



US, Canada Eye Higher Beef Sales To Manila

THE Philippines has further eased the entry of beef and beef products from the US and Canada by lifting the restrictions on age of cattle and ban on bone-in meat.

The US and Canadian governments had lobbied for the lifting of the ban after the World Animal Health Organization (OIE) classified both countries as having a controlled BSE risk. Also classified in the same OIE category are Brazil, Chile, Switzerland and Taipei.

Previously, imports of beef and beef products from the US and Canada were limited to boneless beef from cattle less than 30 months of age.

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Food prices up next year

By SAMUEL V. SENOREN in MANILA

RISING costs of farm inputs and production shortfalls are likely to push up prices of critical food items next year as major producers grapple with higher costs of domestic production and shrinking markets abroad.

Industry sources told *Trade Express Asia* that countries which depend heavily on imports of such items as beef, pork and poultry may encounter difficulties in sourcing these products in traditional volumes.

The world's biggest producers of these agricultural commodities are China, the United States, the European Union and Brazil. Of the four however, China does not have the production capacity to serve the export market.

Other developments:

- Philippine agricultural producers are seeking increased government protection to keep the sector viable.

- The Philippines has allowed full market access for beef products from the US and Canada (See related story)

- Costs of imported feeds and feed ingredients have risen by as much as 45 percent in the case of wheat and about 28 percent in the case of corn and soya bean meal.

- Producers also want the government to impose further restrictions on the importation of agricultural commodities.

Consumers in the Philippines are already beginning to feel the pressure on prices in the run-up to the holiday season. Although

domestic prices have risen only less than 10 percent on a year-on-year basis as of last month, consumers now worry that they could soar early in the first quarter next year.

Export prices of poultry meat are currently in the range of \$1150 per ton but according to Trade Express sources, importers could be looking at upwards of \$2000 per ton next year.

In the case of beef, the same sources said that Brazilian packers have told customers around the world to expect higher prices in 2008. Importing countries may be looking at average prices of Brazilian beef in the range of \$4000 per ton compared to about \$2400 at present.

The US department of agriculture however sees the outlook for meat products to be stable in 2008.

In the case of poultry, exports from Brazil and the US which account for 80 percent of the world total, are forecast to grow by 4 percent, it said. Higher exports tend to reflect stronger demand globally as income growth supports increased consumption, the agency added.

The USDA also expects Brazil to increase beef production by 4 percent to 9.9 million tons in 2008 and to export 2.7 million tons mainly to Russia and the Middle East.

In the case of Philippine producers, industry leaders are

(Turn to page 3)

China fuels demand for more oil; growth in supply not fast enough

THE inability of non-OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) countries to keep pace with rising global demand for oil and the instability of some major OPEC producers are believed to be among the main reasons why prices soared to nearly \$100 per barrel in recent weeks. Non-OPEC countries include Russia, Mexico, Britain and Norway.

According to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), when non-OPEC supply growth is less than growth in global consumption, the gap needs to be filled by OPEC members' production increases or draws from inventories.

If this gap is not filled by OPEC

members' production increases and cannot be fully met by a drawdown in inventory, the price of oil rises to bring consumption in line with production, the US agency explained.

Demand for oil has been fueled by strong economic growth, particularly in large oil-consuming regions, such as China, the United States and Middle East countries.

In 2008, global demand for oil is forecast to rise by 1.5 million barrels per day about 50 percent of which is expected to be accounted for by the US and China.

China and the US have been described as the main drivers of

consumption growth although China has lately shown signs of a slowdown.

Non-OPEC supply, on the other hand, has not shown any significant increase because of delays in new projects or continuing declines in production.

The US agency also noted the declining oil inventories in highly industrialized countries which put pressure on the need to replenish them. It forecast that by the end of this year, oil inventories in the OECD countries will fall by about 10

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Business boom in Cebu spurs need for more electric power

CONSUMER and industrial demand for power in Cebu is forecast to rise 100 percent to 700 megawatts in three years as its economy picks up on the wave of new investments in tourism and hospitality trade.

Part of the power requirements will be supplied by Toledo-based Global Business Power Corp. which is putting up a 246-mw thermal plant next year.

According to the Philippine Electricity Market Corp., Cebu's power supply base totals only 390 megawatts, slightly higher than the average daily demand of 329 mw.

Cebu-based plants however can only provide 131 mw with the rest of the requirements supplied by the geothermal plant in Leyte.

Amanpulo Group Sold For \$250m

THE luxury resort Amanpulo in Palawan along with 17 other properties of the Singapore-based Amanresorts is being acquired by the Indian property group DFL for about US\$250 million, according to press reports in India.

In addition to the payout, the Indian buyer is also to assume about \$220 million in

(Turn to page 10)

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REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Investors look to the Philippines as site for retirement villages

“WHAT would you say is the best investment today?” A delegate to the Real Estate Investment IQ 2007 convention in Hong Kong asked the speaker, Marc Faber, renowned economist, editor and publisher of the Gloom Boom & Doom Report. Known for his “contrarian” view of the markets and how they will impact real estate, Faber curtly replied, “Anything, anywhere, except in the US dollar”.

Investors and fund managers, he said, have directed their businesses to Asia. As of today, China is the top choice, followed by India. According to another speaker, Graham Bibby, CEO of Richmond Group (Asia Pacific), these two countries have provided risk rewards to private equity players in real estate. The Asia property cycle is still in its infancy, and properties as well as Asian currencies are undervalued. He states that there is access to emerging markets, and diversity in markets creates several opportunities. “Wealth is being created faster than ever before”, Bibby said.

How does the Philippines rank in terms of investment preference within the region?

Food prices (From page 1)

asking the Arroyo government to allow feedmillers and end-users of feeds to import corn and soya meal without duties.

In a recent letter to President Arroyo, Rep. Nicanor Briones who represents the agriculture sector in Congress also asked that government agencies involved in the regulation of imports be overhauled.

Government efforts on anti-smuggling are very inadequate, Briones lamented.

He proposed that a 100 percent inspection of all refrigerated shipments be made, especially on items that carry low tariff rates. Among these are fats, offals and skins which have a tariff rate of only 3 percent.

US, Canada (From page 1)

Under the new policy, US beef exports to the Philippines are expected to hit at least \$10 million next year. According to the USDA, more than 100 countries now allow the entry of US beef products four years after it reported its first case of BSE.

From indications, it is behind Japan, Singapore and Malaysia.

Our government regulatory landscape was cited as a major setback that gives foreign investors second thoughts on pursuing investing in the Philippines. On the other hand, the people’s smiling faces and resilient attitude are plus factors for investing in retirement homes and villages.

The REIT

One of the real estate trends given emphasis in the conference held last Nov. 6-8 is the Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT). This has gained popularity in Japan, Australia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. It is now being introduced in the Philippines through Senate Bill No. 63 and House Bill No. 145 known as “The Real Estate Investment Act of 2007”.

Atty. Francis Ed. Lim, president of the Philippine Stock Exchange, who was a member of the Philippine delegation, defined REIT as a stock corporation organized solely for the purpose of owning income-producing real estate assets and real

By TESS R. BIGORNIA in HONG KONG estate securities. It pools the capital of many investors, enabling them to participate in real estate investments.

He enumerated the benefits as follows: democratization of wealth, liquidity, affordability, high yields, and tax incentives, including exemptions from corporate income tax.

The allowable REIT investments are real estate property, either thru direct ownership or thru shareholding in an unlisted special purpose vehicle constituted to own real estate, real estate-related assets, debt-securities and listed shares issued by local or foreign non-property corps, government securities issued by the Philippine government or by other countries and cash and cash equivalent items.

On the other hand, Federico C. Cuervo, president of Cuervo Valuers and Advisory who headed the Philippine delegation to the conference, advocates Agrarian REIT as an alternative to CARP. He disclosed that only 1.4 million

hectares were distributed to 751,900 farmers in the span of ten years since 1993, noting that there must have been defects in the implementation of the Philippine CARP.

He said that CARP did not improve productivity and that the growth in labor productivity was only 6% in the last 20 years, possibly

one of the lowest growth rates in Asia. China’s productivity doubled during the last two decades, while Malaysia grew by almost 70%.

He also said that there are income opportunities in poverty alleviation and that “working with the poor can also give us the desired profits.”

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Star Cruises honored as Asia's best cruise operator

STAR Cruises won the "Best Cruise Operator in Asia-Pacific" award for the tenth time at the 18th TTG Travel Awards held in Bangkok, Thailand last October. The TTG Travel Awards is an annual highlight in the travel trade calendar which honors the best in Asia's hospitality, tourism, services and travel industry.

Star Cruises was cited for being at the forefront in the development of cruising in Asia. Since 1993, it has been offering exciting world class cruise holidays that have grown in popularity throughout the region with its innovative concept of freestyle cruising. The warm hospitality that Asians are known for as well as its high safety standards has attracted an international profile of guests who have patronized Star Cruises over the years.

The cruise line has been constantly innovating and improving its products and services in adapting to the changing needs and preferences of the different markets while developing and introducing new itineraries and destinations to provide greater cruising options for holiday makers. Its unique brand of onboard dining,

world class entertainment and recreation options make it a preferred holiday choice among Asian travelers.

The company recently saw the introduction of *SuperStar Aquarius* in Hong Kong bringing the total number of ships in Asia offering regular cruises to five. These include *SuperStar Virgo* and *SuperStar Gemini* in Singapore, *SuperStar Libra* in Taiwan and *Star Pisces* and *SuperStar Aquarius* in Hong Kong.

The Star Cruises group also recently saw the addition of the newest vessel to the Norwegian Cruise Line fleet, the *Norwegian Gem*. Other brands under the group include NCL America and Orient Lines.

"As pioneers of cruising in the region, and as a company of Asian heritage, we are proud to be able to host our many international guests and take them on a discovery of the many various exotic destinations and to experience the warm, authentic Asian hospitality of our truly diverse and vibrant crew," said Jean Teo, senior vice president, sales and marketing.

Star Cruises' chief operating officer Chong Chee Tut, who received the award on behalf of Star



Star Cruises' chief operating officer Chong Chee Tut shows off the "Best Cruise Operator in Asia-Pacific" award from TTG Asia, its tenth.

Cruises said, "Having won the award for the tenth time is indeed very special and an honour for Star Cruises as it is a reflection of our concerted efforts and commitment in providing the best possible cruise experiences for our guests. We're also deeply appreciative of the support extended by TTG, the travel trade, media and various other parties associated in one way or another in the course of our daily business and operations."

Being a 10th time winner, Star Cruises is eligible to be inducted into TTG Travel Awards Hall of Fame from next year onwards and will no longer be competing at the Awards.

The honor is also a tribute to the late founder, Tan Sri Dato' Seri (Dr.) Lim Goh Tong for his foresight, vision and pioneering efforts in bringing about the realization and the development of Asia-Pacific as an international cruise destination.

China, Russia approve oil refinery deal

TIANJIN – China and Russia have agreed to locate a planned oil refinery capable of processing 10 million tons a year in the northern port city of Tianjin.

China's top oil firm, China National Petroleum Corp., and Russia's Rosneft, have set up a joint venture in Tianjin to implement the project.

The refinery project is a concrete follow-up to the two companies' agreement reached in March 2006 to intensify cooperation in the oil sector.

A possible site for the refinery is the Tianjin Harbor industrial park off the Bohai Bay east of Beijing.

The central government has listed Tianjin as a national base for the development of the oil industry.

Thai economy to remain firm

BANGKOK – Thailand will not be adversely affected by the economic slowdown in the United States because it has long adjusted itself to prepare for the situation, according to the Fiscal Policy Office.

Ekniti Nitithanprapas, director of FPO's Macro-Economic Analysis Division, said the US Federal Reserve's move to revise its economic growth estimate next year to 1.8-2.5 percent from 2.5-2.75 percent lived up to FPO's earlier expectation.

He conceded that US economic slowdown would have repercussions on countries which export mainly to the US.

For Thailand, he said, exporters had shifted to expand exports to emerging markets and regional ones, including China.

Fight vs AIDS

BEIJING – All hotels in Beijing will be required to provide condoms in every room by the end of next year following news that the capital registered 973 new HIV/AIDS cases in the first 10 months of this year, up 54 percent from last year.

The Beijing Municipal Health Bureau has been pushing hotels to provide condoms in every guest room for the last couple of years but so far they are only available in 133 hotels – 15,907 guest rooms – out of a total 700 hotels in Beijing, according to government statistics.

The hotels however are not required to supply condoms free of charge. The decision on how much to charge was up to the hotels.

Indon nuke plant

JAKARTA – The National Nuclear Energy Agency wants the Indonesian government to issue a presidential decree which stipulates the construction of a nuclear power plant for operation by 2017.

The decree would provide certainty concerning the construction of the plant in the Muria Peninsula in Central Java, the agency said.

President Yudhoyono had previously announced Indonesia would build a nuclear power plant in 2010.

(From PNA wires)



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Meat processors ask NMIS to clarify policy on smuggling

THE largest group of meat processors in the country has urged the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) of the Department of Agriculture to clarify its stance on meat smuggling and explain why it bestows awards to companies suspected of smuggling hot meat products from China.

In a statement, the Philippine Association of Meat Processors, Inc. (PAMPI) asked the government's meat quality regulator to put in details the criteria which it used in giving awards to meat processing plants.

"We just want the NMIS to become transparent in the process of coming up with its list of awardees. As the main agency in charge of ensuring the quality of meat products in the country, we assume that the NMIS will recognize only companies with untarnished reputation," it said.

The group issued the statement after Meken Food Corp., a Pampanga-based meat processor, which was reportedly caught in possession of suspected hot meat products from China last year, published its latest award from NMIS, which recognized the company's meat processing plant as the best in the country for three consecutive years.

PAMPI said that while it is the prerogative of government agencies to distribute awards to companies they regulate, they should have the moral ascendancy to use the concept of "award and punishment" in stopping illegal activities such as meat smuggling.

In November 2006, PAMPI asked the Department of Agriculture to conduct an impartial investigation on the smuggling from China of 62,000 kilos of meat shipments amounting to PhP12 million,

China fuels (From page 1)

million barrels from 150 million barrels last year.

It reported that the excess refining capacity worldwide has dropped resulting in little flexibility to meet demand in the event of unplanned refinery outages.

Also noted were the following developments:

—Iraq is still struggling to revitalize its oil industry after decades of wars, sanctions and underinvestments.

—Supplies of crude from Nigeria, the world's eighth largest exporter, have been cut since last year because of militant attacks on its oil industry.

—Venezuelan oil production has never fully recovered since December 2002 when political strife brought production to a halt.

which reportedly ended up in a warehouse in Pampanga province. The government bans the importation of meat products from China, which remains to be declared free from the contagious foot-and-mouth disease (FMD).

Despite the ban, shipments of hot meat from China continue to flood the local market, threatening both the local hog industry and the meat-processing sector, the association said.

In September last year, four reefer vans containing smuggled meat products disappeared from the warehouse of the Bureau of Customs, only to be later recovered in Pampanga. It can be recalled that the Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG) raided the Kayabe ice plant and cold storage in Barangay Lagundi in Mexico town on November 28.

Authorities discovered the missing meat products, believed to

have been pilfered from the four reefer vans earlier seized by PNP. The raid in Mexico town yielded an estimated 62,000 kilos of meat that came from China which is not yet FMD-free.

The Kayabe plant is reportedly keeping the suspected "hot meat" allegedly owned by Meken Food Corp.

PAMPI said that up to now, authorities have yet to disclose the results of the investigation into the smuggling case. The group asked why the very company suspected as the one behind the smuggling case last year is not only in operation today, but is also proudly announcing its latest commendation from the government itself.

"Is this the message that the NMIS tries to convey to the meat processing industry? It is no wonder that our livestock and poultry producers are raising a howl against meat smuggling in the country," PAMPI said.

Export demand for RP mangoes rising

By AURELIO A. PENA in DAVAO CITY

A BUMPER crop of fresh mangoes next year is expected to meet rising demand in foreign markets as more local growers and exporters move to meet strict health standards put up by Japanese authorities, according to Marsman Drysdale president Clemente Garrucho.

The Philippines is Japan's biggest supplier of mangoes with a market share of 65 percent followed by Mexico with 28 percent.

However, among the world's mango producers, the Philippines accounts for only four percent of exports although it ranks sixth in production.

The world's top mango producers are India with 10.8 million tons, China with 3.62 million tons, Thailand with 1.72 million and Pakistan with 1.7 million, according to Philippine Mango Exporters Board president Roberto Amores.

Amores said however that increasing orders from New Zealand,

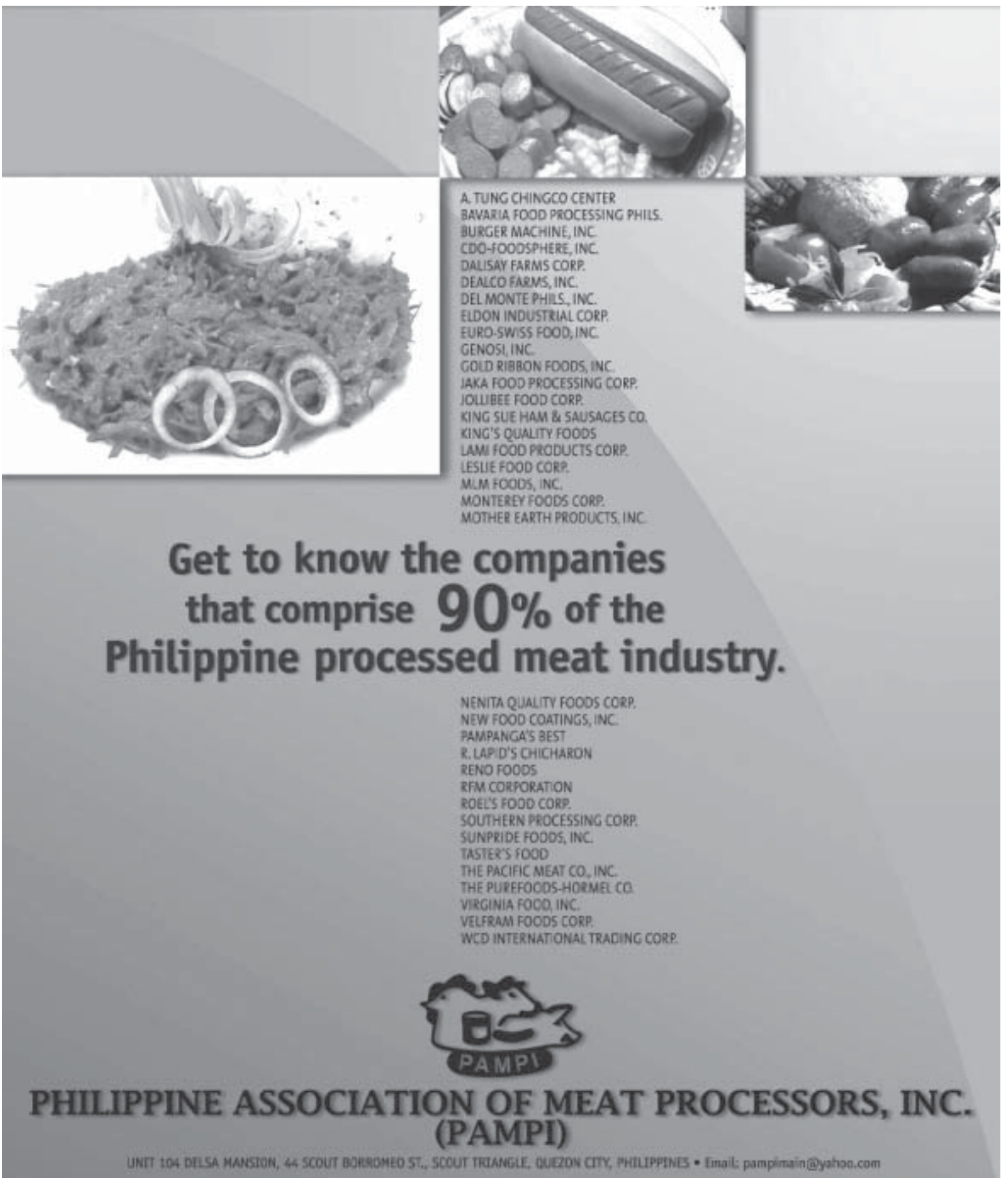
Australia, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and lately Russia are expected to boost more demand for Philippine mangoes next year.

Aside from mangoes, Russia has also been increasing imports of Philippine fruits such as bananas and pineapples which are shipped to Vladivostok for transshipment to other Russian markets.

Major Russian importer is the trading firm Double D Trade which maintains a buying office in Washington state in the US.

According to Maxim Cheploutsky, Double D import manager, exports to Russia are transported out of Vladivostok to the cities of Ussurisk, Nakhodka, Khabarovsk, Yuzhno, Sakhalinsk and onwards to Siberia.

At present, shipping services to Vladivostok are limited. Shipments to the Russian port are usually transshipped from the Korean port city of Busan. (PNA)



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There is only one greater folly than that of the fool who says in his heart there is no God, and that is the folly of the people that says with its head that it does not know whether there is a God or not.

- OTTO VON BISMARCK

EDITORIAL

In search of alternates

WITH world oil prices hitting the roof, it is about time the government and the private sector seriously consider an aggressive approach to tapping or generating sources of power other than oil.

If experts are to be believed, the energy situation is not expected to improve sooner. In fact, it may even get worse.

There are forecasts that say oil prices could go as high as \$120 per barrel as there are others that predict prices stabilizing at \$70 starting next year. True, the range is wide although many years back, nobody thought the price would touch the \$100 level.

But definitely, the days of the \$20 per barrel are history.

Today, high oil prices are more the result of an unprecedented growth in global economy rather than disruptions in supply from the Middle East reminiscent of what happened in the 70s and 80s.

The effect is particularly devastating on developing countries like the Philippines which has just started to reap the benefits of economic growth.

If high oil prices continue to persist in the months ahead, the Philippine economy could go into a tailspin and make life more difficult for Filipinos.

Warns business leader Raul Concepcion: "Shortages in essential goods, together with rising prices of fuel, energy, transport and basic commodities have a tremendous impact on most Filipinos, especially the poor. Higher prices reduce one's purchasing power, take-home pay and impoverish many."

Concepcion already fears that in the weeks ahead, prices of basic commodities, especially food, will inevitably rise. And almost to the point of sounding like an alarmist, he now calls for drawing a rationing program to cope with price increases.

The poor will suffer the most because they spend 55 percent of their income on food, he adds.

The biggest challenge then that the Arroyo administration faces during the remaining months of its term is how to mitigate the adverse effects of soaring oil prices while at the same time fasttracking the search for alternative fuels.

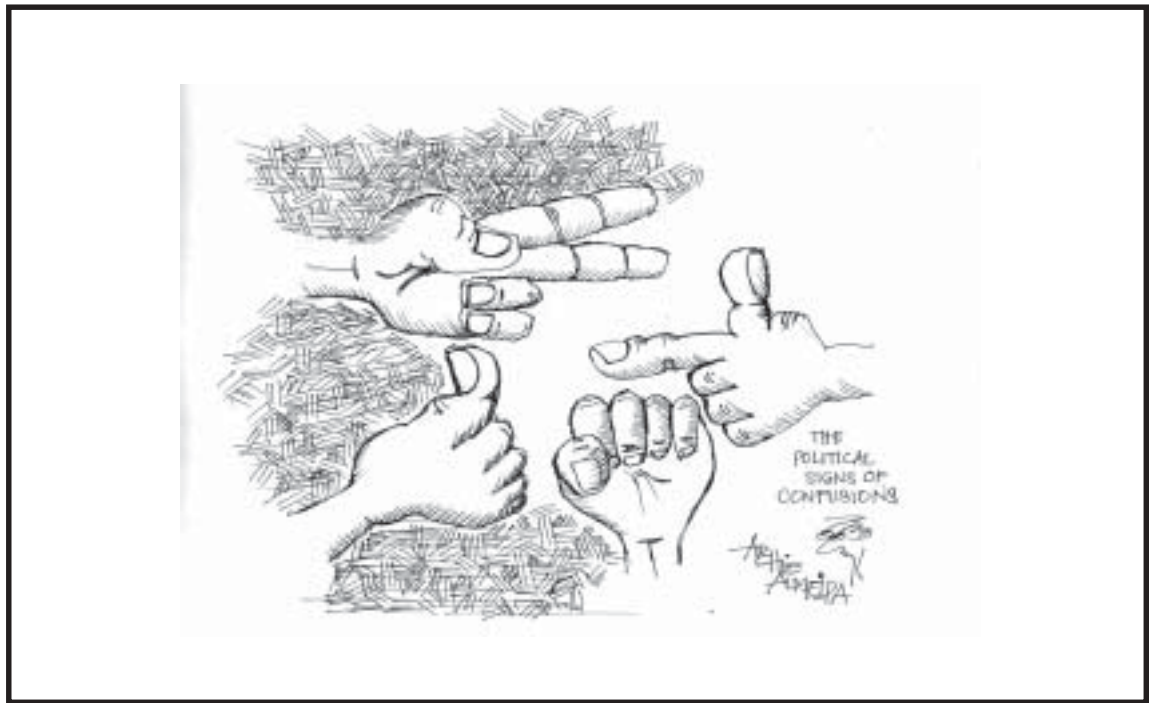
Both instances not only require expertise and good governance but also the political will to see them through.

Some headway has already been made in the search for alternatives such as in efforts to harness wind power, exploit natural gas and develop biofuels.

But all these will require huge investments which unfortunately, the Philippines doesn't have.

So the search falls back to the most basic elements of how to make the country attractive enough for foreign investors to make them put their money into power and power-related projects.

These are the elements that, as of today, are the subjects of exposes, investigations and never-ending soap-operas in the political theater.



In My Notes By SAMUEL V. SENOREN



Press freedom is only for newspapers

BEFORE defenders of press freedom and the right of the public to know, go overboard on how government views television and radio coverage of the Manila Peninsula incident involving Sen. Trillanes, Gen. Lim, et al., it may be worthwhile to look at how the broadcasting industry in the Philippines works.

To invoke freedom of the press for a sector that, for all intents and purposes, cannot be considered really free, is highly pretentious.

Unlike the printed media, broadcasting companies operate on the say-so of government. They are allowed by government to go on the air on the basis of so-called congressional franchises which spell out the terms and conditions under which they operate. In contrast, there are no congressional franchises for newspaper and magazines.

One of the key conditions of

broadcasting franchises is a catch-all provision which prohibits operators from using their radio/TV networks and their facilities to incite, encourage or assist subversive or treasonable acts.

This is where the problem lies because while a newspaper or magazine reporter will have no difficulty writing and reporting a controversial or highly sensitive story, a TV or radio reporter covering a similar story can be subjected to sanctions on the mere interpretation by a police, military or civilian authority that the broadcaster is in violation of the condition so stated in the congressional franchise.

Let me cite an example:

A newspaper or magazine reporter/columnist can write and so declare that Lim and Trillanes called on their colleagues in the military to oust the Arroyo government. The government cannot run after them.

But if a television reporter goes on the air, makes a lead-in and put Lim and Trillanes on video or on the phone denouncing and calling on the military to topple the

government, then the network is in trouble. (Which is what happened in the Peninsula case). The aforementioned franchise provision can be justifiably applied. The network cannot invoke freedom of the press because that is how Philippine broadcasting is structured.

So, no matter how Philippine broadcast executives argue the issue of press freedom in relation to broadcasting, they will always find themselves at the losing end of the debate.

The way Philippine broadcasting is structured under a congressional franchise system is for it to be a vehicle mainly for entertainment and variety shows but not for serious news and commentary.

Even the manner of putting up a TV or radio network is already a giveaway. For instance, after getting the congressional franchise, the operator will have to apply for a permit to operate, install equipment, etc. with the National

(Turn to page 8)

ViaThePen By FRANK GREGO



More science, less theory on PNP probes

individually contributed a report that at this writing they did not want yet released.

Why? Was the PNP not sure of the results of its own probe when as early as October 24, they already announced in a massive road show for newspaper editors and TV station executives that their findings validated their pursuit of the gas explosion theory?

Was the PNP backtracking from its pronouncements that it did not anymore rely on its very own report so that it had to recruit scientists at the last hour?

The official police announcement was that it was an upward rupture from the diesel tank triggered by the presence of septic tanks, and wastewater treatment facilities that produced methane; and the presence of open switches, motor pumps, batteries and other possible igniters.

For whatever hidden agenda the police barefacedly ignored the fact that there was never any septic tank therein, for Ayala Land uses a

sewage system, and therefore impossible for methane to cause the explosion because:

There was no solid mass of human waste being formed, for what was coming down from the above floors were mostly wastewater and slush from the kitchens, and human urine. Which were being emptied from the sump pits about three times a day.

There was no relevance for a septic tank to be part of the sewage system at the basement, for no microorganisms that grow in eight days from solid waste mass in a sealed septic tank could stay long enough in the basement to produce methane.

Not to mention the fact that there was so much oxygen that could kill those anaerobic methane-producing microorganisms in the well-ventilated basement.

It appears that the police report would likely be cursory and therefore erratic if it was not backed up by the experts. But even the report of the Australian experts was

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TradeExpress Asia

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Twice Told Tales By RAUL S. GONZALEZ

THE last time I was in General Santos City - - that is, before President Ramos dragged me along in his sorties to Socargen and ARMM - - it was still Dadiangas; Ramon Magsaysay was the President of the Philippines; and I was a teenager on my first out-of-town assignment in my first regular job (For the uninitiated in the Ramos lexicography, Socargen is South Cotabato-Sarangani-Gen. Santos and ARMM is Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao).

Since that first visit, I have been to a thousand other places - - all the provinces in our country, fabulous cities and exotic isles around the globe; but few have etched their names as searingly on my memory as Dadiangas - - at that time, a miserable, one-(dirt) street town in the poorer part of one of the poorest provinces, albeit the biggest, in the country - - Cotabato.

The reason is, it was in Dadiangas I first received intimations that in my frail body resided not only a brave heart but also a strong stomach.

Vividly I remember that night in September more than 40 years ago when we approached Dadiangas in a rickety C-47, my companions in great fear - - for darkness had fallen although it was not yet night; a storm which was not supposed to be there was making us bounce like lotto balls in our bucket seats; the only thing one could see through the portholes was lightning - - and the silhouettes of craggy mountains; we were low on fuel; and we had just been radioed that the airstrip at Dadiangas - - farms just recently bulldozed - - had no night-landing facilities.

No longer Dadiangas

The only thing going for us was a quick-thinking colonel named Osmundo Mondoñedo and a radio that still worked. From the plane the colonel had jeeps and trucks rushed from a nearby army post to the field and their headlights turned on to delineate the runway; he had bonfires lit at the point of touchdown and at the end of the strip; and he had everybody on the ground saying a prayer for us.

It was the roughest, rockiest landing I ever experienced; but I didn't know that then nor even why my companions were ghostly pale, shivering and silent all the while. I had never been in an airplane before and never knew we were in any danger at all. "You are a brave young man," Col. Mondoñedo patted me on the back, as we piled out of the plane.

The morning after, we sat down to breakfast in the only eating place in town. Our mission in Dadiangas, I forgot to mention, was to prepare the way for a flying visit of President Magsaysay who was concerned over the destruction armies of rats were wreaking on the farms in the area.

At the table everyone was asked if he wanted to try Dadiangas' latest delicacy, star meat. All declined except me. But that was because only I didn't know then that star spelled backwards was rats. After lunch, Col. Mondoñedo once more commended me, "You have intestinal fortitude, young man."

To this day I don't know whether my boss then, Press Secretary J.V. Cruz, ever heard about my exploits; but I suspect President Magsaysay did, for why else did he summon me a week later to tell me, "You are a better man than I, my son,"?

This time, in what once was Dadiangas, the presidential plane -

-FVR's Fokker 28, not RM's C-47 - - landed smooth as silk on a runway that extended from here to eternity. Along its sides, at 10-meter intervals, sprouted landing lights fixtures. In the distance the terminal gleamed like the Taj Mahal. In the tower and control room I was told were instruments that could shepherd a fleet of 747s into the airport, whatever the weather. The new airport is said to be the most modern in the country. As is the Makar Wharf which juts out into Sarangani Bay, from which tons of cargo, mainly tuna and prawns, pineapples and asparagus, are shipped to ports all over the world.

General Santos City is a lightyear away from the Dadiangas of my memory. In terms of facilities for comfortable living, it, too, is decades ahead of even Makati and the Ortigas sector of Mandaluyong.

It is criss-crossed by tree-lined boulevards and shop-lined avenues in a design that invites traffic without creating jams. The noise of its industry doesn't intrude into the serenity of its bedroom communities. Recreational parks outnumber shopping malls. The air is full of excitement and yet balmy and soothing. One can breathe it - - and not cough.

"Gensancit," says DBM's Jun Enriquez, lapsing into Ramospeak, "is what our other cities and towns would have looked like if their growth had been programmed instead of allowed to take place willy-nilly."

"Growing at a snail's pace leads to early obsolescence; yet even worse is unprogrammed growth which is just another word for cancer," Jun elaborates. "Gensancit has developed beautifully because it is neither dilly-dallying nor rushing helter-skelter but moving at a pace

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Eye Opener By BER PACHECO

Trillanes must have thought he had people's support

OBSERVERS like Makati Mayor Jojo Binay were quick to comment that the recent incident at the Manila Peninsula Hotel was an over-kill and an exaggerated show of force by authorities. However, many also say that the military and police did right to come strongly with precision at that instance considering that the group of Senator Antonio Trillanes was armed and trained in combat, thus the assault was the best option. Of course there are many who are supportive of what Trillanes, et al, are fighting for, but I personally believe that the action taken by Trillanes and Gen. Danny Lim is similar to the aborted coup they plotted four years ago in Oakwood. Believing perhaps that he has gathered enough support because of the 11 million votes he garnered last senatorial elections, Senator Trillanes did not use his intelligence to foresee that his new attempt to oust President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo using the same tactic, would not succeed. He did not get enough sympathy and popular support that he thought he has. Except for a few who was with him when he walked out from the regional court hearing and marched to Manila Pen, many bystanders were just looking and not even cheering him on. People are already wary of too many coups in this country. They see that what happened during EDSA I can no longer be replicated. Bishop Labayen who called for support is clearly not Cardinal Sin. Besides, Trillanes is not offering any attractive alternative except military rule which is not acceptable to the people.

The Senate will be put to test on the action they will take with regards to the unconstitutional behavior of Sen. Trillanes. Will the Senate reprimand, suspend or expel him as senator? If the Senate will act as opposition senators and not as independent minded legislators, they might just reprimand Trillanes or do nothing at all. There is a moral obligation on the part of the Senate to show our countrymen what is right and what is wrong under the law.

Many Filipinos are awaiting the approval of the cheaper medicine bill now pending in Congress. If this bill will be enacted, Filipinos, particularly the senior citizenry, will tend to benefit. I heard a lot of complaints from retirees who are getting monthly pensions from the Social Security System and the GSIS, saying that their pension is not even enough for their medicine maintenance.

But what is taking this cheap medicine bill so long to be approved by our lawmakers? Are the Senate and House investigations on matters with political color, where politicians can use for grandstanding and projecting their egos, more important? Is the trip of 40 Congressmen to join President Arroyo to Europe more important than the discussion on relevant pending bills that give meaning to the plight of many poor Filipinos desperate for affordable living? Legislators who have joined the presidential party in trips abroad should report on their individual roles in the entourage so as not to be accused of being pure junketeers spending the people's money.

Of course we Filipinos are proud to confirm in a poll survey that we are the second happiest people among Asians next to the Indians. There is no doubt that Filipinos in general are resilient, cheerful, and confident and look positively at life despite everything. *Mababaw ang kaligayahan.* They are full of hope and forgiving of other people's misdeeds. They give second and third chances to misdemeanors and sinners. *Madaling makalimot.* But is this good or bad? Maybe bad to some extent as we do not uphold values and give importance to lessons in life. Should we forgive and forget the sins of corrupt people in government who steal, gamble, womanize and just exploit the poor condition of many to their advantage? Are they sincere in eradicating poverty or they only dole out small favors and money in order to secure their reelection? We Filipinos should think twice before we ask favors from politicians in exchange for their own selfish ambitions. Happiness is not bought. It is a condition where true justice is administered equally to all, where the bad is punished and the good gets rewarded, a condition that we need to see in this country.

The City College of Manila is now named Gat. Andres Bonifacio College., a fitting homage to honor the great founder of the Katipunan, who started a noble revolution to gain Filipino independence from Spain. What Bonifacio did was something remarkable at that time in our history. He awakened the spirit of nationalism in the hearts of many Filipinos in all parts of the country to stage an uprising without the help of modern technology. How he managed to communicate and pass on the message of courage and hope is beyond belief. Unlike Jose Rizal, Bonifacio was not educated but he too captured the imagination and dreams of even the Filipino professionals and the youth to rally behind him to bring Philippine independence from Spanish rule.

Another person who deserves to be honored for his eloquent dream for every Filipino is the author and advocate of *Libreng Pilipino*, a social program for the poor. During his almost ten years stint as Mayor of Manila, Antonio J. Villegas, born of a poor family in Tondo, Manila, organized the *Libreng Pilipino* program where poor Manilans could avail of free access to hospitalization and affordable medicines and free college education to indigent but deserving students, among others. He even initiated mass weddings in civil and religious rites for free. If there is a man whose name should give honor to a school or hospital, it is Antonio de Jesus Villegas for it was during his time that the Ospital ng Maynila and the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila were established. His logic and brilliant ideas worked for the advantage of both the poor and the government. He believed that good education is the key to good economy. An educated person who is strong and employed contributes to the coffers of the government by way of paying taxes and could buy commodities that help the economy. So, it is

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Prima Facie By EDGAR E. SERRANO

CARP is a big flop

concentrated mainly on land distribution, without considering viability and support services.

This finding has been corroborated by the World Bank's 2007-2008 economic outlook for the Philippines which also urged the country's leaders to invest more in agriculture. The World Bank also recommended that the farming sector must be given more importance in the country's development agenda; warning that "the goals of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 - which are UNDP Millennium Development Goals - would not be realized."

A lot of public money is being wasted on misplaced priorities and misallocation of resources with 60 percent of total disbursement going to salaries of a bloated bureaucracy. Government has allocated only about 50 percent of the needed funds, while Land Bank has to advance up to 4.5 billion pesos way beyond its credit line of 1.1 billion pesos from World Bank.

Meanwhile, most of the farmer beneficiaries have sold or mortgaged the lands awarded them due to lack of capital needed to farm as well as lack of support services and credit. Loans are not made

available to beneficiaries who had to borrow from commercial banks at interest rates of more than 20 percent.

In my place in Bataan, a farmer needs to borrow at least 5,000 pesos in order for him to till his three-hectare rice farm. For every 1,000 he borrows, he has to repay it with three sacks of palay worth at the very least 1,200 pesos.

The plight of sugar land farmers is even worse. Farmers who are in the sugar producing regions can only hope to earn a yearly income of 5,000 pesos from the three-hectare sugar land awarded to him under CARP.

Maryse Gautier, World Bank acting country director in the Philippines draws government attention "to new opportunities presented by the global markets by shifting expenditures towards supporting dynamic, high-value added products with export potential" saying that the shift "will help increase incomes from agriculture, where more than 40 percent of the Philippine labor force is employed, but which presently contributes only about 14 percent of national output."

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THE Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) is a dismal failure!

Although the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) has claimed that the implementation of CARP is a success, a DAR-German Economic Cooperation (GTZ) study done in April 2007 has said otherwise.

Based on the result of the joint study conducted by DAR and the German group, it said that Philippine Agriculture is in a "state of distress" and that the social and economic conditions in the rural communities are not any better than 10 years ago.

The "agricultural trade balance" has had a clear deteriorating trend since the enactment of CARP with the country transformed from a net agricultural exporter into a net agricultural importer by mid-1980's

The study revealed that 34 years of agrarian reform "failed to significantly reduce rural poverty levels" and has validated the complaints aired long before by agrarian reform beneficiaries and landowners that farmers were left on their own because DAR has

POST MORTEM LIGHT



By ARIEL S. GENER in MELBOURNE

Missing the days of swine and Rosies

LAST month, I reported on foreign refugees terrorizing the suburbs of the Land Down Under resulting in Australia rethinking its immigration policy ("*Taking Back the Welcome Mat*"). I also started having my email address at the end of my column for readers to respond.

My inbox almost exploded with hate mail. Even small plants close enough to my laptop died from the vitriol. Thankfully, fan mail far outnumbered the correspondence from the "playa hater" (player haters), which eventually revived the plants.

I have no problem being antagonized. And like I say, I do value other people's opinions – so long as they agree with mine.

But this time, I am making an exception. I will actually give in to minority opinion. I shall write about "what the market demands": And according to you, that's Hollywood news, and other apolitical, "non-confrontational" stuff.

So, since it seems that many care not if rescued hooligans turn my idyllic Australia from utopia into Ethiopia, here's my new-look column – or what I like to call: *Post Mortem Light*. Enjoy. You asked for it.

Breast augmentation with saline or silicone gel implants is now passé. A Japanese doctor now harvests a patient's own fat cells from elsewhere in her body – usually the posterior – and injects them directly into her breast tissues.

While in the past, whenever women would ask us, "*does this pair of pants make my ass look big?*", men across the galaxy would restrain themselves from quipping back, "*No, Honey. Your ass makes your ass look big*" – if only to preserve the social harmony of the cosmos and prevent the universe from imploding.

But now, with J-Lo trunks getting transposed to build Dolly Parton lumps, "*Hon, does this pair of pants make my breasts look big?*" will be echoing all over the mallscape. And, "*From your rump? Nice.*" will now be our brisk reply to women who wear tank tops that ask, "*Guess*".

I can just see boyfriends and husbands everywhere now egging their women to "*Go get another helping... or five, Sweetie*" of that "cardiac surprise" grease burger so they can nourish those previously-unappreciated fat cells that now happily reside deep in their breasts to Pamela Andersonian proportions.

Quick, buy yourselves stocks with Lane Bryant – fashion designer for the full-sized...I mean, for "Cantilevered-Americans".

I hope this "much simpler" breast augmentation procedure does not spark a stampede of emotionally labile patients just because the great Australian philosopher David Tench said, "*Plastic surgery will not change what you are inside. But, you WILL have a lot more casual sex*".

I have always been a fan of lesbians...or "people of the Lesbyterian persuasion", in politically correct terms. In fact, I know I am a lesbian trapped in a man's body.

But, lately, Rosie O'Donnell and Ellen Degeneres (no relation to me) have been making me question my fondness of them. First, Rosie slugged "The Donald" (Trump) for him giving a pretty 19-year-old a second chance at becoming Miss USA, or Miss America, whichever pageant he owns.

Isn't that what America is all about? Giving people second chances? Providing opportunities?

Then, Rosie daily attempted to drown with her verbal diarrhea the cute blonde who played Nicolas

Cage's wife in the movie "Con Air". Thankfully, Barbara Walters got tired of it and gave Rosie "The View" – of her boot.

Not to be outdone a few weeks ago, Ellen marinated herself on-air discussing her own dog adoption snafu. What is happening to Hollywood? Who let all these aristo-Brats out?

Even certified non-lesbians are losing it. Paris and Britney are getting booked for driving offences. Ladies, "being green" means the CAR gets the ethanol – not YOU...and the color "green" represents NATURE – not your CYANOSIS (paleness) after "pitching your cookies" (vomiting) all over your Blahniks.

Lindsay has also been alleged to have carjacked an SUV and to have careened down the freeway as if the car had a flux capacitor and she needed to hit 88 mph most ricky tick to go Back to the Future and rescue Doc Emmett Brown.

What ever happened to the "good old days"? – when men were the pigs, and lesbians acted like the "men-pigs" (– at least the ones I've seen on No-Tell Motel pay-per-view channels like Skin-e-max)? – Why do lesbians now have to champion social awareness, have political statements and get emotional meltdowns on TV over lost dogs and billionaire beauty pageant owners? I've met much "weaker" hetero women who knew how to handle their hormonal firestorms with truckloads more finesse.

Rosie and Ellen got it backwards (no pun, nor fun, intended). These "fans of women" should LOOK like women but ACT

like "men-pigs". Not the other way around. They are ruining my lesbian fantasies.

I also miss the days when Paris and Britney would simply make sex tapes with their respective partners in the "privacy" of the world-wide web – but in the SAFETY of their homes – instead of endangering countless innocent lives on public roads with their boorish driving.

Or the days when Lindsay was a baby fat – plump, freckled redhead hating the Mean Girls, vice being an anorexic, "chemically-enabled" bleached blonde and **being one** of the mean girls. I miss Lindsay being more Chanel than Chenelle, when she was more Disney than dizzy, clean rather than mean.

I miss the good ole days. Maybe, my niece was right – I am getting old.

Have a Merry Christmas, dear friends. Enjoy the times. They don't seem to last too long. Well, not as long as the stay of the additional pounds we will be packing in after the brutal and relentless holiday bingeing in fermented grape (wine) and burnt carcasses of dead mammals (BBQ swine) at the ancestral trough (family dine).

The silver lining is – the women can now stuff their relocated fattened asses (not the animals) in their new 42DDD bras. They're happy. Their hubbies are happy. Lane Bryant is happy. Every one is happy.

Aren't Japanese plastic surgeons great? "**BANZAI NIPPLE !!!**"

Email author at navdoc10@yahoo.com.

Press freedom (From page 6)

Telecommunications Commission under the department of transportation and communications. Broadcast technicians also need to get a license from the NTC.

On the other hand, in newspaper/magazine publishing, no special permits are needed other than those similarly required of other ordinary businesses such as BIR registration, mayor's permit, etc.

And it is so simple to start a newspaper, magazine or komiks business. All it takes is to register the venture with the Securities and Exchange Corp. if it is a corporation which can be done in one day; or with the

department of trade and industry, if it is a single proprietorship registration of which can be done online.

So, who can rightfully invoke freedom of the press?

The Constitution provides that "no law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press, or the right of the people to peaceably assemble; and petition the government for redress of grievances."

Unfortunately for broadcasting, that principle was adopted from a model of the time when radio and television were only figments of the imagination.

No longer (From page 7)

it is comfortable with -- just like FVR."

From General Santos City (I still can't get myself to call it Gensancit), we helicoptered 100 kilometers to Koronadal, which I learned just then is the capital of South Cotabato. Only then also did I get it straight in my mind that there is no longer a Cotabato; in its stead are South Cotabato, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, and Sarangani. What remains a puzzle is this: all along I thought the capital of Maguindanao was Cotabato City; it turns out it is not. Moreover, it turns out the province has two capitals -- Pagalungan and Magonoy. There goes my boast about how good I am in geography.

In Koronadal, we attended the opening of the 1996 Palarong Pambansa in a stadium

constructed with funds raised mainly by the people of Socsargen. As I took my seat, I was handed a plastic fan and on it was written this injunction: "Get it done."

I found myself nodding, for on the way to Koronadal I could spot from our helicopter roads and bridges and irrigation dams being built; farms being furrowed or planted to corn and asparagus and pineapple; new growths in the forests that cover mountains. And something a wit said came to mind: "Things are getting done. We should not worry about moving slowly, only about standing still."

(Note: This article was first published in the defunct *The Evening Paper* on April 18, 1996 under the column Believe You Me.)

Trillanes must (From page 7)

only proper that when this person gets sick, he gets free medical assistance and hospitalization so that when he gets well, the person could again work and pay taxes.

His nationalism is uncontested for his advocacy in the use of Filipino in public signs and messages. Many remember his poetic way of admonishing people not to smoke in movie theaters and public places. "*Hindi dahil sa nais naming kayo'y pigilin, subalit' yang usok ay masamang hangin.*" 'Yeba' as he was fondly called

by Manilenos, worked for the cleanliness and greening of Manila with his women volunteer street sweepers. Like present day MMDA Chairman Bayani Fernando who fearlessly eradicates sore spots in Metro Manila, Yeba also caused the demolition of squatters in Intramuros, giving back to the place its dignity. His dream for every Manilan and Filipino for that matter is to live free from hunger and want of education. If he is living today, he could be a presidential timber capable of leading this country to a better future.

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MUSINGS



By DENN A. MENESES

Love in the time of the Internet

While you are destroying your mind watching the worthless, brain-rotting drivel on TV, we on the Internet are exchanging, freely and openly, the most uninhibited, intimate and, yes, shocking details about our config.sys settings.

Dave Barry

IT IS a new phenomenon, or so it seems. Virtual strangers falling in love just staring at the computer screen, or something like that.

Skeptics dismiss it as nonsense, hogwash, blah. They wake it off as nothing more than a ridiculous playground for idle minds, a sheer waste of productive time, a nesting place for people who don't have a life.

It might be true, to a certain extent; but then again, isn't skepticism the mother of conversion? Isn't curiosity the progenitor of discovery, restlessness the catalyst for change? Doesn't the thrill of adventure usher one into heretofore inconceivable worlds, at once trifling but nonetheless exciting, at times mind-boggling but awe-inspiring all the same?

What would life be if we didn't have the courage to venture into the unknown, one time or another, whether or not it be worth it in the end?

For many, the Internet has become a comforting refuge from the harsh realities of their everyday struggles, a momentary escape from the ills that nibble at the fragile threads of their being. It is the beacon that allows them to live another life, as it were; to assume a different self, or discover a new dimension to their individuality.

It is as if a totally divergent world exists for them, a realm so far removed from the dreary rut that they inhabit. Like an enchanted kingdom that dwells only in the mind, or an ivory tower that provides safe haven for fertile imagination to thrive even more. And once there, one can only go deeper and deeper, not necessarily to sink into a black hole than to swim in all directions or to ebb and flow with the changeable tide.

Much like a chain that is suddenly broken, a string that snaps from being pulled at opposite ends, or a nut loosened free from the bolt that has been clutching it firmly in place – the experience is liberating, to say the least.

The anonymity that cyberspace affords is a lure too hard for the timorous of spirit to resist. In there, they can be nameless and faceless, yet still be a person even if bereft of flesh and emotion. They can be spontaneous and impetuous, even if in real they are contemplative and reticent. And they end up being cognizant of things about themselves that are, at best, surprising, or, at worst, unsettling.

And so it comes to pass that citizens of this brave wide 'other'-world – 'netizens', they are euphemistically called – congregate in their favorite corner of 'netopia', blabbering and chattering almost non-stop about bits and pieces they have or don't have in common. Oblivious of time zones and language barriers, they navigate the thin line that separates profundity from senselessness with deft hands and wary eyes, more than ready to

take on the infinite possibilities that abound in cyberspace.

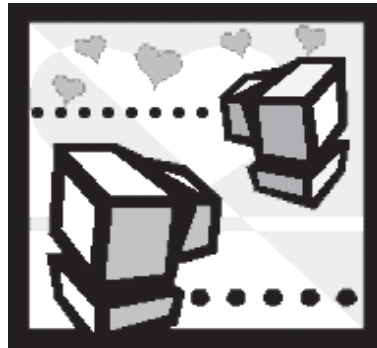
They wade through a maze of lonely hearts and desperados, bored huskies and jaded suits, jilted lovers and creepy characters on the prowl, immature adults and juvenile delinquents on the loose, sexual perverts and depraved better halves, Romeos desperately seeking Juliets and Juliets ruthlessly ditching Romeos.

Throw into the fray an eclectic mix of deep thinkers and intellectual wannabes, obscure poets and struggling musicians, published authors and creative warts, average Joes and not-so-plain Janes, bumbling geeks and prodigies in the making – from all parts of the globe, of every race and conviction, whenever the proclivity to intermingle takes over, whatever the temperament, as good as it gets.

They come together in chat

rooms, dating sites, blog spots, networking links, web pages, message boards, interactive forums, e-mail groups, name it, they have an impetus for it – hiding behind identities, screen names so-called, that essentially speak volumes about their true colors. The interactions are either fleeting or lingering, depending largely on salutations and first impressions, while actively searching or merely lurking.

The casual encounters become frequent and, before long, they are baring their souls and spilling their guts to one another, eventually forging friendships – without actually meeting – more deep-seated than one's nodding acquaintances in real life. The connection becomes palpable once a common link is ascertained – books and literature, perhaps; or politics and religion, music and



cultures, education and business, or just empty, brainless prattle.

And there is no turning back the moment they reveal their genuine selves. After relentlessly pounding the keyboards, they pick up their headsets and listen to each other's voices. Then they turn on their webcams and look into each other's eyes. And inevitably or not, they fall in love, or think they do. Virtual lovers they have become, spending extra hours getting to know each other in more intimate, delicate terms – the feeling not any less intriguing than when skin truly touches skin.

When they finally meet – eyeball to eyeball, in cyber speak – the emotions are inexplicable. Completely disorienting, one might say; like two different worlds colliding, a concept here and a truth there, imagination

modifying reality, reality substantiating imagination.

A windswept rock singer in Bangalore finds the love of his life in a sultry Romanian goddess. A Norwegian man-about-town trots the globe with an Argentinean poetess, producing works of art together – he with his pictures, she with her words. And it all began with an innocuous phrase or two.

Back in the good old days, people walked in and out of our lives like rain on a summer day. Their presence or absence has become predictable over time, and the constancy leaves us a little indifferent each day. Now the Internet provides a new source of excitement. It has made the earth an incredible shrinking planet! Who cares where you are, as long as you're wired. You will be found, even if you're not looking.

Can't locate your 'soul mate' from where you sulk and simmer? They're probably cooped up in some desert or outback or snow-capped mountain, thinking what you're thinking, wishing the same thing, a million miles out of reach. Even so, what do you know? They could, after all, be just one mouse click away.

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Defining global standards

Foreign group mulls P3b project in Coron

By LILYBETH G. ISON in MANILA

THE Banyan Tree Group has committed to invest at least \$70 million for the development of a 55-hectare property on Dinaran island in Coron, Palawan.

This was disclosed recently by Tourism Secretary Ace Durano as he expressed optimism that the tourism industry will continue to grow rapidly in the months ahead.

"The presence of the Banyan Tree Group is a clear confirmation that the Philippines is an attractive destination for tourism investment," he said.

Banyan Tree operates resorts in prime tourist areas including such destinations as Bali in Indonesia, Phuket in Thailand, Mexico and the Middle East.

Banyan Tree's planned investments will be made notwithstanding domestic violence and political noise in the country. Aside from Palawan, the group is also looking at other sites in the country to develop.

According to Banyan chief executive Ho Kwon Ping, there is not a single country in the world which is immune from domestic

violence.

"Tourism practitioners like us do not take such challenges to be fear challenges as they are part and parcel of normal challenges we have to deal with," Ho said.

He added that "the Philippines will grow into an important luxury tourist destination and our resorts in Dinaran will not only enhance our position as a premier resort chain in Asia but will also give us important foothold in a country with tremendous potentials."

However, he urged local authorities to improve infrastructure facilities to support investments in tourism.

"If the Philippines can improve its transportation system, I think this is the single largest assistance that foreign investors and the tourism industry would want," Ho noted.

With its culture that is hospitable, good food and cuisine, natural resources and beautiful beaches, all the country needs is just improve its infrastructure, he added. (PNA)

Cagayan Valley pushes eco-tourism

By PURITA S. LICAS in TUGUEGARAO CITY

AT LEAST five eco-tourism packages in the three provinces of Cagayan Valley are now being promoted to boost tourism in the region.

Tourism Regional Director Blessida Diwa said the network of caves at the Callao Caves Tourist Zone in Penablanca town still tops the list of destinations where tourists experience cave spelunking, boating, swimming, kayaking and bat viewing at dusk.

En route to Sta. Ana's Palau island where white sand beaches are located, are centuries-old churches, the oldest bell in the Far East and the Cape Engano lighthouse which is still being operated to guide seafarers.

Another tour package includes a pilgrimage to the Piat Basilica

Minore of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary which is home to the miraculous image of the Black Mary.

A five-day/four night package to Palanan involves homestays in the town and in the forest where General Emilio Aguinaldo put up his stand against the Americans.

Stamina of tourists are put to test as they trek through the Palanan river for local color.

Included in this itinerary are a river cruise with visits to Dibungco which is the first Agta-organized community in town, and passage through mangroves for a panoramic view of Palanan Bay, the Pacific Ocean and the northern ranges of the Sierra Madre mountain and Dicototan where Palanan Point's barrier reefs are located.

A stroll on a deserted white

sand beach where the Palanan rainforest stops the breaking swells of the Pacific Ocean and where a few nomadic Agta indigenous families have set up their mobile lean-tos long the seashore is also a must-do activity.

Fund and frolic along the Sabang Beach and a hike through the 16-hectare botanical research plot to discover the rich biodiversity of Palanan and the dynamics of a rainforest ecosystem is part of the itinerary.

The Quirino special adventure on the other hand, includes treks to the Susong Dalaga hills in Cabarroguis town, eco-adventure to the Governor's Rapids, visit to the Wasid Nagtipunan ecotourism hub and a treat to the Bugkalot Tribe Cultural presentation. (PNA)

Amanpulo (From page 1)

debt.

As a result of the acquisition, DFL will take over construction of a new hotel in New Delhi which Amanresorts had put up. The property is expected to offer luxurious facilities which will make

it one of the most expensive hotels in the country.

DFL Ltd. is the largest listed real estate company in India. It went into the hospitality business last year by forging a joint venture with Hilton International to build up to 75 hotels and serviced apartments in India within seven years.

Aside from Amanpulo, Amanresorts also owns high-end resorts in Indonesia, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Morocco, Bhutan, French Polynesia, France and the US.

Amanresort properties are known to cater to the rich and the famous with room rates of over US\$600 per night.

Amanpulo which is located on Pamalican island in Palawan has its own airstrip which is used by chartered planes to ferry vacationists to the exclusive island resort.

CARP is (From page 7)

The national government and the private sector should seriously consider investing in agriculture more heavily as the World Bank recommends. But before this could happen, a comprehensive study, review and assessment of the CARP should be done to remove restrictive provisions and fine tune the program based on present realities and global trends. (egay_serrano2005@yahoo.com.ph)

More science (From page 6)

not that specific, and it instead raised more questions than what it answered.

If the NBI investigation report turns out to be more of the same and takes just as long to be made known to the public (maybe coincidentally by December 21 when the Makati Business Development Council submits its independent investigation results), then that's Strike Three and Out in baseball!

It is high time that some sense of standards and best practices in police management be observed from the DILG down to the PNP. Incompetence should be censured just as proficiency is recompensed. (congressmagazine_frankgrego@yahoo.com)

TORRES HIGH SCHOOL CLASS '74 REUNION

The Torres High School Class of '74 will hold a grand reunion on February 23-24, 2008 in Metro Manila.

All graduates of Batch '74 are enjoined to attend this once-in-a-lifetime gathering of not-so-old classmates reliving not-so-long-ago memories.

For details, contact the Secretariat in Manila thru Maritess Guina (maritess_guina@yahoo.com) at telephones 6340270, 6340273 or 6341969.

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REALTORS CONFAB IN HONGKONG - The 3rd annual Real Estate Investment IQ 2007 was held at the Conrad Hotel in Hong Kong last Nov.6-8 attended by real estate practitioners across Asia and the Pacific. The Philippine team tackled the topic 'The Philippines: the Next Asian Real Estate Jewel to be Discovered?' In photo (l to r) are: Tess R. Bigornia, president of Land Treasures Realty; Ken Atchinson, managing director of Atchinson Consultants based in Australia; Federico Cuervo, president and CEO of Cuervo Valuers and Advisory, and head of the Philippine delegation; Rick M. Santos, managing director of CB Richard Ellis Hong Kong and chairman of CBRE Philippines; and Atty. Francis Ed. Lim, president of the Philippine Stock Exchange.



OFFICIAL HOME OF PINOYSIKLO 2007 - Traders Hotel Manila was the official residence of Pinoysiklo, the biggest motorcycle gathering in the country, participated in by motorcycle clubs and individual bikers held last November 24. Bikers from North Luzon, South Luzon and the National Capital Region rode enmasse towards Quirino Grandstand, the venue for the whole day event. A motorbike show, motocross tricks, wall climbing and the search for Ms. Pinoysiklo 2007 were among the activities lined up for the day. Shown during the contract signing are (l to r): Rowena Bacani, sales director of Estima Inc.; Rodrigo "Elcid" Cruz, head organizer of Pinoysiklo 2007; Andrea Mastellone, Traders Hotel general manager; and Michael Jaey Albaa, Traders Hotel director of sales and marketing.



ATTY. Adrian S. Cristobal, Jr., director general of IP Philippines, presides at the 4th Heads of IP Conference (HIPOC) 2007. Atty. Cristobal provided an update on the office's experience as a self-sustaining agency for two years.

IP Philippines stages 4th int'l IP heads confab

THE Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IP Philippines) recently hosted the 4th Heads of Intellectual Property Offices Conference (HIPOC) 2007 at the Peninsula Manila with close to 100 local and foreign delegates in attendance. IP Philippines staged the two-day event for the first time in partnership with the European Patent Office (EPO) last November 13-14.

Atty. Adrian S. Cristobal, Jr., director general of IP Philippines, said that it is an honor for the country to host HIPOC 2007. The international conference, themed "Addressing IP Needs of the Future", builds on the previous year's meeting in Singapore on addressing growing workload and office modernization.

"Now, more than ever, the IP system's immense impact on society is felt in communities around the world," Cristobal said in his opening remarks. "Many issues like access to affordable medicines and knowledge or the level of protection of IP owners vis-à-vis the public

interest are common concerns being debated in our countries and our regions," he said.

"The common objective is to restore that delicate balance in the IP system to ensure it promotes innovation, making it relevant to our people and spur socio-economic development," he added.

The first session, presided over by Cristobal, discussed the future of intellectual property rights (IPR) where Dr. Manuel Desantes, Vice President of the EPO, presented the strategic renewal of patent offices and provided future scenarios. These scenarios could serve as tools for IP offices in designing strategies for intellectual property rights. Desantes was accompanied by other EPO officials, namely Niclas Morey, head of the Asia Unit and; Nicholas Kornig, Asia Co-operation Administrator.

Dr. Andy Noorsaman Sommeng, director general of the Indonesian Intellectual Property Office; Mohamad Kamel, director general of the Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia (MyIPO);

Liew Woon Yin, director general of the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (IPOS) and; Tran Viet Hung, director general, National Office of Intellectual Property (NOIP) of Vietnam were some of the delegates to HIPOC 2007.

Officials of HIPOC member organizations who likewise presented strategies and perspectives from the other offices include Margaret Focarino, deputy commissioner for patent operations, United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO); Hitoshi Amano, director of the Intellectual Property Department, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) Bangkok; Fatima Beattie, deputy director general, Intellectual Property Australia; Xing Shengcai, deputy commissioner, State Intellectual Property Office of China; Ravi Vedaraman, controller of the Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks (CGPDTM)—India; and representatives from the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO) and the New Zealand Intellectual Property Office (NIPO).

UE Chorale sweeps Busan Choral Festival

THE University of the East Chorale made the Filipinos proud again following their being crowned as the Grand Prix winner and gold medalist at the 2007 Busan Choral Festival and Competition in Busan, South Korea last month.

The UE Chorale's Grand Prix win is a victory for the Philippines in general and UE in particular, signifying as it does "International Excellence in Classical and Pop Music." The UE-based singing group also won two gold medals in the Competition's Classical and Pop Categories. They bested over 35 choirs from around the world, including two others from the

Philippines.

This was the second year in a row for the UE Chorale to win the said competition's Grand Prix. Last year, the UE Chorale won not just the Grand Prix but also the Gold medal in the Pop category and the Silver medal in the Classical category.

The UE Chorale has already held 27 concerts in various venues throughout South Korea, including Korea University and Cheong-Ju University. It is composed of 26 college students of the University of the East, led by Anna Tabitha Abeleda-Piquero as musical director and conductor.

Traders Hotel offers holiday packages

TRADERS Hotel Manila is all geared up to welcome its patrons for the festive Yuletide season with a range of special offers.

Latitude restaurant offers the following buffet deals:

* Christmas Eve Noche Buena Dinner Buffet priced at Php 920++

* Christmas Day Lunch/Dinner Buffet priced at Php 920++

* New Year's Eve Dinner Buffet priced at Php 980++

* New Year Countdown at the Lobby Lounge at Php680++

Entertainment with pica pica buffet and two standard drinks

* New Year's Day Lunch/Dinner Buffet priced at Php 920++

Patrons are also invited to take advantage of the hotel's New Year Holiday packages .

* An overnight stay in a Superior Room, including buffet breakfast and dinner for two at Latitude, a bottle of red wine and a special Christmas token, priced at Php5,000++.

* An overnight stay in a room on the Traders Club floor and all the

Traders Club amenities, such as buffet breakfast, afternoon tea with pastries, sunset cocktails, private check-in and check-out and more, priced at Php 7,000++.

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Exponent of good food supply management

Is your Christmas ham made of whole-meat?



CHRISTMAS is a season of sharing, and one favorite gift item that often tops the list during this holiday is ham. But with the abundance of ham products in every grocery store and supermarket, shoppers are puzzled as to which one is of the best quality that the whole family can enjoy.

A ham expert shares some

practical tips in choosing which honest-to-goodness ham is deserving of the name holiday ham.

Technically speaking, there are two classifications of ham according to meat structure, says ham making expert Amy Cuna. These are the whole-meat ham and the restructured ham.

Cuna says the whole-meat ham is processed using one piece of whole muscle meat. It comes in two basic variants, namely the bone-in, such as the pork leg, and the boneless ham, made up of the boneless part of pork.

Restructured ham, on the other hand, is made from lean meat trimmings from several

pieces of meat that come from ham leg and shoulder parts of the pork. These trimmings are then processed into hams, which come in two forms.

Molded ham is a type of restructured ham, produced by using molders to form the meat trimmings into specific or desired shape of the finished product. These products include pear-shaped ham, square ham or oblong ham, which follow the same processing method.

Cook-in bag ham, meanwhile, is produced by using a special casing for stuffing, shaping, cooking and shipping out of cooked ham.

Buyers, who are familiar with the different types of hams, look for whole-meat ham, which is considered superior over a restructured ham, both in terms of meat ingredient and process.

That is why whole-meat ham is considered the premium or more expensive ham, says Cuna. She says ham buyers must

be able to distinguish whole-meat from restructured ham.

“With whole-meat ham, you can see the meat strands. *Makikita mo talaga yung hibla ng karne pag na slice ang hamon.* Whereas *sa restructured ham, pinong pino ang hamon pag na slice,*” she adds.

Take the case of CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham, which uses one piece of lean pork leg and undergoes a ten-step process to provide that genuine taste of ham. Whole-meat ham is considered as the premium type because of its good looks, lean meat, and savory taste.

The CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham is the flagship Christmas ham product of the 32-year-old meat manufacturing company, CDO-Foodsphere Inc. To sustain the good quality of CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham, the company makes sure that all materials, ingredients, and processes used are in accordance with internationally recognized standards.

Shoppers are cautioned about the tactics of other clever ham processors or retailers that disguise restructured ham for whole meat ham.

For more information about whole-meat ham processing, call 294-1111.

(In photo, model Melanie Fabian shows off the CDO Whole-Meat Ham in holiday packaging.)

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STYLE SPEAK



By MARITESS G. CONCEPCION

UNDOUBTEDLY, many of us will have a difficult time this month balancing our budget which will obviously contain our shopping expenses during the holiday season.

Generally, I expect consumer spending to be subdued despite the onslaught of advertising and promotions to make people part away with their hard-earned money.

Since last month, a lot of people have been going to the malls but there has been no dramatic increase in sales although the Christmas season is really the period when consumers go on a buying binge.

I believe the slow spending is caused mainly by the erosion in the purchasing power of consumers.

Costs of basic goods and services have been gradually going up, caused mainly by the increase in the prices of fuel. Pump prices of gasoline, diesel and cooking gas move up so often that I have really lost count.

As a result, I now make sure that unnecessary trips are eliminated to save on gasoline. And I have asked my staff to do the same.

Of course, oil companies will argue that local fuel prices are still reasonable based on world prices that have hit nearly \$100 per barrel as news reports have said. Still, other players say that the appreciation of the peso against the US dollar has also helped temper local prices. Well, as the saying goes, 'whatever'.

Nevertheless, I am all the more confused when I hear official pronouncements to the effect that our inflation is low. How can that be?

In the case of reduced consumer spending, I expect this to be more pronounced among dependents of OFWs which have been hit hard by the peso appreciation.

Since early this year, I think the value of the peso has risen more than 15 percent against the US dollar. If my arithmetic is right, I think this translates to a loss in purchasing power of P8 for every dollar earned. This is a lot of money and I can't blame OFW dependents for raising a howl.

An OFW who used to get the equivalent of P10,000 on a remittance of \$200 a month previously, now gets only a little over P8,000. This is a lot of money that the dependent loses on the remittance.

One can imagine the magnitude of this loss if this is translated to the equivalent of \$1.2 billion that OFWs send home every month.

So, instead of buying a few extras to spice up the Christmas season, OFW dependents will probably just concentrate on the basic necessities in life.

These necessities, as shown by a recent survey of the Central Bank, involves mainly food and other household needs, education and debt payments in that order. Purchases of consumer durables such as home appliances and other goods rank low in their order of spending.

According to the survey, 94 percent of those surveyed spent the remittance on food; 50 percent on education; about one in every three spent it on debt payments, and one in every four spent it on medical expenses.

A similar situation is being experienced by consumers in India whose currency also rose more than 11 percent against the US dollar since early this year. I am told that the effect of the currency appreciation has been harsh on Indian exporters who are now forced to either stop exports or reduced volumes just to be able to keep their share of the market abroad.

Why consumer spending is falling



FLEA markets, like this one in Greenhills, are where the action is this Christmas.

Given the current situation, how should consumers live up their holidays? Well, there's always the flea market or the night market

to go. And if they're patient and not too choosy, there's always Divisoria and Baclaran.

Anyway, may I wish all our readers and supporters a very Merry Christmas and a more prosperous New Year!

Magandang araw mula sa San Miguel

Sa pagsisikap, natutupad ang maraming pangarap. Aram ng San Miguel ito. Kaya naman sisisikap nito na gawing mas masarap, mas maginhawa ang bawat araw. Ikinatagayod ang mga programang nakikitungo sa pagpapalaganap ng buhay at kalusugan. Ito ang "Operation Linis Tula" sa bahay na nangangailangan sa kalusugan ng mga tsada din. At ang "Tulong-tulong sa Tullahan" na malinag binubuhay ang Tullahan River para sa kapakanan ng mga taga-Malabon at Valenzuela. At siyempre, mahusay na ginagawa ang San Miguel Corporation ng mga de-kalidad at abot-kayang mga produkto para sa bawat Pilipino.



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