

Rendez-vous 07 to restore Montreal's past glory



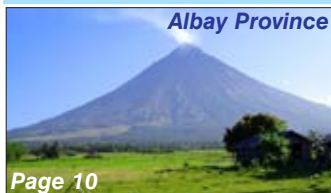
A view of the Rendez-vous conference in session at the Palais de Congrès, November 12-13, 2007

Rendez-vous November 2007 a special moment in the cultural history of Montreal that brought together about 1300 participants who believe in the strength and future of Montreal. Two days of meetings and discussions centered on the presentations of various individuals and organizations that provided the government with numerous viewpoints and proposals to make Montreal regain its former status as a major cultural metropolis over the period of the coming 10 years.

The big turnout is an evidence of the success of the conference. The organizing committee hoped to draw around 800 people.

"The clear interest of the public and private sectors, as well as cultural and community groups, shows how important this major historic meeting is seen to be - and rightly so," commented Gérald Tremblay, Major of

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Albay Province

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Panday Tinig a hit at Carnegie Hall



Seated L-R: Willie Gomez, Jowen Soguilon, Editha Fedalizo (pianist & coordinator), Edward de las Alas, and Jake Calizar. Standing L-R: Paul Imperial (Music director), Jessie Pascual, Amir Billones, Dindo Miras, Peter Apelo, Gerald Castillo, Jun Diaz, and Domingo Lorica Jr., Ruel Arevalo (not in picture).

It was a captive audience to the last note as the Panday Tinig Choral Ensemble ended their afternoon concert at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall in New York on Saturday, October 20, 2007.

Aptly called Kapalaran, the concert traced the destinies of three daughters of a family as they moved from province to province in the Philippines. Their story was captured through choral music representing traditional songs, haranas, kundiman, and contemporary compositions in various Philippine languages.

A rendition of Pambansang Awit, O Canada, and Star Spangled Banner opened the program. Setting the tone for the concert was Sa Mahal Kong Bayan by Lucio San Pedro depicting the love for our Philippine music. The scene moved to the slum area of Manila with the song Bahay describing homes built with boxes, galvanized material and cardboard.

See Page 5 Panday Tinig

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EDITORIAL

How do we make our government transparent and accountable to us?

The current debate over the former Prime Minister Mulroney's affairs begs an answer to the question of whether or not there is transparency at all in the different levels of government – municipal, provincial and federal. Do we keep ourselves informed of how our political leaders make their decisions?

As citizens and taxpayers, it seems quite important to know who are our representatives in each district so that when the time comes, we can easily call on them to voice our opinions, or to seek their assistance. However, it is a common experience that no one seems to know neither their names nor their addresses. It is only during elections when everyone is aware of their candidates' names but once elections are over, people forget them and never bother to see how they are doing their job. Will it not be a good idea if we all decide to make it our business to know how our political leaders are protecting our interests? How do we make them accountable to us?

In order to keep our government accountable and transparent, there is a need for all of us to learn how our elected officials make their decisions. There are many ways we can accomplish this. The most practical way is to gather all information about every issue of the day by reading newspapers, magazines, watching television news, listening to talk shows, going to council meetings, and surfing the internet. If one is really an avid follower of political people, sitting at the gallery of the Parliament or the National Assembly whenever an important debate is going on will surely be an advantage. If we do all these things, we can be sure to be prepared to vote the right person to represent us in future elections.

After having learned about different issues, particularly those that are controversial, we must not just sit around and do nothing about them. We have a duty to express our opinions and let our lawmakers know how we feel either by telephone or in writing. We must learn how to ask questions for it is only by asking intelligent questions that we can put the pressure on them to be responsible or accountable to us.

Although all political parties have had their share of scandals, we as citizens should not accept them as part of politics. Politics need not be a "dirty game." It is the type of people who enter it that make it so. If there are many good people who will enter this field, it is possible to have ethical leaders we can look up to.

The current case of Mr. Brian Mulroney may make us wonder about many things. How is it possible for someone like him to be receiving such huge amounts of cash in an envelope in various hotel rooms? The fact that it has been quite a long time ago when it happened and yet still remains as a question leads us to ask many more questions. If it is true that the payment was for past or future services, why did Mr. Schreiber use cash? The black market or the hidden market is the only place where cash is often used to avoid the payment of taxes.

As Mr. Mulroney has been declared innocent of the airbus scandal, and he claims that he will be vindicated again, we must really be interested in finding out how he could explain away this cash payment. Will the public inquiry help him clear his name? How can this case serve as a lesson for politicians not to be involved in a similar situation?

Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi

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Some of the proposed activities are watching popular Tagalog films, playing board games, or having some information sessions about the cooperative movement.

The following volunteer members have graciously agreed to start the ball rolling:

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2008

January 13 - Luz Dizon & Leony

Eufemio

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Those who are interested in volunteering their time and who have some creative ideas in making the coffee club sessions more interesting are welcomed to call the Coop at 514-733-8915, or 514-485-7861, and submit their names.

In our desire to improve the sales of the Coop, we are also requesting all members to buy even \$10 a week. If all 600 members buy this amount, we will have at least \$6000 sales per week and in a month, this will be \$24 000. Hence, we will soon achieve our break-even point. In a short time, we will be making a profit. On the other hand, if members do not patronize the Coop, it will be difficult if not impossible to achieve any of the goals of a cooperative.

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Chief Editor & Publisher

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ROTRAND TO MARK 25th ANNIVERSARY AS CITY COUNCILLOR



Marvin Rotrand

November 14 will mark the 25th anniversary of Marvin Rotrand's first election as Snowdon's City Councillor.

Rotrand has been a strong voice for democracy, social justice, minority rights and environmental protection.

Just before the last municipal election Rotrand was termed "a public conscience and a voice for fairness and fair play" by the Gazette.

Snowdon voters have stuck by Rotrand whether he was with the governing party or the opposition. First elected with the Montreal Citizens Movement (MCM), Rotrand was instrumental in 1990 in founding the Democratic Coalition of Montreal (DCM) when the MCM broke its election promise to create strong Borough Councils.

Rotrand was also instrumental in 2001 in bringing the various City Hall opposition together to form the Montreal Island Citizens Union under Gerald Tremblay to win that year's election. Indeed, the new party's structure was negotiated in Rotrand's living room bring the MCM, the DCM and the Union group together!

Rotrand is currently the Vice President of the Societe de Transport where he working toward a major increase in transit services for 2008 and 2009. His work at the STM also deals with the introduction of hybrid buses that use less fuel and pollute less. He also serves as Deputy Leader of the Majority and Vice President of the Speaker's Commission which oversees City Council's rules of procedure.

Some of Rotrand's accomplishments include the creation of the Quebec Police Ethics Commission assuring civilian oversight of law enforcement, the green space acquisition plan which lead to the creation of the regional park network, work on launching the first minority hiring plans, and work on the Montreal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities.

Rotrand's work also lead to the adoption in 2005 of the Montreal-Manila agreement through formal resolutions of each of the respective municipal councils. Rotrand hopes to see this agreement broadened in 2008

and 2009.

Rotrand, who is the President of the Borough of Cote des Neiges - Notre Dame de Grace's Intercultural Commission, has been a close friend of the Filipino community working to facilitate cultural events and obtaining municipal grants for various social and cultural organizations of the Filipino community. He is currently working the Borough of Cote des Neiges - Notre Dame de Grace and Filipino merchants toward an improvement plan for Victoria Avenue.

When asked, Rotrand says his main accomplishment is an intangible. He was first elected when Montreal Council was secretive and citizens excluded. He has been instrumental in the democratic reforms that have seen the City add question periods and consultative mechanisms such as Commissions.

Rotrand's outspokenness has changed the way City Councillors do their job. City Council is no longer a rubber stamp.

Ethics committee in chaos over Mulroney hearings

OTTAWA -- The abrupt adjournment of a Commons ethics committee meeting Tuesday provoked a chaotic shouting match and left dangling the question of whether Karlheinz Schreiber and Brian Mulroney will be summoned to testify before MPs.

The committee is scheduled to take the matter up again Thursday after committee chairman Paul Szabo considers whether MPs have any more than "a sliver" of authority to subpoena the two men before a government-ordered public inquiry gets underway next year.

Mr. Mulroney, Progressive Conservative prime minister from 1984 to 1993, will testify if summoned, his spokesman said. Mr. Szabo, a Toronto Liberal, also told reporters that the committee could delay Schreiber's extradition to Germany from a Toronto detention centre, scheduled for Dec. 1, by securing a Speaker's warrant to compel him to testify about his dealings with Mr. Mulroney.

NDP Pat Martin had an argument with ethics committee chair Paul Szabo over the Mulroney-Schreiber affair. View Larger Image View Larger Image NDP Pat Martin had an argument with ethics committee chair Paul Szabo over the Mulroney-Schreiber affair. Jean Levac/CanWest News Service Email to a friend Email to a friend Printer friendly Printer friendly Font:

However, Mr. Szabo's effort to ensure the committee acts within its mandate dissolved into a confrontation with New Democratic Party MP Pat Martin, who pitched his pencil over a committee table and stormed over to Szabo to accuse him of stalling his efforts to get an ethics committee inquiry off the ground.

"You're a disgrace," Mr. Martin told Mr. Szabo, who remained seated

in his chair. "That's it. You're done."

He also called Mr. Szabo a "son of a b***h." But Szabo said later that Mr. Martin is a friend who made the remarks in the heat of the moment. "I forgive him for the comment," he told reporters.

Mr. Martin said he remained furious at what he saw as Mr. Szabo's attempt to "sabotage and hijack" his efforts.

Tempers began to boil as Mr. Szabo questioned the admissibility of several motions aimed at getting a parliamentary inquiry rolling before a government-ordered public inquiry into the Mulroney-Schreiber affair gets underway.

The final blow-up occurred when Mr. Szabo suddenly adjourned the meeting in the midst of an argument by Bloc Quebecois MP Michel Guimond, who challenged Mr. Szabo's authority to prevent a vote on Mr. Martin's motion to launch an inquiry immediately.

Mr. Guimond "was in full flight and then he was going to start lecturing me," Mr. Szabo said as he ruled the MP out of order.

Conservative MPs quickly and quietly filed out of the packed committee hearing room. Conservative MP Russ Hiebert later accused the opposition parties of turning the committee into a circus and called it "a horrible waste of time." He declined to say whether Conservatives, who hold a minority on the committee, would support any of the motions.

The motions before the committee would summon Messrs. Schreiber and Mulroney to the ethics committee (NDP); launch an inquiry into whether ethics codes have been broken in the Schreiber-Mulroney affair (NDP); and review the Conservative government's handling of the affair (Liberal and Bloc Quebecois).

The government-ordered public inquiry is looking into the Mulroney-Schreiber financial dealings and whether new allegations by Mr. Schreiber have any bearing on a \$2.1-million payment to Mulroney made by the Liberal government of Jean Chretien in 1997. That payment covered Mr. Mulroney's legal and public relations fees in his libel suit against the federal government after a Justice Department document named him a target of an RCMP investigation into alleged kickbacks from Mr. Schreiber, related to the sale of Airbus jets to Air Canada in the late 1980s.

Mr. Szabo said if a Speaker's warrant is obtained, Justice Minister Rob Nicholson would be in contempt of Parliament if he enforced the extradition order against Schreiber that is now scheduled for Dec. 1. He expected Mr. Schreiber's lawyer to appeal to the Supreme Court the latest lower court ruling upholding the extradition order, and said that could give the committee another 60 days to act.

Ottawa Citizen

A Secret Trial William Kaplan

National Post - Review

The scandal that won't go away;

Shortly after leaving office in

1993, Brian Mulroney accepted an envelope containing \$100,000 in cash from Karlheinz Schreiber, a promoter who had once successfully lobbied his government on the matter of a contract involving Air Canada and Airbus. The transaction was not in itself illegal. No evidence has emerged to suggest it had anything to do with Schreiber's previous lobbying efforts. But especially given the many recent revelations about the culture of corruption in Liberal Ottawa, Mulroney's reluctance to explain his relationship with Schreiber has continued to cloud Mulroney's reputation. Many ask: Was the conduct of the last Conservative PM beyond reproach?

It has become conventional wisdom that in his years of office, 1984-1993, Brian Mulroney was a better prime minister than Canadians thought at the time. He is widely credited as the father of free trade, the facilitator of good relations with the Americans and the leader who began facing up to Canada's crisis in public finance. Taxation experts maintain that Mulroney's courageous introduction of the GST was the real key to the mid-1990s turnaround in Canadian government finances and Paul Martin's surpluses today.

The Liberals, remember, broke their commitment to change the GST, just as they went back on their commitments to alter the free trade agreement and various other Mulroney policies. In particular, Jean Chretien and Paul Martin have implemented many of the concessions to Quebec and the other provinces contained in Mulroney's failed Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords. And virtually every day, the Gomery inquiry into Adscam generates more evidence supporting Mulroney's complaint that he was a mere novice at the patronage game as played by veteran Quebec Liberals.

All of this would add up to a powerful brief -- though in my view, not a fully convincing one -- for awarding Brian Mulroney greater historical respect. But first, he must find a way to disassociate himself from the last odours of the scandals that have dogged his reputation during and after his years in power.

For a few years, between 1998 and 2003, it seemed as though Mulroney was completely vindicated. A humiliated government of Canada apologized to the former prime minister, and compensated him for what then appeared to be a groundless legal investigation of 1980s-era aircraft contracts. A thorough 1998 book about these matters by respected historian and lawyer William Kaplan, Presumed Guilty: Brian Mulroney, the Airbus Affair, and the Government of Canada, appeared to set the historical record straight. From Kaplan's pages, Mulroney emerged guiltless.

But the wheels of history and justice ground on. First in newspaper articles and now in a powerful new book, A Secret Trial: Brian Mulroney Stevie Cameron and the Public Trust, Kaplan has changed his view of Brian

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Montreal and Chair of the event. "I am pleased at this heavy turnout in response to our decision to call together the movers and shakers on the cultural scene so that they can consider methods of enhancing its reach and influence. More than ever, I am convinced that together we will chart the course for Montreal to remain culturally dynamic and to be recognized as an international cultural metropolis. I therefore welcome alone and all: we have a rendezvous to shape the history of Montreal."

The meeting had two main "stages" where participants made themselves heard. First, the plenary sessions were held to improve and agree on the 2007-17 Action Plan submitted by the Steering Committee. This document set out 28 separate objectives and now fewer than 65 actions associated with five major approaches: 1. Enhance access to culture; 2. Invest in the arts and culture; 3. Improve the cultural quality of the living environment; 4. Enhance Montreal's status in Canada and internationally; 5. Secure for Montreal the means of a cultural metropolis.

At the same time, large numbers had visited "Place du Rendez-vous." Close to 70 organizations presented initiatives and projects that could give Montreal a boost - each in its own style and in enjoyable, detailed way.

"In order to realize Montreal's full potential and promote greater access to culture for citizens, we need to provide ourselves with the means to achieve our goals. This is the challenge that we face," said the Mayor.

Mr. Tremblay was pleased to note that the very great majority of cultural event promoters, administrators of cultural facilities, cultural entrepreneurs and directors of local cultural groups and committees were on the list of participants. He also hailed the involvement of many businesspeople who have accepted the invitation to come and take part in the conference.

Several federal and Quebec government ministers participated actively in the presentations and discussions.

The idea to hold a Montreal Rendez-vous on Culture began to form in 2005. Aside from Mayor Tremblay, the Steering Committee for the November 2007 Rendez-vous is made up of Josée Verner, Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages' Michael Fortier,

Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada and Minister responsible for the region of Montreal; Christine St-Pierre, Québec Minister of Culture, Communications and Status of Women; Raymond Bachand, Québec Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade, Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the region of Montreal; Isabelle Hudon, President and CEO of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal; and Simon Brault, President of Culture Montreal.

To learn more about the event, go to: www.montrealmetropoleculturelle.org
Source: Susan Ellefsen

Montreal, Cultural Metropolis - November 2007 Rendez-vous
Information: Elizabeth Boileau, Media Relations Manager, 514-789-3456.

\$120 million to build the Quartier des spectacles

After years in the making, the plans for the Quartier des spectacles are finally coming together. Yesterday, it was announced that all three levels of government will be chipping in with \$120 million to reshape the area around Ste. Catherine St. between Bleury St. in the west and St. Denis St. in the east. Four phases of development will be spread over four years.

So what do we make of all of this? The first thing to consider is the plan's treatment of public space. The so-called "Place du Quartier des spectacles" sounds promising, since it includes a reduction in the number of lanes on Jeanne Mance St. and a dramatic widening of its sidewalks. (Apparently, the garage doors and blank walls of the Musée d'art contemporain will be renovated to

pedestrianization that is well-suited to Montreal's climate. All in all, by expanding sidewalks, reducing traffic lanes, opening up blank façades and creating new squares where parking lots currently exist, this plan will significantly improve the pedestrian experience in the area around Place des Arts.

But what about the rest of the Quartier des spectacles? At the corner of Ste. Catherine and the Main, a new \$20 million cultural centre called the Red Light will replace an abandoned building and a vacant lot. The name of the building suggests a somewhat cynical appropriation of the area's seedy heritage, and the building's renderings don't reveal too much — it would be about 13 stories high and luminescent — but I'm inclined to think that this would be an appropriate landmark for a notorious crossroads that has lately become more pathetically tacky than seductively deviant. People have been worrying about the Times Square-esque "Disneyfication" of the lower Main for years, but Gérald Tremblay is no Rudolph Giuliani and Montreal is no New York.

What concerns people most about the Quartier des spectacles is that, as interesting as it all sounds, there is a big potential for things to go terribly, terribly wrong. The Balmoral Block, which is at the centre of the plans, has already been the victim of government incompetence. In 2002, when it was slated to be redeveloped into government offices and a new symphony hall, the provincial government purchased the block, evicting dozens of artists and small businesses. When the symphony hall plans were shelved, the block was left

structures, the imposing Wilder Building, might have to be demolished. If this is the way the creative enterprises already located in the Quartier des spectacles will be treated, it's not a terribly good sign. Already, arts groups are worrying that the neighbourhood's redevelopment will force up rents and push them away.

Another concern is the quality of design. Given the area's existing

From Page 1 Panday Tinig

Vignettes of daily life were represented by a medley of traditional songs from Chichiritchit, Kundiman in 1800, Ang Alibangbang, Atin Cu Pong Singing to Leron Leron Sinta.

The harana was a special moment in the lives of the three sisters as they moved from province to province. They recalled songs like Hatinggabi (Tagalog), Malinac Lay Labi (Pangasinan), Nu Duduam Pay (Ilocano), Sarung Banggi (Bicol) and Kahibulungan (Visayan).

Other songs included Tatlong Dalaga, an adaptation of Sa Lungsod Sa Buenavista and a Visayan traditional, Laylay Agolaylay.

Completing the program were interpretations of L'important C'est La Rose by Gilbert Becaud and Tatak Ng Pilipino by E. Dodgie-Simon. Mabuhay Panday Tinig, composed by P. Imperial and lyrics by E. Fedalizo, depicting the choral life as a Panday Tinig member was premiered in this Carnegie Hall concert.

Members of the Panday Tinig Choral Ensemble include sopranos Marivic Aplao, Magnolia Camat, Raquel Estoque, Elvie Flores, Mellie Francisco, Anita Lo. Jee Mae Ojoylan, Theresa Pasiolan, Mynia Penaranda, and Sahmee Roux; altos Minerva Barriga, Lilibeth Flores, Gelyn Gao-ay, Erlinda Gascon, Marissa Meneses, Marina Ocumen, and Carmela Raquero; Tenors Ruel Arevalo, Joselito Calizar, Jun Diaz, Willie Gomez, and Jessie Pascual; and basses Edward de las Alas, Peter Apelo, Amir Billones, Gerald Castillo, Domingo Lorica Jr., Dindo Miras, and Jowen Soguilon. Pianist and coordinator is Editha Fedalizo. Music director is Paul Imperia.

The Panday Tinig Choral Ensemble was especially invited to mark the 35th anniversary of the founding of Artists International of New York City by its founder and executive director Leo B. Ruiz. Watch for the 2008 spring presentation of the Kapalaran concert to be showcased in Montreal. Further announcements will follow.



Premier Jean Charest making the announcement about the 3-way partnership in building the Quartier des Spectacles whereby the municipal, provincial and federal government will chip in \$40 million each.

include retail space.) The renovation of Ste. Catherine will calm traffic and allow for a flexible approach to

to rot for five years, decaying to such an extent that one of its historic



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Government of Canada Supports Quartier des Spectacles in Montréal

Montréal, Québec (November 12, 2007) - The Government of Canada, through its brand new Building Canada infrastructure plan, will consider the Quartier des spectacles cultural precinct as a funding priority. This financing could cover as much as one third of eligible costs, for a federal contribution of a maximum of \$40 million for the cultural precinct of the Quartier des spectacles. The Government of Québec and the City of Montréal have also confirmed a financial commitment for this project, both for an amount of \$40 million each. The Honourable Josée Verner, Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Status of Women and Official Languages, and the Honourable Michael M. Fortier, Minister of Public Works and Government Services, made this announcement today, on behalf of the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

The Quartier des spectacles is centered on the intersection of Sainte-Catherine Street and Saint-Laurent Boulevard, covering almost a square kilometre bound by City Councillors Street, Berri Street, Sherbrooke Street, and René-Lévesque Boulevard. This area is home to 30 performance halls totalling almost 28,000 seats, numerous international festivals, art galleries and centres for the exhibition and broadcast of alternative culture. The Quartier des spectacles supports more than 7,000 jobs linked to cultural activities, from education through to public outreach, including production, exhibition, and broadcasting.

"Promoting the cultural development of our cities is important for the Government of Canada," said Minister Verner. "This is a priority of our Building Canada infrastructure plan, which is ensuring access to quality infrastructure. Our government's support for Montreal's Quartier des spectacles is a concrete demonstration of the value we place on cultural development in all its forms, ensuring the enrichment of citizens' lives."

"The Building Canada infrastructure plan is advancing quality infrastructure," said Minister Fortier. "Through Building Canada, our government acknowledges the importance of preserving, developing and improving access to culture."

Financial support for the project, for a maximum of \$40 million, is conditional on the signing of a framework agreement with the



Province of Québec under the Building Canada infrastructure plan. Funding is also conditional upon the completion of a due diligence review of the project, the successful

completion of environmental assessments required under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the signing of a contribution agreement outlining

the project details and the parameters for federal financing, and on compliance with the obligations set out in the framework agreement.

Through its unprecedented \$33-billion Building Canada infrastructure plan, the Government provides long-term, stable and predictable funding to help meet infrastructure needs across Canada. Building Canada supports a stronger, safer and better country. For further information contact: Karine White, Press Secretary, Office of Minister Cannon, 613-991-0700



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Cooperative Movement It's bigger than you think By Jerry Estrada

If only

In 1998, I took a vacation in my hometown in Southern Mindanao where I was born. One day, I woke up listening to the story of my friend, a farmer, who relates the worsening economic situation over the years - in his gradual inability to spend for his family's basic needs. Ten years ago, he couldn't send his children to school. Then five years ago, he could hardly buy clothes anymore.

Lately, I heard again from the same man that at present he wakes up and realize he could hardly buy food for his family from a kilo of fish, to a can of sardines and now even a kilo of dried fish is difficult to buy.

I think of his situation that reflects the difficulties of the majority of our people where many are forced to work outside the Philippines and that there are more than 3,000 Filipinos leaving the country everyday to earn a

better livelihood.

What happened to the Philippines? In 1961, many Asian countries used to envy the Filipinos. They dreamt to study in the University of the Philippines (UP), La Salle or Ateneo. Today, these countries are the employers of Filipino workers. Some Asian nations have sent an astronaut into space, while Filipinos are still quarrelling about government contracts and alleged rigging of elections whilst the majority of the poorest of the poor are gnashing their teeth due to starvation.

EARLY INFLUENCE

Back in 1998, upon hearing the story of my friend, we started thinking together how could we help the rest of the people in the barrio (village). One early morning, inside a 100 sq. m. chapel, we were listening to an invited speaker from a small agricultural coop talking about cooperativism. That was my first coop encounter. Before that, my knowledge

on coops was nil.

Since then, I became interested on credit unions and the different kinds of cooperatives. Four years after, I met Atty. Mordino Cua in the northern part of Mindanao, who traveled ten countries (including Canada) to study cooperatives. From him I heard about Desjardins (Canada), Raiffeisen (Germany), Schulze-Delitzsch (Germany), Father Masterson, SJ (Philippines) and other coop pioneers. I also learned from him that Desjardins was influenced and inspired by the efforts of Raiffeisen and Schulze-Delitzsch in helping their people. Likewise, the life-story of Desjardins influenced Fr. Masterson (SJ), who also convinced church, school and political leaders in Northern Mindanao to join coops in the 1960s, and subsequently coops thrived all over the Philippines.

It was then that I was so convinced that cooperativism can really help in re-distribution of wealth and empowering the people. In 2003, I found myself working with Atty. Cua in organizing coops for transport drivers, workers and small farmers in urban and rural areas of Northern Mindanao.

THE DESJARDINS EXPERIENCE

Alphonse Desjardins of Lévis, Quebec, then 24 years old, once mentioned, "It is my dream to do something someday to help the poor, something that would help the people of our race in their needs." He was determined to make a difference in people's lives.

Of course, the Caisse

Populaire Desjardins of Canada, with more than a hundred branches in Quebec was not by chance, but rather the result of immense preparations and skills developed through hardwork and dedication of Alphonse and Dorimene (his wife).

As for Alphonse he knew well that the fate of his plan depended upon what the people did with it. If they accepted the idea and built their Caisse Populaires, they could have the advantages. If they did not, all would fail and he would be remembered only as a fool. That was the risk he was taking.

Dorimene was so worried during the early stage of the Caisse. Dorimene summarized it all and bombarded Alphonse with the following concerns: (a) "We started a coop in our own house to help the people. Isn't it absurd? Please, let's close it now, before we get in deeper and deeper." (b) We are not bankers why are we trying to be bankers? We are just people like everyone else. Why don't we be like everyone else and just work for the family that's growing up? Everyone was a potential accuser if something went wrong." (c) "They say definitely that you are also a fool. Sooner or later when you are working with others, there is trouble. You are sure to lose. When that comes, our children will be on the street and will be condemned to utter poverty." (d) You give your time to that. What do you get out of it? What does the family get out of it? (e) We might even lose the house that we struggled for years to own. (f) They say, too, that if Monsieur



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Zenaida F. Kharroubi
B.A. English, M.A. Ed. Studies
Diploma in Education, TESL
Founder & Director-General
Gilmore International College
Editor & Publisher,
North American Filipino Star
Group Commissioner, Scouts
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Desjardins knows so much about banking, why is it that he remains poor with only the small income of a civil servant? If he's so good in these questions of finance and economics, why is it that he doesn't make some money?"

But Alphonse said, "Is there anything that they do not say? You and I will carry on with the load and the risks. If we can hold on a little longer, things will be better. When we help those who need help, we will not measure and expect a reward. The caisse—that is for the people. We have known what the poor suffer; let us not forget it in our own fears. If we arouse the interest of good people and influential people, they could help carry it on. When I started this work, I made up my mind that I wouldn't be turned aside by the gossip of those who didn't know any better."

If only, the majority of Filipino people think like Desjardins, who dreamed to be useful to his fellowmen,

If only, a significant number of government officials help to eradicate poverty in the Philippines, not selfishness and greed, then the country would become great again.

If only, some of us realize that we don't need abundant material things for ourselves, and share some of our blessings, time, talent and skills to help other people, then the poor people would have a chance to build better lives.

When a news reporter interviewed Brad Pitt what has inspired him to become more involved as part of the Global initiative. He answered, "I am tired of thinking about myself. Time to think of others."

Perhaps, our fellow kababayan who are enjoying all kinds of luxuries could be reminded to be like Alphonse Desjardins, or Brad Pitt. Of course, there are some people in our community who have already taken up the challenge of helping out but we need more to come forward. It is hoped that those who have the ability and the means to share their good fortune, will do so. After all, Christmas is almost upon us. It is the time of giving. If only we can all believe that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" then it will be much easier to convince people to join the cooperative movement. Let us not let the first Filipino Solidarity Cooperative down.

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Palace to Senate: Don't waste time on 'cash gifts'

November 8, 2007

Malacañang opposed the upcoming Senate investigation into the alleged bribery of lawmakers and local government executives during meetings in the Palace last month.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said senators should be concentrating on key legislation pending in the Senate, instead of wasting their time in their investigations into the alleged distribution of "cash gifts" to officials last October 11.

"Napakaraming panukala na maaring makatulong sa kababayan, di tuwing nakikita natin ang mga kuwento at istoryang may imbestigasyon. Imbes makabuti sa atin nakakasira ng kalooban ng marami. Napakahabang oras ang ating nauubos (There are so many bills that could help our people once they are

passed into law. But senators chose instead to waste the people's time conducting investigations that tend to generate demoralization)," Ermita said in an interview on dzRH radio.

Ermita noted that the Palace is rushing the passage of the cheap medicine law, the P1.227-trillion national budget for 2008, and a presidential proclamation for amnesty.

He said the Palace is also pursuing a law that will provide amendments to the power sector reform act (EPIRA).

The Senate has scheduled for next week the start of hearings on the "cash gift", with Pampanga Gov. Ed Panlilio and Bulacan Gov. Jon-jon Mendoza – who both admitted receiving P500,000 after attending a meeting in Malacañang – as resource persons.

Senate's announcement of the

hearing schedule came in the heels of House Deputy Speaker and Kabalikang Malayang Pilipino (Kampi) secretary Ma. Amelita Villarosa's admission that cash gifts distributed to various local government officials were from the party's funds.

Villarosa's statement supported sentiments that President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo – who heads Kampi – knew of the distribution of "cash gifts" to congressmen and local government executives.

In the interview, Ermita maintained President Arroyo knew nothing of the bribes, although he admitted Arroyo has been keeping tabs on developments in the mess.

"Siyempre si Pangulo di gumagawa ng komento. Pinagmamasdan niya ang pangyayari (The president won't comment on the matter. She is keeping an eye on developments)," he said. ■

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Adobong Baboy (Pork Adobo)

Ingredients :

- 1-1/2 lb. pork, cut into serving pieces
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1/3 cup vinegar
- 3 tbsp. soy sauce
- 1 bay leaf
- salt to taste
- 1/4 tsp. pepper or 1 tsp. peppercorns
- 1 tbsp. sugar (optional)
- 1/2 cup water
- oil, for frying

(Measurement Guides)

Cooking Procedures :

1. Combine all ingredients in a big pot except the oil and let stand for at least 30 minutes.
2. Place pot over medium heat and bring to a boil.
3. Lower the heat and simmer covered until meat is tender for about an hour

(checking occasionally for the water not to get dry, just add a little water each time you see its almost dry up). You may adjust the seasoning according to your taste and liking. Drain and reserve sauce. Set aside.

4. Meanwhile, heat oil in a pan over medium heat. Fry the meat until lightly brown on all sides. Set aside and keep warm.

5. Pour off all remaining oil from the pan. Pour in back the meat and reserve sauce. Mix for about a few minutes while scraping up the bits on the bottom of pan.

6. Remove from heat. Serve hot.



Filipino Lumpia

INGREDIENTS

- * 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- * 1 pound ground pork
- * 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- * 1/2 cup chopped onion
- * 1/2 cup minced carrots
- * 1/2 cup chopped green onions
- * 1/2 cup thinly sliced green

cabbage

- * 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- * 1 teaspoon salt
- * 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- * 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- * 30 lumpia wrappers
- * 2 cups vegetable oil for frying

number of stars

DIRECTIONS

1. Place a wok or large skillet over high heat, and pour in 1 tablespoon vegetable oil. Cook pork, stirring frequently, until no pink is showing. Remove pork from pan and set aside. Drain grease from pan, leaving a thin coating. Cook garlic and onion in the same pan for 2 minutes. Stir in the cooked pork, carrots, green onions, and cabbage. Season with pepper, salt, garlic powder, and soy sauce. Remove from heat, and set aside until cool enough to handle.

2. Place three heaping tablespoons of the filling diagonally near one corner of each wrapper, leaving a 1 1/2 inch space at both ends. Fold the side along the length of the filling over the filling, tuck in both ends, and roll neatly. Keep the roll tight as you assemble. Moisten the other side of the wrapper with water to seal the edge. Cover the rolls with plastic wrap to retain moisture.

3. Heat a heavy skillet over medium heat, add oil to 1/2 inch depth, and heat for 5 minutes. Slide 3 or 4 lumpia into the oil. Fry the rolls for 1 to 2 minutes, until all sides are golden brown. Drain on paper towels. Serve immediately.



Afritada

Ingredients

- 1 kilo pork
- 2 Tbsp. cooking oil
- 1 1/2 tsp. garlic (7-10 gloves), peeled and minced
- 1 big onion, peeled and chopped
- 3 pieces tomatoes, chopped
- 3 tsp. salt 6 Tbsp. vinegar
- 4 pieces potatoes, peeled and cut into quarters
- 2 pieces red bell pepper
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce
- 1/8 cup bread crumbs
- Tbsp. vinegar

Slice pork into 2 inch cubes. Heat oil in pan. Sauté in garlic, onions, and tomatoes. Season with salt. Add pork. Add vinegar and let boil for 5 minutes. Then add enough water or stock to make meat tender. Add potatoes. When almost done, add sliced pepper and tomato sauce. Thicken the resulting sauce with bread crumbs. Cook for 5 minutes thereafter. Remove from fire.

Makes approximately 8 servings.
*You can use chicken instead of pork.



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The Albay province is a paradise located in the Bicol Region of the Philippines, 460km south of Manila. Albay is home to the spectacular **Mayon Volcano**, the region's crown jewel and one of the great wonders of the world. Only one hour away is the natural habitat of the fascinating Whale Sharks in **Donsol**, an amazing interactive eco-experience for the

whole family.

During the exploration of Juan de Salcedo in 1573, the province and its neighboring areas were known as 'Ibalon'.

A small settlement by a mangrove swamp was a town called Albaybay (meaning "by the bay"). The town was first renamed Albay, then Legazpi, as Albay went on to refer to the province.



Cagsawa ruins church tower - Today, only the belfry remains as a mute testimony of Mayon's unpredictable fury and devastating strength.

Agriculture dominates most of Albay's land area. Their major products include coconut, rice, abaca and corn. The province is also rich in mineral deposits like gold, copper, iron, mercury and deposits of coal, marble, ceramic clay, perlite, silica, guano and phosphates. Lying around the province is a mass of fishing grounds that contain a selection of fish species

like scad, tuna, siganid, anchovy and mackerel. Aside from farming and fishing industries, the Albaynons are good in handicraft making. Some of their famous products are **Sinamay and Pinolpog**, fabrics woven from abaca hemp and the mats made from pandan.

Bicolano cuisine is famous for its rich and spicy dishes, which are



Mayon Volcano, otherwise known as the perfect cone volcano

mostly cooked using coconut milk called gata and spiced with a very hot, local variety of chili called siling labuyo. Well known Bicolano specialties are Bicol Express (a very hot dish cooked in coconut milk with green chilies), Pinangat (fish or shrimp wrapped in gabi or yam leaves and cooked in coconut milk), Laing (gabi leaves and stalks boiled into a stew with ginger, chili and coconut milk) and Ginataang Langka (young jackfruit stewed in coconut milk with shrimp paste called bagoong).

Legazpi, the capital of Albay Province, is best known for its surrounding attractions, in particular, the majestic Mayon Volcano. Mayon is world renowned for its perfectly symmetrical cone, which billows smoke daily, a reminder that the volcano still erupts at frequent intervals. The buried remains of **Cagsawa**, with only the church steeple still standing, are proofs of the strong powers of this beautiful, but dangerous wonder of nature.

Historical sites found in the province are the Battle of Legazpi Tylon, Jose Ignacio Paua Monument, Old Albay, Simeon Ola Monument, Guinobatan and the Andres Bonifacio monument in Sto. Domingo. The National Museum in Cagsawa contains geological finds from Mayon.

Notable ancient churches include **Our Lady of the Gate** in **Daraga**, St. John the Baptist in Camalig and St. Rose in Bacacay.

Albay is filled with many natural wonders and notable attractions in the area include the **Hoyop-Hoyopan**, **Calibidongan and Pototan Caves**, the surfing beach at Sto. Domingo and also **Misibis Island**, a paradise for beach lovers, artists, and nature lovers and an ideal place to enjoy swimming and discover the exotic marine life underneath; **Busay Falls** and the **Tiwi Hot Springs**; San Miguel and **Rapu-Rapu Islands** are among the lesser known, but unspoiled dives sites in the country.

Mayon Volcano: The world's most perfect cone, Mayon Volcano has a height of 2,242 meters (8,189 feet) and a base of 10 kilometers embracing several towns. Her name was derived from the Bikol word "Magayon," which literally means beautiful. The peak, likened to the legendary beauty Daragang Magayon, is often concealed by clouds urging first-time visitors to stay longer to admire her charm.

Albay also celebrates its own festivities. The Karangahan Festival is celebrated in May is a grand Albayano celebration as an expression of wealth brought about by a good harvest. Katalingkasan Festival, held every July 21-25, is celebrated in conjunction with the town fiesta of Libon. Bicol Food Festival is a feast of the famous Bicol cuisine. Bancathon is a water sport activity participated in by fisherman from the different municipalities of Albay. ■



Local handicraft store, daraga, albay - Curtains & hanging lamps made from seashells, ball lamps from abaca twine, native fans & hand bags made of "sinamay" cloth, a material woven from fibers of a maguey plant (pineapple family).



The town of Tiwi, in Albay province, is known for their exquisite pottery.



Sleeping Lion Hill - Kapuntukan Hill is called so because its contour and shape are like a sleeping lion, lying a kilometer away from the busy Legazpi pier. Atop this hill affords viewers to relish the beautiful vista of the entire city of Legazpi and the neighboring municipalities as far as the town of Manito and the alluring islands of Rapu-Rapu.



Misibis Island Beach - A paradise for beach lovers, artists, and nature lovers, Misibis is an ideal place to enjoy swimming and discover the exotic marine life underneath.



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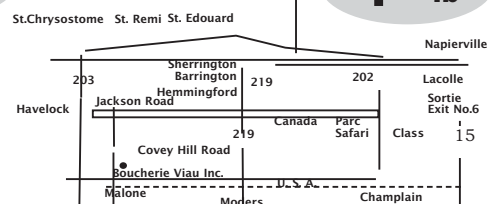
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Star Photo Gallery



Panday Tinig at Carnegie Hall post concert reception Front from L: Peter Apelo, Dindo Miras; kneeling from left: Amir Billonnes, Jake Calizar, Jowen Soguilon, Gerald Castillo. Jessie Pascual, Jun Diaz, Willie Gomez; semi-standing from left: Mellie Francisco, Marivic Aplon, Mynia Peñaranda, Gelyn Gao-ay; standing from left: Elvie Flores, Raquel Estoque, Anita Lo, Theresa Pasiolan, Jee Mae Ojoyan, Paul Imperial (Music director), Editha Fedalizo (pianist), Erlinda Gascon, Minerva Barriga, Marissa Meneses, Carmela Raquepo, Marina Ocumen, Ruel Arevalo, Lilibeth Flores; back from left: Domingo Lorica Jr., Sahmee Roux, Magnolia Camat, Edward de las Alas.



Vigie Asiatique Committee at the Testimonial Dinner at the Cabaret of the Montreal Casino held on October 22, 2007



Mary Joy Lizarondo showing off some of the parols made during the workshop held on November 11, 2007 sponsored by the Phil. Folk Art Society of Quebec.



The participants pose with the officers of the Phil. Folk Art Society of Quebec



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Students of the Tuesday French class at Gilmore College pose with Mrs. Zenaida Kharroubi (standing at left), their teacher and director of the school.

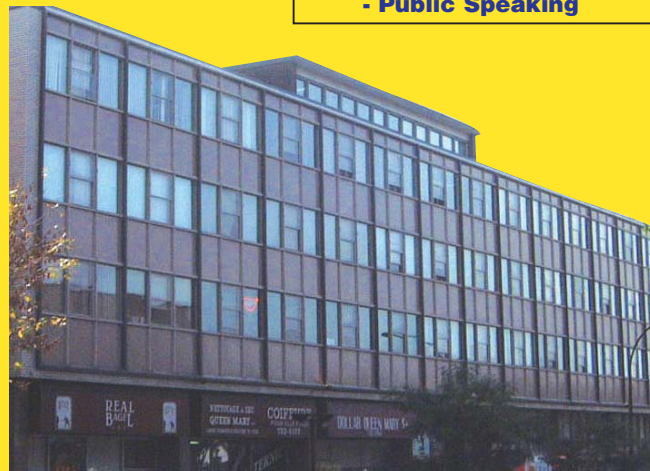


A group photo of the students Christmas party traditionally held annually at Gilmore International College.

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FILIPINO STAR SHOWBIZ GOSSIP

Fil-Canadian Jessica Nicole Trisko crowned Ms. Earth 2007



In the picture (from left to right): Miss Earth-Water Silvana Santaella Arellano from Venezuela, Miss Earth 2007 Jessica Nicole Trisko from Canada [Images], Miss Earth-Air Pooja Chitgopekar from India, and Miss Earth-Fire Angela Gomez from Spain.

new queen was chosen yesterday, November 11, during the coronation night of Miss Earth 2007 at the University of the Philippines Theater in Diliman, Quezon City. Ms. Canada Jessica Nicole Trisko bested 87 other delegates for the title, which was previously held by Hil Hernandez of Chile.

The pageant, which was aired live last Sunday night on ABS-CBN, was hosted by MTV Asia VJ Greg "Utt" Panichkul and Ms. Earth 2004 Priscilla Meirelles. The Brazilian beauty queen is currently the flame of actor John Estrada.

Jessica is a political science Ph.D. student at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. Her mother, Maria Elizabeth Asuncion Domingo, hails from Manila. The newly crowned beauty queen was born and raised in Vancouver, British Columbia.

A total of 88 environmentally aware and concerned young ladies competed in the Miss Earth beauty pageant, which is organized by Carousel Productions. Now on its seventh year, Miss Earth is a pioneering beauty pageant that serves as a vehicle for environmental advocacy. ■

Rumored breakup of Rachelle Ann Go and Christian Bautista getting more buzz



Although Christian Bautista denied that he and Rachelle Ann Go have broken up, the rumor just refuses to



simmer down. According to a report, the singing couple ended their relationship long before their U.S. concert tour

May nagbalita sa PEP (Philippine Entertainment Portal) na break na sina Rachelle Ann Go at Christian Bautista after two years of being together. Matagal na raw break ang dalawa at sa last trip nila sa United States for a series of shows ay wala na sila. Pero ngayon lang lumabas dahil hindi nila sinabing tapos na ang kanilang relasyon.

Sa concert ni Beyonce Knowles sa The Fort noong November 7, ang dating manliligaw na si Jed Madela ang kasama ni Rachelle. Niyaya raw siya ng binata at dahil wala na siyang boyfriend ay sumama naman.

"Hindi kami magkasundo sa ugali," ang sagot daw ni Rachelle nang unsain sa breakup nila ni Christian pero hindi na siya nag-elaborate. Hindi rin nito sinabi kung sino sa kanilang dalawa ang nagbago ang ugali.

Ang breakup din daw nila ni Rachelle ang rason kung bakit hindi pumayag si Christian na magkaroon ng presscon ang show niya sa St. Francis Square. Bukod sa ayaw siguro nitong matanong sa nangyari

sa kanila ng dalaga, ayaw rin nitong magsinungaling. Si Christian pa naman, pagdating kay Rachelle ay non-stop ang mga kuwento. Ano nga naman ang itsitsika niya sa press kung wala na sila?

Balita pa ng PEP, mula nang malaman ng mga dating manliligaw ni Rachelle na wala na sila ni Christian, bumabalik ang mga ito at muli siyang nililigawan. Kasama kaya sa mga muling nanliligaw sa singer si Mark Bautista?

Nag-text ang PEP sa publicist ng Stages, ang management company ni Christian, upang kumpirmahin ang balitang breakup ng dalawang singers ng ASAP '07. Ang reply sa amin ni Oliver Oliveros ay saan daw nakuha ng PEP ang istorya.

Nang sabihin namin na reliable ang pinanggalingan ng balita, kakausapin daw muna niya sina Rachelle at Christian at saka babalikan ang PEP. But as of press time ay hindi pa uli nagti-text sa amin si Oliver. ■

Amalia Fuentes denies robbery allegation of estranged husband



Joey Stevens accused his wife, veteran actress Amalia Fuentes, of robbery in his business establishment in Quezon City last Saturday, November 10.

Stevens reportedly filed a complaint for robbery, as represented by his corporate secretary Editha Bernardo Lopez, against Amalia at the Quezon City Police District—Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit.

According to a report in People's Journal published today, November 14, Joey claimed that Amalia stole 20 stocks certificates from various companies; a folder containing documents for a Ford Expedition, Pajero and Daewoo vehicles reportedly owned by Stevens; a digital camera; a manual camera; various original titles; deed of absolute sale; cash worth P99,721.44; manager's check payable to SSS amounting to P131,000; various foreign currencies—collector's item; checkbook; and other documents.

Amalia Fuentes denies robbery allegation of her estranged husband. Amalia is being accused with five other persons who allegedly

helped her in getting the cash and other important documents.

Investigations showed that Amalia was with a certain Jeric Stevens, SPO3 Rodel Tuano, one Edmar Ramirez of 24/7 Locksmith and Safe Vault Services, and two unidentified person when she was allowed to enter the establishment. These men allegedly helped her in opening the main door of the office and stealing the documents contained inside the vaults.

Through a text message, People's Journal was able to get the side of the veteran actress. Amalia's message read, "I can't answer until I see what he [Stevens] filed, you are the first one I hear this. Last night we were both in Manila Polo Club. So let me read his case first, I will ask my lawyer to get a copy of the case."

In the following phone interview, Amalia defended that she merely picked up personal papers. She was in a hurry, the actress said, so she picked up a stack of documents, with the intention of returning them later.

Amalia clarified, "I only picked up personal papers from Joey's secretary. I didn't barge in. I had the key to the office of Joey. Technically we're still husband and wife. Whatever is in his name is still considered conjugal."

"I have no intention of selling the certificates. What I don't need, I will return. That is not a robbery."

The veteran actress further explained that she and Joey are still technically husband and wife, that they still own the said conjugal property. Amalia added, "A husband cannot sue his wife for theft."

During the interview, Amalia added that Joey stopped giving her the P100,000 monthly support. She has also filed a case for temporary protection order against her husband before the QC court.. ■

Lea Salonga back from the success of "Les Miserables" the Richard Gutierrez and Marian Rivera to star in a Valentine movie



Dumating sa Pilipinas ang international Filipino star na si Lea Salonga kagabi, November 13. Kasama ni Lea ang kanyang anak na si Nicole at ang kanyang equally-celebrated mom na si Mrs. Ligaya Salonga.

Halatang pagod si Lea, pero malugod pa rin siyang nagpaunlak ng interview sa ilang miyembro ng media na sumalubong sa kanya sa airport.

Tuwang-tuwa ang international star dahil naging matagumpay ang kanyang pagganap bilang Fantine sa timeless musical play na Les Miserables. "It was an honor and quite a challenge to have played Fantine in Les Miz," pahayag ni Lea.

Ikinuwento rin ni Lea na labis siyang naapektuhan dahil sa nagaganap na stagehand strike sa Broadway sa New York. Ayon sa balita, work rules at staffing requirements, pati na ang mga balangkas sa pagbuo ng isang mamahaling Broadway show, ang naging dahilan ng welga ng mga manggagawa.

"There's not much going on there right now because of the strike and I hope it stops," sabi ni Lea, na labis ang pag-aalala para sa kapwa niya Broadway actors.

Samantala, tuwang-tuwa naman si Lea habang ikinukuwento niya ang kanyang pagiging ina. Kilig na kilig pa

siya habang idinedetalye ang pag-aalaga niya sa kanyang panganay na si Nicole.

"She runs now! If you can just imagine, hinahabol na siya ng lola niya. Ako hinahabol ko siya kahit saan. Nakakatuwa! She's such a sweet and wonderful kid. She also talks a little bit now. So it's really nice when I talk to her. Nakakatuwa talaga!" pagmamalaki ng Tony-winning actress-singer.

Natuwa rin si Lea nang mabalitaan niyang may plano si Ai-Ai delas Alas na gawan siya ng tribute concert. Wala raw problema kay Lea kung gawin ng comedienne na katatawanan ang mga kantang pinasikat niya. Basta ang importante raw ay huwag mawala ang respeto kung paano isinulat ang mga nasabing kanta.

"Wow, I feel so honored and so flattered!" bulalas ni Lea. "You know that's Ai-Ai and you pretty know what to expect when you watch her. She's a great comedian."

Sa isang cruise ship daw magpa-Pasko si Lea at ang kanyang pamilya. Wala pang ibang plano ngayon ang aktres kundi tutukan ang kanyang bagong musical play sa Pilipinas, ang Cinderella.

Sa July 29 hanggang August 24, 2008 ipapalabas ang Cinderella sa Cultural Center of the Philippines at ililibot pa sa ilang bahagi ng Asya. ■



For the past three years mula nang bumalik ang GMA Films in production, isang Richard Gutierrez-Angel Locsin parati ang pang-Valentine movie ng film arm ng Kapuso Network in cooperation with Regal Entertainment.

It started with 2005's Let The Love Begin introducing another loveteam, sina Jennylyn Mercado and Mark Herras, and it broke box-office records. Noong 2006, isang out of the country movie naman ang pinagsamahan nina Richard and Angel for their second Valentine movie, ang I Will Always Love You. Light romance ang naunang dalawang Valentine movies nina Richard at Angel.

But for this year, sumubok ang loveteam nila sa isang serious and gothic type na pelikula, ang The Promise, na updated version ng Hihintayin Kita sa Langit nina Richard Gomez at Dawn Zulueta.

Pero middle of this year ay lumipat si Angel sa ABS-CBN kung kaya't parang naging malabong magkaroon ng Valentine movie ang GMA Films and Regal for next year, unless may makuhaing bagong partner si Richard.

Enter Marian Rivera.

Launched in Marimar, Marian's stock rose phenomenally the same way her primetime show did. Dahil dito



kung kaya't susubukan for the first time na pagsamahin sina Richard and Marian for the 2008 Valentine movie ng GMA Films and Regal Entertainment.

With the tentative title A Very Special Love, the script will be written by Suzette Doctolero and directed by Mark Reyes. Sa Thursday, November 15, magsisimula ang shooting ng pelikula, na magtatampok din sa dalawa pang alaga ni Annabelle Rama na sina JC de Vera at Ehra Madrigal.

Ang original title ng movie ay My Best Friend's Girlfriend dahil kuwento ito ng magkaibigan (Richard and JC), pero mai-in love si Richard sa girlfriend ni JC na si Marian.

Sa presscon ng Kamandag kagabi, November 12, sa Studio 3 ng GMA Network, ayaw pang magsalita ni Richard about the movie dahil nasa presscon daw siya ng bago niyang fantaserye. Pero may isang statement siyang pinakawalan patungkol sa unang pagsasama nila ni Marian: "I'm very excited."

Sa pagsasama nina Richard at Marian sa pelikula bilang Valentine offering ng GMA Films at Regal Entertainment, mukhang hindi muna matutuloy ang napabalitang pelikula na gagawin ni Richard with superstar Judy Ann Santos. ■

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Cristine Reyes filed case against Manny Pacquiao and Ara Mina resume shoot for "Anak ng Kumander"



Inamin ni Cristine Reyes na labis siyang naapektuhan sa pagkumpronta sa kanya ni Carlene Aguilar dahil kay Dennis Trillo. Ayon kay Cristine, hindi raw niya inaasahan at hindi dapat ginawa ng beauty queen ang nangyari sa taping ng All Star K noong November 7.

Sa kuwento ni Cristine, hindi naman daw estranghero sa kanya si Carlene. May ilang beses na raw tumawag sa kanya ang ex-beauty queen nang nasa United States pa ito. Hindi na ikinuwento ni Cristine ang detalye ng usapan nila ni Carlene, pero naging maganda naman daw ito kaya't hindi niya maintindihan kung bakit ganoon na lang ang pakikiharap sa kanya ng 2005 Bb. Pilipinas-World.

"For protection na rin kaya ako nag-file ng demanda," sabi ni Cristine sa GMA News at PEP (Philippine Entertainment Portal).

Ikinuwento rin ng young sexy star na may ilang pagbabanta sa pamamagitan ng text message na galing diumano sa pinaniniwalaang cell phone number na pag-aari ni Carlene.

Dagdag ni Cristine, hindi na raw muna niya kinakausap si Dennis. Pero kinumpirma niyang humingi na ng paumanhin sa kanya at sa kanyang pamilya ang young actor, na ama ng anak ni Carlene.

Ayaw nang magkomento ni Cristine tungkol sa totoong relasyon nila ni Dennis. Gusto muna raw niyang kalmahin ang kanyang pag-iisip dahil hindi naman daw siya sanay na



ginugulo ng kahit sino.

"Mabuti na lang itinatayo ngayon ang Serve," pagbabalita ni Cristine. "Ito ang bagong negosyo namin na disco club. Yung dating Klownz sa Araneta Coliseum, nakuha na namin ang puwesto. Kasama ko rin dito sina Lito Alejandria at Mark Herras, at may ilan pang non-showbiz na partner namin."

"Mabuti nga ito kahit walang shooting at taping ngayon, talagang pinagkakaabalahan ko ito. Anyway, mahilig naman ako sa disco kaya nakakalimutan ko ang problema ko ngayon."

Nagpapasalamat naman si Cristine dahil mula nang pumutok ang kontrobersiya sa pagitan nila ni Carlene ay marami na ang nagpadala ng mensahe ng suporta sa kanya.

"Nagpapasalamat ako sa mga kaibigan kong hindi nawawala sa tabi ko," sabi ni Cristine. "Ilang araw din akong nagkulong sa bahay at hindi tumatanggap ng tawag o text, pero sobra ko naa-appreciate ang mga messages sa akin. Hindi n'yong lang alam kung paano ko naa-appreciate ang mga 'yon. I hope they all understand that I have to be silent for a while because I need some time for myself."

"Sobra rin akong nagpapasalamat sa Ate [Ara Mina] ko. Hindi talaga niya ako iniwan sa mga ganitong pagkakataon. Thankful din ako kay God dahil talagang lumalakas ang loob ko," pagtatapos ng StarStruck 1 Avenger. ■



Filipino prize fighter Manny Pacquiao once again donned his showbiz persona as his movie, *Anak ng Kumander*, resumed shooting. The crew of GMA-7's *StarTalk* reportedly visited the set last Sunday, November 11.

In his column that appeared today in *Abante Tonight*, Abu Tilamzik spills the details regarding the much-awaited meeting between Manny and his co-star Ara Mina. Over the past months, the two have been favorite tabloid subjects due to reports that they're allegedly carrying an affair. Unfortunately, the rumor gave birth to other damaging issues, like Manny purportedly presenting Ara a new house, along with a luxury vehicle, as gift.

Ara has denied the issue incessantly while expressing disappointment at Manny for failing to comment on the issue.

The strain, according to Tilamzik, was still evident during the shoot last Saturday, November 10, prompting director Kaka Balagtas to personally coax the two stars to settle their differences for the sake of the movie.

Defending himself and his actions, Manny said, "Naka-concentrate ako nun sa laban ko. Pagbalik ko rito, ang dami ko nang ginawa at hinarap. Hindi ko sinagot nun dahil hindi naman talaga totoo."

Manny, of course, was then busy preparing for a boxing rematch against Mexican slugger Marco Antonio Barrera and was consumed by his



training. Manny won the bout via unanimous decision last October 7 at the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The man dubbed as the "Pambansang Kamao" also downplayed the rumor that he personally sought to pull Ara out of the project to quell the malicious rumor.

"Para tayong loveteam na iniintriga!" Ara reportedly snickered to Manny.

"Ang dami ko nang nagawang pelikula at naiintriga sa mga leading man ko, ito yung pinakagrabe," lamented the sexy actress.

In defense of Christine

Speaking in behalf of her sister, Cristine Reyes, Ara said that she was more affected by the confrontation issue that transpired between Cristine and ex-beauty queen Carlene Aguilar, allegedly over young heartthrob Dennis Trillo.

"Mas ako pa nga ang nag-react nang husto. Kahit si Cristine, parang wala lang sa kanya," confided Ara before voicing out her sister's request, "Huwag na lang daw patulan at pansinin."

Ara revealed that Dennis send a text message and even called her personally to say sorry for Carlene's actions. Cristine, however, failed to answer directly if she accepted Dennis's apology. ■

Liz Almoró is picking up the pieces, according to Maricel Laxa

Though saddened by the court's decision, actress Maricel Laxa-Pangilinan is not bothered by some people expressing doubts about her testimony in defense of Willie Revillame's estranged wife Liz Almoró.

Speaking to Showbiz Central in a taped interview aired yesterday, November 11, Maricel calmly said: "May mga taong nagsasabi nga sa akin na dismissed 'yong kaso. Ang sa akin naman, hindi ako naaapektuhan kung anong sasabihin ng tao o ano 'yong iniisip ng mga tao tungkol sa akin or sa kaibigan ko. Basta ang importante, alam ko 'yong totoo at



makakatulog ako sa gabi, knowing

'yon ang totoo."

Maricel was a neighbor of the Revillames and when Liz abandoned her marriage and filed a case against the comedian-host, Maricel stood up for the beleaguered wife by testifying in support of Liz's claims that her marriage was detrimental, both physically and emotionally.

Willie was charged for allegedly violating Republic Act 9262 or the "Anti-violence Act Against Women and their Children." Just recently, the Department of Justice (DOJ) dismissed the case for lack of merit.

"Actually kasi hindi ko naman alam

'yong naging outcome nung resolution. Kasi apparently nauna 'yong media makaalam kesa sa lawyers," said Maricel.

he's doing very well. She's going to finish her Master studies. She's working on her thesis, 'tapos she's moving on her with life. And I think ang pinaka-importante sa kanya ngayon ay si Juamee, ang kanyang anak," said Maricel.

Maricel concluded her statement by saying: "I wish her the best, both of them the best." ■

POLITICAL PRESS RELEASES

Bernier's Decision to Skip International Meeting on Pakistan Demonstrates Skewed Foreign Policy Priorities

OTTAWA- Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier's decision to skip the Commonwealth Ministerial meeting on Pakistan's future in the Commonwealth is the latest example of the Harper government's skewed priorities on Canadian foreign policy, Liberal Foreign Affairs Critic Bob Rae said today.



Hon. Maxime Bernier

"Given that Canada's mission in Afghanistan is our country's top foreign policy priority and the success of that mission depends on political stability in neighbouring Pakistan, it seems strange that Mr. Bernier would decide to send his junior counterpart to the Commonwealth meeting," said Mr. Rae.

"Canada has a responsibility to speak out about against recent actions taken by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, yet the Minister of Foreign Affairs has decided that the state of emergency in Pakistan isn't important enough to merit his attendance this important meeting."

Foreign ministers from more than 50 countries are meeting in Uganda Thursday to decide whether to suspend Pakistan from the British Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, of which Canada is a member, has given President Musharraf a deadline of November 22 to lift the emergency rule imposed earlier this month, resulting in the arrest of thousands of opposition and human rights activists, the removal of members of Pakistan's Supreme Court and the silencing of independent domestic media outlets.

Liberal Associate Foreign Affairs Critic Bryon Wilfert expressed disappointment at the Conservative government's decision to send Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Helena Guergis to such a high profile

international meeting.

"What kind of message are we sending to the international community by sending a junior official to be Canada's representative in discussions on how to hold Pakistan accountable for its actions?" asked Mr. Wilfert.

NOVEMBER 1, 2007

CONSERVATIVE IMMIGRATION REPORT MISLEADING: NDP

Fails to outline major problems and hides reduction by 10,000 new immigrants

OTTAWA - Stephen Harper's Conservative government continues to disappoint hard-working families hoping to bring their relatives to Canada. The newly-released 2007 annual immigration report failed to outline the major complaints and systemic problems in Canada's immigration system and confirmed a decrease over the previous year by over 10,000 new immigrants.

"Canada needs at least 320,000 new immigrants each year in order to meet the 1% target of the total population," said NDP immigration critic Olivia Chow. "As a vast country with a declining birth rate and an aging population, bringing enough families to Canada represents the future economic growth of this country. The Conservatives have failed by allowing only 251,649 new immigrants last year."

A 2004 Canadian Council on Social Development report projects that by 2020, the number of children and youth under age 25 is expected to decline to 9.3 million, a drop from the current 32% of the population to 26%.

Canada is already lacking skilled workers and under the current regulations, international students are only allowed 90 days to find a job. Chow vowed to introduce legislation to change this law in order to retain these highly educated young people in Canada.

"Major problems in our system are missing from this report," continued Chow, outlining the lack of action on family reunification and on Canada's refugee program. "Canadian families sponsoring their loved ones are often rejected or forced to wait for years to be reunited or even be granted a visa. This frustrating practice is cruel and hurts the reputation of Canada overseas."

There is also a disturbing ten percent drop of the number of refugees approved last year.

"There is absolutely no reason why Canada cannot accept more refugees from war-torn countries. Bringing fairness to immigrant families will increase economic productivity as we need newcomers to fuel our growing economy," said Chow.

For more information, please contact: Rupinder Kaur, NDP media officer, 613-222-5048 or rupinder@ndp.ca

Immigration System Failing Under Conservative's Watch

The Conservative government's recent immigration targets are misleading and do not reflect the reality of what is going on in our immigration system, said Liberal Citizenship and Immigration Critic Maurizio Bevilacqua.

"Although Citizenship and Immigration Minister Diane Finley claims she will maintain the current annual immigration target levels set by her government last year, this does not reflect reality," said Mr. Bevilacqua. "The Harper government actually accepted 10,500 fewer immigrants last year than the previous year."

Over the past decade, immigration has accounted for 70 per cent of Canada's net labour force growth. Statistics Canada predicts that between 2011 and 2015 all - 100 per cent - of our net labour force and population growth will come from immigration.

In 2005, the previous Liberal government allocated \$418 million of new funding to streamline the immigration system and deal with a growing backlog of applications.

"The first act of the Conservative government regarding

immigration was to cancel hundreds of millions of dollars that the previous Liberal government had earmarked to deal with the growing backlog of immigration applications," said Mr. Bevilacqua. "Departmental figures show that the overall backlog of immigration applications grew by more than 20,000 last year alone."

Processing times for immigration applications have also risen substantially over the past year.

"Parents and grandparents waiting to be reunited with their families will now have to wait longer," said Mr. Bevilacqua. "The average time it takes to process their applications has jumped to three and a half years from three years."

"It is tragic that new Canadians have to suffer undue hardship because of this government's lack of a long-term vision or commitment to Canada's immigration system."

Contact:

Office of Honourable Maurizio Bevilacqua
(613) 996-4971

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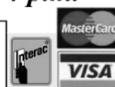


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Glorietta blast was an industrial accident - PNP

November 15, 2007

Last month's deadly explosion at the Glorietta 2 mall in Makati City was an "industrial accident." This will be the substance of the Philippine National Police's (PNP) final report that will be released soon.

In an interview on dzRH radio, PNP chief Dir. Gen. Avelino Razon Jr on Saturday said the inter-agency task force that investigated the mall blast headed by Chief Superintendent Luizo Ticman is finalizing the report.

Razon said he expects to receive the final investigation report "anytime soon."

"Patapos na ang investigation, si Gen. Ticman is about to finish his report (The investigation is in its final stages. I expect Ticman to finish his report)," Razon said in an interview on

dzRH radio.

When asked if the report will indicate that the blast stemmed from an "industrial problem," Razon replied: "Opo (Yes)."

At least 11 people were killed while more than 100 others were injured after a blast ripped through the Glorietta 2 in Makati City last October 19.

Inter-agency investigators, aided by foreign experts, found no traces of a bomb in the blast site, leading authorities to believe that a gas leak that led to a buildup of methane gas in the mall's basement caused the explosion.

Ayala Land Inc., which owns the Glorietta malls, had contested the findings, saying its own experts found no trace of a gas buildup in the mall's basement. ■

Erap says he's still with political opposition

November 5, 2007

A week after he was pardoned and released from detention by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, former president Joseph Estrada on Thursday said he remains to be a leader of the political opposition.

Estrada also said he will refuse any position in the government.

"Di na ako pwede bumaba, ang huling position ko presidente. Kung may mag-offer sa akin ng position dapat hindi bababa sa presidente, di ba?" said Estrada.

He said he can still serve the people as a private citizen. The ousted leader earlier said he will support Mrs Arroyo's efforts to fight poverty.

Estrada, who said he has adjusted to normal life, said he wants to help put a closure to investigations of irregularities in the government.

Estrada received a warm welcome at the San Juan cemetery where he visited the tomb of his father after his six-year detention.

"Ang kasiyahan ko doble-doble, tagal ko rin 'di nabisita papa ko," he said.

Estrada said he got his knack for public service from his father, Emilio Ejercito Sr., who served as a government employee.

Estrada arrived at the cemetery about 6:30 p.m. and left after after two hours. ■

RP Government vows to probe corruption after world bank scraps road loan

November 15, 2007

The Philippine government promised Tuesday (20 Nov) to investigate reports of bid-rigging that led the World Bank to suspend a US\$232 million loan for a national road project.

The bank's vice president, Jim Adams, said in a statement from Washington that the lender had rejected two large road contracts between 2003 and 2006 "because of strong signs of collusion and excessive pricing" linked to government procurement.

The contracts are part of the national roads improvement and management program, which is partly financed by the World Bank and which Adams described as the country's main tool for modernizing infrastructure.

He said bank and government officials have developed "stringent anti-corruption measures" to address anomalies in the bidding process, but that the second phase of the project will remain on hold "until the government and the board members receive the information they have requested."

World Bank spokesman Peter Stephens told The Associated Press he expects the board to discuss the projects again in the next few weeks because it wants "to be sure that all of the safeguards and precautions are in

place."

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and top Cabinet members were attending a summit of Southeast Asian leaders in Singapore and did not comment immediately.

Her Cabinet secretary, Ricardo Saludo, said the government was committed to curbing corruption and was working with the World Bank to address the issues of transparency in all projects.

"We expect that anti-graft agencies will look into and act on any solid evidence of corruption," he said.

Arroyo has been struggling to shake off the image of a graft-ridden administration amid several corruption scandals.

She has cancelled a US\$330 million (232 million) broadband contract with China's telecommunications company after a Senate hearing implicated Commission on Elections Chairman Benjamin Abalos as a broker in the allegedly overpriced deal, as well as Arroyo's husband who has been accused of pocketing kickbacks.

Abalos later resigned, and Arroyo's husband has denied any wrongdoing.

In a speech recently, Arroyo said corruption was no longer "a problem within the system, it may have become the system itself." ■

'Un-pardon' me, Erap dares state

November 15, 2007

Convicted plunderer Joseph Estrada yesterday dared the government to recall his pardon following his fight to stop the anti-graft court from confiscating his properties to satisfy the penalties cited in his conviction.



Former Philippine President Joseph Estrada talks to a crowd during a medical mission in Manila November 3, 2007

The former president said he was willing to go back to jail to continue his fight against confiscation, adding he was used to it.

"This government had put me in jail for six years and six months," he said.

Estrada, a former actor, San Juan mayor and vice president, was ousted in a peaceful Army-backed people power revolt in 2001, and later was tried in a P4.1-billion plunder case.

The Sandiganbayan found him guilty on Sept. 12 this year and sentenced him to life in jail, but President Gloria

Macapagal Arroyo pardoned him on Oct. 25 over the objections of government prosecutors.

That pardon allowed him to leave Tanay, Rizal, where he had been under house arrest during his trial.

"I'm ready if they want to return me to jail—even Muntinlupa [the national penitentiary]—if they can prove that I'm guilty," he told dzMM radio.

He said he accepted Mrs. Arroyo's pardon because he had lost hope of getting justice after six years of litigation before the anti-graft court, adding he did not have a chance of being acquitted even if his lawyers brought his case to the Supreme Court.

He vowed "to fight to the end" to stop the Sandiganbayan from confiscating the properties that he said he had acquired before he became president in 1998.


"If I stole the people's money, I would not appear before the public. That is why I am fighting this," he said.

"Modesty aside, my family is quite well-off," he said, adding his grandmother had an ancestral home in Laguna, and that they had the biggest house in Greenhills, San Juan, when they moved there.

Earlier, Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said he would ask for a recall of the executive clemency granted to Estrada, citing his refusal to pay in full the assets stated in the forfeiture order.

Yesterday, Villa-Ignacio said the grant of pardon to Estrada was done in haste and would set a bad precedent.


He said that pardon would encourage other dishonest officials to commit crimes because "they could later seek a pardon." ■



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DUMANDAN ENTERPRISES

Binay gets death threats on birthday

November 12, 2007

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay received 11 death threats via text message on his birthday, radio dzMM reported Monday.



Mayor Binay

Binay's security officer, Vincent Inonog, went to the Makati City Police Office on Monday to inform them about 11 text messages received by the mayor on the day of his birthday

(Sunday, October 11).

Inonog said it was the eighth text message that alarmed Binay. It read: "katapusan mo na ngayon hinahatulan ka na ngayon sa kawalang hiyaan mo huwag mong subukan ang Ka Gloria mahal na mahal ko iyan, ka Bobot (Your time is up. You are being judged for your misdeeds. Don't try Ka Gloria I love her so much, Ka Bobot)."

Inonog said the mayor received the threat at 10:23 a.m. Sunday. He added that the other messages were sent from 1:02 a.m. to 10:37 a.m.

He said the messages came from cellular phone # 0920-4129555.

Senior Superintendent Gilbert Cruz, Makati City police chief, said authorities are now coordinating with the National Telecommunications Commission to identify the owner of the cellular phone number. ■

Joey de Venecia back in RP

November 8, 2007

Jose "Joey" de Venecia III is back in the Philippines less than two weeks after slipping out of the country amid the media frenzy on the pardoning of former President Joseph Estrada.

De Venecia, who had dropped bombshells on the \$329.48-million ZTE controversy, said there will be no more exposés in his future testimonies in the Senate.

"There's nothing else for me to say," De Venecia told GMA News at a Manila airport.

He added in Filipino that, "Everything that I had said was corroborated by the affidavit of [Philippine Star columnist]

Jarius Bondoc."

The businessman left the Philippines a day after testifying that President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo knew about alleged bribe offers for the passage national broadband network (NBN) project.

He said Mrs Arroyo ordered former socioeconomic planning secretary Romulo Neri to approve the project anyway.

During the same testimony on October 25, De Venecia quoted business tycoon Enrique "Ricky" Razon as saying that First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo stood to gain \$70 million in kickbacks from the ZTE deal.

That same afternoon, Malacañang

announced that Mrs Arroyo granted executive clemency to Estrada.

De Venecia told GMA News that he left on October 26 to visit his mother in the United States.

He expressed relief that that the relations between President Arroyo and his father, House Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr, appear to remain intact in spite of the ZTE controversy.

"That's a positive development. At least the events won't be too politicized," he said.

The businessman had accused Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza and two other former police generals of hatching an assassination plot.

He claimed to have received information that the "elimination plot" was headed by Mendoza, Transportation Assistant Secretary Reynaldo Berroya and Ricardo Dapatt, director of the Bureau of Corrections.

"Should anything happen to me or my father in the coming days, no other persons will be responsible for it other

than Generals Mendoza, Berroya, Dapatt, and their henchmen," he said.

The three flatly denied the younger De Venecia's claims.



Jose "Joey" De Venecia III

The businessman said he learned about the assassination plot through retired Lieutenant Gen. Jaime de los Santos, whom he described as Mendoza's roommate of three years at the Philippine Military Academy.

De los Santos, Berroya and Mendoza are all members of the PMA Class 1969. ■

Philippines inflation steady on strong peso

November 6, 2007

A strong peso offset rising oil prices and kept the Philippines inflation rate steady at 2.7 percent in October, the government said Tuesday.

Last month's inflation rate was within market expectations and the central bank's forecast range of 2.5-3.0 percent.

"Price pressures from major food, non-food and fuel items were broadly mitigated by the peso appreciation," central bank governor Amando Tetangco told reporters.

The US dollar has lost 10.49

percent of its value against the peso so far this year. The dollar was trading at 43.89 pesos Tuesday, compared to 49.03 pesos on the last trading day of 2006.

Core inflation, which excludes selected food and energy items prone to volatile price swings, rose at 2.4 percent from a year earlier in October, compared to 2.7 percent in September, the National Statistics Office said.

Overall, the inflation rate for the 10 months to October stood at 2.6 percent. ■

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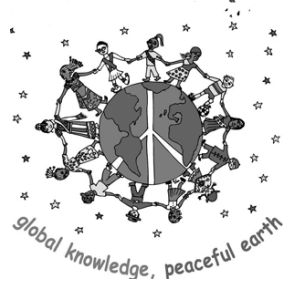
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Isaac T. Goodine

Global Perspectives



The Loonie and the Greenback: A tale of two dollars

OTTAWA SENATORS SALARIES
2007-08 (US\$)
Current (Cdn\$)*In 2002 (Cdn\$) **

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Wade Reddin | \$6.5 million |
| \$6.11 million | \$10.52 million |
| Dany Heatly | \$5.5 |
| \$5.17 | \$8.90 |
| Jason Spezza | \$5.0 |
| \$4.71 | \$8.09 |
| Daniel Alfredsson | \$4.69 |
| \$4.41 | \$7.59 |
| Martin Gerber | \$3.7 |
| \$3.48 | \$5.99 |

• * Nov. 9, 2007 rate of \$1.06 vs. U.S. dollar

• ** Jan. 21, 2002 rate of 0.6179 cents vs. U.S. dollar

What a difference the exchange rate makes! Of course the Senators named here are the ones who play the game of ice hockey in a sports arena and not the ones who play the game of politics in the Senate chambers on parliament hill. But the table shows how the exchange rate has dramatically altered the economy for all who live, work, or invest in Canada and the shift came about in the space of five short years. The strong Canadian dollar compared to the United States dollar is affecting the economy dramatically on both sides of the boarder. The strength of the Canadian currency is due to high prices for oil and other commodities that mineral-rich Canada sells in the international market that are based on contracts quoted in United States dollars.

However the "other side of the coin" shows that it is the weakening of the United States dollar against other major currencies that accounts for much of the shift in relative value of currencies. So the Canadian "Loonie" (so called because there is an image of a loon on the obverse side of the one dollar coin) has gained strength against the American "Greenback" (so called because of the color of the one dollar bill coveted around the world as the Yankee dollar). The net result is that if you have something to sell, such as oil from Alberta and Newfoundland, potash from Saskatchewan, or hydroelectricity from Quebec, that is good news, but if your livelihood depends on tourism, retail sales, personal services, consulting, or manufacturing items to sell abroad, the news is not so good. But what if you

have been saving or investing for a retirement nest-egg in greenbacks? Look at the chart above again, count your losses, swallow hard, and prepare to move on.

This oversimplified statement of the situation helps to explain that the economic situation has just undergone a "paradigm shift". The United States is no longer the only world-class-act on the intercontinental stage as other major players have arrived, including newcomers such as China, India, and the Philippines. We are no longer in a splendid solitude and the Canadian workforce is not prepared for the competition. A former Canadian, Conrad Black, the media baron who is on bail awaiting sentence in the USA for corruption in international financial dealings, has recently pointed out that the last time the Cdn\$ traded above the US\$ was back in 1976 and that was because Canadian productivity was the highest in the world on a per capita basis implying that we had the most efficient workforce in the world and the most effective management of human capital. In 1976 things were different. Montreal was Canada's largest city and played host to the Olympic Summer Games and the economy was on a solid footing---for awhile.

The fundamental difference with the current situation is that commodities rather than productivity drives the process and is not sustainable unless we can bring about a better balance in our human capital account. In fact Canadian productivity is below the average for the developed economies and the nation is not prepared to compete with emerging competition from the rapidly developing countries now in the game.

In regard to human capital the Philippines has a unique part to play because it is the one country that prepares a workforce specifically to obtain employment overseas as an integral part of economic strategy. English is the medium of instruction and educational institutions tend to respond well to identified needs and continuously supply much of the human capital required in the global market place. The numbers are in the millions and the record of performance is remarkably high as evidenced by the contract extensions and repeated recruitment drives. The Philippine Overseas Employment Authority (POEA) serves as a Department of

Labor to assure foreign employers of the integrity and competence of the Filipino worker and provides general support to contract workers while abroad to ensure that employers meet international standards for terms and conditions of employment. The POEA is also the only body authorized to approve and oversee practices and procedures for recruitment of overseas workers under contract and accomplishes this by issuance of a License to approved agencies. Foreigners are cautioned to deal only with valid Licensees in all matters of employment of contract workers.

Canada established strong links with the Philippines when Democracy was restored at the end of the Marcos Presidency and a group of international agencies agreed to collectively provide official development assistance (ODA) to help build the capacity that would enable the Philippines to catch up economically with its South East Asian neighbors. Canada accepted the role of capacity building and focused its share of the ODA on human resource development. This was accomplished largely by education and training projects that linked Canadian and Filipino institutions in partnership and some resulted in long term relationships. Some Canadians opted to stay in the Philippines and some Filipinos opted to immigrate to Canada. For example, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) was linked with a counterpart Association for Non-formal Training and Education in the Philippines (ANTEP). Subsequently, the Government of Canada decided in 2005 to undertake the Canadian Immigration Integration Project (CIIP) in China, India, and the Philippines, and contracted ACCC as the executing agency. Not surprisingly, the first post to become operational was that in Manila. The Manager of the field office is a Canadian of Filipino origin and the latest information from that source indicates that 1500 persons have been through the briefing program already. The division of ACCC responsible for the CIIP consists of 14 people, six of whom are of Filipino origin, and another staff member of the same division (although not of Filipino origin) has experience as the Canadian Community Coordinator at the Canadian Embassy during the period when Canada provided ODA.

Finally, at this juncture I wish to clarify that I have a personal and professional interest in the recruitment of skilled workers from the Philippines and for that reason I have established a business relationship with my former colleague, Violeta A. Laraya, based in Manila. We worked together at the Colombo Plan Staff College when I was Director General and she was Director of Administration and we subsequently collaborated in writing projects. Now, in response to a perceived need for skilled workers in Canada and with full knowledge that there are competent candidates available in the Philippines; we have entered into a business a business arrangement whereby we can

effectively match Canadian employers with the workers they are seeking in a wide range of professions and trades.

Isaac Goodine may be reached at: itgoodine20@hotmail.com

Government of Canada Supports Quartier des Spectacles

Montréal, Québec (November 12, 2007) - The Government of Canada, through its brand new Building Canada infrastructure plan, will consider the Quartier des spectacles cultural precinct as a funding priority. This financing could cover as much as one third of eligible costs, for a federal contribution of a maximum of \$40 million for the cultural precinct of the Quartier des spectacles. The Government of Québec and the City of Montréal have also confirmed a financial commitment for this project, both for an amount of \$40 million each. The Honourable Josée Verner, Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Status of Women and Official Languages, and the Honourable Michael M. Fortier, Minister of Public Works and Government Services, made this announcement today, on behalf of the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

The Quartier des spectacles is centered on the intersection of Sainte-Catherine Street and Saint-Laurent Boulevard, covering almost a square kilometre bound by City Councilors Street, Berri Street, Sherbrooke Street, and René-Lévesque Boulevard. This area is home to 30 performance halls totalling almost 28,000 seats, numerous international festivals, art galleries and centres for the exhibition and broadcast of alternative culture. The Quartier des spectacles supports more than 7,000 jobs linked to cultural activities, from education through to public outreach, including production, exhibition, and broadcasting.

"Promoting the cultural development of our cities is important for the Government of Canada," said Minister Verner. "This is a priority of our Building Canada infrastructure plan, which is ensuring access to quality infrastructure. Our government's support for Montreal's Quartier des spectacles is a concrete demonstration of the value we place on cultural development in all its forms, ensuring the enrichment of citizens' lives."

"The Building Canada infrastructure plan is advancing quality infrastructure," said Minister Fortier. "Through Building Canada, our government acknowledges the importance of preserving, developing and diligence review of the project, the successful completion of environmental assessments required under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the signing of a contribution agreement outlining the project details and the parameters for federal financing, and on compliance with the obligations set out in the framework agreement. Through its unprecedented \$33-billion Building Canada infrastructure plan, the Government provides long-term, stable and predictable funding to help meet infrastructure needs across Canada. Building Canada supports a stronger, safer and better country."

For further information contact:

Karine White
Press Secretary
Office of Minister Cannon
613-991-0700

Spell it "Balik-BUY-an"

Filipinos returning home

by Tina Arceo-Dumlao

You can take the Filipino out of the Philippines, but you can't take the Philippines out of the Filipino.

Even when they've been living comfortably abroad for years, Filipinos can still be counted on to visit the country regularly to renew and revitalize their ties with relatives and friends.

Data from the Department of Tourism show that the United States is consistently among the top sources of visitors to the country. And almost of them are Filipinos carrying American passports.

The rest of the balikbayan are Filipinos permanently residing in other countries, like Canada, Australia, Singapore, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates.

Like their counterparts in the US, these Filipinos are flush with cash, which they're ready and willing to spend on themselves and their families. This makes the balikbayan a potent economic force in the Philippines, with several sectors particularly buoyed by their moneyed presence.

In an interview, John Victor R. Antonio, chief operating officer of the Century Properties group, one of the country's leading real estate companies, revealed that about one in four people who buy its single-detached units—like the Canyon Ranch in Cavite—and the bigger-sized

condominium units, is a balikbayan or a visiting Filipino who is permanently residing outside the Philippines.

"They are really looking for retirement homes here because in terms of lifestyle, the Philippines can't be beat," Antonio explains. "About 80 percent of the people who come back to the Philippines regularly say that they want to retire here, and that's why they're buying homes."

For this reason, other real estate companies like Ayala Land Inc. and Megaworld Corp. are targeting the balikbayan market, and have even set up marketing offices in countries with big Filipino communities to get them to buy property in the Philippines.

Willy Ocier of Belle Corp., which owns and operates the Tagaytay Highlands resort property, confirms this. Members usually bring their visiting friends and family to the sports and country club to show them a better side of the Philippines, he noted.

"The club is a favorite destination because it's convenient to go there. It's a short drive from Metro Manila."

Malls are also getting their fair share of the estimated \$100 that tourists, including the balikbayan, spend everyday they're in the country. Millie Dizon, vice president of the SM mall chain, said the group has even entered into a joint marketing agreement with the DOT, under which the tourism department encourages visitors to visit its malls, particularly the Mall of Asia in Pasay City. The SM group, for its part, includes DOT special tours in its own customer campaigns.

"We do cross promotions and help these guests with what they need," Dizon said.

She added that balikbayan arrivals peak in July—when US schools go on a break until September—and in December, when the balikbayan comes home to spend the Christmas holidays here.

Roel Chan, brand manager of Uniglobe Travelware Co., Inc. agrees. Chan said that during these months, Uniglobe—which handles The North Face, Columbia and Jansport brands in the Philippines—notices an increase in its sales, thanks to purchases made by returning Filipinos for their families.

"We did some qualitative studies and results show that there is an increase in sales from balikbayans, especially in June and December," Chan said. "In December, jackets and more novelty items sell, while in June, the Jansport bags sell because it's time to go back to school."

Even the restaurants are getting a balikbayan windfall, especially those that specialize in Filipino cuisine, like Sentro of the Chateau restaurant group. Chateau chief executive Ricky Gutierrez said that easily 30 percent of its patrons are balikbayan, with arrivals peaking from December to March.

"They come to Sentro mainly because we provide comfort food for them. We offer something different from the cuisine that they are used to," Gutierrez said. "We are also happy that Filipinos here recommend the restaurant to their balikbayan friends." Best sellers include the sinigang na corned beef, the galunggong special and sagot gulaman.

Annabelle Wisniewski of the

Discovery Hotel group said the balikbayan also makes up a sizable and growing market for the serviced apartment industry since not all of them want to stay with relatives.

"Many balikbayans choose to stay in a serviced apartment like the Discovery Suites because they can entertain their relatives here. At the same time, they can cook and have privacy," Wisniewski explained. She said they usually stay for about two weeks to as long as a month.

"It's a growing market because there are now more people going abroad, and those who still have roots here will always come back," she added.

And since the balikbayan has to go back to their new homes, food companies are there to sell them a piece of home they can take back with them. Goldilocks marketing manager Pinky Yee said they usually bring home polvoron, mamon, ensaimada and other pastries, so Goldilocks has changed its packaging to make it easier to tote the baked goodies.

She added that because Goldilocks has realized a significant balikbayan contribution to its income, the company decided to come up with the Pinoy Deli line of cooked meals in dry packs of food like dinuguan and bopis, which are approved for entry into countries like the US and Australia.

With companies themselves seriously wooing the balikbayan market with goods and services tailored to their needs, little wonder these seasonal guests have made the country part of their yearly holiday plans. ■

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SPORTS NEWS

PBAM League Jumps off

By: Joy Lizarondo

As advertised, the PBAM, Montreal Filipino Basketball's finest, jumped off its 2007-2008 season on Saturday, November 17, 2007 at the CDN Sports Centre. Ushered in by emcee par excellence Ed Vasquez, the colorful parade of athletes brought in a

Nicole Mislang from the Palaboyz, and Best Uniform from PAAWIS was made by a panel of judges composed of Ms. Lourdes Rosales, Ms. Lucy Parial, Ms. Nemia Bermudez and Ms. Tess Manuel. Cash awards were donated by Ms. Glenda Lasatin, incumbent president of the Ilocano Association and FAMAS.



Borough Mayor Michael Applebaum gets ready to throw the ball for the jump off between FCAWI and PAAWIS players, November 17, 2007 during the opening of the PBAM League season.

reverberating ovation from excited parents and supporters.

PBAM Vice-President and League Manager Hal Sotero, welcomed players and their parents and thanked them for their commitment and faith in the PBAM. He stated that the 20% increase in team entries was evidence that the PBAM is doing well in community service.

Guest speaker Mayor Michael

Partial listing of the Opening Day winners of the 9 Divisions, 66 teams, 323 games schedule were:

| | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Division Team | |
| Lawin Kidz A: 67 | PAAWIS A: 61 |
| Itlog Kidz A: 29 | PAAWIS: 24 |
| Aguila Steelers 43 | KP 35 |
| Kuwago CAM-LAOS 71 | |
| All-City 65 | |
| Itlog Kidz C: 35 | Kidz B: 16 |



Natasha Marie Lizarondo Nuguid, FCAWI team muse (with shirt no. 8 on the right) holds the banner during the opening parade.

Applebaum of the NDG-CDN borough commended the tremendous volunteer work of the PBAM officers and the solid support of parents in promoting youth sports. Astounded by the significant increase of youth teams, equal number of youth off the streets, the Mayor promised to undertake more sports related projects, citing the approved construction of another sports centre in NDG (Benny Farm). It should be noted that the PBAM is a partner organization of the Centre, recognized by the Ville de Montreal as truly representative of the sports interest of the Filipino community.

During the the 14 game spectacular opening, the selection of Ms. PBAM I, Joy Palermo Castellano from the Seafarers, and Ms. PBAM II,



Mike Nuguid (only adult in the group) seems to enjoy the company of these kids who are members of the FCAWI basketball team.



Borough Mayor Michael Applebaum poses with (from left) Marites Manuel, Lourdes Rosales, Lucy Parial and Nemia Falconite Bermudez, November 17, 2007 at the Van Horne Sports Center.



Mary Joy Lizarondo poses with the FCAWI team before the parade.

You are cordially invited to join us in celebrating the **Silver Jubilee** of the **North American Filipino Star** on December 8, 2007 starting at 8 p.m. Studio 26 Mtl 855 Decarie Blvd. featuring the QP8 Band Guest Speaker, His Excellency Ambassador Brillantes Please get your tickets now and support the fund rising drive for our Filipino Solidarity Cooperative. 514-485-7861 514-733-8915

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43,000 regain Filipino citizenship

November 15, 2007

Some 43,000 former Filipino citizens have reacquired their Filipino citizenship in the past three years under the dual citizenship law, the Bureau of Immigration (BI) revealed Sunday.

Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan said 28,400 applications for dual citizenship have been approved in various Philippine consulates abroad while some 14,479 were processed at the BI main office in Manila.

Former Filipinos who became American citizens topped the list of applicants whose dual citizenship were approved. Many Filipino-Canadians and Filipino-Australians have also reacquired Filipino citizenship.

"As a result, these former Pinoys are again enjoying their rights and privileges as citizens of the Philippines," stressed Libanan, a former congressman and one of the principal authors of Republic Act 9225 or the Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act.

It was in 2003 when Congress passed the act but the BI started processing applications only in April 2004 after Malacañang designated the bureau as the lead implementing agency of the law.

The dual citizenship law declares that former natural-born Filipinos who later became naturalized citizens of other countries have not lost their Philippine citizenship.

Libanan said the law was enacted in line with the thrust of President Arroyo's administration to encourage former Filipinos who are now living abroad to return to the land of their birth and buy property or invest in business here.

Manuel Ferdinand Arbas, who heads the BI technical staff on dual citizenship, said his team receives an average of 15 applications for dual citizenship a day.

Arbas said there has been an upsurge in the number of applicants since the BI came out with new guidelines that eased the requirements for dual citizenship applications.

Under the revised rules, applicants for dual citizenship are no longer obliged to submit birth certificates from the National Statistics Office (NSO) to prove that they were former natural-born Filipinos.

Instead, an applicant may submit his birth certificates from the local civil registrars of his birth place and other documents, such as his old Philippine passport, voter's affidavit, and marriage contract, proving that he is a former natural-born Filipino.

He said the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) regularly transmits to the BI the list and records of approved dual citizenship applicants so that the latter may secure their identification certificates and leave their fingerprint files with the bureau once they visit the Philippines. ■

Report: Philippines retains 6th on gender equality

November 10, 2007

The Philippines retains its rank as the sixth most woman-friendly country in the world, the latest study by Switzerland-based World Economic Forum (WEF) showed, according to local media Friday.

In the Global Gender Gap Index 2007 study, the WEF showed that the Philippines in sixth place achieved a gender equality score of 0.7629, from its score of 0.7516 in 2006, Philippine television network GMA News said.

The Philippines was the only Asian country included in the study's top 10, which was dominated by European countries. Topping the list was Sweden, followed by Norway, Finland, Iceland and New Zealand.

Following the Philippines in the rankings were Germany, Denmark, Ireland, and Spain.

The Global Gender Gap Index included 115 countries.

The poll's criteria includes educational attainment gap, outcomes on access to basic and higher education level; political empowerment gap, outcomes on representation in decision-making structures; economic participation gap, outcomes on salaries, participation levels and access to high-skilled employment; and health and survival, outcomes on life expectancy and sex ratio. ■

Central Bank to improve remittance system

November 15, 2007

The central bank, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), said it had prepared measures to improve make more transparent the mechanisms for money remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and to cushion the adverse impact of a strong peso on households supported by OFW incomes.

Banks will be required to post in their premises and websites their various remittance products and charges with breakdowns of costs, delivery time to beneficiaries, and other relevant information, the BSP in a recent report to Malacañang.

"The transparency of bank charges would enable Filipinos overseas to shop for cheaper and better service providers," the BSP said. "At the same time, this encourages greater competition among remittance agents and promotes lower remittance fees and charges."

To improve OFW families' access to financial services, rural banks will be allowed to provide services related to foreign exchange remittances as well as buy and sell foreign currency, the BSP also said.

This service is expected to improve the delivery of remittance service and give depositors, including overseas Filipinos, an option to keep their foreign currencies in bank deposits instead of immediately exchanging their foreign-currency earnings for pesos.

The BSP has also approved alternative modes of remittances, such as Internet-based remittance, and use of mobile phones for financial transactions using SMS/text features for balance inquiries, fund transfers and withdrawals.

"Banks have also introduced other new technologies to which beneficiaries will have greater access, such as card products with debit feature to facilitate remittances with financial institutions as issuers, and telephone companies as service providers," the BSP said.

The interconnection of the three major automated teller machine

(ATM) networks--Megalink, Bancnet and Expressnet--has effectively widened the delivery network of cash remittances and improved the payments and settlements system for a faster and safer flow of remittance funds to beneficiaries, the central bank said.

Acceptable IDs for financial transactions have also been simplified to encourage OFW remittances to use banks instead of non-formal channels, such as personal couriers, it added.

To encourage overseas Filipinos and their families to increase savings and investments, the BSP said it proposed issuance of multicurrency-denominated Retail Treasury Bond (RTB) instruments for overseas Filipinos.

"With a proposed initial offer size of US\$1 billion, the bond issuance would promote saving among overseas Filipinos as well as raise funds for development financing," it said.

Commercial banks will start offering overseas Filipinos specialised investment products and services, including insurance and pension plans and real estate, through tie-up arrangements with pre-need and development companies, the BSP said.

The banks have designed direct payment schemes to ensure the security and convenience of the household-beneficiaries, it said.

The BSP said it had approved a proposal of ING Bank to launch a "International Filipino Fund", a fund invested in stock and fixed-income securities, with Philippine National Bank (PNB) as its distributor/marketer through ING and PNB branches overseas.

"Lastly, the BSP continues to undertake its advocacy through financial literacy campaigns that aim to promote a culture of savings among overseas Filipinos and their families," the central bank said.

Overseas Filipinos and their beneficiaries are being educated about safe practices in investing in financial products. ■

Groups oppose "ocean fertilisation" in Philippines

November 12, 2007

Environmental groups condemned on Monday an Australian company's plan to dump hundreds of tonnes of fertiliser into Philippine waters as part of an experiment to combat climate change.

The groups, including Greenpeace and civil society organisations, called on the Philippine government to stop the experiment, known as "ocean fertilisation".

"This is not a solution and is a dangerous diversion to the real solutions to address climate change," said Jasper Inventor, Greenpeace climate and energy campaigner. "It is also extremely irresponsible to test a speculative and unproven method, which potentially has high impacts to the environment."

Sydney-based Ocean Nourishment Corp. is said to be planning to pump up to 1,000 tonnes

of nitrogen-rich urea into the Sulu Sea in the southern Philippines, where it has already dumped one tonne of the substance.

The company has said urea stimulates the growth of phytoplankton in the sea and can absorb large quantities of carbon dioxide -- the main cause of global warming -- from the atmosphere.

It also said the growth of more phytoplankton would help boost fishing stocks.

But Inventor said the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has noted that ocean fertilisation "remains largely speculative" and "many environmental side effects have yet to be assessed."

The Sulu Sea between Palawan in the west and Mindanao is home to the UNESCO World Heritage Tubbataha Reef Marine Park. ■



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