunday flew to Thailand on their way to Nepal for the most challenging expedition of their lives. They will attempt to climb 29,035-foot high Mt. Everest, the world's tallest peak.



Ask the Video Guy Al Abdon

Laptops: Love them or hate them

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Laptops

I love laptops. To prove it, I got 2 power books G4, 1 Dell Dimension 2410, an older model Compaq & Toshiba which I use as a paper weight. Why that many? I edit a lot at home using the 2 desktops (Dell and Mac Pro G5) I travel a lot too. On the road I have to keep on editing and exploring different effects softwares and the only way I can do it is with the powerbooks. During meetings and seminars, my Dell laptop is a saver. I can put all information I need in an organized, orderly fashioned way. And before going to sleep, I don't read books but the powerbooks.

Laptops are a longtime companion at work, school and the on the road. The laptops today are bigger (I've seen Monster laptops in Dumolin's), crisper displays and more usable key lay outs. They have faster processors, largememory and bigger storage drives. The burn DVD and CDs faster than its use to be. Most of the laptops available has the ability of high speed wireless internet access at airports, school, hotels, restaurant and coffee shops. Most laptops have the ability to double their battery life not some of the models I have which last only 30 minutes full charged. The thinnest laptops on the market are less than 1 inch thick and weigh just 3 to 5 pounds.

How to choose:

Decide if a laptop is right for you. If you are on a tight budget and aren't cramped for space, a desktop computer may be preferable because it cost a few hundred dollars less.

Windows Vs Macintosh

Many people choose laptops

Rex Navarrete "C'est Talagang Crazy"

Many claim that college is the turning point in one's life. This was the case for San Francisco Bay Area Rex Navarrete. His Asian American professor, Dan Gonzales has told him, "Get out of my office. You should not be joking here....take those jokes to the stage". Right there, a comedian is born.

His parents have never imagined that he will grow up as a comedian.. One spring day, a 19 year old student looking for an identity has been baptized with fire entertaining a crowd of 800 at the Annual Asian Pacific Islander Student Union Conference UC, Santa Cruz.

Rex Navarrete gathers all of his materials from what he calls "real Rex moments", reality and shared life experiences. He sees humor in everything and anything. Even though most of his materials are geared for Filipino audience, if you have the "Rex sense" one will understand the universality of his comedy act. In the beginning his act revolves around characters (many of whom were struggling underdogs) such as his ESL teacher Mrs. Scott, his uncle Boy and Maritess, a domestic worker.

Since then, Rex Navarrete has brought his Comedy Act not only in colleges, universities, community events, but also in North America touring cities such as Los Angeles,

New York, Seattle, Houston, Montreal Toronto, Vancouver and Hawaii and also world wide such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Philippines. He has released some CDs such as "Husky Boy", "Bastos", "Hella Pinoy" and "Badass Madapaka!".

Some of his current projects include his own television series- "Rex in the City" for MTV Philippines and an animated series "The Nutshack".

Rex Navarrete is a hard working Filipino American comedian and has performed along side George Lopez, DL Hughley, Paul Mooney and many other notables.

At present, He lives on the island of Oahu in Hawaii where he enjoys swimming, fishing and quiet relaxation

RVJ Productions welcome Rex Navarrete in the City of Montreal. He will be performing at the Oscar Peterson Concert hall. Also featuring The Blacksmith Band and young Filipino Artists Christopher Tapia, Mishael-Thea dela Cruz and Jed Bermillius.. The "C'est Talagang Crazy" big day will be on May 13, 2007 at 7:00 pm.

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using Window operating system because it's what they've always used by Apple's OSX is a fine alternative. In recent subscriber surveys, Consumer Reports found Apple technical support to be top-notch. According to a recent survey, it was found that Apple computers have been less susceptible to most viruses and spyware than Windos-based computers. Its true because I don't see pop-up ad in my Apple computers unlike my Dell which is propagated with all kinds of flashing pop-ups. If you are interested in editing, photo retouching, music and video applications, Apple is best for you.

PC based computers on the order hand is tailored based computers. Dell computers can be tailored to an individual's need just like choosing a car. This configure-to-order is now common practice for laptops as well as desktops. PC based laptops are common to business applications, accounting and word processing. The price of a PC laptop varies on the number of

components, hard drives and the number of processor it has. One more advise to look closely at warranties and insurance. Salemen will encourage you to buy extended warranties. Be wise and make

sure you buy when you need it most. If you travel a lot with your computer, it is advisable to purchase additional warranties if not you don't need to buy a service you don't use.

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PBSSQ holds Easter Fiesta on April 8, 2007

The Philippine Benevolent and Scholarship Society of Quebec will celebrate their traditional Canadian Easter and for the first time will introduce the Pilipino way of welcoming spring after a long bout of snow and winter.

The Easter Fiesta 2007 will be held on April 8, 2007 (Sunday) 9:00 AM at the St. Kevin's Social Hall 5600 Cote Des Neiges. The activities will include information booth, bazaar, food court, games and entertainment.

Donations are \$2.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children and seniors. Ticket holders will also qualify to win prizes. All proceeds will go to Scholarship Awards and Benevolent activities. For more info, please call Al Abdon at (514) 264-8706. ■

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Logos: Universal Net, Glenora College, RE/MAX, R/MAX, and others.

Personality of the month

Hiyas ng Pilipinas 2007 Candidate

Her name is Lucky Charity Carillo Lizarondo, and one of her dreams is to win a Miss Universe title in the very near future. That dream may as well become a sweet reality via the "Hiyas ng Pilipinas", a newly launched beauty pageant that will catapult the winners



into the glitzy world of stardom with various appearances in different Filipino communities abroad where they will promote Philippine trade and tourism.

Miss Lizarondo, a stunning beauty

with a winsome smile and only 18, is already a winner of several beauty contests. In fact, she has just won the Miss Philippines Youth beauty title on March 14, 2007. Gifted with a mellifluous voice, she can carry a tune perfectly well. She can also dance, act, play guitar and do gymnastics with gusto. She loves listening to music and reading as well.

Charity, the hypocorism her friends and family call her by, attends the University of Santo Tomas where she takes up a bachelor's degree in Tourism.

Standing five feet and four inches, and measuring 33 by 23 by 35 inches, Charity is the reigning Miss Bulacan (Binibining Bulacan 2006). She's a daughter of the former Cely Carillo, herself a beauty to reckon, and Tomas Lizarondo, both of Bulacan in the Philippines. ■



Scouts learn how to make a treasure chest from a recycled box. Cairo Bermudez and Richard San Miguel are showing the kids how to make one.



Laging Handa Scouts learn not only survival skills but also how to play the guitar. This is one of the activities lined up for this session every Saturday from 3 to 5 p.m..

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From Page 3

STANDOFF ENDS

Ramos, one of the four people he later took hostage.

Villegas drew a handgun and a grenade and seized Ramos, who was claiming ownership of Villegas' property, along with two court clerks and a lawyer, police said.

Villegas fired four shots into the air as he and his girlfriend herded the hostages into an upstairs room in the government building.

The suspects threatened to kill the hostages unless Ramos' family paid a ransom of three million pesos (about 62,000 dollars).

Scenes from the hostage drama which lasted for 24 hours were aired on national television, including dramatic footage of the final assault.

The slain hostage taker was later seen slumped on the floor in what appeared to be his own blood. Outside, a horde of reporters and photographers scuffled with police to get into the building.

Taguig city mayor Sigfrid Tinga attempted to broker a peaceful surrender, raising half of the ransom demand. He said Villegas had agreed to turn in his weapons, but later turned violent.

"We had a lot of chance to neutralize him, but we were afraid he may drop the grenade," Tinga told reporters.

"Police assault was carried out when he turned violent. We could hear he was beating up the hostages."

Authorities ordered the evacuation of a nearby elementary school as a precaution.

Tinga said an investigation would be conducted to determine how the suspects managed to smuggle weapons into the courtroom.

After leaving the military, Villegas had worked at several odd jobs including as a movie stuntman, police said. ■

Ousted Philippine president's gambling buddy gets 6 years for bribery

March 19, 2007

A Philippine court sentenced a former gambling buddy of toppled President Joseph Estrada to a maximum six years in prison Monday as part of a plea bargain, a court official said.

Charlie "Atong" Ang last week pleaded guilty to bribery, avoiding a possible sentence of 40 years for plundering state coffers.

Ang also agreed to return 25 million pesos (US\$510,000; 391,104), his alleged share of tax kickbacks he was accused of diverting in conspiracy with Estrada.

Justice Teresita de Castro of the anti-graft court Sandiganbayan sentenced Ang to between two years and four months and six years, after he pleaded guilty during his re-arraignment.

Ang's admission has strengthened the government's case against the deposed leader, who has been on trial for plunder since he was ousted in 2001, according to Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio.

But Estrada's lawyer, Rufus Rodriguez, said Ang's sentencing would have no effect on the former president's case.

"President Estrada expects an acquittal in his case," he said, adding Ang's admission "is completely false and untrue."

Estrada is accused of amassing about 4 billion pesos (US\$81 million; 62 million) in payoffs from illegal gambling operations, tobacco tax kickbacks and commissions. He also is charged with perjury for allegedly

falsely declaring his assets.

He has denied any wrongdoing and accused his successor, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, of conspiring with the country's elite, Roman Catholic church leaders and some senior military officers to oust him.

Rebel leader to run for governor in May polls

March 20, 2007

Philippine Muslim rebel leader Nur Misuari has been allowed out of detention to file his candidacy for governor of his southern island stronghold.

Escorted by heavily armed police, Mr Misuari took a commercial flight to Jolo, part of the Sulu province, where American troops are assisting Filipino forces against Muslim militants linked to al Qaeda.

"I am just filing my candidacy for governor of Sulu," he said before boarding a plane in Manila.

"Victory is already a foregone conclusion."

Mr Misuari is chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a Muslim former separatist group that signed a peace pact with Manila in 1996.

Under the deal, Mr Misuari won governorship of a Muslim autonomous area, but later lost the government's support amid allegations of massive corruption in the regional government.

AFP news agency reports, in 2001, he and his supporters reportedly attacked government targets on Jolo and Zamboanga city, killing more than 100 people.

MNLF gunmen held hostage dozens of school children whom they used as human shields to stop a government assault.

The hostages were freed in exchange for safe passage back to Jolo, where they now remain as a major armed force.

Ang was extradited in November from the United States, where he fled several months after Estrada was toppled in the 2001 "people power" revolt. ■

Shortly after the rebellion, Mr Misuari fled to Malaysia but was arrested and repatriated. He is under house arrest while being tried for rebellion.



MNLF rebel leader Nur Misuari, center, waves as he arrives in Zamboanga, southern Philippines, March 20, 2007.

A Manila court granted his request to run for governor of Sulu in the May 14 polls on the basis that he has not yet been convicted.

President Gloria Arroyo's adviser on the peace process, Jesus Dureza, welcomed Mr Misuari's move to join mainstream politics, wishing him well in the elections. ■

From Page 7

COOPERATIVE

coops' political arm in Congress, won one seat. The incumbent Congressman Guillermo Cua represents the coop sector. Considering that the coop movement has barely flexed its muscles and still fettered by the "non-political" myth, the coop movement is still capable of a stronger showing in future political exercises.

The number of operating cooperatives in the Philippines reached 28,555 in December 2004. Today, there are cooperatives in almost all barangays or villages in the Philippines. Coop membership has grown and it is estimated that the family beneficiaries of the coop movement are around 25 million. These numbers, aside from being an economic and socio-cultural power center, can also be transformed into a political power center.

It is hoped that this trend continue and be further enhanced by researches and documentation of the best cooperative success stories or "best practices". These documented researches should be disseminated to other coops for their guidance and inspiration to uplift the Filipino people from poverty.

Filipino nanny saves 6 kids

WHO says a good deed is never rewarded? After risking her life to save her employers' children, a 30-year-old Filipino was rewarded with \$25,000 as a "gift" for her heroic act.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said on Tuesday that in a statement that Hazel Reposo, a native of Negros Island, saved her employers' four children and their two friends from a house fire in Stowe, Vermont.

In her report to the home office, Consul General Cecilia Rebong of the Philippine Consulate General in New York said they learned about the incident when Reposo, together with her employers, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Wood and their children, went to the consulate to acquire a new Philippine passport. Reposo lost her old passport and other belongings in the fire. Reposo recalled that one of the children told her of the fire coming out of the garage door of the 4,500-square-foot wooden luxury home, Rebong said.

"The fire alarm went off, and I immediately ordered the children to abandon the house. I called up 911 on my mobile phone and then my employers," she narrated before the consulate.

The Woods acknowledged her heroism and her quick thinking, saying they would be "forever grateful" to her.

"The \$25,000 was not a reward but was meant for the education of Hazel's son. She took care of our most precious possession—our children," they said.

Reposo, a business management graduate of the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos, has worked as a nanny since November 2003.

She left the country for her five-year-old son's sake to work in Bermuda with her

parents and two siblings.

Reposo's heroism was published in an article entitled "\$25,000 reward for Filipino nanny who saved 6 kids," in the February 23 to March 1, 2007, issue of the Filipino Reporter, a New York-based newspaper.

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Ana May Tappan

Tagalog Corner



Wikang Pilipino

Noong ika-dalawampu't-apat ng Pebrero 2207, alas 3:30-8:30 ng gabi, muli na namang nagbigay ng kasiyahan ang grupo ng Tagapagmatyag na LAGING HANDA at ito ay ginanap sa lugar ng 6767 Cote des Neiges sa ika-anim na palapag.

Maraming mga panauhin ang nagsidal sa araw na ito, kabilang na si Ginoong Mark Branchley ang "Stoney Point Area Commissioner", si Ginoong Patrick Bedekian ang kinatawan ng Bangko Scotia at isa sa mga tagapagtaguyod ng grupo ng Tagapagmatyag na Laging Handa, narito din ang mga magulang upang masaksihan ang palatuntunan ito, kabilang na si Ginang Riza Esmeralda ang pinuno ng palatuntunan, si Ginoong Joselito Sarto ang nagtipon ng mga larawan upang maipakita sa lahat at mga bagong kasapi kung ano ang mga bagay na ginagawa ng grupo ng Tagapagmatyag, si Ginoong Moises Medina ang aming gitarista, si Ginoong Mark Branchley, ang pinuno ng Tagapagmatyag sa Stoney Point na nakakasako sa LAGING HANDA at ito ay pinangungunahan ni Ginang Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi ang Komisyonado ng grupo, si Ginoong Claro Bermudez ang pinuno ng

Tagapagmatyag, si Ginoong Romeo Valenzuela ang ikalawang pinuno ng Tagapagmatyag, si Ginoong Richard San Miguel ang ingat-yaman, at ang inyo pong lingkod Binibining Ana May C. Tappan ang kalihim.

Sinimulan ang palatuntunan sa pamamagitan ng parada ng mga kulay na pinangungunahan ng mga Tagapagmatyag na sina Robert Kevin Araneta, Joshua Felix Beltran at Alexandre Felix Beltran. Inawit ang "O Canada", Lupang Hinirang ang pambansang awit ng Pilipinas. Kay gandang pakinggan ang kanilang mga tinig habang sila ay umaawit. Ito ay sinundan sa pamamagitan ng pagpapakilala sa aming mga panauhin mula kay Ginang Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi at ito ay pinangunahan ni Ginoong Mark Branchley, ang siyang nagbigay kaalaman kung ano ang tunay na kahulugan bilang isang kasapi sa grupo ng Tagapagmatyag. Pagkatapos ito ay sinundan ng mga piling awitin mula sa grupo ng Tagapagmatyag, inawit nila ang "My Bonnie", "If you're happy" and "I've got that Scouting Spirit". Nagkaroon din ng mga palaro na siya namang ikinatuwa ng mga grupo ng



Ang mga kasapi at tagapagtaguyod ng Laging Handa, kasama ang 2 panauhin, G. Patrick Bedekian ng Scotiabank at G. Mark Branchley, Stoney Point Scout Commissioner.

Tagapagmatyag at ng mga panauhin. Ito ay kinabibilangan ng mga dating kasapi na sila Robert Kevin Araneta (Scout), Jean Matthew Sarto (Scout), Christian Ian San Miguel (Scout), Ira Paac Alagao (Cub), Natasha Nuguid (Cub), Thomas Nuguid (Cub), Kurt Richard San Miguel (Cub), Marlon Bravo (Scout), at Adrien Morales (Scout). Ang mga bagong kasapi na kinabibilangan nila Joshua Felix Beltran

Bermudez at Ginoong Mark Branchley at kanila ding ipinaalala kung sino ang nagtatag ng Tagapagmatyag at ito ay itinatag ni Ginoong Lord Baden-Powell mula 1907. Kung nais ninyong maging kasapi sa grupo ng Tagapagmatyag, Sa buwan ng Abril 6, 7, 8 kami ay muli na namang pupunta sa lugar ng Tamaracouta upang mag'camping at



Ang sorpresang numero ay si Dawn Esmeralda Sarto na sumayaw ng sarili niyang "choreography"

(Scout), Alexandre Felix Beltran (Scout), Jeremiah Felix Beltran (Scout), Sarah Beltran (Cub), Ian Gravel (Cub), Neil Gravel (Beaver), at Dawn Esmeralda Sarto (Beaver). Nagtapos ang palatuntunan sa pagbibigay ng mga kaalaman na pinangungunahan ni Ginoong Claro

kayo ay inaanyayahan naming makiisa kung gusto ninyong magkaroon ng mga bagong kaalaman. Hanapin lamang si Ginang Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi at mag-iwan ng mensahe sa numerong ito 514-485-7861. ■

Marlys Pizza

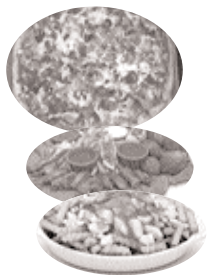
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Philippines hits back at US probe on unsolved killings

March 16, 2007

A US Senate probe into extrajudicial killings in the Philippines appeared biased against the Manila government and was an affront to its sovereignty, a senior Filipino official said.

Rights groups say more than 800 people have been killed since 2001 during the administration of President Gloria Arroyo, who has vowed to take steps to end the murders of the journalists, church leaders, political figures, human rights activists and trade union leaders.

The Senate hearing was chaired by Senator Barbara Boxer (news, bio, voting record), head of a panel on East Asia and the Pacific, and invited experts, who questioned Manila's commitment to stop the violence.

Boxer said it remained to be seen if Arroyo's pledge to solve the killings and stop the violence would be "followed by real and tangible actions." Other experts suggested that military aid to the Philippines, a key US ally in Southeast Asia, could be affected if the murders were not solved.

But Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez stressed that Arroyo had already ordered the creation of special courts to handle the cases as well as telling the military to probe allegations that rogue soldiers were behind many of the deaths.

He said Boxer's comment was biased and was "already in effect making judgment that our efforts are

not sincere." Reacting to a possible cut in aid due to the killings, Gonzales said: "That is blackmail to me."

Gonzalez stressed on local television that the Philippines was a sovereign country, "not a vassal of anyone." He also dismissed the US probe as "posturing by one senator who wants her name in the headlines for international consumption."

Gonzalez stressed that Washington military aid had helped professionalize the Philippine armed forces, which in turn have been crucial in the Southeast Asian front of President George W. Bush's global war on terrorism.

US-trained Filipino troops have in recent months killed the two top leaders of the Abu Sayyaf, an Al Qaeda-linked group blamed for the kidnapping and deaths of two Americans seized in 2001.

The US Senate hearing came after special UN Human Rights Commission rapporteur Philip Alston blamed military personnel for most of the killings and called for a thorough investigation to bring the culprits to justice.

An independent commission set up by President Arroyo also said there was circumstantial evidence linking troops to the killings. The military has officially denied it has had anything to do with the deaths, and instead blames an internal purge by communist guerrillas. ■

Two face charges in nurse exam cheating scandal

March 7, 2007

Two people are to face corruption charges in the Philippines in a massive cheating scandal which has cast a shadow over the qualifications of some 17,000 nurses, the government said Wednesday.

Two examiners who carried out the 2006 exams will face charges for violating anti-corruption laws, the government's ombudsman said in a statement.

in high demand overseas, especially in the United States, Europe and the Middle East.

Some 42,000 students sat the nursing examination last year but only about 17,000 passed.

The government of President Gloria Arroyo has ordered all the 17,000 to re-take the exams, triggering an uproar from the nurses, who say they were not involved in any wrongdoing.




File Photo - Filipino nurses attend the mass oath taking ceremony for nurses who passed the scandal tainted June 2006 nursing licensure examination.

The two are accused of leaking some of the questions on the 2006 Nursing Board examination to an exam review center before the tests were held.

The scandal rocked the country's medical profession and cast a shadow over the quality of its nurses, who are

The United States Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) issued a temporary ban on the 17,000 last month, insisting that Filipino nurses retake sections of the 2006 examination where mass cheating took place. ■



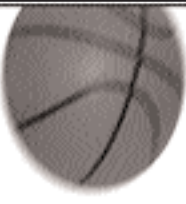
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Isaac T. Goodine

Global Perspectives



Canadian Philosopher, Charles Taylor, has been awarded the Templeton Prize, 2007, for "spiritual thinking".

"Dr. Charles Taylor is the first Canadian to win the prestigious academic honour that is also the most lucrative prize in the world for intellectuals with a cash value of more than \$1.8 million Cdn. He is "filled with joy and humility" he said.

Sir John Templeton, now 94, the global philanthropist who established the Templeton Foundation, created a special prize that has been awarded annually since 1973 to recognize research in the field of spirituality, particularly as it relates to natural science and modern society.

Dr. Taylor, 74, believes that the bilingual environment in which he grew up in Quebec gave him his investigative spirit. His mother's native tongue was French and his father's English and he grew up in Montreal. "It was my life in Quebec—in a family that was ...between two solitudes—where all the great questions were asked." He said.

He is the author of 23 books and has made the case that depending only on secularized viewpoints may block crucial insights that might help the world address many pressing problems.

At the reception during the Award Ceremony in New York, academics and journalists had an opportunity to hear his views regarding the current global perspectives including the supposedly pending "clash of civilizations." In regard to the idea of a clash of civilizations he warned: "The tragedy is that if we buy into that narrative, we could make it true as each begins to treat the other as a monolith which is hostile to the other...which has the worst possible motivations ...Therefore we have to mobilize".

He explained that there is a need in both the Western and Islamic worlds for each to learn more about the other, and about the diversity of each other's respective civilization. What the Western world can do to avoid a tragic clash is to "fight back against a creeping 'Islamophobia' that is growing in our societies."

One of his fundamental beliefs is that rationality is not incompatible with spirituality and the separation of natural science and religion has hurt the study of both, and prevented crucial insights into clashes of religion, culture and morality.

I have been in working in a

cross-cultural environment for the past 35 years and, in my own small way, I have tried to find ways to help people see value in diversity and develop the means to realize benefits of synergy. This requires a willingness to try and understand the point of view of others and to accept that people who have a world-view that is different from our own need not be a threat; but may in fact offer additional strength. There can also be unity in diversity—if the spirit is willing. Mind, body and spirit must work in harmony in each individual and in each organization for balance to be maintained in all fields of human development. The Templeton Foundation has given a great gift to humankind in recognizing the significance of integrating studies in spirituality and natural science in the emerging global society. Recognizing the work of individuals, such as Dr. Taylor, helps counter the claims that war is the only way forward that we so frequently hear these days from ranks of the misguided, the profane, the corrupt, the loud, and the fearful. We need a creed of peace.

Some 35 years ago, in the course of my own studies, I learned some fundamental truths from a great teacher and Mystic Philosopher, the late Ralph M. Lewis, who enunciated a creed of peace. I presented it in this column last year; but I believe it is worth repeating and apt on this occasion.

Creed of Peace A Practical Approach

- I am guilty of war when I proudly exercise my intelligence to the disadvantage of my fellow man.
- I am guilty of war when I distort others' opinions, which differ from my own.
- I am guilty of war when I show disregard for the rights and properties of others.
- I am guilty of war when I covet what another has honestly acquired.
- I am guilty of war when I seek to maintain my superiority of position by depriving others of their opportunity of advancement.

• I am guilty of war if I imagine my kin and myself to be a privileged people.

• I am guilty of war if I believe a heritage entitles me to monopolize resources of nature.

• I am guilty of war when I believe other people must think and believe as I do.

• I am guilty of war when I make success in life solely dependent upon power, fame, and riches.

• I am guilty of war when I think the minds of people should be

regulated by force, rather than by reason.

• I am guilty of war when I believe the God I conceive is the one others must accept.

• I am guilty of war when I think that the land of a man's birth must necessarily be the place of his livelihood.

Enunciated by ...Ralph M. Lewis

■

Arroyo asks Filipinos to change spending patterns to fight hunger

March 20, 2007

Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Tuesday advised the public to change "spending patterns" to fight hunger, saying that the patterns can be a reason behind the hunger experienced by a number of Filipino families based on a recent survey, according to a statement issued by the government.

"I ask our people to spend on the basics first before the luxuries so our children will have enough to eat," President Arroyo said in the statement, adding that hunger "cannot be totally attributed to poverty and lack of opportunity but also to the spending patterns of the people."

A Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey from February 24 to 27 said that nearly one in five Filipino families have experienced hunger at least once in the last three months.

"We always take these reports with a sense of urgency and we want to pinpoint the specific areas and communities where hunger may be rife so that effective intervention can be

mounted," Arroyo said, adding "all aspects must be dealt with so the whole citizenry can be healthy and productive."

Arroyo also said, "I shall continue to see to it that nobody is left behind in the social payback of economic growth, and fighting hunger shall be a constant priority in strategic and immediate levels."

Arroyo said that "on the strategic level," the government was enhancing agricultural programs in order to boost food production, broadening and speeding up the food distribution system, and balancing out price disparities and fluctuations.

"On the immediate level," Arroyo said that the government had put up rolling stores in poor communities, strictly monitored food prices to prevent profiteering, and ensured that food transport routes were running smoothly from farm to market. ■

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COOPERATIVE NEWS

FilipinoSolidarity Cooperative establishes direct contact with suppliers to offer lower prices to its members

The new management team of the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative is very keen in finding a way to make Divisoria Cubao become the favorite store of 15 000 Filipinos who live in the Cote-des-Neiges area. To accomplish this, the first step is to lower prices and offer a complete array of products imported from the Philippines and other Asian countries. On February 28, 2007, Ben Bade, Rhoda Tremocha and Zenaída

day invoice term.

As the Coop does not really have any credit facility, and no cash available to buy merchandise, Zenaída Kharroubi offered to get a credit line that she guaranteed with the bank. Hence, the Coop was able to make an immediate purchase of approximately \$18000 worth of merchandise. It took three trucks to deliver them in a week's time.

Now that the Coop has a lot of



Mr. Willie Lao (on the right) of Wilby Commercial Ltd. in Markham, Ontario, poses with the Coop team who visited him on February 28, 2007.



APO Products Ltd. manager, Mr. Rudy Ong, poses with the visiting Coop team.

Kharroubi hired a private van to go to Ontario and be introduced to the suppliers who import products directly to avoid the extra cost incurred when buying from a middleman. They were accompanied by Bok Alzate who facilitated the contact with these suppliers.

There were three suppliers the three-member team met. But since there was no established credit reference with these suppliers, they all wanted to sell on a cash basis only and it would take at least six months of regular purchasing that will give the Coop the privilege of buying on a 30-

merchandise to sell, the next problem is to sell them quickly and get a fast turnover of inventory to have some cash to pay accounts that have been outstanding for several months. People who belong to the Paluagan are still waiting to be paid. The expected subsidy from CDEC has not yet materialized as the meeting on March 15, 2007 was postponed because Mr. Jason Prince who is helping the Coop and handling the file, suddenly got sick. Consequently, the committee meeting which will discuss further the case of the Coop was postponed to be held only on April 26, 2007. Meanwhile, the Coop has

practically used up the \$25 000 credit line which Mrs. Kharroubi guaranteed with the bank. The people who are waiting to be paid then have been told to be more patient because of this development. Those with urgent cases are only paid partially from the sales receipts, or they are offered to buy their groceries in exchange for the money they are expecting. When people call

everyone know what happened. However, not everyone has read the report, thus, she spends time telling the whole story over and over again. Then they usually ask when they can expect to be paid. This is hard to say as nothing is certain as to when CDEC will decide when they will give the grant of \$40 000. Will CDEC finally disburse the funds after April 26? No one wants



Diwa Products proprietor, Mr. William Tan (on the right) poses with the group headed by Ben Bade, President, Zenaída Kharroubi, treasurer, and Rhoda Tremocha, store manager, when they visited his warehouse in Scarborough, Ontario, February 28, 2007.

Mrs. Kharroubi who became the treasurer since January 21, 2007, she had to explain the reasons why they cannot be paid yet, and she appeals to them for understanding and patience. She also mentions the fact that she has made a report in the newspaper to let

to give any answer, and leaves us wondering as well.

Mr. Jason Prince requested Mrs. Kharroubi to provide all the receipts of the purchases of merchandise, and to be prepared to answer their questions so that he can

21 mars

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submit a report to the committee.

Mrs. Kharroubi also plans to write a letter of appeal to whoever can help the Coop in its fight for survival. As her time is limited and she is involved with too many activities and most of them requiring her personal attention, she has not yet completed the story of the Coop. A few days ago, she has been receiving e-mail messages from people who received information from Mr. Jose Gaviola, the former president of the Coop. She also received an e-mail directly from him, insisting on his claim that the former treasurer, Rhoda Tremocha, should be investigated for the missing money that could not be accounted for. He even clipped the picture from the Star, showing Mrs. Kharroubi and Rhoda, and underneath was written: "Sa simbahan, pinatatawad ang may kasalanan, sa Coop ay kailangang imbestigahan." Now, the question remains, if his allegations were true, how come he did not clear up the problem before leaving the Coop? Why did he not face the other members of the Board and formally submit all documents for scrutiny? Why did he not make himself available to answer any questions we may have? Why does he resort to a "smear campaign against Rhoda Tremocha? What proof does he have to pin all the blame on Rhoda?

In keeping with the spirit of transparency and in protecting the

interest of the Coop, Mrs. Kharroubi requested Rhoda Tremocha to submit a written report supported by documents which prove beyond doubt that the financial troubles were caused by Mr. Gaviola's actions. By doing this, she wants the public to understand the whole situation and let them be the judge who they should believe and who they should blame for the financial crisis of the Coop.

Rhoda reported that there seem to be some people affected by Mr. Gaviola's accusations sent by the internet. She therefore wants to meet with the Board of Directors and discuss the problem. She would like to give a complete testimony of everything that transpired during the time of Mr. Gaviola.

How can you help the Coop succeed?

As everyone knows, the success of the Coop is the success of all Filipinos in Montreal. It will be an example of cooperation, unity, and economic progress. If everyone patronizes the store, and if everyone becomes a member, the cash flow situation will improve, all accounts will be paid, and the Coop can focus on marketing and improving its sales to make a profit. In the end, all members can receive a dividend, save money by buying their groceries at a lower cost and facilitate the creation of jobs in our

own community.

When one analyzes all the advantages of being a member and patronizing the Coop, there seems to be no reason why anyone will not take an extra step to bypass the store on the corner of Victoria and Van Horne, and walk about 50 steps towards the direction of Divisoria Cubao on 4711 Van Horne Avenue near Marly's Pizza which is just beside MegaStar and Bahay Kubo Restaurant, all Filipino-owned businesses on Van Horne.

The campaign has a slow start because of the workload being quite heavy at this period of time. Mrs. Kharroubi who suggested this campaign has to do most of the correspondence. So far she received a few names of prospective sponsors and will be sending a letter of solicitation to these companies.

Coop Membership Drive Update

Some people became members after reading the article in the Filipino Star. Others have expressed their intention to become members but they have not yet acted upon their intentions. For example, there were two families who were supposed to be members but until now we have not yet received their applications.

Mrs. Kharroubi is also encouraging all students at Gilmore International College to become

members and to buy from Divisoria Cubao. She has discovered that there are still many people who are not aware of the store's existence, and sometimes, even if they know, if no one reminds them about it, they usually end up buying from the Vietnamese or Chinese-owned stores.

All members are urged to participate in the Membership Drive. Land to try to recruit at least 5 or more members each. Not only will they have a chance to win big prizes like airline tickets, computers, TV sets, gift certificates, and the like, they will also be helping build the future of their children who may one day become employees of the Coop.

The membership drive is going to be in full swing by next month when more people learn about the advantages of cooperative membership. If they have been reading the series of articles written by Mr. Jerry Estrada, they will be more inclined to support the cooperative movement.

Readers of this newspaper are encouraged to send a letter to the editor to give a feedback about the things they read and to let the publisher know how they feel about the issues discussed.

You may send an e-mail to: filipinostar2@yahoo.com ■

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Philippine Ambassador Jose Brillantes and Mrs. Zenaida Kharroubi (3rd from left) posing for souvenir with students who received their certificates from Gilmore International College (from left) Evangeline Bacolores, Isabel Galanto, Veronica Paculdar, and Josiale Azeukeng.

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