

# FILIPINO TIES



website: <http://www.cfo.gov.ph>

A PUBLICATION OF THE COMMISSION ON FILIPINOS OVERSEAS DISTRIBUTED WORLDWIDE May - August 2004 Vol. XI No. 2

## CFO transferred to Office of the President

In accordance with government reorganization initiatives, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo ordered the transfer of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to the Office of the President effective 05 August 2004. The transfer was made through Executive Order No. 343, repealing Executive Order No. 490 signed on 26 November 1991 which transferred CFO from the Office of the President to the DFA.

With this directive, CFO is once again an agency of the Office of the President after being attached to the DFA for more than a decade. The transfer came about as a response to the "unprecedented and phenomenal increase" in the number of overseas Filipinos, prompting the need to strengthen efforts in promoting their interests and well-being.

*see CFO transferred, page 10*

## President Arroyo bares 10-point agenda

A million jobs every year for the next six years, investments in education, a balanced budget, decentralization, increased access to electricity and water, computerized elections, and a just end to the peace process – these highlighted President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's inauguration address held on 30 June 2004. Dubbed as the "10 point agenda", President Arroyo explained to the public that the priorities she highlighted aims to reduce poverty and bring the Philippine economy back on its feet.

President Arroyo stressed the importance of building transport and digital

infrastructures in creating hubs of development in the countryside with the aim of decongesting Metro Manila. The President cited the proposed development of Subic and Clark as a competitive international service and logistics center in Southeast Asia. She also emphasized the importance of efficiently collecting government revenues in the hopes of balancing the budget and raising government productivity.



President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo waves at the crowd after speaking about her 10 point agenda during her inauguration at Cebu City.

In her first State of the Nation Address at the House of Representatives on 26 July 2004, President Arroyo unveiled five reform key packages which specifically address her 10-point agenda: 1) job creation through economic growth, 2) energy independence and savings, 3) social justice and basic needs, 4) anti-corruption through good government, and 5) education and youth opportunity.

Chief among the government's priority is to create a business environment that is conducive for job creation. President Arroyo revealed that the country's fiscal deficit of P312 billion and public sector debt of P5.3 trillion are the biggest stumbling blocks for job creation. To address this problem, she asked the Congress to pass eight revenue measures aimed at averting a financial crisis at the same time sending an impression to investors that the country can hold its own ground.

President Arroyo also sought to reform the energy sector with the privatization of the National Power Corpora-

## CFO to launch investment and business guide for overseas Filipinos



The Commission on Filipinos Overseas announces the launching of its most recent publications, the *Investment and Business Guide for Overseas Filipinos* and the *Primer on Citizenship Retention and Re-acquisition Act of 2003*. These two new publications were developed by the Commission in line with the government's effort to strengthen ties between overseas Filipinos and the Philippine motherland and in view of the passage of Republic Act No. 9225 or the Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act of 2003.

Both publications will be initially distributed during the 6th Empowerment Convention of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations on 10-12 September 2004 in Chicago, Illinois.

The primer aims to provide overseas Filipinos who have acquired foreign citizenships, information on how they may re-

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*see President Arroyo, page 3*



# News From Abroad

## U.S. honors veterans with memorial

April 29, 2004 marked the public opening of the World War II Memorial, the United States of America's lasting tribute to honor the 16 million who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during the Second World War. Located on 17<sup>th</sup> Street, between Constitution and Independence Avenues, it is flanked by the Washington Monument to the east and the Lincoln Memorial to the west. The Memorial is operated by the National Park Service and is open to visitors 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



The World War II Memorial during the day. At far end is the Washington Monument.



As night time falls, the memorial is bathed with bright lights, making it more spectacular and breathtaking.

A dedication ceremony was held on 29 May 2004 led by President George W. Bush, former Presidents Clinton and Bush, and U.S. Senator Bob Dole. Speaking before a crowd of veterans and their family members, Senator Dole expressed that the memorial is "a tribute to the physical and moral courage that makes heroes out of farm and city boys...to lay down their lives for people they'll never meet."

Many veterans, however, lamented that the nation's tribute came too late for their comrades. Of the 16 million who served, only about four million are still alive and are dying at the rate of 1,056 a day.

*see US honors, page 10*

## Filipinas clinch two firsts in Italy

Following the adoption of a proposal to allow the election of immigrants to Rome's city council, Filipina Irma Tobias was elected in March 2004 to represent immigrants from Asia and Oceania. Hailing from Sta. Cruz, Laguna, Tobias is one of the four city councilors elected to represent the estimated 250,000 immigrants living in the city of Rome, Italy.

Tobias' election marked the institutionalization of a consultative mechanism that allows foreign residents in Rome to participate in matters concerning integration and assimilation. These include programs and policies dealing with the promotion of civil and political rights, prevention of discrimination in public services and protection of equal opportunities between Italian citizens and foreigners.

In the same month, Italian President Carlo Ciampi awarded the Order to the Merit of the Italian Republic to Charito Basa, the first and only Filipina and one of the only four non-Italians to be conferred the said award. President Ciampi also named Ms. Basa as Knight of the Republic. The award came in recognition of Basa's contributions in "social development as well as in the promotion of the rights of women and migrants."

Basa's work with international non-government organizations such as Isis Inter-

## U.S. Census: Filipino New Yorkers are better off compared with the rest of New York

In a community briefing held at the Philippine Consulate General on 15 July 2004, the Asian American Foundation of New York, in coordination with the Filipino American Human Services, Inc. issued a report saying that New York City's Filipino American population earn more money and have more education than New York residents as a whole.

Said observations were culled from 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census data featuring a series of demographic indicators, profiling New York City's Filipino residents. New York City's Filipino American population grew by 44% in the last decade and is considered the fourth-largest Asian American group in the city. More than half of Filipino Americans in New York reside in Queens and nearly three quarters were born outside the United States.

In all income measures, Filipinos in New York earned more than city residents overall. Filipinos had a median household income of US\$69,228 as compared to US\$38,923 for the total city population; median family income of US\$78,219 surpassing the entire city's US\$41,887; and per capita income of US\$27,065 as opposed to the city's US\$22,402. General poverty rate among Filipino Americans in New York was 6%, substantially lower than the city's 21% overall.

The large income may be attributed to education, where 84% of Filipino Americans in New York City had post-secondary education compared with 48% of all adult New Yorkers. Only 7% of New York City's Filipino adults dropped out of high school compared to more than one-fourth of all adults. Filipino American school children in New York are twice as likely (40%) to go to private schools than all of New York's school children.

Nearly 40% of Filipinos in New York own their homes as compared to 30% of all

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## FIL-AMEMPHIS extends free medical services to poor patientes in Bulacan

In response to the lack of access to health care and services of indigent communities in the country, the Filipino-American Association of Metropolitan Memphis (Fil-AMemphis) of Tennessee, USA conducted a series of medical missions in Malolos City and Hagonoy, Bulacan on 05 to 11 June 2004. Some 30 doctors, nurses and other US volunteers, headed by Fil-AMemphis founder Fred McCaw, Jr. and current President Dr. Eduardo Cabigao, extended medical assistance to about 1,789 patients from various municipalities in Bulacan.

About 78 surgeries, including radical mastectomy, cholecystectomy, thyroidectomy, cleft lip and palate repair, and hernia repair, were performed by the foreign and local volunteer physicians at the Emilio G. Perez Memorial Hospital in Hagonoy. Free eye operations were also performed on 31 patients through the assistance of the Malolos Eye Clinic. Some 1,680 residents of Bulacan with various health problems also received free medical check-ups. The medical team distributed about 23 boxes of medicines and medical supplies, including 200 pairs of eyeglasses.

The US-based volunteers were joined by physicians and other health workers from Bulacan and Manila, local government officials and staff, and volunteers from the Grand Lodge of F&AM of the Philippines, the local sponsoring organization for the medical mission. The Malolos Masonic Lodge No. 46 coordinated the activities of the mission, including the pre-screening of patients and the schedule of the surgical operations.

For the past six years, the Fil-AMemphis has conducted medical and surgical missions in Nueva Ecija, Laguna, Bulacan and Pasig City.

For procedures and requirements in conducting medical missions in the country, interested parties may contact CFO's Projects Management Office at telephone number (632) 561-8327 or 561-8321 (local 607/608) or through fax number (632) 561-8332 or email [cfodfa@info.com.ph](mailto:cfodfa@info.com.ph).

## Demand for Skilled OFWs Continues

Worldwide opportunities boom for overseas Filipino workers despite growing competition from other labor-exporting countries, the Department of Labor and Employment announced in a news conference held on 10 August 2004. Most labor-receiving countries prefer and value Filipino workers because of their skills, work ethic and positive attitude.

According to the Labor Market Intelligence Report (LMIR), prepared by DOLE's Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, there is an emerging demand for infrastructure development project workers in the Middle East. OFWs are also needed for the new Dubai Mall in Abu Dhabi and the forthcoming 2006 Asian Games in Qatar. The United States, on the other hand, will require more nurses and teachers. The demand for new nurses is projected to increase by 25.3% in this decade alone. Canada is also expected to hire 59,000 to 113,000 nurses until 2011.

Furthermore, Asian countries are beginning to recognize the role of Filipino English teachers, engineers and information and communications technology professionals in maintaining their economic momentum. European countries are also able to care for their elderly population by hiring Filipino nurses, caregivers, and other medical and paramedical workers.

DOLE stressed, however, that OFWs should strengthen their knowledge of their host country's culture and language and continuously reinforce their capabilities and skills in response to the growing demand.

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*President Arroyo...  
continued from page 1*

tion which has been incurring debts because of inefficiency. She pledged to continue pro-poor programs on employment, land reform and health and affirmed the government's commitment in tearing up the drug and kidnapping syndicates.

To fight graft and corruption, President Arroyo asked the Congress to pass a law that will intensify the Ombudsman's functions. She also pledged to expand government services while trimming down bureaucracy by abolishing government offices with overlapping functions. She stressed the importance of improving educational standards with emphasis on technical and vocational education as well as strengthening English, science, technology and values formation. She sought Congress' support in considering charter change to "enhance the country's freedom and flexibility to do more."

While the President's 35-minute speech was generally well-received, some could not help notice the absence of two key issues which were common subjects of the government's policy pronouncements for the past three years: terrorism and overseas Filipinos. Many recall President

Arroyo as one of the first Asian leaders to support the United States' war against terror. The Philippines, has in fact, been the subject of several terror threats and attacks during President Arroyo's first three years in office.

President Arroyo's administration also saw the passage of three measures empowering and protecting overseas Filipinos, such as the Overseas Absentee Voting Act, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Act in 2003. Migrant-focused groups find the omission surprising, given that President Arroyo won overwhelmingly against her closest rival during the first-ever implementation of the Overseas Absentee Voting Act.

Others contend, however, that the lack of new policy pronouncements concerning overseas Filipinos does not equate to less attention given by the government in promoting the rights and well-being of Filipino migrants. Many share the view that with the looming financial crisis ahead, the role of overseas Filipinos in the development and progress of the Philippines has become more obvious now than ever before.



## FILIPINO TIES

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ISSN 1655-1664

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### Quotes from the Quill

**"I did not sacrifice policy to save a human life. I applied policy for that purpose."**

- President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo during her State of the Nation Address, justifying her decision to pull out the Philippine humanitarian contingent in Iraq to save OFW Angelo dela Cruz from being beheaded by his captors.

**"A borderless world doesn't preclude the idea of a home."**

- 19 year-old Patricia Evangelista, in her award-winning speech about the Filipino diaspora where she bested 59 other student contestants from 37 countries in the International Public Speaking Competition conducted by the English Speaking Union (ESU).

## perspective

# Filipino migration and the population question

**T**he alarming rate of population growth in the Philippines has spawned a plethora of legislations aimed at arresting the country's high birth rate, which is considered by some individuals to be a major impediment to economic growth. To address the country's rapidly growing population at 2.36% annually, legislators have proposed a two-child policy, five-year pregnancy and services moratorium, one-woman policy, and marrying at mid-age. House Bill no. 16 filed by Albay Representative Edcel Lagman proposed to give incentives to couples who will limit their number of children to two or less by providing them better access to education and other social services.



Population has been the most avoided issue of the 2004 Philippine Presidential campaign. The question is, how long can we avoid addressing it?

On the other hand, some believe that population increase is eventually good for the economy. In the article "Booming population: a bonus for migration?", Isagani dela Paz quoted economist and academician Dean Bernardo Villegas saying the government should not be afraid of a growing population since these Filipinos will become "the country's "demographic bonus" – a major source of manpower in a world of aging populations hungry for labor." Villegas is banking on today's young to become future migrant workers, and thus help boost the economy.

### More growth or more poverty?

Ideally, population growth, complemented by higher levels of domestic productivity, accessible education, and supported by responsive government programs and policies, can provide a strong labor force that can fuel economic growth. However, current economic indicators don't bring much hope for the four new Filipinos being born every minute.

The Philippines ranks as the 14<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world and 8<sup>th</sup> in terms of population density following countries like India, Bangladesh, and South Korea, among others. Population trends reveal that the Philippines has a very young population, 50% of which are below the age of 21. The Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics reveal that while a bigger percentage of the population is comprised of economically productive people (those aged 15 years old and above), only 66.7% are actually employed. Furthermore, the country's dependency ratio shows that one Filipino is providing for four others, a burden that many Filipinos are unable to take up and eventually pass on to the government. In 2003, the Philippines registered an unemployment rate of 11.4 percent, with the youth accounting for the bulk of the unemployed at 47.1%.

Dr. Nimfa Ogena, Director of the UP Population Institute, examined the link between population and international migration. She asserted that with the increasing proportion of young population in the Philippines, the challenge is how to respond to the increasing number of people competing for jobs in the labor market. A larger population implies higher competition for work, and a lower proportion of people looking for and getting work leads to a higher proportion of people in poverty. Since the size of the economically productive ages is seen to increase over the years, there is greater need for placement in overseas or local jobs.

Given the current upward trend for population figures and the high fertility rate among Filipinos, she stressed the need to focus on the generation of employment opportunities, not only locally but also overseas. "Given the population projections that we have", Ogena said, "there is definitely a need to pursue more labor-exporting activities."



# Mailbox

## CFO requested to help form more Filipino associations overseas

I am doing pretty good here in Canada. My fiancé and his mom are taking good care of me. They are very supportive so I don't find it hard to adjust to my new environment. There are a lot of immigrant serving organizations here that are very willing to support the newcomers in Canada. These organizations are being supported by the Canadian government. In the Vancouver International Airport, before proceeding to the Immigration Office, you will pass by the Community Airport Newcomers Network (CANN). They are giving handbook which will guide you on how to start your life in Canada. They also give leaflets containing list of immigrant serving organizations near the area where you will be staying.

I think, another project that the CFO could best extend to the Filipino immigrants is to facilitate or encourage Filipinos to create a Filipino community organization not only in key cities of Canada. The organizations may support and guide the future immigrating Filipinos in starting their lives in Canada. This will be a big help especially to those who are bringing their whole family or without relatives in Canada. Not only will it give the migrants more confidence but also to cheer them up in times that they feel homesick.

Lastly, I give my thanks to CFO for the high satisfactory services you have extended to our countrymen. I was quite amazed and happy to know that there are still government agencies in the Philippines which have friendly, approachable and good hearted people.

**Geminie A. Ortiz**  
Alberta, Canada

## Compliments from Germany

Your publication is a good way of reaching out and bringing CFO closer to our countrymen abroad. CFO made migrants aware that the government recognizes the vital role of overseas Filipinos in nation building, and value them as the modern-day heroes of the country.

It is also an enlightenment on the part of the migrants that there is a refuge they could turn to when things go wrong.

Congratulations and more power.

**Edna de Leon Reuer**  
Bayanihan Germany Magazine

## Thanks from little angels

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks for choosing us as one of the recipients for the cash gift granted by the Filipino Club Darwin. We can not express into words our appreciation for facilitating this gift. You are undoubtedly God's instruments in helping the little angels entrusted to our care. May God reward your goodness with His choicest blessings and grace you and your group deserves.

**Sr. Maria Fe Alonto, Cssl**  
Blessed Alfonso Fusco  
Children's Home  
Virac, Catanduanes

## More conferences and activities for overseas Filipinos

I am a Filipina married to a Dutch national and had been staying in Den Haag since December 2003. I always have that longing to find people from our country to socially connect with. I am lucky to have found *Munting Nayon*, a duly established organization here which publishes a monthly newsletter. There are also some Filipinas who render choir service at St. Lourdes Church in Scheveningen. However, not all Filipinos here are members of organizations because they connect to people within their area only.

It would be a significant endeavor if CFO organizes programs that would gather overseas Filipinos in one place or event, and conduct conferences to enhance their social and civic awareness. This will also help CFO disseminate information about its programs and policies.

I extend my warm gratitude to CFO for their concern and continued support to many Filipinos overseas. I believe we have a strong wall to lean on.

**Agnes Pavia Ven De Beek**  
Den Haag, The Netherlands

## First time in the Philippines

Thank you so much for making my first trip to the Philippines so memorable. I hope I'll be able to come and visit again in the near future. I appreciated everything. I now have a better understanding of my culture.

**Jennifer A. Cushing**  
Vallejo, California  
2004 Lakbay-Aral participant

*Editor's note: Over the years, CFO has organized or worked with Filipino organizations overseas to gather overseas Filipinos from all over the world. Some of the most recent activities include "Tipanansa Maynila 2000", Filipino Seafarers' National Convention and the 2nd Global Filipino Networking Convention. On January 20-22, the 3rd Global Filipino Networking Convention will be held in Cebu. Also in 2005, CFO plans to co-organize conferences of Filipino community centers or service organizations in the United States, and overseas Filipino youth.*

The FILIPINO TIES welcomes your opinions, comments, and suggestions. You can write to us at the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 1345 Quirino Ave., cor. South Superhighway, Manila, Philippines, send us a fax at (632) 561-8332, or e-mail us at cfodfa@info.com.ph.

## Bureau of Immigration sets up task force on dual citizenship

With its new mandate of implementing R.A. No. 9225 or the Citizenship Retention and Re-acquisition Act of 2003, the Bureau of Immigration (BI) has established a task force on citizenship retention and re-acquisition, in-charge of handling and processing applications coursed through the BI or Philippine embassies and consulates.

Under the implementing rules issued by BI, any person qualified under R.A. No. 9225 may file an application to reacquire or retain his or her Filipino citizenship at the Bureau of Immigration when in the Philippines, or at Philippine embassies and consulates, when abroad. The applicant must submit a copy of his or her birth certificate, authenticated by the National Statistics Office, or any other similar document issued by foreign competent authorities, or the Philippine embassy and consulate with jurisdiction. Said document must be submitted along with a signed petition and oath of allegiance, three 2" x 2" photographs (front, left and right side views) and a one-time application fee of US\$50 or its equivalent in foreign currency when filed abroad, or P2,500 when filed in the Philippines.

As of 13 July 2004, the BI reported that it has received 772 applications, 348 of which had already been approved. Nearly 80% of those who filed applications are American citizens. Former Filipinos who are Canadian citizens holds the highest approval rate, with nearly 54% of those who filed have re-acquired / retained their Filipino citizenship. The BI disclosed that one of the reasons why some applications have yet to be acted upon is because applicants have yet to provide the necessary documents.

The CFO's primer on the Citizenship Retention and Re-acquisition Act of 2003 may be viewed at [www.cfo.gov.ph](http://www.cfo.gov.ph) for more information about dual citizenship.



## Romulo spells out realities of RP foreign policy

National interest will always prevail. This is the primary consideration of Philippine foreign policy according to newly designated Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alberto G. Romulo. In a speech before the Manila Overseas Press Club (MOPC) on 17 September 2004, Secretary Romulo spelled out the "realities" of Philippine foreign policy, which he said, guides the conduct of Philippine relations with other countries.

Romulo explained that national interest is embedded under the three pillars of Philippine foreign policy, namely: 1) the preservation and enhancement of national security, 2) promotion and attainment of economic security, and 3) protection of the rights and promotion of the welfare and interests of Filipinos overseas. These three pillars, he asserted, are interlinked and form the very essence of the country's foreign policy.

First among the "realities" which Romulo emphasized is the determining influence of China, Japan and the United States in the security and economic destiny of East Asia. To date, Japan and the United States remain the country's biggest trading partners. Both prominently figure in the official development assistance received by the Philippines. China, on the other hand, is an emerging economic superpower whose large market opens opportunities for Philippine products and services.

The second reality, according to Romulo, is that Philippine foreign policy decisions will have to be made in the context of the Association of Southeast Asian (ASEAN). He cited the importance of ASEAN in achieving greater stability within the region and its evolving relationship with China in terms of security and trade. He emphasized progress made through ASEAN in reducing tensions in the South China Sea and preserving critical routes for oil and goods.

Touching on the role of the international community in the Philippine peace process, Romulo highlighted the growing importance of the Organization of Islamic Conference as the third reality. He cited the role of Malaysia, Brunei, Libya and Bahrain

*see Romulo spells out, page 11*

## RP and Spain sign extradition and mutual legal assistance treaties

To enhance bilateral cooperation on law enforcement, the Philippines and Spain signed two treaties related to extradition and mutual legal assistance on criminal matters. Signed on 2 March 2004 at the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Philippines was represented by acting Secretary of Justice Merceditas Gutierrez, while Spanish Foreign Minister Ramon Gil Caceres signed the treaty on behalf of Spain.

The event marked the first time that the Philippines concluded an extradition and mutual legal assistance treaty with a member state of the European Union. The last time the Philippines concluded an extradition treaty with a European country was in 1989, with Switzerland.

Many viewed the signing of treaties as timely, in view of the increasingly transnational scope of organized crime, such as drug trafficking, gun smuggling, ter-

rorism and trafficking in persons. The extradition treaty is envisioned to facilitate the exchange of wanted criminals found in the contracting party, preventing them from escaping punishment from Philippine or Spanish authorities. The mutual legal assistance treaty on the other hand, aims to improve the effectiveness of judicial assistance through rationalized procedures in both countries.

To date, the Philippines has concluded extradition treaties with Australia, Canada, China, Indonesia, South Korea, Thailand and the United States of America, among others. The Philippine Congress is also contemplating on passing a law that will enable the Philippine Foreign Service to propose transfer of sentenced persons agreements, with countries where there are several Filipinos serving time in foreign prisons.



## **PROGRAM Updates**

# Filipino-American youth rediscover their roots

**O**n 29 June 2004, 17 Filipino-Americans from Vallejo, California arrived in Manila to join the *Lakbay-Aral sa Pilipinas* Program. The group was headed by Ms. Sophie Pasibe, who is also the Chairperson of the Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce-Solano County.

The participants visited different parts of the country, mostly in the Western Visayas region, to get acquainted with the distinct culture, heritage, and people of the Philippines. Their itinerary included visits to Iloilo City, Aklan, Guimaras Island, and Palawan.

The *Lakbay-Aral* commenced with a visit at the Manila City Hall and a guided walking tour of the walled city of Intramuros. The participants went around Fort Santiago and learned about its significance in Philippine history. Glimpses on the life of our national hero, Dr. Jose P. Rizal, were also shown to them.

As part of their learning experience, Prof. Bernard Karganilla of the Department of Social Science of UP Manila gave a brief lecture on the *Philippines: The Land and the People*. He provided the participants with insights on Philippine history from pre-colonial times up to the Japanese era. He also explained the various foreign influences on our culture and how these have helped shaped our country into what it is today. The young participants were very fascinated to learn these facts about the Philippines and became even more eager to discover the country for themselves.



Watch your feet! *Lakbay-Aral* participants take on the rhythmic and tricky *Tagalog* folk dance, *tinikling*.

*Dance* by the renowned Bayanihan National Folk Dance Company, through the assistance of the Philippine Women's University.

Due to heavy rains, the day-tour of Corregidor Island in Bataan was cancelled. The group, however, took this opportunity to see their relatives, and visit the orphans at the Acocasion de Damas de Filipinas in Paco, Manila, where they handed out toys and gift items to the children. To show their gratitude, the children delighted their visitors with various song and dance numbers. The participants were moved by the children's presentation and were inspired to extend more assistance to the orphans in the future.

In the following days, the group visited Aklan. They went to the Bakhawan Eco Park and the Piña and Ati-Atihan Villages in Kalibo where they were taught first-hand about the Ati-Atihan festival and street dancing. For a breather, the group spent a few days



Streetdancing has never been this colorful. *Lakbay-Aral* participants learned to dance the *Ati-Atihan* from experts in Kalibo, Aklan.

The group also attended a crash course on *Conversational Filipino* given by Ms. Althea Enriquez of UP Diliman, and were taught the basics of *Philippine*

## **ADOPT-A-SCHOLAR GRANTEE GRADUATES CUM LAUDE**

**M**s. Amalia Solee, a beneficiary of the Adopt-a-Scholar Project, graduated last April 2004 with honors. She obtained her baccalaureate degree in Behavioral Science from the University of the Philippines Manila through the assistance of the Barangay Club of Indiana, a Filipino organization based in the United States, which financed her books, tuition and miscellaneous expenses at UP.



Solee encourages fellow youth to always aim high in setting their goals.

Amalia is one of more than 300 Filipino youth who have received help from overseas Filipino groups or individuals through the Adopt-a-Scholar Project, the educational component of the *Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino* (LINKAPIL) or Link for Philippine Development Program of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas. The said project aims to help indigent but scholastically-qualified students who wish to complete their studies.

Upon her arrival in UP Manila in 2000, she scouted for possible scholarships to help augment her expenses for school. She said she didn't want to burden her parents, who had to support her and five other siblings only on her father's income as an employee.

She has always been an achiever in her studies, being conferred academic excellence, discipline and leadership awards when she graduated from high school.

Currently, she works as a human resource assistant at Smart Communications, Inc. She said she is learning a lot, and enjoys working with the company. She wants to hone her skills and use them to their utmost potential. She dreams of traveling abroad to be able to broaden her horizons. Her advice to other struggling students is "never lose hope, persevere and always aim high when reaching for your goal".

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## cfo highlights

### Tree-planting, gift-giving activities highlight CFO's 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary

Going beyond the usual anniversary celebration, officers and staff of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas commemorated its 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary by emphasizing the importance of protecting the environment and helping those who are in need. On 19 June 2004, CFO employees and their family members gathered to plant seedlings at the La Mesa Reservation Area and give gifts to the children of Camarin, Caloocan City.

CFO employees planted at least 400 seedlings of indigenous plant species in one hectare of the La Mesa Reservation Area, which stretched along the boundaries of Caloocan and Quezon City in Metro Manila and the municipality of Rodriguez, Rizal. This was part of CFO's participation in ABS-CBN *Bantay Kalikasan's* "Save the La Mesa Watershed Project", which aims to reforest the once-denuded 2,700-hectare MWSS La Mesa Reservation Area. The project seeks to improve water production in La Mesa dam, prevent soil erosion and flooding, increase carbon dioxide sequestration, and promote



CFO employees and their family members at the La Mesa Watershed.

the area as a biodiversity nature park for the general public. *Bantay Kalikasan*, with the assistance of various groups has already succeeded in reforesting 1,000 hectares with 47 Philippine endemic species.



Through the generosity of groups like Feed the Hungry, Inc., CFO employees distributed gifts to school children of Barangay 185 and 186 in Camarin, Caloocan.

After a quick lunch at the La Mesa Eco Park, the group proceeded to Camarin, Caloocan City to distribute gifts to children of schooling age from *Barangays* 185 and 186. CFO staff distributed school bags and supplies, groceries, and snacks, which were sponsored by Feed the Hungry, Incorporated (FtH), a U.S.-based Filipino organization. Since 1990, CFO has been forging partnerships with overseas Filipino associations such as FtH, in reaching out to underprivileged sectors of the society through the *Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino* (LINKAPIL) or Link for Philippine Development program.

Over the last decade, the LINKAPIL program has channeled more than P870 million worth of development assistance in over 70 provinces in the Philippines.

## Presidential Awards Secretariat receives 150 nominations

When the official nomination period for the Year 2004 Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas ended on 15 June 2004, the Presidential Awards Secretariat was literally swamped with nominations from virtually every continent in the world. Undauntedly, the Secretariat set out to identify nominations that are officially endorsed by the Awards Committee convened by Philippine foreign service establishments with jurisdiction. Only endorsed nominations will undergo the second stage of evaluation in the Presidential Awards system.

The Presidential Awards Secretariat received 150 nominations for this year's awards, endorsed by 43 Philippine Posts based in 29 countries. The Philippine Consulate in New York led all Posts with 14 endorsed nominations, followed by Chicago (11) and Toronto (9). Approximately 38% of all nominations came from the United States and its territories. The number of nominations from Canada came at a distant second at 11%, while Australia came in third with 6%.

As in previous years, nominations to the *Banaag* Award outnumbered nominations in other award categories (94 out of 150). Close to 20% of all nominations were for the *Pamana ng Pilipino* Award category, while *Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino* nominations accounted for 13%. There were only three nominations for the *Kaanib ng Bayan* award category for this year's awards.

Endorsed nominations are presently being evaluated by the Technical Committee. The Executive Committee will further evaluate the shortlisted nominees. The final list of awardees is determined by the Office of the President and is expected to be announced no later than 31 October 2004. The awarding ceremonies will be held at the Malacañan Palace in December 2004.

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## CFO releases new information materials

In line with its mandate of providing the public with information materials to communicate the realities of migration, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas developed and released *Gintong Patnubay*, a comics magazine containing three illustrated stories touching on migration and intermarriages, and its psycho-social impact on individuals. The publication which was released in May 2004, aims to portray a balanced view on migration and educate the reader about the consequences of migrating overseas. *Gintong Patnubay* is written in Filipino, interspersed with some English and Taiwanese words.

To communicate its programs and services to overseas Filipinos, CFO developed and enhanced audio visual materials on the *Lakbay-Aral* program and the *Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino* (LINKAPIL) or Link for Philippine Development program. Shot and directed by Probe Productions, both materials featured people who have participated or benefited from said programs.

The *Lakbay-Aral* video highlights the experiences of second generation Filipino emigrants who participated in CFO's *Lakbay-Aral* program to rediscover their roots, and be acquainted with Filipino history, culture and language.

The LINKAPIL video, on the other hand, focuses on underserved Filipino communities which have benefited from the generosity of overseas Filipinos. Said video also provides information on how overseas Filipinos can assist Philippine development by channeling financial and material donations to disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities in the Philippine countryside.

*Gintong Patnubay* is given to the public free of charge. Filipino associations overseas may request for copies of the *Lakbay-Aral* and LINKAPIL programs.

Interested parties may e-mail [cfodfa@info.com.ph](mailto:cfodfa@info.com.ph) for more information.

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### Filipino migration...

*continued from page 4*

There is no doubt that the movement of Filipinos abroad bites into the existing domestic unemployment, but the question is, are there enough jobs overseas that can absorb the increasing number of workers the domestic labor market cannot absorb?

Recent trends in Philippine international migration reveal that increasingly, the level and quality of education is setting the parameters for overseas Filipino employment. High quality of education increases not only the chance of getting jobs overseas but also the possibility of better work opportunities. Competition among would-be migrant workers is also apparent. The Commission on Higher Education reports that there is a significant increase in the migration of selected professionals specifically in the field of education, engineering, health/medicine, and computer and information technology between 1990-1998. Among temporary migrants, there is a growing number of professional and technical workers, which in 2003, registered a 23% growth compared to a 1.3% growth in the service sector.

In the end, maximizing the gains from migration means increasing the competitiveness of Filipino workers through enhanced education and the continuous upgrading of their skills. However, with the increasing proportion of the Philippine population that relies on the government for education and other basic social services, it is doubtful whether the government can deliver these social services at the rate faster than the growth of its constituents. Ultimately, our present population growth rate is depriving the country the sufficient time to develop its resources and meet the demands of its people.

## CFO's Community Education Program kicks off

In coordination with participating agencies, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas launched its 4-month long Community Education Program (CEP) in July 2004. This year's CEP aims to cover 25 provinces nationwide, which commenced at the Ifugao and Benguet provinces. Some of the areas which will be covered include northern Cagayan, Isabela, Quirino, Bicol, Aklan, Capiz, Samar, Cagayan de Oro, Iligan, Davao and Sultan Kudarat, among others.

As early as 1988, the CFO has been undertaking a nationwide public information and community education program as part of its efforts to assist and protect Filipino migrants. Over the years, CFO has generated support from various government agencies such as the Department of Foreign Affairs, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and Philippine Information Agency, as well as non-government and people's organizations, in the conduct of information campaigns at the grassroots level to raise public awareness on issues with regard to migration and relevant government policies, programs and services.

Among the major issues which will be discussed in this year's CEP are trafficking in persons, illegal recruitment and intermarriages, among others. The Anti-trafficking in Persons Act, which was enacted in May 2003, will be the special focus during discussions with local public and law enforcement officials, symposia in schools, meetings with non-government organizations and interviews with the local press in radio, televisions and newspapers. CFO information teams will also provide and distribute useful handouts and information materials relevant to the discussions.

The 2004 CEP is scheduled to end in the CARAGA region by October. CFO aims to broaden the scope of the CEP every year to assist more people in making informed decisions about migrating abroad.



### **CFO to launch...**

*continued from page 1*

acquire their Filipino citizenship, and once again enjoy the rights and privileges Filipino citizens are entitled to under Philippine laws. It comes in an easy-read, question and answer format, and contains detailed procedures on how an applicant may re-acquire Filipino citizenship; documentary requirements and fees involved in re-acquiring one's citizenship; and other relevant issues and concerns.

Recognizing the potentials of overseas Filipinos in investing and promoting economic growth, the Commission developed the Investment and Business Guide for Overseas Filipinos to ac-

quaint Filipinos in other countries with business opportunities in the Philippines. The Business Guide contains a broad spectrum of possible business and investment undertakings in the Philippines, and includes details on the procedures, requirements, and registration fees, among others, when starting a business venture.

Each of the 27 chapters of the Business Guide takes up a different area of investment which includes agribusiness, trading, investments in bonds and securities, franchising, tourism and property ventures, among others. It also features investment and business possibilities by regions in small

medium scale enterprises, and areas where government provides incentives to investments.

The Business Guide is packaged in CD format and will be posted at the CFO website, with links to relevant government, non-government and private sector websites.

Interested parties may contact the CFO at telephone nos. 561-8321 and fax no. 561-8332 or email address: [cfodfa@info.com.ph](mailto:cfodfa@info.com.ph). You may also visit the CFO website at [www.cfo.gov.ph](http://www.cfo.gov.ph).

### **CFO transferred...**

*continued from page 1*

Created on 16 June 1980 through *Batas Pambansa Blg. 79*, CFO took over the functions of the former Office of Emigrant Affairs under the Department of Labor and Employment, in charge of registering Filipino emigrants and conducting pre-departure orientation seminars. CFO's functions have subsequently expanded to include programs and projects in community education, Filipino education and heritage, development assistance from overseas Filipinos to local communities and policy development and data banking, among others.

Other government agencies catering to overseas Filipinos have also undergone changes. The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) board will now be chaired by Vice President Noli de Castro, the newly designated Presidential Adviser on Overseas Filipino Workers.

### **US honors ...**

*continued from page 2*

Made of granite and bronze, the World War II Memorial was more than a decade in the making and received more than US\$195 million in cash and pledges, in addition to the US\$16 million provided by the federal government. The words, *Bataan Corregidor, Philippine Sea, Leyte Gulf, Luzon and Manila* are inscribed at the Southern Fountain Copings of the said memorial, commemorating the war that was fought in the Philippines during World War II.

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### **Filipino-American youth ...**

*continued from page 7*

swimming, boating, snorkeling and fishing in Boracay Island, one of the country's foremost tourist destinations.

In San Joaquin and Iloilo City, the participants learned about religious practices and Philippine architecture through visits to old churches including the Miag-ao Church declared by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. They also attended craft-making demonstrations, feasted on native delicacies, witnessed various cultural shows, and interacted with some Filipino youth in the province.



Locals show the art of piña-weaving to *Lakbay-Aral* participants. Fibers from pineapple leaves are weaved to make elegant and intricately designed fabric for making *barong Tagalog*.

The group also went to the National Mango Research Development Center, the Trappist Monastery, and Nueva Valencia in Guimaras Island. The participants were excited to visit the province famous for its sweet mangoes. Unfortunately, the fruit was out of season at the time of their arrival in Guimaras.

The last stop for the group was a tour of Palawan, where they went island hopping, snorkeling and fishing in the crystal clear waters of Puerto Princesa City. They also visited the Underground River where they were taught about the importance of preserving and protecting the rich natural resources of the island.

It was evident throughout the group's two-week journey that they began to appreciate their roots. They were very thankful for the hospitality of the people in the different provinces they visited and expressed hope to return to the country soon to learn more about the Philippines and their *kababayans*. Above all, they were grateful for the opportunity to rediscover the Filipino in them.

*Editor's note: Developed and implemented by CFO since 1983, the Lakbay-Aral sa Pilipinas Program is a two-week study visit program to the Philippines intended for 15 - 25 year old youth with Filipino ancestry. The program is also open to others who wish to learn more about the Philippines. For further information about the Lakbay-Aral Program, please contact the Program Coordinator at telephone numbers (632) 561-8327 or 561-8321 (local 604 to 608), fax number (632) 561-8332, or e-mail at [cfodfa@info.com.ph](mailto:cfodfa@info.com.ph).*

# CFO is just an SMS away!

Are you:

- migrating to another country?
- an Exchange Visitor Program participant?
- reporting a mail-order bride or trafficking in persons scheme?
- curious to know about legislation affecting overseas Filipinos?
- looking for more information about CFO programs and services?



Type in TXTCFO in your mobile phone's short messaging service (SMS) and send it to 700CFO (700236) to receive a list of available CFO information through SMS. This service is available for SMART Telecom subscribers only. You will be charged P2.50 per text message sent.

**Filipino New Yorkers...**  
*continued from page 2*

city residents. There is a narrow difference between the number of people in a household, 2.82 for Filipinos and 2.59 for all city households. While the city's Asian American population had an even overall gender distribution, Filipino women (58%) outnumber Filipino men (42%).

Only 20% of Filipinos in New York have limited English proficiency as compared with the city's 25%. It is surprising to note, however, that 40% of elderly Filipino New Yorkers have limited English proficiency as opposed to 27% for all senior citizens in the city.

According to the report, three quarters of Filipino immigrants in New York City came to the United States in the last 20 years. Roughly 40% of New York's foreign born Filipino population immigrated to the U.S. between 1990 and 2000. They are also more likely to become naturalized citizens (52%) compared to all immigrants residing in New York City.

*Source: Asian American Federation and U.S. Census Bureau*

**Filipinas clinch...**  
*continued from page 2*

national and Society for International Development, among others, has been widely recognized. She also founded and presently chairs the Filipino Women's Council, a migrant organization that provides programs and services for foreign domestic workers in Rome. Hailing from Mamburao, Occidental Mindoro, Basa has also collaborated with United Nations agencies, the Council of Europe, European Commission and the International Organization for Migration on issues concerning migrants, citizenship and suffrage, human rights, remittances and policy development.

**Romulo spells out...**  
*continued from page 6*

in helping facilitate dialogue between the government and secessionists to achieve peace and progress in Mindanao.

Romulo referred to the changing role of multilateral and inter-regional organizations in promoting common interest as the fourth reality. He discussed the role of the United Nations in promoting peace and global security and the Philippines' role as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

Parallel to challenges in upholding national sovereignty,

***"It is a world where there are over 7 million Filipinos in other lands... We may not be a global power, but we have a global presence."***

**- Secretary Alberto G. Romulo on the realities of Philippine foreign policy**

Romulo asserted the importance of gaining the respect of other countries with regard to Philippine territorial waters. He believes that this is the fifth reality and is instrumental in protecting the country's environment and natural resources.

The sixth reality emphasized the benefits of improved relations with the European Union. According to Romulo, economic growth can only be sustained through foreign direct investment, especially from the EU which is the largest source of portfolio investments. He also stressed the quick benefits that may be achieved from international tourism. This, according to him, is the seventh reality of Philippine foreign policy.

Reiterating one of President Arroyo's policy pronouncements when she first assumed the Presidency, Romulo stated that the critical role overseas Filipinos play in the country's economic and social stability is the eighth reality. Citing the emergence of a global Filipino community, Romulo viewed the Philippine response during the abduction of OFW Angelo dela Cruz as a clash between two interests: "the Philippines' close relations with the United States and the need to extend the full mantle of protection to our overseas Filipinos." While the Philippine government decided to give preponderance on the latter, Romulo explained that there was no disruption in terms of relations with the United States. He added that the "bonds of friendship between the Philippines and the United States are enduring and beyond temporary setback."

While Romulo characterized the importance of the Filipino diaspora in the formulation of Philippine foreign policy, there is without a doubt that the overriding theme of his speech is the changing international situation and the complex challenges it presents. He acknowledged the changes brought about by advances in communication and how these changes built new linkages and strengthened existing ones. As Romulo harped on the realities of an increasingly borderless world, wittingly or unwittingly, he has emphasized the increasingly pivotal role overseas Filipinos play for the future of the Philippine motherland.



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# Reflections on the Filipino diaspora

The media hype that was Angelo dela Cruz proved once again that stories featuring overseas Filipinos and their “plight” sell like hot *pan de sal*. While media coverage on overseas Filipinos have improved quantitatively since it first came to national consciousness during the Flor Contemplacion case in 1995, it is a common observation that the quality of coverage has yet to emerge from the stereotypical tragedy that most people are accustomed to hearing.



This type of reporting is viewed as “situational”, where the tendency of the reporter is to focus purely on specific cases such as a Filipino migrant’s incarceration, deportation or involvement in a crime, among others. The bigger picture, as a result, is drowned out by tiny details that could pepper the viewer’s imagination. Contextual reporting is sacrificed in lieu of sensational news.

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***“Each square mile in the world is made up of people of different ethnicities, with national identities and individual personalities. Because of this, each square mile is already a microcosm of the world.”***

**- Patricia Evangelista on the theme, “A Borderless World”**

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There is a consensus among migration journalists, however, that there is more to portray about Filipino migration than real-life dramas that has become the staple of this soap-opera loving nation. Take the case of Patricia Evangelista, a 19 year old Filipino student who bested 59 contestants from 37 countries in the International Public Speaking Competition in London to become the English Speaking Union’s (ESU) 2004 Best Speaker. Speaking on the theme, “A borderless world”, Evangelista highlighted how the Filipino diaspora reflects the notion of a world without borders.

In the course of her 5-minute speech, Evangelista described how Filipino migration is not really a form of abandonment but an extension of one’s identity. Justifying that nationalism isn’t bound by time or place, she pointed out that people move to create new nations, yet still remain essentially who they are. Leaving the country, she expounds, is not always a matter of choice, but coming back to the country that shaped you, is. She concluded by emphasizing that a borderless world does not preclude the idea of a home, and that Filipinos will always be Filipinos, and the Philippines will always be the country they come home to.

Similar stirring images were evoked on Michael Tan’s (Philippine Daily Inquirer opinion page) “World Without Filipinos”, where he invites readers to picture a world where Filipinos suddenly disappeared one day. Tan spoke about a crippled shipping industry, abandoned oil fields in the Middle East, closed airports, parents forced to stay home to take care of their children, neglected hospitals and nursing homes, as well as staff shortages in the United Nations and the Vatican! The purpose, according to Tan, is to highlight the important contribution of Filipinos all over the world, who are nearly invisible in the eyes of many. In the end, Tan explained that the commentary is not so much dedicated to foreigners who fail to appreciate what Filipinos do, but rather to Filipinos who are good at putting themselves down.

Evangelista’s speech and Tan’s commentary were short and direct, yet both showed facets of Filipino migration that emphasize its importance and pervasiveness in Philippine society. Both forms of expression proved that Filipino migration, without embellishment or histrionics make up an interesting and poignant subject. Tan and Evangelista framed Filipino migration in the context of nationalism and globalization, and hammered the concept of “a borderless world” right on the mark.

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## ***ARE YOU MOVING?***

In case you are moving or changing your address, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas would like to request you to inform us of your new address, so we can serve you better.

Thank you.