

# FAMAS presents 2008 Bb Pilipinas



The five candidates for this year's pageant pose with the current title holder, Miss Yashica Nabor, and Munting Bb. Pilipinas, Heather Mondoux, during the press conference held on Sunday, March 9, 2008 at the FAMAS Community Centre.

During the press conference on March 9, 2008, the Philippine Association of Montreal and Suburbs, popularly known as FAMAS, announced that its beauty pageant, Bb. PILIPINAS-MONTREAL BEAUTY PAGEANT will be held on April 12, 2008 at the Hellenic Community Centre at 5757 Wilderton Ave., Montreal, Quebec. This event has become a yearly tradition for our Filipino Community here in Montreal for the past 34 years. Besides having a chance to win fabulous prizes, the beauty pageant also provides our community's young Filipina-Canadians an opportunity to exercise their capability and showcase their talent, beauty and intellectual prowess while fostering friendship among their peers and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the Philippines.

The Beauty Pageant is also

See Page 4

FAMAS



## Contents

Tourism . . . . .	p. 6
Showbiz Gossip . . . . .	p. 10
Classified Ads . . . . .	p. 16
Philippine Cuisine . . . . .	p. 16
Global Perspectives . . . . .	p. 18
Community News . . . . .	p. 22

## Filipino Solidarity Cooperative holds its 3rd general assembly

By Zenaida Kharroubi

After a long delay, the financial statements for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2006 were presented to the membership during the 3rd general assembly held on Sunday, March 16, 2008 at the FAMAS building, 4708 Van Horne in Montreal. The secretary-treasurer of the Coop, Mrs. Zenaida Kharroubi, explained the details of the report, highlighting the need to increase membership in order to have the capital required and buy merchandise to increase sales that will cover the high overhead costs. As already reported in the previous issues of the Star, the biggest problem of the Coop was due to the Paluagan which until now has a balance of approximately \$8 000 as of February 2008. At the end of December 31, 2006, there was a balance of \$23725.00 which has not been



A group photo of all who attended the meeting was not taken until almost at the end of the gathering after some members had already left. Hence, this is a partial record of members who attended the general assembly on Sunday, March 16, 2008.

See Page 4

General



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# EDITORIAL

## What do we need to change?

The buzz word nowadays is change. Barack Obama makes his speeches on this subject. Which changes should be done first? Our environment is adversely affected by global warming; poverty and corruption are still rampant, violence of wars and conflicts are raging in many parts of the world, homeless people are still found even in affluent societies, racism is too deeply ingrained in our society; terrorism constantly haunts us, equality between men and women has not been completely achieved, our health care systems are deteriorating, and the list goes on. Which of these problems should be given priority? Indeed, there are still many serious issues which have remained unresolved since time immemorial.

On the other hand, we may realize that we are looking too far beyond our reach. After all, we cannot carry the whole world on our shoulders but at least, we can make a difference in our own community by doing the little things within our means. We should learn to take one small step at a time and start within ourselves first to recognize what is holding us from being united in solving our common problems. Mahatma Gandhi said: "be the change yourself." These words lead us to think that we need not wait for others to change, but we should start first. Eventually, the process of change affects us all until we all have become of one mind. It is said that to effect change, everyone has to decide to do so.

As a start, let us think of how we can make our own neighborhood a better place to live in. If we all make sure that no garbage is thrown around the streets and backyards, and if we help our youth in their development to be good citizens, if we think of taking an extra step to patronize our local businesses to help create a better economy within our own community, we will have prosperity for all which is probably the greatest deterrent to crimes. It has been said that when people don't have anything to eat, they may be forced to steal to feed their children.

Our community is quite well established as there are many of us who have been here for quite a while. But unfortunately, there is no business owned by anyone of us that is big enough to employ hundreds of people. We have not yet built a larger community center until now while other ethnic groups have already done so.

We have been increasing in numbers, and settling down in the same area of town, and yet, the biggest stores are owned by the Chinese and Vietnamese. We usually admit they are better organized and supported by their own people and yet, we do not seem to think that it is also possible to do the same thing. We hear people say that Filipinos will never change their attitudes, as if the one speaking is not a Filipino, too.

The first Filipino Solidarity Cooperative has been founded here in Montreal since July 15, 2005. But in spite of the Filipino Star's effort to publicize the fact that it badly needs community support, not too many people have volunteered to come and become a member. Out of 15 000 Filipinos in the Cote des Neiges area, we only have around 630 members during the past two years. What will it take to make more people aware that it is within their power to make a difference? Don't they know that it is in people's hands to make the cooperative movement work?

The Filipino Coop is a worthy cause, to support as it can prove that Filipinos are able to work together and be united. It is our reason to work hard and see it grow into a big business that will serve the community's needs. If we can persuade many people to join the Coop, we will not have any problem in meeting this challenge for it is in being united that we are stronger.

We would like to see the day when things change for the better. Our wish to keep the Filipino Coop open is to show we can succeed against all odds if many more people become members.

With the thawing of the snow and the beginning of spring, buds will be on the trees which will become alive again. In no time at all, we will be seeing bare trees suddenly become full of leaves. We hope that the same thing will happen to the Filipino Coop. Its empty shelves will suddenly be filled with all kinds of merchandise, and that the good weather will bring many people to come to the store. When this happens, the Coop will be on its way to a successful year. Then we will all have a reason to rejoice for we have proven to ourselves that everything is possible to do when we decide to act together.

Finally, to answer the question: What change then do we need to have? It is the change within ourselves which is the most important change of all.

Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi



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## Devotees nailed to cross in Good Friday rites

March 22, 2008

Philippine devotees re-enacted Jesus Christ's suffering Friday by having themselves nailed to crosses in rites frowned upon by church leaders in Asia's largest predominantly Roman Catholic nation.

Fernando Mamangon, 37, was among the first of some 30 men scheduled to go through the Good Friday rites in three villages in northern Pampanga province's San Fernando city. Five other devotees, including a woman, were nailed to crosses in nearby Bulacan

province.

It was Mamangon's 13th straight year for the rite, which penitents endure to fulfill a vow or pray for a cure for illnesses.

"I started having myself nailed to the cross in 1995 because my eldest son got sick and almost died," Mamangon, clad in a maroon robe with a crown of vines and thorns, said minutes before he was nailed to a wooden cross on a dusty mound in Santa Lucia village.

He said his eldest son was cured of complications from measles, but his 5-

year-old son Alex still suffers from a stomach ailment.

On Wednesday, Archbishop Paciano B. Aniceto of San Fernando city urged devotees not to turn Holy Week into a "circus."

Aniceto said he has been telling penitents "to take time to thank God for the blessings and never use their devotion for tourism purposes."

The yearly tradition has become a tourist attraction, especially in San Fernando's San Pedro Cutud village, which sometimes draws thousands of local and foreign tourists.

Aside from the cross nailings, scores

of men pound their bleeding bare backs with bamboo sticks dangling from ropes in a flagellation rite meant to atone for sins.

Aniceto lamented that a surge of vendors and tourists has injected too much commercialism into Holy Week celebrations.

But Mamangon vowed to continue with the practice handed down by his late father, who was nailed to the cross 15 times.

"After being nailed to the cross, I feel so refreshed, like all my sins are washed away," Mamangon said. "I will continue this until my son Alex is cured." ■



## "Tumatanda na ako"

Makakakuha kayo ng pera ngayon upang tulungan kayong mag-ipon para sa edukasyon o training ng inyong anak pagkatapos ng high school. Ang maliit na halaga na iipunin ngayon ay maaaring makagawa ng malaking pagkakaiba sa kinabukasan ng inyong anak. Magagawa ninyo ito nang may kaunting pagpapalano lamang. Para sa karagdagang impormasyon tungkol sa Canada Learning Bond at Canada Education Savings Grant, tumawag sa amin o bisitahin ang aming website.

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SNOWDON



From Page 1

FAMAS

a fund-raising project of FAMAS for its civic, social, cultural, educational and sports activities.

The search for young Filipina-Canadians to vie for the title of Bb. Pilipinas-Montreal 2008 is based on the following criteria:

- Must be between the ages of 16 and 25.
- Must be single (Never been Married).
- Must be a Filipino descent (Mixed race are included).
- Must comply with the rules and regulations governing the beauty pageant.
- Must be able to attend rehearsals in preparation for the event.

The duties of the Bb. PILIPINAS-MONTREAL include serving as an Ambassador of Goodwill and role model for young Filipinos. Interested potential contestants can contact Jojoé Hervieux, Pageant Chairperson, at 514-660-8505 or Claro Bermudez, FAMAS president, at 514-576-0906 and 514-485-0428. You can also contact any of the members of the FAMAS Executive Board.

To date, here are the five (5) official candidates for this year's Pageant with their respective escorts: 1) May Ann Miras, escort: Johan Linares; 2) Jory Daisy Juan, escort: Julius Caesar Quintin; 3) Marie-Antonette Carbon, escort: Bryan Winston Felipe; 4) Katherine Mariquit, escort: Devino Nabor, and 5) Stephanie Deluso St. Pierre, escort: Sean Michael Seekumar. The current title holder is Miss Yashica Nabor, Bb. Pilipinas - Montreal 2007.

The pageant officials are as follows: Over-all Chairman, Claro V. Bermudez; Pageant Chairperson Jojoé Q. Hervieux; Pageant Co-Chairperson over-all Pageant Coordinator, Nemia Palconite Bermudez; Pageant Choreographer - Mimi Noche Tamayo; Program Coordinator - Dorie E. Francisco

The occasion will not be successful without the support of the community. Everyone is invited to attend. Tickets are available for the donation of \$ 40.00 which includes dinner, and can be obtained by calling the aforementioned numbers or the PHILIPPINE COMMUNITY CENTER at 514 341 7477 or any of the FAMAS EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS.

From Page 1 General Assembly included yet in the statement presented. This needs to be corrected and a final statement will be published in the next issue of the Filipino Star for all members to see and compare with what they received during the assembly.

In response to Ms. Julie Parado's question if we should really keep the Coop open, Mrs. Kharroubi stated her reasons why it should continue. She cited the fact that there are about 15000 Filipinos living in Cote des Neiges area and it would be a disgrace to the whole community if

they allow the first Filipino Cooperative to fail. Ironically, they buy their groceries from the stores who do not give them back anything while the Coop could be the key to their own economic improvement.

In order to remove the bad image and bitter experience caused by the Paluagan which was the idea of the first president of the Coop, Mrs. Kharroubi proposed to the membership to remove the name of Divisoria Cubao. According to the feedback she received from many people, in particular from the students of Gilmore College, this name evokes a negative reaction. A resolution to remove Divisoria Cubao was unanimously approved by the members present. From now on, the legal name, Filipino Solidarity Cooperative, in English, and Coopérative Solidarité Filipino in French will be the only names printed in all literature. A short name, Filipino Coop can also be used. An e-mail address has been created for the purpose of communication among all members. They are asked to send suggestions, questions and information about prices of other stores by sending a message to: filipinocoop@gmail.com. The Coop will try to maintain prices the same as other stores or even lower for members whenever possible.

After the treasurer's report, Magnolia Camat, one of the founders of the Coop, read the president's report (please see full text of this report on page \_\_\_ on behalf of Ben Bade who could not be present due to the death of his mother in the Philippines. He expressed regret for his inability to attend the assembly. He made a brief overview of what had happened since the second general assembly held on October 22, 2006. He cited the difficulties encountered from the time when Jose Gaviola resigned and left the Coop, but did not leave important documents which could have made life easier for those left behind. The reason why the Coop is still operating is because of the help of volunteers and the financial support given by Mrs. Zenaida Kharroubi. He urged members to continue supporting the Coop by buying their groceries from the store and to help in recruiting their friends and families to become members as well.

The election of the new board of directors was part of the agenda. Although two directors' terms have not yet expired, they expressed their wish to be replaced because of their work schedules that limit their availability to attend board meetings. Five people were nominated to be directors. As there was no one else willing to run to be directors, these five people were acclaimed, namely, Benjamin Bade, Salvé Desprez, Joy Estabillo, Zenaida Kharroubi, and Victorina Laya. The new board will have their first meeting on Sunday, March 30, 2008 at 6 p.m.

Suggestions to help the Coop improve are the following: Recruit volunteers to do some of the work in the store in order to cut salary expenses, introduce shop by phone

service, ask members to prepay their orders, have gift certificates available, institute an ID card system to track down the amount of purchases made by each member, give rebates for members' purchases at the end of the year, follow-up members who still have not fully paid their qualifying shares and to encourage everyone to become members. In addition to these proposals, interest-bearing preferred shares will be issued to members who are willing to help the Coop financially. Dindo Abella, who used to provide the Coop with lechon on weekends, announced that he will resume this service starting on Saturday, March 22. When the needed equipment is available, he will also be able to supply fresh meat to the Coop.

Riza Esmeralda moderated the meeting while Angie Ogerio acted as secretary to take the minutes which must be forwarded to the Minister of Cooperatives together with the financial statement for the year ended December 31, 2006.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT DELIVERED BY MAGNOLIA CAMAT ON BEHALF OF Ben Bade, Coop President**

In the absence of Benjamin Bade, the president of the coop, with the consent of the board please allow me to deliver his report for today's meeting.

His report goes:

Good afternoon fellow members of the coop and to our guests - our future members. Welcome to the 3rd General Assembly of the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative. First of all I would like to apologize for not being present at this meeting which is due to the death of my beloved mother and being their eldest son it's a must for me to be back home with my family during the two weeks of my mom's wake and at the funeral. I asked Zeny Kharoubbi our Secretary-Treasurer to take charge on the realization of this meeting today. I know it's very hard for her to handle but I can't do anything as the Vice-President went home to the Philippines for emergency also.

Fellow members, it's been 3 years now since the Coop has been founded and it's been 2 years that it's been in business operation. During this time too many problems have been encountered by us and nobody knows why the store is still open. The 1st year of our operation was very critical we admit and became worst when the 1st coop president Jose Gaviola disappeared without turning over all important documents of the coop. Our overhead expense were too high due to unprioritized expenses like the renting and renovation of the basement instead of using the money for merchandise. His creation of paluwagan was a mess, his leasing of too many old and new fridges which were not all needed. When he realized that he had overspent and he didn't know what to do, he disappeared and left me and Rhoda. We nearly went lunatic due to stress on how to pay the rent, pay the bills, pay back the paluwagan and how to buy merchandise without enough money

in the bank. He hired Eugene Salinas as a bookkeeper but did not do his job to remit to or make claims from the government. Thanks God that we have knowledgeable members who volunteered to help us find ways and means to cope up with the problems. Zeny Kharoubbi volunteered to deal with CDEC about giving us a grant and accepting to be our guarantor giving her GIC as collateral in the bank. Thanks to God that we have volunteers like Lita Parado, Andre Proulx and Rhoda Tremocha, Joecel Trinidad, Norma Foz, Salve Duprez and husband and other friends who are members. With all their help, the 2nd business year of 2007 was a bit bearable. We, the directors tried our best to keep the coop surviving. To lessen our salary expenses we were able to:

1. Ask the government to pay for us a cashier for 1 full year, one who is unemployed which was Letty.
2. With Jason Prince's help, CDEC has required and given us funding to pay a store manager who can also straighten up our accounting system and do internal bookkeeping.

3. We are able to lessen what we owed the paluwagan to down to \$8,000.00 or less.

4. We have a member Remy Monteagudo who is willing to do importation of Philippine products to Canada. We are happy to announce to you that we have now received the 1st shipment of 19 boxes of Philippine products direct from the Philippines just the other day and now they are available for you to buy. In connection with this, we, the directors are encouraging all members to invest \$100 or more at a calculated interest so we can buy more and boost up our inventory with all goods coming from the Philippine including San Miguel beer exclusively for the Filipino Solidarity Coop.

5. We are also introducing pre-paid shopping of \$10 or more every week as a temporary solution to fill up our shelves so people have the things they want to buy when they come to the store. I believe that if each member comes to buy worth \$10 or more each week we could easily and roughly generate \$6,000 from just the members. Don't forget the more you buy from the store, the more money we make and return more dividends that we will give back to you.

6. We are also bringing back take out lechon. You can buy it whole or by pound. Our member Dindo Abella will supply us together with a warmer. We can also add chicken lechon on top of that.

7. We would like to maximize volunteerism. Please volunteer to get involved in the coop activities in order to lessen our salary expenses, to facilitate work at the coop like cashing, pricing, displaying and maintenance. The lesser expense we have, the better dividends we members make. 2008 will be a better year if we work together.

I would like to let you know that my term as president has expired

and cannot be nominated again for director due to my absence but I promise I will still be there to volunteer in all of the coop's activities because I found, I capitalized on fantasized it not for me but as legacy that I will leave to the community – it's my dream and you are the only ones who can help me make this dream come true.

I would like to thank my co-directors for being there with me during decision making especially to Zeny Kharoubbi for her unlimited support to the coop, physically, morally and financially. Without her expertise I don't know what I could have done. I thank you all members who have volunteered to come and work at the coop for free, Remy Monteagudo, Joecel Trinidad, Jojie Perez and John Aquino, Lita Parado, Estrella Gascon, Alex Robles, Aida de la Cruz and many more. And thanks to all members who have come to invest on fast moving merchandise.

In the name of the Filipino Solidarity Cooperative, I thank you all our members and expected members for shopping at Divisoria Cubao. We have to see you more often at the store. The more we are the merrier we will be. Let's make our tribe increase.

Finally, I hope that we continue to work, communicate and think together as one. I ask that every one of you to forget whatever personal grudges you had to each other so we can work together happily and harmoniously for the survival of the 1st Filipino Solidarity Coop in Canada.

## How we can make the Filipino Coop become a community resource for the development of entrepreneurship skills

The golden opportunity for our community to show its true solidarity is now. The Filipino Coop is in need of your help.

We have now elected a new board of directors. This board is going to work together and make sure that the Filipino Coop can overcome its financial problems by adopting many strategies.

First, we are going to institute a volunteer corps from our membership. They will be given tasks to perform in different areas.

1) Price Canvassing – All members should check prices of products they buy from other stores and send the information by e-mail to: [Filipinocoop@gmail.com](mailto:Filipinocoop@gmail.com)

2) Substitute cashier needed for holidays and weekends, and weekday evenings from 5 to 8 p.m.

3) Store clerk – to help the cashier in locating merchandise and checking prices

4) Stock clerk – to help in arranging stock on the shelves

5) Shoppers – to help in purchasing merchandise

6) Delivery service – members who have transportation to deliver members orders. Delivery fees charged to member will be given to the volunteer based on a reasonable share of revenue between the volunteer driver and the Coop which

will be part of the Coop's policy approved by the board.

7) Phone Service – to call members to place their orders, as well as to remind them of their outstanding balance

8) Inventory clerk – to help in counting stock

9) Handyman or handywoman – to help re-decorate or re-arrange furniture and fixtures

To keep a record of the purchasing activities of members in order to grant them rebates or patronage dividends, an ID card system will be instituted. Members are therefore requested to submit an ID card photo together with a \$3 fee to laminate their ID cards. Those members who have not yet fully paid their \$100 qualifying shares are requested to send their cheques or come in person to pay their account. Those who have changed their telephone numbers and addresses must also advise the Coop by calling 514-733-8915.

To keep our accounting accurate, please demand a receipt for any payment you make to the Coop.

Gift certificates will also be available for members to purchase and give to their friends, or relatives.

Fully paid members are also urged to invest additional funds for which they will be given interest-bearing preferred shares at 4%

annually and paid at the end of each year. These preferred shares will have a term of two years but can be renewed if the members so desire.

The Filipino Coop will also issue auxiliary and support memberships. This type of membership will be addressed to political leaders and other supporters of the Coop. Solicitation letters will be sent to prospective supporters in government and civic organizations.

To promote solidarity and fellowship among members, we will be organizing at least two social gatherings – a summer picnic, trips, and parties on festival days like Valentine's Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving, etc.. Other activities can be organized upon request of members.

The following committees have been set up during the general assembly held on Sunday, March 16, 2008: Communications – Riza Esmeralda; Social Relations – Magnolia Camat; and Membership – Remedios Monteagudo. Other committees to be set up and require volunteers: are the Audit Committee and Community Relations Committees. The specific tasks to be performed by these committees will be discussed at the board meeting.

Training sessions for volunteers will be provided as soon as possible and ensure the smooth operation of the Coop.

Please send us your ideas via e-mail: [filipinocoop@gmail.com](mailto:filipinocoop@gmail.com)

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# TOURISM

## ILOILO Heritage Haven Of Panay

Iloilo province, and its beautiful city, ranks as one of the country's foremost centers of culture, industry and trade. Located on the southwestern tip of **Panay Island** between the Iloilo River and the Guimara Strait, its attributes as the repository of architectural and artistic legacies, as the promising point of progress in aquaculture, and as a trove of unexplored tourist attractions give it an allure so bewitching as not to be missed.

Iloilo is the cradle of early Philippine civilization. The telltale marks of such cultural influences live on in the century-old houses, the period churches, the colorful festivals, and in the enterprising bloodline of its people. Iloilo has a glorious past as the land's great sugarbowl and the locale of the haciendas of the old rich - whose scions and daughters turned down the centuries into the dons and donas of powerful economic dynasties.

Some of the testimonies to this awesome heritage are the churches. Nowhere else can church tours prove



so rewarding. The **Miag-ao Fortress Church** is a grand example of a medieval bastion church with ornate floral designs on the facade; another colossal monument is the **San Joaquin Church** and cemetery known for its bas relief featuring the Castilian and Moorish wars, while its cemetery is picturesque for its hexagonal chapel with rose windows and twin-tiered balustrades that lead to its entrance; meanwhile, three staircases lead to the historic rock; whereas the Renaissance-inspired **Molo Church** and orphanage, the Asilo de Molo, are unique for their architecture as well as for a rare product, hand-embroidered barong Pilipino in pina cloth; the **Pavia Church** is a red brick and coral windows cases and rightfully deserves a place in one's travelogue. These churches are no farther than two hours' distance from each other. In the city of Iloilo, one can gaze with awe at the imposing & exquisite structure of the **Jaro Belfry**, ruined by an earthquake in 1948, one of the few bell towers in the country that stand apart from the



The Jaro Belfry, Iloilo City - ruined by a 1948 earthquake, but now restored. One of the few belfries in the country that stands apart from the church



Miag-ao Church, Iloilo City - Built in 1768, it has a native façade and a unique explosion of botanical motif reminiscent of Aztec Art. Declared a national landmark in 1973.



Lizares Mansion, Iloilo City



Top: Isla Naburot - A small coral island off Guimaras Island, with white sand and colorful tropical corals and marine life. Bottom: Igang Point - Noted for its secluded beaches, multicolored fish and corals.

church.

Iloilo's is a byword for its famous festival - the **Dinagyang Festival**, a local mardigras. Held every January in honor of the Infant Jesus, the festival is a major tourist attraction. Another even Iloilo is known for is the Paraw Regatta. Which is participated in by local and foreign sportsmen.

Iloilo is a trove of historical sites. Tour the province's famous sunset strip, Fort San Pedro or the flower-decked La Villa Rica de Arevalo, site of the Hispanic governance. Or one can visit another historical landmark, **Plaza Libertad** in the central city district where the flag of the Philippine revolutionaries was first raised upon Spain's final surrender. Old paintings, tapestries, furniture and memorabilia may be viewed in the Museo Iloilo and also in private galleries deeo in the heart of the city.

Iloilo may be relished by nature trips to its delightful beaches that are best for swimming, snorkeling and other water sports.

**Igaras**, an hour and fifteen minute's drive from the city is sure to captivate visitors with its waterfalls, climbing hills, crystal caves and springs. Another cave haunt is Dingle, only 35 minutes from the city proper - it also boasts of a number of religious shrines and healing springwaters. Sicogon Island and the **Islas de Gigantes** are nearby isles which are laced with shimmering sands and deep blue waters that teem with marine life and corals. Pavia, a ten minutes drive by jeepney, is noted for its red brick Church while memories of the past may be evoked by visits to Janiway, where ruins of abbeys, cemeteries and watchtowers still stand

to mesmerize the traveller. For a view of grand mountain canyons, a drop-by at Bucari Mountain Ranges in Leon 28 kilometers away is simply thrilling.

Visits to the colleges of agriculture in Leon and Lambunao, and the fisheries college of Barotac Nuevo. Show that the province is a hive of economic progress.

Today, Iloilo still reigns as the gateway to the Visayan belt. Its riches are more plentiful than ever on the combined merits of industrial significance, historical antiquity and natural poetry.

Other attractions include:

- **Guimbal Church**, Iloilo City - Yellow sandstone church with a vintage tower and stonewalled cemetery.

- **Plaza Libertad**, Iloilo City - The place where the flag of the First Philippines Republic was raised in triumph after Spain surrendered Iloilo, her last capital in the islands, to the revolutionaries led by Gen. Martin Delgado on Dec. 25, 1898.

- **Alubihod Bay** - Found in Nueva Valencia, Guimaras, it is an ideal site for swimming, excursions and picnics.

- **Isla De Gigantes, Estancia** - Site where 15th century burial caves are still found. One cave has a stone elephant and a natural swimming pool.

- **Nadsadjan Falls, Igaras** - A 50-foot high falls dropping on a giant cauldron-like natural swimming pool.

- **Cataan Cave**, San Joaquin - Has beautiful marine gardens. Ideal site for scuba diving.

- **Sicogon Island** - A 1,104 hectare white sand, palm-fringed island gradually sloping down to some 350 feet beyond the shoreline. ■



Images of the Dinagyang Festival, held every 4th weekend of January in Iloilo City. A colorful cavalcade in honor of the Holy Child Jesus amidst the cracking drumbeats, Iloilo's version of the world famous Ati-Atihan Festival.

Agence

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## Philippines 81st in world tourism

March 6, 2008

Here's good news for a change. The Philippines has advanced by five rungs in world tourism, according to the World Economic Forum, ranking 81st among 130 countries surveyed.

The WEF's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2008 said Manila was 86th among 124 countries polled last year. The report ranked the most attractive environments for the travel and tourism industry, factoring in government policy, regulations, environmental sustainability, safety and security, health and hygiene and the priority given to tourism.

Tourism is a big moneymaker for the Philippines. The WEF estimated that our hospitality industry last year amounted to \$5.57 billion, reflecting a 4.4-percent annual growth with an employment of about 1.3 million people. Our report yesterday said travel and tourism contributed about \$12.3 billion to the national economy.

Tourism also boosts the national image. It reflects foreign confidence in our stability, infrastructure and sense of hospitality. Travel is a big come-on for investments since businessmen are part of the tourist crowd and their impressions count much for investment decisions.

Like housing, tourism has wide multiplier effect, boosting the travel (ships, airlines, bus lines) industry, the accommodations (hotels, condotels, tourist inns) business, sports and entertainment, restaurants, handicraft, historical and cultural centers and a wide constellation of local attractions.

It has advanced significantly on the programs of the Department of Tourism, Philippine Tourism Authority and the Department of Foreign Affairs. The report on arrivals for January is impressive. Problems remain however.

We have not reached the target we have been aiming for in the last decade. Among Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, Malaysia (ranked 32nd), Thailand (42nd) and Indonesia (80th) outpace us. Singapore is in the top 10, along with Iceland, the United States, Hong Kong, Canada, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom. Vietnam is 96th, but Hanoi's economy is one of the fastest growing in the region, pulling along the tourist trade.

The growing strength of the peso could hurt tourism as travelers look elsewhere for cheaper destinations. Reports say that many metro Manila establishments prefer to receive peso, not dollar, payments for their services.

The government has reduced paperwork for travel to the Philippines. Under the visa-upon-entry program of the Bureau of Immigration and the DOT, tourists could enter without visas, receiving them at points of entry. Their character, purpose of business and length of stay are certified by the association of travel agencies or individual travel companies. What we fail to see is an effective monitoring system that tells us how many tourists have left and how many have overstayed legally or illegally.

Many kinks have to be ironed out before we could achieve a robust and fully rewarding tourism industry. By all means, we should widen the door to our visitors, ensuring that a correct proactive policy environment actively backs our culture of hospitality.

### Political tourism

Filipinos have tried every approach from traditional tourism, ecotourism to medical tourism. We haven't tried a potential winner—political tourism.

Philippine politics is unlike many others. Partisanship is a crowning glory. Permissiveness is a quality since it is not a crime for politicians to jump from one party to another. Families and political dynasties rule local and national elections. Succession is guaranteed by wealth.

This is a country where people squabble about an election that is two or three years away. The only place where many election outcomes are known in advance. All candidates sincerely believe they could only lose to cheating. This explains why concessions are rare.

The campaigns are unique. Issues and platforms are never discussed. There has never been a presidential debate in history. You cannot tell the parties or the political coalitions from each other because no group offers honest options. The messages and appeals are delivered to the voters through dance-and-song onstage, donations, black propaganda, motorcades and naked vote buying.

It takes weeks and months to know the victors and the losers. Some election protests take so long the real winner never gets to take his seat until the last day of the congressional session or until the incumbent local official has bled the treasury dry.

Filipinos may have contributed "people power" to the world but now they are increasingly embarrassed by "Edsa One" and "Edsa Two." Mob power was never an answer to misrule.

Gossips and rumors, especially about military coups and civilian mutinies, are part of the landscape. There is always a scandal—true or imagined—breaking out each month. Media focus and coffeeshop talk keep the rumors alive. The Congress spends as much time to investigations as to lawmaking.

Foreigners have a lot to learn from our politics. They could have their pick of the walking tours to the presidential palace, the Batasan Building, the Senate Executive Bldg., the Commission on Elections offices, city hall, the provincial capitol and the numerous media forums. The campaign period is highly recommended. Voting and ballot counting at the precinct are instructive. The "political noise" is overwhelming. Entertainment is guaranteed. We promise. ■

## Philippine eagle gets chance to return to Mount itanglad

March 6, 2008

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is set to release a two-year old Philippine Eagle back to the forest of Mount Kitanglad today.

The DENR, the Philippine Eagle Foundation and the provincial government of Bukidnon, will release the juvenile male Philippine Eagle today at Mount Kitanglad Range Natural Park in Bar-ngay Lupiagan, Su-milao, Bukidnon.

Park guards confiscated the Philippine Eagle named "Kag-sabua" from a resident of Ba-rangay Ka-antuan, Lan-tapan, Bukidnon on September 6, 2006.

"Kagsabua," when rescued, weighed 3.5 kilograms only, sustained a gunshot wound at the back of its head. After receiving first aid treatment at the Bukidnon Provincial Veterinary Office, the bird was transported by a team led by Mount Kitanglad Park Superintendent Felix S. Mirasol to the Philippine Eagle Center in Davao City for further treatment and rehabilitation.

Kagsabua, now about two years old and fully rehabilitated, will add to the six individual Philippine Eagles already recorded in separate locations within the Mount Kitanglad park.

The Philippine Eagle is the largest eagle in the world. It measures up to about one meter high with a wingspan of about two meters. Its massive arched beak and narrow and pointed crown feathers that form a crest characterize the rare bird.

Also known as the monkey-eating eagle, the Philippine Eagle can be

found in Luzon (Sierra Madre Ranges and Cordillera Region), Samar, Leyte and Mindanao.

The bird builds its nest on top of tall trees, nests once every two years and lays only one egg that is incubated alternately by both parents for about 60 to 61 days. The eaglet remains on the nest up to about 5 1/2 months. Once the young fledges, the parents look after it for about 17 months.



The Philippine Eagle is listed as critically endangered under the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red Data Book. Its present status is due to destruction of dipterocarp forest brought about by logging and agricultural practices and collection for illegal trade and trophy.

Because of this, trade is strictly prohibited and collection may only be allowed for conservation-related research purposes as may be granted through a permit by the DENR. ■

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## Former Philippines president Corazon Aquino has cancer

March 24, 2008

Corazon Aquino of the Philippines, whose conquest of one of the 20th century's most corrupt dictators made her an icon of democracy across the world, is suffering from colon cancer, her family said on Monday.

The 75-year-old was diagnosed with the disease just two weeks ago, her daughter Kris said in an emotional address on national television. She will start chemotherapy on Tuesday.

Aquino, known as Cory to millions of Filipinos, was president from 1986 to 1992. But she is remembered, more than two decades after the fact, as the slim woman in yellow who led the "People Power" revolution that toppled dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

The tumultuous events of those weeks in 1986, which culminated when up to 1 million people waving rosaries and flowers stopped tanks advancing towards Aquino-backed army rebels, became a fairy-tale revolution that gripped the world.

When a bewildered Marcos and his wife Imelda fled the nation, it set a stirring precedent for dissidents everywhere, from South Africa to South America to Pakistan. Aquino was hailed as a modern-day Joan of Arc.

But she was a reluctant leader at the start, shedding the housewife's apron only after her husband Benigno was assassinated at Manila's international airport on his return from exile in the United States.



**Aquino, right, was swept into power by the peaceful "people power" revolt that ousted late dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, cementing her as an icon of democracy.**

Inevitably, her presidency was less successful than the revolution, with a series of coup attempts by the military keeping the administration hamstrung. Aquino was much lauded for her courage, but rarely seemed to be able to get on top of ruling the country.

"I have not always won but ... I never shirked a fight," she said in 1992 before handing power over to her successor, Fidel Ramos.

But she did oversee the writing of a new constitution, which among other things limited a president's time in office to one six-year term.

### DEVOUT CATHOLIC

Born on January 25, 1933 into one of the country's richest families, the Cojuangcos, Aquino grew up in a world of wealth and politics, being the daughter of a three-time congressman.

She married one of the country's most promising politicians and they had four daughters and a son before he was thrown into prison by Marcos. He was released into exile in the United States in 1980 but was murdered on his return three years later.

Accusing Marcos of ordering the murder, Aquino led protest marches,

but was hesitant when snap elections were called in 1986.

"What on earth do I know about being president?" she said before taking up the challenge to run against Marcos.

The spectre of army intervention haunted her entire rule. Natural disasters, including Mount Pinatubo's huge volcanic eruption in 1991, severely battered the economy.

A devout Catholic, she often turned to her faith to steer her through difficult times.

"There was never any moment that I doubted God would help ... If it was time to die, so be it," she said when rebel mortars pounded the presidential palace in 1987.

Aquino seems frail now, but is still game for a fight when she thinks it necessary. She brought half a million people onto the street in the 1990s when her successor Ramos flirted with the idea of trying to extend his term in office.

She was involved in the protests that brought an end to the presidency of Joseph Estrada in 2001, and has supported the campaign to remove current President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

The presidential palace said it was saddened by the news of Aquino's illness.

"I'm sure that the President will be one with us in praying for her speedy recovery," Arroyo's spokesman said. ■



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# FILIPINO STAR SHOWBIZ GOSSIP

## Happy birthday Rudy: see you same time next year!

That was what his guests and well-wishers were telling birthday boy, cancer patient Rudy "Daboy" Fernandez, when he marked his 56th birthday Monday, March 3, at the Wack Wack Golf & Country Club in Mandaluyong City, organized by his wife Lorna "LT" Tolentino and Precy Vitug-Estrada (wife of Sen. Jinggoy Estrada), with the help of their bosom buddy Paul Cabral.



Rudy "Daboy" Fernandez wife Lorna

"That's my birthday wish," admitted the teary-eyed celebrator who was later serenaded by friends and colleagues. "Many more birthdays to come. Actually, even just a few more birthdays are good enough for me."

The glittering array of well-wishers was led by Pres. Joseph "Erap" Estrada who jokingly evaded the attempts of Ai-Ai delas Alas, his leading lady in a planned Star Cinema movie, to "rehearse" their kissing

scene.

Among those who dedicated songs to Rudy were Pops Fernandez, Ricky Davao, Jestoni Alarcon, Edgar Mortiz, Ara Mina, Eddie Gutierrez (Song: Ang walang kamatayang Blue Suede Shoes of his idol Elvis Presley) and Regine Velasquez (Pangako and Ikaw ang Lahat sa Akin).

Lorna reaffirmed her "pledge of love" by singing Ikaw Lang ang Mamahalin to Daboy. The couple held hands and exchanged sweet glances while Tirso Cruz III, who hosted the impromptu "mini-concert," sang Somewhere to them, theme song of their 1984 starrer of the same title.

The barkada of Senators Jinggoy and Bong Revilla, Phillip Salvador and Tirso sang Florante's Handog (with reworded lyrics) as finale, driving Daboy to near tears.

In his thank-you speech, Daboy said, as he did during his birthday last year, "I'm not gonna die yet!," asking everybody not to be sad, assuring them, "I'm alive and kicking!," even as he left a reminder to see the same faces, "Same time next year!"

Tonight, Daboy and Lorna will fly to the States for a month-long trip. First stop: L.A. where Daboy will receive an award along with several other Filipino artists. Next stop: Las Vegas, to watch the Unfinished Business bout between Manny Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez. Last stop: Boston, where Daboy will try a new kind of chemo/treatment for the fourth-stage cancer that has metastasized to his liver. ■

## Megastar denies rumors that senator Kiko has another woman



Sharon Cuneta was present at the Wack Wack birthday party of Rudy Fernandez and reporters again asked her if it's true she has separated from Sen. Kiko Pangilinan who wasn't with her that night. "Alam n'yo, I'm really tired na of the rumor that my husband has another woman at may mga anak na sila and we're hiwalay na raw," she says. "The truth is habang sinisiraan ang asawa ko, lalo

kaming nagiging close. Ayan nga, he just texted me if I got here to Wack Wack safely kasi he can't come with me as he has an important meeting. Ganyan ba ang hiwalay?"

When we attended the wake on the last night of Ethel Ramos' mom, Sen. Kiko was there and he also condoled with us for the loss of my wife. Later on, Sharon texted me saying Sen. Kiko told her he saw me there and she asked him if I looked depressed. Sharon is very caring and continues to send us inspiring messages up to now. If she's really "hiwalay" with Sen. Kiko, I don't think she'd bother to tell us that Sen. Kiko saw us at the said wake.

As for the reported romance between her daughter KC and Richard Gutierrez, she says she doesn't know anything about it. "I'm not even sure if he's really courting my daughter and I also don't know kung matutuloy ang movie nila, so don't ask me. But if he would court KC, I wouldn't mind kasi good friends ko sina Tita Annabelle Rama and Tito Eddie Gutierrez." ■

## Cristine Reyes admits dating Dennis Trillo few days after Valentine's

Recently, controversial actor Dennis Trillo finally came home after few days stay in Los Angeles, California.

Dennis went to USA with Yasmien Kurdi and Jolina Magdangal to have a concert, a tribute to Filipinos staying in L.A.

"Originally, mga ano lang yata, four or three days lang pero pina-extend naming para maging mga ten, para masulit naman 'yong punta namin. Kasi ang haba ng biyahe 'tapos para sulit 'yong pagpunta naming talaga. 'Tsaka first time naming sa L.A.," said Dennis.

Few days after Valentine's day, young actress Cristine Reyes admitted she went out for a date with Dennis but immediately

clarified that both are friends, and it's very apparent that they will not be in each other's arms again.

Dennis didn't deny that he and Cristine have communication again. "Oo, nagkakamustahan, ganoon," he answered. But when asked if they are together again, he can't answer immediately.

"Hindi ko sigurado. Ewan ko,e. Siya na lang ang tanungin ninyo siguro dahil hindi ko talaga alam kung ano'ng score," his tentative answer to question."I really avoid that." She must have been traumatized by the real life kissing scene she did with John Estrada that became very controversial. ■

## Success changes Kim Chiu's relationship with stepmom



Pinoy Big Brother Teen Edition winner Kim Chiu

Reality shows definitely change the lives of winners. In just a short span of time, they could command big talent fees, and have under their names fat bank accounts, aside from newly

acquired properties. Such is the case of PBB Teen Edition grand winner, Kim Chiu. And because of The Filipino Channel (TFC), her name is now widely known to Filipinos all over the world. It's the reason why her shows abroad are such a hit.

Her life after PBB Teen edition remarkably changed. She has become so mature mentally and emotionally. In fact, even her relationship with her stepmom has changed for the better. The most significant thing that happened to her was her first big screen appearance. This has been her childhood dream. Kim believes in karma that she shares her blessings, at the same time, saving up for the future.

And her love life? "Wala pa po talaga." What about Gerald Anderson? "We're the best of friends. Busy rin po siya sa kanyang career. Love can wait. Mas importante ang career."

Meanwhile, Bahay ni Kuya's door will open once again as PBB Teen Edition Plus is launched on March 23. It is hosted by Toni Gonzaga, Bianca Gonzales, Mariel Rodriguez and Luis Manzano with a premiere on March 16 on ABS-CBN. ■

## Regine proud to be kapuso

Beleaguered TV host-singer Regine Velasquez, made her statement regarding the network transfer brouhaha: "It's true, I really planned to leave GMA," she said. "I cried (on SOP) because I found it hard to say goodbye to my co-hosts, and to the staff and crew who I've worked with for the past several years."

Although there was nothing new in her statement and the interview we did a few weeks ago, Regine finally put a closure on the issue. She confirmed that there was an offer, and she was tempted to accept it, but she clarified that it was not because of money.

"Hindi naman ito pera-pera lang," she said. "I said on The Buzz last week na I was jobless, because it's true. I want to do something, and they offered me that something. It's for my growth as an artist. I was looking for a new venue for my growth."

She thanked GMA bigwigs, Atty. Felipe Gozon, VP Jimmy Duavit, Wilma Galvante, Darling de Jesus and especially Annette Gozon-Abrogar "for understanding."

Of course, she never forgot to



Regine Velasquez

thank boyfriend, Ogie Alcasid "for always being there" and ended it with "Baba (her term of endearment for Ogie), I love you."

Officially, she said: "I will remain a Kapuso and I'm proud to be Kapuso." ■



## American Idol top 10 finalist Ramiele Malubay says Regine Velasquez is her favorite performer



When I found out that I was on top 24, I kinda slapped my face, that really hurt," related Filipino-American Ramiele Macrohon Malubay about her

feeling when she made it as one of the semifinalists of seventh season of American Idol.

In a video interview posted at the

official website of American Idol, www.americanidol.com, Ramiele shared how she felt when she was announced as one of the semifinalists in the world-famous televised singing search.

She said, "I kinda stood and sit up a whole bunch of times because I really didn't know. I thought she [Paula Abdul] was psyching me out and telling me I wasn't gonna make it. I don't know, I don't know what she was thinking. And then, when I made it, I kinda freaked out a little bit. I went downstairs and they told me I was just like I had this plain look on my face."

Being included in the Top 24 is already a big achievement, but Ramiele said that fame has yet to hit her. She humbly said, "I didn't know how to take it yet. It still hasn't hit me. I'm not like, 'Oh yeah.' Maybe it'll hit me when I'm like walking on the street."

Only 20 years old, Ramiele, who hails from Miramar, Florida, started singing when she was 12, during her cousin's birthday. She also named our very own Asia's Songbird Regine Velasquez as her favorite performer.

Aside from Regine, Ramiele listed down Aretha Franklin, Jackson 5, Mariah Carey, and Lani Misalucha as her musical influences. She also plays the piano and guitar, and loves dancing the hula.

"I took piano for five years but I can't read all the hard notes anymore. But I learned the guitar. My sister is teaching me. I'm not too good at that but, you know, I can. I'm into hula dancing, Polynesian dancing since I was in first grade."

### RAMIELE GETS PERSONAL

In the said introduction video, Ramiele revealed some other personal facts.

"People would be surprised to learn that instead of singing in the shower, I like put the music on, like random songs, like Spice Girls, that stuff, and dance in the shower. It's kinda personal but, yeah," said

the American Idol semifinalist.

Balot is the weirdest thing she has ever eaten. "It's like... I think it's a duck egg. It's cooked but there's a baby inside, baby, the bird thing. And you're supposed to eat the whole thing, it's kinda gross. I don't know. I don't it anymore. But yeah, it tastes good if you eat the outside part instead of the baby inside."

The American Idol hopeful also shared her most embarrassing moment when she slipped while performing on stage.

Ramielle narrated, "I was wearing heels because... I swear short people should stay like lower to the ground. That's why God make you short, you know. I went on stage, I was wearing like stilettos. I went go to turn around and slipped. I was wearing a dress so it's not cute."

### NEXT AMERICAN IDOL?

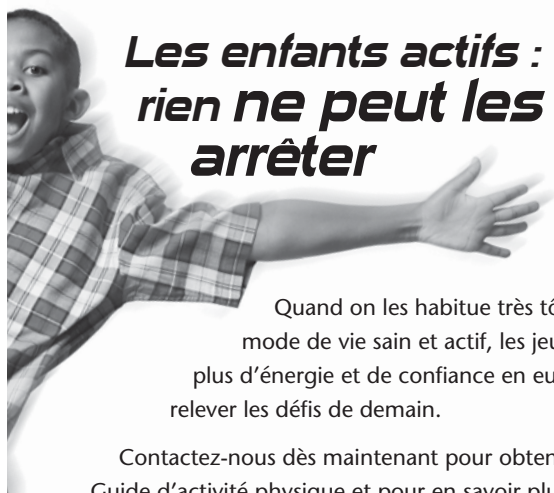
Becoming famous was not really the aim of Ramiele when she decided to join the American Idol auditions.

The seventh Fil-Am who made it to the Top 24 of American Idol explained, "It's not like I wanna be famous, but I wanna represent for Asian people and I wanna just live my dream. Singing in the showers is a lot more different than singing on stage in front of all these people."

Ramiele also said that she would not feel depressed if she does not win the American Idol title. Past winners include Kelly Clarkson, Reuben Studdard, Fantasia Barrino, Carrie Underwood, Taylor Hicks, and Jordin Sparks.

"If I don't become the next American Idol, I really don't think I'm gonna get discouraged or anything and be like, 'I'll never gonna sing again.' I mean, of course, it's a big experience, you know. You'll learn all these, you know, up until the point, you know, where you get taken off. You just take what you've learned and grow from it," Ramiele said. ■

## Les enfants actifs : rien ne peut les arrêter



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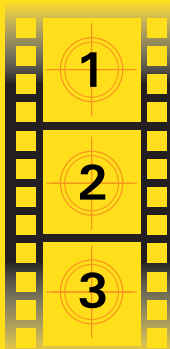
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3. Papadalhan namin kayo ng two (2) Movie Gift Certificates valued at \$10.00 each which you can use at participating movie theaters. To locate a participating theatre near you, visit [www.moviecash.com](http://www.moviecash.com).



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Number of To Send Form Receipts included: \_\_\_\_\_

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TFC on Demand

## Important Announcement from The Filipino Channel Canada, ULC

### **TERMINATION OF WE ENTERTAINMENT AS DEALER/ AGENT OF TFCKo EFFECTIVE MARCH 16, 2008**

This is to notify the general public that **WE ENTERTAINMENT AND ITS AGENTS** are no longer authorized to represent or act, in any form whatsoever, on behalf of The Filipino Channel Canada, ULC and TFCKo.

Effective March 16, 2008, TFCKo transactions from WE ENTERTAINMENT, its agents, their website **www.tfckocanada.com** and hotline number **1-888-98-TFCKo (1-888-98-83256)** will no longer be honoured by TFCKo.

Any TFCKo transactions by WE ENTERTAINMENT in behalf of TFCKo before March 16, 2008 will be duly processed by The Filipino Channel Canada, ULC via our authorized hotline number.

Kindly direct inquiries on subscription, activation, and other information on TFCKo directly to our customer service hotline 1-800-345-2465 or to any of the authorized dealers/agents listed below.

**The Filipino Channel Canada, ULC**

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# Philippine lake, one of Southeast Asia's largest, in danger of dying, official says

March 25, 2008

A prominent Philippine lake, one of Southeast Asia's largest, could become biologically dead in a few years if rampant pollution is not stopped, an official said Tuesday.

Laguna de Bay, located southeast of the capital, Manila, has become a virtual "septic tank" from the influx of more than 32,000 impoverished families, who dump their waste into the sprawling freshwater lake from illegal shanties along its 238-kilometer (147-mile) shoreline, according to Edgardo Manda, who heads the Laguna Lake Development Authority.

Factories have sprouted along the shore of Laguna de Bay over the years, and some of the 14 cities and 47 towns in the area also have contributed to the pollution by

operating garbage dumps that leak waste into the lake.



The shallow lake produces about a third of metropolitan Manila's supply of milkfish and other edible fish, helps generate electricity and serves as a key transport route, Manda said.

"We have to raise the alarm bells now," Manda told reporters as organizers launched an April 26-27 bike tour around the lake to call

attention to what he called a "harrowing crisis affecting one of the most important natural water basins in the country."

"If we don't do something within the next five years, the lake will continue to deteriorate and glide to a stage no longer salvageable," Manda said.

Manda appealed to international aid agencies to finance information drives to convince local government officials and lakeside dwellers to adopt measures to mitigate the pollution and establish effective waste disposal systems.

Massive fish kills already have been reported in recent years. About 100 rivers and streams drain into the 90,000-hectare (222,390-acre) lake, he said.

The illegal lakeside dwellers, numbering about 100,000, will have to be removed eventually, but that has not been seriously considered because of the massive funding needed for relocation, Manda said.

Philippine law says the government must provide housing loans or alternative housing sites for squatters whose houses are demolished. In some cases, however, many end up returning to their old neighborhoods because resettlement sites often are far from the city and its job opportunities.

Authorities will start dismantling illegal fish pens, which obstruct commuter boats, in the lake in the near future, Manda said. ■

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## RP takes steps to secure rice supplies as world prices rise

March 19, 2008

The Philippines, one of the world's largest importers of rice, is taking steps to ensure supplies as international rice prices rise and stocks come under pressure. Douglas Bakshian reports from Manila.

Philippine Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap says there is no rice shortage in the country and the government is working on several fronts to ensure that ample supplies continue.

He says the government's existing rice reserve will last 57 days, and an additional six days of imported supply is on the way. The government also plans to increase rice production domestically by 1.1 million hectares this year. On the conservation front, the government has asked fast-food chains to request that customers take a half-



**Asian nations are hurting as the price of rice soars and the world rice supply dips**  
cup of rice, rather than a full order.

Rice supplies and prices are politically sensitive in the Philippines. It is a staple food in the Philippines, and the country consumes about 12 million tons of rice a year, most of which is produced domestically.

This year it plans to import just over two million tons.

Secretary Yap notes that in the last quarter of 2007, rice on the international market sold for an average of \$360 a ton, but just last week, when the Philippines went to

the market, the price was \$650.

A number of factors are cutting world production of rice and driving up the cost. Secretary Yap says bad weather hurt crops in Thailand and Vietnam, which are leading exporters, and also cut production in China, a major consumer of rice.

"China's winter harvest has been wrecked," Yap said. "You've got flooding in Thailand, flooding in Vietnam. You've got high prices of fuel for transportation. Urea fertilizer is 150 percent higher in the last two years."

He also says rising demand from the Middle East and Africa puts pressure on rice supplies.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo this week said Philippine rice prices are expected to increase but she gave assurances that there will be no shortage. ■

## 2007 Épargnes fiscales pour les enfants actifs

Les parents de Jessica **paient moins d'impôt** avec la déduction de ses frais d'inscription au hockey

Jessica's parents **save on taxes** with her hockey registration costs

Les parents d'Alyssa **paient moins d'impôt** avec la déduction pour son ballet

Alyssa's parents **save on taxes** with her ballet lessons

Les parents d'Omar **paient moins d'impôt** avec la déduction de ses frais d'inscription au baseball

Omar's parents **save on taxes** with his baseball registration costs

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Nathan's parents **save on taxes** with his karate training costs



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## Unforgettable evening

35th Wedding anniversary of Salvé and Abel Desprez

By Lou Hufana



**Congratulations for your 35th** Wedding Anniversary. The 1st of February was unbelievable, despite the blizzard weather the party goes on. It turned out to be a marvellous evening, good friends, and wonderful guests. They received congratulations letter from the Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Opposition Leader Stéphane Dion, MP of Lac St-Louis Francis Scarpaleggia, Philippines Ambassador Jose Brillantes, Mayor of Pierrefonds-Roxboro Monique Worth, The Voice of Egypt in Canada George & Mary Saad, and other friends from Canada and U.S.

Everyone enjoyed the food, from cocktails canapés, seafood entrées, to the main dish and dessert, to the sweet table in the late evening. The music was great from ballroom,

line dancing, etc...

The greatest thing that happened to their 35th Wedding Anniversary is that the proceeds of the gifts-donations went to the Philippine Centre Foundation of Greater Montreal for about \$2,800. In the evening, their friends put on a fundraising raffle from Dignity - Côte des Neiges Funeral Home, Cuisine Santé International, and a gift from Salvé and Abel. This raffle raised \$530 for the 'Foundation', a very good cause indeed.

Salvé and Abel, please keep your good volunteer work going, (changing the community one volunteer at a time).

Lou Hufana  
Volunteer for the 'Foundation

## Ontario's Fairness Minister speaks at CRARR seminar



Hon. Jean Augustine, Fairness Minister

In spite of the stormy day, participants to the seminar organized by CRARR managed to come Hyatt Regency Hotel on Wednesday, March 5, 2008 from 9:00 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. and listened to the keynote speaker, Hon. Jean Augustine, Fairness Commissioner of Ontario and former Federal Commissioner of Multiculturalism. She and three of her senior staff presented the Ontario Government's recent measures to improve the recognition of foreign credentials and

The purpose of the seminar is to explore effective models and strategies necessary in Quebec, especially where monitoring and reporting for greater public accountability and access are concerned. These models can help us develop ways to eliminate systemic barriers to fair foreign credential recognition and promote newcomers;

fair access to the professions and thus the labor market.

The seminar also featured a panel discussion on barriers to integration, current and upcoming avenues for improvement, and recommendations for change. Panel members were: Mr. Silvano Tocchi, Director of the Foreign Credential Recognition Division of Human Resources and Social Development, Canada; Ms. Patricia Rimok, President of the Conseil interculturel du Québec, and Ms. Marie Josée Duplessis, Coordonnatrice - volet integration, Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes, and a senior representative of the Ministère de l'immigration et des communautés culturelles du Québec.

Questions were raised by participants which seem to indicate that many people are waiting for a long time. They wonder if the government is really going to make things easier for those who have been here before. They worry about the fact that immigrants with professional degrees will not get a fair chance of employment. For example, even if foreign graduates of medicine are accepted, there is not enough residents places in hospitals.

The panelists responded to most of the questions and assured their listeners that in spite of the slow pace of the procedures, something is being done to change the unfair situation.

The final impression one can gather from this seminar is that nothing is clear about the time line when the whole process will actually result in the resolution of problems in the integration of immigrants into the different professional fields.

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## Beef with ampalaya and oyster sauce



Beef with ampalaya and oyster sauce. Beef and ampalaya with oysters sauce, this is another popular restaurant dish. Another version is also found at canderias it is called ampalaya con carne. The candereria version it sautéed in soy sauce or with the addition of tausi or fermented black beans. But most restaurant, Chinese restaurants in particular it's stir fried with oyster sauce. I have been cooking this on several occasions, it's a good alternative way of cooking your beef, see also my previous post of beef and broccoli in oyster sauce.

### Ingredients:

1 k. lean beef, thinly sliced into strips  
2 large size, ampalaya, split in halve seeded,  
sliced crosswise and blanch  
1 medium onion, chopped  
1/2 head garlic, minced

1/4 c. soy sauce  
1/2 c. oyster sauce  
salt and pepper  
1/2 cornstarch  
sugar  
cooking oil

### Cooking procedure:

Marinate beef in soy sauce, cornstarch and a dash of salt and pepper for 10-15 minutes. In a wok, heat cooking oil and stir fry beef in batches until color change to brown and start to sizzle and set aside. In the same wok sauté garlic and onion. Add in the ampalaya and stir cook for 1-2 minutes then add in 1/2 c. of water, oyster sauce, sugar and beef. Stir cook for another 2-3 minutes or until sauce thickens. Correct seasoning if required. Serve hot.



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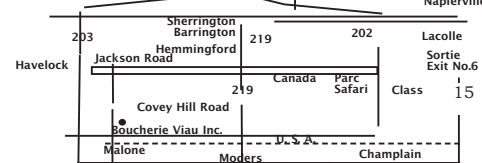
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Isaac T. Goodine

## Global Perspectives



### Born Poor? Marvelous!

...Napoleon Hill, Author of *Think and Grow Rich*

Early last month my brother Joe passed away and weeks later his wife, Shirley, followed him. This is a time of reflection for my family. One brother, Earnest died in 1932 at age 2 and a-half years, when

quite well and have no complaints about starting life in relative poverty; particularly since it provided learning opportunities in survival by cooperation and an attitude of mutual support in times of need. In my own

material things to hold me in check, and like him, I had incentive, in particular from my mother, to find my way. Once she taught me to read and seek knowledge I discovered that by working hard I could get an education and so I became one of the Transnational Workers of the world; one of about 80 million spread around the globe at this time. Millions of us, transnational workers, share some common traits. First we left home because prospects were better abroad. We have technical skills that employers want and that conform to an acceptable international standard. We have language skills that include an ability to communicate in the language of the global workforce, so called English. And finally, we have interpersonal skills and emotional maturity to adapt to working in a cross-cultural environment.

Some countries, like Canada, depend heavily on recruiting Foreign Workers to supplement the domestic workforce and some countries, like the

to one of the Group of Seven fully industrialized economies and Canadian workers became the most productive in the world, on a per capita basis. That of course is no longer the case. The education system is not adequately linked to the employment market and does not meet the aspirations of the students or the expectations of the employers. The Organization for Economic Cooperation in Development states that the annual report on the status of higher education in member countries does not include Canada because there is no reliable information available or forthcoming from Canada. What is known, and reported, is that productivity in Canada has been slipping badly for several years and Canada has moved from number one in the world in productivity to number 17 and the trend can not be reversed unless career education is made more relevant to the modern labour market needs. In the short term, Canadian employers must again turn to foreign



In July 1988, Goodine (left) was honored by Barber Connoble, World Bank president for ten years of loyal, and valued service.

I was six months old, and Joe was the first sibling to pass since then, leaving three sisters and six brothers to reflect on his life and ours.

We were, by any measure, a poor family in the early days, due to the great depression during which my parents lost the family farm and resettled on a barren hillside to start life over two years before I was born. We lived at the subsistence level in those years. Ultimately all have done

case, the lessons learned in childhood placed me on a path to a career in international development—there were no prospects for me where I was born, and that drove me to get an education that has taken me to many parts of the world, including an appointment as a regular staff member of the World Bank.

Like Napoleon Hill, who was born poor, I had no constraints of ties to family fortune, factory, land, or any



From left to right: Ike Goodine, Joe and Francis. Goodine at home in 1943

Philippines, depend heavily on the placement of workers abroad to relieve unemployment at home and earn foreign currency needed to sustain international trade and to provide financial assistance to family members in the home country. The phenomenon is not new but new players have come onto the field of the global labour market.

The Industrialization of Canada that started during the Second World War was sustained by the recruitment of about 2.4 million immigrants with technical and professional skills needed to expand and modernize the workforce until the source dried up at the beginning of the 1960s due to reconstruction in Europe. Then Canada implemented a scheme whereby the Federal Government provided funds to develop a competency based system for technical education and vocational training that would provide career-education that would meet two criteria: (1) meet the employment aspirations of the student; and (2) meet the productivity expectations of the employer. By this means Canada went from a middle income country

workers to sustain operations.

Now, Canada has a problem. There is an urgent need to recruit foreign workers in a wide range of professions and trades, and to integrate them into the community much more effectively than has been done in the past. The three main impediments have been identified as lack of recognition of foreign earned credentials, lack of acceptance of credit for work experience gained in the home country or in other countries, and lack of language skills to meet Canadian requirements. To fix this two things are needed: (1) the physical technology with ability to use it; and (2) a network of people with specialized knowledge and a willingness to share it.

The international labour market has become an integral part of the globalization process and in many cases it is the most effective means to transfer wealth from the richer countries to developing countries. Through this newspaper and other media we are able to identify how an Ad Hoc Network can contribute to the mutual benefit of



many people who depend on an effective international labour market that should be based on mutual respect and fair remuneration, and of course labour mobility. That in turn requires a rational approach to accreditation. In recent years the Asia Pacific Accreditation and Certification Commission was established and is housed at the Colombo Plan Staff College in Manila, and includes India and the Philippines. In the case of China, the Labour Market Development Project assisted by the World Bank, established OSTA (Organization for Skill Testing and Accreditation) to facilitate labour mobility throughout China. These two organizations would be helpful in addressing issues of accreditation for the three main sources of immigrants to Canada.

Also, there is an urgent need for focused private sector training that is competency-based and includes cross-cultural components. In that regard, it is only fair to point out that Gilmore College has 17 years experience in helping immigrants to enter, or to advance within, the workforce in Montreal. Recently, the college has been renovated and an agreement reached with a nearby medical laboratory to support the training of caregivers.

Finally, this is to restate my belief that the accident of the place of one's birth need not determine where one must earn a livelihood, and as a member of the Speakers Bureau of the

World Bank Group, I am committed to the stated mission: To fight poverty with passion and professionalism for sustainable results.

For some of us it is necessary to reflect, from time to time, on where we came from, especially if we believe we can help others to escape from poverty as we did. In an old photo of the Goodine boys (below) the one on the left (Ike) is the future World Bank staff member in training to fight poverty.

Isaac Goodine can be reached at: itgoodine20@hotmail.com  
Website address is: www.ikes-world.com

Left to right in the photo are Ike, Joe, and Francis, Goodine, at home in 1943.

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# Embattled Arroyo revokes order that had impeded corruption investigation

March 6, 2008

A day after more than 80 former Cabinet members and senior government officials issued an angry demand to shape up, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo yesterday revoked a controversial order that had blocked Cabinet members and other officials from testifying in congressional inquiries.

"Effective immediately, I am revoking Executive Order 464," Arroyo said in a press statement after a meeting with Roman Catholic bishops, who have condemned widespread graft in her government.

With the scrapping of the gag order, more witnesses are expected to appear in an investigation by the Senate into allegations of \$130 million worth of kickbacks in a \$329 million government telecoms deal with China's ZTE.

Opposition groups and an irate citizenry have accused Arroyo of covering up for officials and her husband, who has been linked to the controversy. Both Arroyo and her husband have denied any wrongdoing.

Commission on Election Chairman Benjamin Abalos was forced to resign late last year after a losing bidder in the planned national broadband network project named him as the broker of the corrupt deal.

President Arroyo subsequently canceled the contract, but attempts by the administration to prevent a former government consultant on the contract from testifying in the Senate fueled suspicions of a cover-up. Presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye yesterday said Arroyo revoked the gag order to demonstrate her resolve to let the truth out in the scandal that has rattled her administration.

Bunye said officials could no longer invoke the order "to excuse nonattendance from legislative inquiries."

"The president, like anybody else, is after the truth. The president listens to the people," Bunye said. "She believes that it's in the best interest of



Arroyo during a cabinet meeting in Manila, March 6, 2008

everybody to heal our present conflict."

Cabinet members have used Arroyo's order to avoid testifying in a probe by the opposition-dominated Senate.

Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, who heads the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), welcomed Arroyo's decision.

"We're happy and grateful that our appeal has been heard by the chief executive," Lagdameo said, but added it was only "a first step."

Senators were cautiously happy with the revocation of EO 464, noting that her decision, made after she met a group of bishops, was just a "publicity stunt" to please the church and witnesses could still side-step questions by arguing that their conversations with Arroyo were confidential. "The impression people get is that with 464 repealed, everything is okay," Senator Manuel Villar told reporters. "They can still resort to all other means to thwart our efforts to find out the truth in these anomalous deals."

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan downplayed the revocation of EO 464, saying the Supreme Court has long ruled on the unconstitutionality of the order. "There is nothing to scrap. The question is

the status of MC 108 because after the Supreme Court issued its ruling on EO 464, the administration issued MC 108," he said.

Senate President Manuel Villar said Malacañang "should do more than revoke EO 464 to show its sincerity in promoting transparency and accountability in government ... by also scrapping Memorandum Circular 108 and the illegal use of the executive privilege, the tools used to prevent its officials from testifying before congressional hearings on issues affecting the administration."

Memorandum Circular 108 was issued after the Supreme Court declared portions of EO 464 unconstitutional.

Administration critics say the circular, which says "all heads of departments of the Executive branch of government shall secure the consent of the president prior to appearing at a question hour before either House of Congress," is a virtual clone of EO 464.

Senator Manuel Roxas II said the order should have been lifted long ago because it has been used to "cover up" anomalies in government.

Last week, tens of thousands of people gathered in Manila's financial district of Makati calling for Arroyo to step down, the biggest crowd since

about 40,000 protested against her in 2005 amid allegations she cheated in the 2004 election.

Analysts say, however, that Arroyo, who has already survived three impeachment attempts and at least three coup bids, is likely to see out the remainder of her term.

They noted that many Filipinos are sick of political turmoil and the numbers at last week's rally were a fraction of the 500,000 who took to the streets to oust former President Joseph Estrada in 2001 and the 1 million who faced down tanks to overthrow dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. ■

## Filipinos overseas may soon vote via mail or Internet

March 25, 2008

Two House committees have approved the consolidation of three measures that would allow Filipinos overseas to vote through mail or the Internet.

Cebu City Rep. Antonio Cuenco, House committee on foreign affairs chairman, said that his committee and the committee on suffrage and electoral reforms chaired by Makati City Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr. had concluded their deliberations on the three measures that sought to amend restrictive provisions of the Overseas Absentee Voting Act of 2003.

While not discounting that cheating could likely happen through the voting by mail mode, Cuenco said they were "devising measures to address this problem." He said that voting through the Internet or other means may also be allowed.

Cuenco said the two measures seek to enfranchise more Filipinos overseas by softening restrictive provisions in the law. In particular, both propose that registration and certification of overseas absentee voters be made more accessible to Filipinos worldwide through more field and mobile registration centers. Cuenco said migrant Filipino workers may also file their application personally at any post or designated registration centers approved by the Comelec. ■

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# Court acquits Imelda Marcos of transferring cash abroad

March 10, 2008

A Manila court Monday acquitted former Philippine first lady Imelda Marcos of 32 counts of illegal money transfers made 40 years ago, court officials said.

The 78-year-old widow of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos smiled broadly as she walked from court, saying "I am happy because the truth of the Marcoses is going to be justice."

Of the 901 cases filed against her in the early 1990s just 10 remain, her lawyers told AFP.

Ferdinand Marcos, who ruled the Philippines for 20 years, fled into exile in 1986 with his family after he was overthrown in a "people power" revolution led by the Roman Catholic Church and breakaway elements of the military.

At the time it was claimed he had milked the country of between five and 10 billion dollars.

After a 22-year search for the so-called hidden Marcos wealth, the government has only managed to retrieve 683 million from several Swiss bank accounts.

The latest case was filed in 1991 by the Philippine government and has taken 16 years to work its way through the country's convoluted legal system.

The government's case claimed that 32 bank transfers to foreign accounts in Switzerland between 1968 and 1976 were carried out illegally by Ferdinand Marcos, his wife



**A tearful former Philippines first lady, Imelda Marcos, reacts in Manila on March 10, 2008 as a lower court acquits her of 32 counts of illegal money transfers made 40 years ago.**

and an associate who is now dead.

But trial court judge Silvino Pampilo ruled that evidence provided

by the government failed to prove Imelda Marcos broke the law.

The government said Monday

that what mattered most was the recovery of the funds that were salted away in 11 bank accounts in Switzerland.

"The case involved money laundering and as far as I know the subject matter has already been recovered by the PCGG," said Narciso Nario, the chief lawyer for the Presidential Commission on Good Government, a government body assigned to recover the alleged ill-gotten wealth of the Marcos family and their cronies.

"Our mandate was to recover ill-gotten wealth which we have done," he added referring to the 683 million dollars the Swiss Federal Supreme Court remitted to the Philippine government in 1997.

Lawyer for the Marcoses, Robert Sison, told AFP that it was illegal for individuals to move money overseas without the approval of the central bank.

He said the court dropped the case when the government failed to prove its case.

"In fact the money was transferred by a close family friend Roberto Benedicto (who is deceased) and not Marcos," he said.

Ferdinand Marcos died in exile in Hawaii in 1989. His widow and her family returned to the Philippines in 1991 and were hit with hundreds of corruption cases.

"With this case out of the way there are just 10 left," Sison said. ■

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# COMMUNITY NEWS

## Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion Attends Filipino Community Lunch



OTTAWA — Liberal Opposition Leader Stéphane Dion took the opportunity to thank the Filipino community for its tremendous contribution to Canada at a lunch hosted by the Winnipeg Filipino Breakfast Council last Friday.

"I was honoured to be invited and to have an opportunity to speak about important issues such as multiculturalism," said Mr. Dion. "This

was also a great chance for me to underscore the immense contribution that Filipino Canadians have made to our great country."

The Liberal Party of Canada is committed to the concept of multiculturalism and is committed to ensuring our society can move beyond the traditional concepts of tolerance and acceptance to true equality and partnership.



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## Conservative Backlog Plan Closes Door on Immigrants

For Immediate Release  
March 14, 2008

OTTAWA — The Conservative government's plan to deal with Canada's immigration backlog by closing the door on immigrants is precisely the wrong approach, Liberal Immigration Critic Maurizio Bevilacqua said today.

"After cutting hundreds of millions in funding that the Liberal government had invested in Canada's immigration system, the Conservatives are planning to 'fix' the immigration backlog by reducing the number of applications it accepts," said Mr. Bevilacqua. "Why does the Minister believe that shutting the door on immigration is the answer?"

Mr. Bevilacqua was responding to recent media reports that the federal government plans to use measures tabled in the House of Commons today to reduce the number of new immigration applications it accepts each year. Citizenship and Immigration Minister Diane Finley refused to deny the report when asked about it in the House of Commons or by media.

Even more shocking are media reports that the new policy would reduce the number of family class immigrants who are being reunited with Canadian family members.

"If we are to attract needed skilled labour and professionals from around the world, we must invest in our immigration system and realize that welcoming their immediate families is a vital part of making Canada an attractive or even viable destination," said Mr. Bevilacqua. "That is why in 2005 the previous Liberal government shifted the balance of immigration targets to favour family reunification, and committed funding to speed up the processing of parent and grandparent applications."

The Conservative government has now gone so far as to release misleading immigration statistics,

combining permanent residents, temporary worker and student categories, to create the false impression that Canada accepted significantly more immigrants in 2007 than in previous years.

"Minister Finley is now deceiving Canadians by claiming the Conservative government admitted more immigrants to Canada last year than in a hundred years," said Mr. Bevilacqua. "The Conservatives are simply attempting to cover-up the fact that for the second year in a row they have admitted approximately 10,000 fewer permanent residents each year than the previous Liberal government and to distract Canadians from a short sighted and draconian approach to dealing with the backlog."

Mr. Bevilacqua went on to point out that this latest policy shift is consistent with the Conservatives' overall historical approach to immigration.

"In 1959, the Diefenbaker Conservative government also proposed application caps to deal with a 131,000-person backlog, but was forced to reverse its policy within one month in the face of pressure from Italian-Canadians and the Opposition Liberals," he said. "The first immigration initiative of the current Conservative government was to cancel hundreds of millions of dollars allocated by the previous Liberal administration to deal with the backlog and for the past two years they have accepted fewer permanent residents than the previous Liberal government."

-30-

Contact :

Office of Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua  
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# Pacman: I won fair and square

March 25, 2008

Newly crowned World Boxing Council super-featherweight champion Manny Pacquiao yesterday insisted he won his rematch with Mexican Juan Manuel Marquez in Las Vegas—fair and square.

"Losing never crossed my mind, I did my best and I deserve the victory," Pacquiao said upon arrival yesterday morning at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, where he was mobbed by well-wishers, supporters and hangers-on.

Pacquiao deplaned at 6:39 a.m. and was welcomed like a rock star by government and airport officials. He hugged and kissed his wife Jinkee and his two elder sons, before carrying his youngest daughter Mary Divine Grace.

His eyes still woozy brought about by the long flight and the punishment he received from Marquez, Pacquiao, turning serious, said he was hurt by the doubts cast on his split decision win over the Mexican champ.

"Masakit na kapwa Filipino pa ang nagdududa," said Pacquiao. "Sa America, walang nagsasabi na natalo ako—si Marquez lang at ang kampo niya. Kumbinsido ako sa panalo ko."

Pacquiao also lashed out at sectors, who want to dissect his victory even further.



**Another victory. President Arroyo welcomes boxing champion Manny Pacquiao to Malacañang.**

"Masakit na may mga nagtatawag pa ng imbestigasyon about this fight. Oh my goodness! Dapat sa kanila turuan kung ano ang boxing, baka 'di pa nila alam kung ano ang rules ng boxing. 'Di lang limang beses ko pinanood ang laban, kahit na slow motion pa, madami akong pinakawalan na suntok ang tumamang kay Marquez," Pacquiao said. "Sa tingin ko, panalong-panalo ako. Crab mentality na lang sa iba."

Pacquiao downed Marquez in the third round of their fight with a solid left—and experts are one in saying that the knockdown spelled the difference for the new champ.

From Naia, Pacquiao checked in and had breakfast at the New World Renaissance Hotel in Makati. He then went to Quiapo church, where he heard mass, before paying a courtesy call on President Arroyo in Malacañang.

Pacquiao plans to move up in weight at 135 pounds and challenge current WBC lightweight champion David Diaz, a former member of the United States Olympic team in the 1996 Atlanta Summer Games.

Big crowds are expected to line up the streets of Manila, Makati, Quezon City, Pasay and Pasig for Pacquiao's motorcade celebration today.

Meanwhile, Pacquiao will be the very first recipient of the Elorde Hall of Fame given by the Elorde clan tonight at the Centennial Hall of the Manila Hotel in a lavish ceremony to be attended by Mrs. Arroyo.

Pacquiao earned the right to be elevated to the Hall of Fame after being named boxer of the year for seven straight times, the same number of years Flash Elorde was world champion.

Elorde's widow, Laura Elorde, will assist President Arroyo in the induction ceremony.

Other boxers of the Year awardees are Gerry Penalosa, World Boxing Organization bantamweight champion; Nonito Donaire, International Boxing Federation superflyweight champion; Florante Condes, IBF minimumweight champion and Donnie Nietes, WBO minimumweight champion. ■



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