



## The Philippines' New President: Benigno "Noynoy" Simeon Cojuangco Aquino III

Benigno Simeon Cojuangco Aquino, III (born February 8, 1960) also known as Noynoy Aquino, is the fifteenth and incumbent President of the Philippines, after convincingly winning by wide margin the presidential elections held last 10 May 2010.

Aquino is a fourth-generation politician: his great-grandfather, Servillano "Mianong" Aquino, served as a delegate to the Malolos Congress; his grandfather, Benigno Aquino, Sr., held several

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## RP INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATED WITH TWO BIG EVENTS IN GREECE



Ambassador Rigoberto and Madame Getsy Tiglao led embassy officials and the Filipino community in a parade at the Independence Day celebration at Fokianos National Gymnasium on June 06 (left photo), and the Diplomatic Reception at the King George Palace on June 11(right photo).

The Philippine Embassy marked the 112<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of Philippine independence with two major, well-attended events in Athens: a *fiesta*-type celebration with the Filipino community at the Fokianos basketball court at Zappeio on 06 June 2010 and a Diplomatic Reception for the *diplomatic corps* at the prestigious King George Palace on 11 June 2010, both in central Athens.

The whole-day celebration with the Filipino community at Zappeio began with the parade of banners of various Filipino community associations in Greece and the singing of the Philippine national anthem. His Excellency Ambassador Rigoberto D. Tiglao led Philippine

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## Ambassador meets with Athens Mayor Kaklamanis



Ambassador Rigoberto Tiglao met with Athens Mayor Nikitas Kaklamanis 6 July at the Mayor's office to discuss the welfare of Filipinos in Athens, where most of them reside and work.

Ambassador Tiglao was accompanied by celebrity Ilias Psinakis and his brother Yorgos Psinakis, both of whom have been active in developing relations between Greece and the Philippines.

The mayor handed to the ambassador his formal invitation for the Mayor of Manila Alfredo Lim to visit Athens in the fall to sign a protocol establishing Athens and Manila as sister cities. The Mayor expressed his admiration for the Filipino community in Athens, whom he said he has the highest respect for. ■

## SPECIAL FEATURE

## A Filipino Sushi Chef at Ledra Marriott Hotel-Athens

*The following article was featured in the Winter 2010 issue of "Roots & Wings," a magazine for Filipinos in Europe, published by Rachel Publishing Co.*

By: Major Yoko Ramos-Vingno

Famous and celebrated *chefs* have started from scratch – from just a mere name to become a renowned cuisine guru; rising from nothing to something big – like Mario Batali and Bobby Flay. Chef Mario Batali started as a dishwasher at “Stuff Yer Face Restaurant” in New Jersey, and Chef Bobby Flay started as a cook in an eatery. The Naked Chef Jamie Oliver at age 8 was a vegetable peeler at his dad’s restaurant, the Cricketers. At 16, he decided to study at Westminster Catering College and went to France to get more experience before going back to London and becoming the famous *chef* he is now. Others started as *sous chef* for chefs with names in high end hotel establishments.

This Filipino Chef, only 20 years old, is a young man which exudes the appearance of a person who seemed to have lived a pampered and blissful life. He lives alone in his flat in Glyfada, located 45 minutes away by car in the southern part of Athens. This young fellow carries a healthy physique, about 5'5 in height, with a bright and cheery attitude, always ready to flash that instant smile; a guy that struck me as a young Mario Batali: jolly, charming, sensible and confident.

Chef John Levi Reano, a fortunate and lucky man indeed, John was given the opportunity to study and finished at the prestigious Alpine Center: the Swiss Business School for Hotel and Tourism Education in Greece with a Swiss Diploma in Culinary Arts. He graduated with distinction and was given the Academic and Professional

Excellence in Culinary Arts in 2007. A consistent top student of his batch, John is the first and only Filipino to graduate in this exclusive Culinary Arts School in Athens. John’s first industry training was at Porto Elounda De Luxe Resort, a luxury golf-and-spa-resort in Crete Island, under the tutelage of chefs Jean Charles Metayer and Michalis Kontes. His second training was at 5-star Ledra Marriott Hotel where he gained the admiration of the Executive Chef that soon after finishing his training, he was offered a full time employment.

Now, John is the only Filipino Chef employed by the Ledra Marriott Hotel. He is the sushi chef at the Kona Kai Restaurant that serves Polynesian and Japanese cuisine and caters to well-heeled Greeks and expatriates. The hotel pays him a good starting salary with satisfactory perks. He is admired and well liked by his fellow chefs and gets along well with the others – from the restaurant Manager to *sous chefs* because of his talent and pleasant and sunny disposition.

John tells me about his childhood in Batangas and how he grew up to realize how fortunate he was to have lived a life that had very strong supportive structures centered in the family. The Reano household is a typical Filipino family where the father works abroad to provide for the family and the children’s education. John is the youngest child of Domingo and Natividad Reano. Domingo is a former overseas contract worker in Saudi Arabia while Natividad stayed at home to take care of the children. Domingo, then in his mid 50’s and having saved a little, decided to retire in their house in Tanauan, Batangas. Soon thereafter, Chef John was conceived when his mother was in her late 40s. Thus, little John Reano was born on October 8, 1988.

Early on, John attended elementary and finished at the Bernardo Lirio Elementary School. He spent his high school at the La Consolacion College in Tanauan, Batangas. Thanks to the kindness and support of John’s elder sister,



Chef John together with his other colleagues at Ledra Marriott Hotel in Athens

then a nurse in Switzerland, who paid for his high school education. John also attributes the blessings that came his way to the generosity of his Greek born brother-in-law who had encouraged and inspired him to pursue his passion and ambition and supported him all the way as if he were his own son. His brother-in-law who is in shipping business met and married his sister when she was working in Switzerland as a nurse.

Chef John is delighted to have his friends (of different nationalities) around, pleased with his independence and thankful for his family and work at Ledra Marriott. When asked for his plans for the future: **“I want to pursue another Diploma for my career in the business. I want to travel around the world to have a better understanding of the world and to experience and explore the different cultures and cuisines.”** And for all the good blessings that came his way, John says, **“I would like to be able to own and operate my own restaurant to open up opportunities and give jobs to my fellow Filipinos. I think this is the best gesture and way that I could think of to give back what I had received and to thank those people dear to me who molded me into the person I turned out to be.”**

**That’s Chef John – our Filipino Chef. ■**



The author together with John Reano.

*Major Yoko Ramos-Vingno, wife of Minister and Consul General Constancio Vingno Jr., is a reserve officer of the Philippine Army. She is a free lance writer.*



*The Philippines new.....(Continued from page 1)*

legislative positions from 1919–44; and his parents were former President Corazon Aquino and former Senator Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, Jr. Aquino is a member of the Liberal Party.

Born in Manila, Aquino graduated from Ateneo de Manila University in 1981 and joined his family in their exile in the United States shortly thereafter. He returned to the Philippines in 1983 shortly after the assassination of his father and held several positions working in the private sector. In 1998, he was elected to the House of Representatives as Representative of the 2nd district of Tarlac

province.

He was subsequently re-elected to the House in 2001 and 2004. In 2007, having been barred from running for re-election to the House due to the term limit, he was elected to the Senate in the 14th Congress of the Philippines.



President Noynoy Aquino.

Following the death of his mother on August 1, 2009, many people began calling on Aquino to run for president. On September 9, 2009, Aquino officially announced he would be a candidate in the 2010 presidential election, held on May 10, 2010.

On June 9, 2010, the Congress of the Philippines proclaimed Aquino the winner of the 2010 presidential election.

On June 30, 2010, at the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park, Manila, Aquino was sworn into office as the fifteenth President of the Philippines, succeeding Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. ■

## ATHENS PE OVERSEAS ABSENTEE VOTING



SBEI members assembling the first ballot box.

Voting for the 2010 elections started April 10 and ended on May 10, 2010. The overseas registered voters cast their votes for the President, Vice President, twelve Senators of the Republic, and one Party for the “Party list” voting.

The ballots cast were counted immediately at the Embassy after the voting period ended at 2 pm on May 10, complying with the strict regulations and procedures of the Comelec.

Thereafter, the voting results were delivered physically to the National Board of Canvassers in Manila by the Ambassador Tiglaog as Chair of the Special Board of canvassers (SBOC).

One thousand six hundred out of six thousand cast their ballots in 2 pre-

cincts. Senator Noynoy Aquino of the Liberal Party (LP) garnered 1,233

votes, followed by Senator Manuel Villar of the Nacionalista Party (NP) with 160 votes; Eddie Villanueva of Bangon Pilipinas with 133 votes.

For Vice-President, Senator Mar Roxas (LP) got 1,112 votes, followed by Senator Loren Legarda of the Nacionalista People’s Coalition with 186 and PDP Laban’s Jejomar Binay with 171 votes.

For Senators, the top twelve are:

Bong Revilla (912), Franklin Drilon (815), Jinggoy Estrada (794), Ana Theresia Hontiveros-Baraquel (793), Ralph Recto (773), Miriam Defensor-Santigao (719), Juan Ponce Enrile (698), Rozzano Rufino Biazon (679), Alexander Lacson (615), Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (602), Vicente Sotto III (111) and Jose De Venecia III (461).

The next twelve are: Cayetano (456), Martin Bautista (431), Acosta (421), Sonia Roco (375), Serge Osmeña (338), Lim (310), Lapid (283), Papin (205), Espinosa (191), Lao (172), Mitra (161), Ople (157).

The top three party list are: AKbayan!Citizen’s Action Party (327), Alyansa ng OFW Party (35) and 1-Aangat Ka Pilipino (71). ■



The four precincts during the counting of the ballots.

## Community News

We welcome Pinoy news!

Send us your letters, news stories, press or photo releases for publication in the newsletter via regular mail, e-mail.



**EL Shaddai DWXI-Greece Chapter's 16th Anniversary.** Embassy official and staff attended the EL Shaddai 16th anniversary celebration on 11 April 2010 in Leoneio Lykeio.



**Filipino Bowlers in Athens, Greece (FILBAG) 7th Anniversary.** Ambassador Tiglao and other embassy official and staff attended the FILBAG 7th Anniversary and Awarding ceremony held on 8 May 2010 in Novotel Hotel.



### Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

#### **BABALA: HUWAG PABIKTIMA SA TEXT SCAM**

Ang publiko ay muling pinag-iingat laban sa text scammers na patuloy ang panloloko sa ating mga kababayan, lalo na sa ating mga OFWs.

#### PAANO GINAGAWA ANG PANLOLOKO

Ang mga text scammers ay nagpapadala ng mga mapanlinlang na mensahe. Kunwari ay nanalo ng malaking halaga ang cellular phone number ng kanilang nais biktimahin sa isang diumano raffle ng Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas o iba pang institusyon. Inuulit po namin! Walang pa-raffle ang Bangko Sentral na matagal nang nagbibigay babala sa ating mga kababayan laban sa text scam syndicates.

Ang mga manlilinlang ay gumagamit ng pekeng pangalan o nagpapakilalang mga opisyal diumano ng pamahalaan.

Hihingan nila ang biktima, bilang kondisyon upang makuha ang premyo, ng perang pambayad sa buwis at pre-paid load na ipapakarga direktso sa cellular phone numbers ng mga manlilinlang. Kapag nakuha na ng scammers ang pera at pre-paid load, hindi na sila muling makikipag-usap sa biktima.

#### ANO ANG GAGAWIN

Ipagbigay-alam kaagad ang anumang insidente ng nasabing scam sa:

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

5/F, EDPG Building, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Complex, Manila

Tel: 302-3982 and 524-7011 local 2372

CORPORATE AFFAIRS OFFICE ng BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS

BSP Complex, Mabini St. Manila

Tel: 523-4832 and 524-7011 local 2259

### **Email Scam Using Name of Philippine Embassy**

All OFWs are being cautioned regarding a new email scam whose modus operandi includes targeting OFW using the name of the Philippine Embassy or other Philippine representations abroad.

In view of this all OFWs are being alerted to this type of email scam and ascertain such claims from the appropriate authorities before giving out personal information or following the instructions stated in the emails.

Below are the contact details of the Philippine Embassy. ■

## Makabayang BALITA sa Gresya at Cyprus

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## First Awardee of the Ambassador's Scholarship Program



**Ambassador Tiglao congratulating first scholar Eden Mae Castillo, with her mother Lilia.**

Eden Mae M. Castillo, college freshman, is the first awardee of the Philippine Ambassador's scholarship under an agreement signed two months ago by University of Indianapolis (Athens campus) Chancellor Vasilis Botopoulos and Ambassador Rigoberto Tiglao.

The Philippine Ambassador's Scholarship provides for a 70% tuition assistance to a Filipino for an undergraduate college degree at the prestigious University of Indianapolis (Athens Campus) upon recommendation of the ambassador. In order to sustain the scholarship the student has to consistently maintain an average grade of B.

Eden, as she is fondly called by her friends and teachers, is an alumna of the Philippine School in Greece-Katipunan Philippine Cultural Academy, who as a student was **very active in the school's cultural activities**. She was a member of the Kabataang Tinig Choir and the PSG Dance Troupe.

She also served as the president of the student council in 2007-2008. Her teachers had glowing praises of her as a smart, diligent and responsible student who also has good

leadership skills.

Already considered an above-average student at the University in the first semester, Ambassador remarked that **Eden is a 'living proof' of the quality of education provided by the Philippine School in Greece (Kaphilca)**

Eden says she is looking forward to taking either A.B. Psychology or Arts and Communications degree. Eden's early impressions of her new school are that of an excellent and ideal place to learn, but also a community composed of administrators, teachers, and fellow students who are very friendly and helpful.

Eden Mae M. Castillo was born on March 09, 1991 in Antipolo City, Philippines. She is the eldest daughter of Mr. Eduardo Bruce Castillo and Mrs. Lilia

M. Castillo and a sister to Despina Joy Castillo.

The University of Indianapolis-Athens is not merely a franchise or a branch of the American university. It is academically and legally categorized as a campus of the university.



**One of UINDY's campuses in central Athens**



**Ambassador Tiglao and University Chancellor Botopoulos**

The other forms of "Ambassador's Scholarships" Ambassador Tiglao had arranged with the University of Indianapolis (Athens Campus) include five undergraduate scholarships providing for a 25% tuition assistance and another five graduate-school scholarships also providing a 25% tuition assistance.

In addition to these "Ambassador's Scholarships", the MOU provides for a General undergraduate scholarships which will grant a 20% tuition assistance for undergraduate studies for a child or spouse of an employee of the Philippine Embassy and the Philippine School in Greece as well as for a graduate of the Philippine School in Greece.

There is also a General graduate scholarship program which provides for a 20% tuition assistance for graduate studies of an employee, child or spouse of the Philippine Embassy and the Philippine School employee at UINDY Athens. ■

RP Independence.... (Continued from page 1)

Embassy officials and delivered the Philippine Independence Day message.

A huge marquee and three big tents covered the venue as protection from the sun and rain. Athens News, the **Philippine Embassy's communications** sponsor for this event, distributed free newspapers and flyers during the event. Coca Cola, Emirates Airlines and the Accredited Community Partners (ACP) served as the major sponsors for the Filipino community event.

The different Filipino organizations showed off their rich and colorful costumes during the parade. Students of the Philippine School in Greece (formerly known as KAPHILCA or Katipunan Philippines Cultural Academy) and representatives of various Filipino organizations performed cultural numbers consisting of songs and dances on the stage specifically built

and assembled by the embassy for the cultural presentations.

Known Filipino singer Ms Tina Paner sponsored by Globe Asiatique sang during the occasion.

Over 1,000 people, Filipinos, Greeks and other foreign citizens participated in this year's Independence Day celebration at Zappeio.

About 350 guests from the diplomatic corps, Greek officialdom and business led by one of Greece's biggest shipping company Tsakos attended the diplomatic reception hosted by Ambassador Rigoberto D. Tiglao and Mrs. Getsy Tiglao in the grand ballroom of the King George Palace. Mayor of Athens Nikitas Kaklamanis, A10 Director Ambassador Haralambos Dafaranos and Deputy Chief of Protocol Kyriakos Amiridis and Director of the Diplomatic Office of the Parliament President Ambassador Ioannis Christofilis led Greek senior officials who attended the embassy's

## Diplomatic Reception

The embassy also invited to the reception leaders of the various Filipino community organizations in Greece.

The reception served a combination of western and Filipino cuisine which the **embassy's foreign guests appreciated** very much. They partook of the sumptuous feast of native Filipino dishes such as *adobo*, *fried vegetable lumpia*, *longganisa*, *barbecue*, *buchi*, *siopao*, *puto* and *leche flan*.

Filipino music played throughout the event and a video presentation on Philippine culture and economy ran for the duration of the reception. Tourism brochures and other information materials were also given to the guests.

**Greece's premier Star Channel together** with its famous television personality Ilias Psinakis arrived to interview Ambassador Tiglao. ■

## Diplomatic Reception

Ambassador Rigoberto Tiglao and Mrs. Getsy Tiglao greeted distinguished guests at the Philippine National Day reception held on June 11 at King George Palace in Athens.



From left: Ministry of Foreign Affairs A10 Director, Ambassador and Mrs. Haralambos Dafaranos, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs Deputy Chief of Protocol Kyriakos Amiridis, Mayor of Athens Nikitas Kaklamanis.



From left: Diplomatic Director of the Parliament President, Ambassador Ioannis Christofilis, Japanese Ambassador Takanori Kitamura and Chinese Ambassador and Mrs. Luo Linquan.





*First row:* with Ambassador of Thailand Preudipong Kulthanan, Ambassador of Indonesia and Mrs. Ahmad Rusdi and Ambassador of the Netherlands and Mrs. Cornelis Van Rij . *Second row:* with Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Saleh Mohammad al-Ghamdi, Consul a.h. Alexandros Fasoulakis and Consul a.h. Nicolaos Margarapoulos. *Third row:* with Mr. Alexis Kyriakides and Consul a.h. Shemaine Kyriakides, Consul a.h. Anastacia Manolopoulou, and Olympic Gulf Tankers CEO Adonis Antoniou and his wife, Grace. *Fourth row* with Fokianos President Kitinos Evangelos, Dr. Helen and Dr. Marcos Fojas and Mrs. Marichu and Mr. Britteon. *Fifth row:* with members of the Filipino Community and Greek television personality Ilias Psinakis.



# Kalayaan 2010



(from left to right) Ambassador Rigoberto and Madame Tiglao lead Embassy officials and staff and members of the Filipino Community in singing the national anthem, PSG reenact significant events in history culminating in the proclamation of Philippine Independence on 12 June 1898 in Kawit Cavite and Amb. Tiglao reads the National Day message of Foreign Secretary Alberto G. Romulo.



(From left to right), Hosts Shirley Manigbas and Joel Capuz, Joshua Escalante singing the Doxology, Ambassador Rigoberto and Madame Tiglao with the Accredited Community Partners and Teachers and staff of Philippine School in Greece (PSG)..



(First row) Ambassador Rigoberto and Madame Getsy Tiglao with Asian Bowlers Club Greece (ABCG), Bagong Kapwa Ko Pilipino in Athens Organization (BKKPAO), Benguet, Ifugao, Mt. Province, Apayao, Kalinga (BIMAK Hellas) and Couples for Christ and its Family Ministries (CFC). (Second row) with Couples for Christ Foundation for Family and Life (CFC-FFL), El Shaddai Group-Greece Chapter, Filipino Bowlers in Athens Greece (FILBAG) and Filipino Club Irakleo Crete (FCIC). (Third row) with Filipino Community Academy Institute (FCAIA), Pilipino Academy of Music and Arts in Athens (PAMANA), Philippine Guardians Brotherhood, Inc., Greece Chapter (PGBI), Philippine Overseas Society (POS) and St. Denis Catholic Charismatic Renewal Prayer Group (SDCCRP).





(From left to right) with Pinoy Tenpins Bowlers in Athens (PTBA), RCBC Tele Money, Tim[uyog Ti Daya and Visayas Mindanao Mi-grants in Greece (VISMMAG).



(First row) BIMAK Hellas was awarded Best Group National Costume and PSG was awarded with the biggest number of participants during the parade, a member of PGBI rendered a song number, and PSG students performing the Jota Moncadena and Maria Clara dance. (Second row) Members of VISMMAG presenting their Sikwate Dance number, members of the Filipino Combat System in Greece demonstrating "Arnis", PSG students showcasing Harana, and CFC Kids for Christ perform a modern dance. (Third row) Ms. Jing Jing Escobar, a member of the Union of Philippine Immigrants in Rhodes participated in the celebration, a student from FCAIA renders a Filipino song, Members of BIMAK Hellas perform Banga Dance, an ethnic dance and a choral presentation by the ACP members.



(From left to right) Consul General Constancio Vingno Jr. with the members of ACPs during the Raffle Contest, Ms. Tina Paner with an audience during a song number and Ambassador Tiglao with Ms. Paner during the Filcom celebration in Zappeio. Ms. Paner is a Filipino artist sponsored by Globe Asiatique.

Photos of the diplomatic reception and Filcom celebration are courtesy of : Byron Villanueva, Carlo Montenegro and Costas Costakis of the Greek Diplomatic Life.

Visit the Philippine Embassy website at [www.athenspe.net](http://www.athenspe.net) for more photos.

## Consular Updates

## DFA Passport Services Commence at New Building



The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) wishes to inform the public that beginning on March 8, passport services will commence at a new building located at the corner of Bradco and Macapagal Avenues in Aseana Business Park, near the Mall of Asia.

The new telephone numbers at this building are the following: (02)737-1000, (02) 831-8971, (02) 551-4437, (02) 551-4402, (02)834-4855 and (02) 834-4424.

To ensure quick, comfortable service,

passport applicants are advised to check the passport requirements and secure an online appointment at [www.passport.com.ph](http://www.passport.com.ph) or call (02)737-1000. Applications may also be filed with the DFA's 19 Regional Consular and satellite offices.

Applicants are no longer required to bring photographs since they will have their pictures taken using ePassport data capturing machines at the new building.

They still need to bring other necessary requirements such as the application form that is available for download at the DFA website and at the reception desks of the new consular building.

Only those with confirmed appointments will be accommodated at the new facility. No escorts are allowed to

accompany individual applicants at this time.

The new 7,000-square meter, four-storey building is a few blocks away from the DFA main building.

The new building is part of the ongoing modernization program undertaken by Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo to further improve the DFA's frontline services which include harnessing new technologies in passport and visa issuances and streamlined procedures in the authentication of documents.

It is part of our dream for the Filipino people to have a world-class passport and consular services. We have done it through the Machine Readable Passport (MRP) and the ePassport, and now the dream is complete with the new DFA-Office of Consular Affairs building," he said.

*Source: DFA-PISU*

## DFA., PDEA Take Decisive Action on 'Drug Mules'

Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Esteban B. Conejos, Jr. said the Philippines is undertaking comprehensive and proactive measures to address the 'drug mules' issue and prevent the further victimization of Filipinos by international drug syndicates.

"We are working in partnership with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) on the operational law enforcement aspects, as well as with authorities in our neighboring countries, Usec. Conejos stated in a joint press conference with Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Director General Dionisio R. Santiago held at the PDEA in Quezon City. This is the first joint press conference between the two agencies on the 'drug mules' issue.

On the recommendation of the DFA, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo signed Administrative Order (AO) No. 279, which created the Drug Couriers Task Force (TFDC), tasked to prevent Filipinos being used as drug couriers by international drug trafficking syndicates last February 8.

The TFDC is composed of the PDEA as chair; the DFA as co-chair; and the Department of Labor and Employment, the Bureau of Immigration, the Bureau of Customs, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Philippine Information Agency, the Manila International Airport Authority, and the Philippine

Tourism Authority as members.

The Task Force is developing and executing programs and strategies against the recruitment of Filipinos as international drug couriers by international drug trafficking syndicates that victimize overseas Filipinos, and promoting close coordination among government agencies towards a more aggressive apprehension and prosecution of members of drug trafficking syndicates operating in the Philippines.

Moreover, the TFDC closely coordinates with counterpart agencies of other countries for the formulation and execution of bilateral or regional actions against recruitment of Filipinos as drug couriers.

Meanwhile, Usec. Conejos reminds Filipinos must be extra wary of accepting offers from individuals or groups to carry illegal drugs in their luggage or in their person when going abroad, as harsh penalties await them in their destinations.

"We warn our countrymen not to accept packages which they suspect are drugs. If they are caught carrying illegal drugs, they will face very dire consequences," he said.

In China, drug trafficking of 50 grams or more of illegal drugs is punishable by 15 years in prison, life imprisonment or death. In Muslim countries, drug trafficking is punishable by death, according

to Shariah law.

Usec. Conejos made this warning in the light of the recent executions of British and Japanese nationals for drug-related offenses in China.

"This action by the Chinese government in strictly implementing their laws should serve as a stern warning to those who have been victimizing Filipinos. It is also a reminder to our *kababayans* not to allow themselves to be willing victims for the sake of money," he added.

Currently, there are 197 drug-related cases in China. Six have been meted the death penalty without reprieve and 67 with death penalty with two-year reprieve. There are 35 cases given life imprisonment sentences, 56 with fixed-term imprisonment and 33 pending cases.

Among the six death penalty cases without reprieve, two are with the People's Supreme Court and four are with the Court of Appeals.

The DFA continues to extend its assistance to those in death row within the bounds of due process and Chinese law. It is also encouraging those meted out the death penalty with chance of reprieve to strive for good behavior.

In death sentences without reprieve, decisions of lower courts are automatically elevated to the higher courts for review. The People's Supreme Court is the court of last resort before the judgment becomes final and executory. *Source: DFA-PISU*



## Cyprus Corner POLO-OWWA CYPRUS

### OFFERS OFW COURSES TO ACTIVE OWWA MEMBERS



**HML Trainor Thomson with trainees**

The POLO-OWWA Cyprus has conducted an upgrading skills for the OFWs and a reintegration program thru the OFW Courses namely Basic Caregiver and the Business Counseling that started in January 31, 2010 in the cities of Nicosia, Larnaca & Pafos.

The Basic Caregiver Course is in partnership with the Houston Medical Limited UK - trained paramedics who are fully qualified and experienced registered emergency medical technician and officers with a long years experience gained in the Royal Army Medical Corps and other medical institutions worldwide. [houston-medltd@cytanet.com](mailto:houston-medltd@cytanet.com)

HML conducts a wide range of First Aid Courses to Advanced level plus advice on Occupation Health & Safety at work, and many more. Houston Medical is also associated with Nuco-Training, country's largest and most highly respected Train the Trainer organizations in the UK.

Together with the OFW Family Club, one of the biggest Filipino organization in Cyprus assist in monitoring the 5 week course in the three cities every Sunday. ■



**HML trainor supervising trainees for Basic Caregiver Course**



**First Aid Lesson**

*Pag-IBIG Mandatory...(Continued from page 12)*

any, and the dividend earnings credited to his/her account;

- The member's contributions inclusive of the employee and employer contribution, if any, shall earn dividends which shall be distributed annually and credited to the member's TAV. All dividend earnings shall be TAX FREE.
- A member who transfers to another employer or who become self-employed carries with him his/her TAV.
- A member may avail of the Fund's various housing loan, short term loan and other benefit programs, provided that he/she satisfies the eligibility criteria set by the Fund
- A member who becomes a member of the Fund after the effectivity of RA 9679 shall **HAVE THE OPTION TO WITHDRAW his/her TAV after the 15<sup>th</sup> year of CONTINUOUS MEMBERSHIP** provided that said member has no outstanding housing loan with the Fund at the time of withdrawal. This option shall not prejudice his/her continuing membership with the Fund.
- In the event of the member's death, the legal beneficiaries shall also be entitled to the additional death benefit grant, the amount of which shall depend on the member's TAV and membership status at the point of death.

- The benefits prescribed under RA 9679 shall not be diminished and the government of the Republic of the Philippines guarantees the payment of the employee and employer contributions as well as the corresponding dividends when they are due.

Makipag-ugnayan kay :

Ginang Jean V. Santos  
Tel. Nos. 210 698 3265/ Cellphone  
no. 693 7124 927/ 697 742 5678

## LABOR PAGE

### Philippine Overseas Labor Office

158 Sevastoupolos, Ambelokipi, Athens  
Tels.: (210) 6983335, (210) 6983265

18 Filipino crew members of *MT Navios Napollon* were freed unharmed by Somali pirates on February 27, 2010. The ship was sea-jacked on December 28, 2009, en route from the U.S. to India with a cargo of fertilizers. The seamen returned to the Philippines on March 5, 2010.

During the seamen's 60 days of captivity, the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) Labor Attaché George Eduvala and Tito Baldago, POLO Administrative Officer, were in constant touch with Ms. Angeliki Frangou, the CEO of Navios Maritime Holdings, Inc., the ship owner, and Mr. George Akasoukolus, the crew manager of InterOrient Maritime Enterprises, the ship management company, to ensure the safety and health of the crew and to speed up

## Filipino seamen on the last hostaged Greek ship are home

their release and repatriation.

The release of the crew marked the first time in the very long while when not a single Filipino seaman on board a Greek owned or managed ship is in the hands of Somali pirates.

On January 18, 2010, the 16 Filipino crewmembers of MV Maran Centaurus, a supertanker carrying US\$140 million worth of crude oil – reputedly the richest booty in maritime history, were released. Nineteen more Filipino sailors on board MV Filitsa tasted freedom on February 1, 2010. In both cases, the POLO coordinated closely with the ship owners during talks for their release.

Nearly 20,000 ships pass through the Gulf of Aden – the pirates' lair – and the Suez Canal each year. Since the start of the year (2010), 42 piracy attacks resulting in 17 sea-jackings occurred. Thus, the Philippines has

banned the deployment of Filipino seamen on ships traversing the Gulf and the Coast of Somalia since February 4, 2010. ■



Labor Attache George A. Eduvala (right side) with Ms. Villy Papefthyimiou, Executive Vice President (middle) and Ms. Anna Kalathakis, Senior Vice President (left side) of Navios Maritime Holdings, Inc. during the discussion on the safety and health conditions of 18 Filipino crew on board the hijacked vessel Mt Navios Napollon on February 4, 2010.

## OWWA MEMBERS GRADUATED FROM CAREGIVING LESSONS

In its effort to enhance and improve the skills of OFWs, a 20-hour session was offered for free by OWWA to its members. It ran from April to May, 2010 at the Filipino Workers and Resource Center in Sevastopouleus, Ambelokipi, Athens. The project was aimed at giving better employment opportunities to Filipinos, even in countries out of Greece like Canada and the United Kingdom.

Laughters, feeling of triumph and fulfillment could be sensed during the graduation ceremonies held on June 2, 2010. Graduates, guests, and mentors, shared to their delight, Filipino foods.

Trainings, like Greek language lessons, computer literacy, and entrepreneurship will be opened for free in July. All OWWA members are encouraged to take the courses and enroll. ■



PAG-IBIG OVERSEAS PROGRAM  
ATHENS, GREECE

MGA KABAYAN! MANDATORY/COMPULSARY NA ANG PAG-IBIG MEMBERSHIP SA OFWS UNDER R. A. NO.9679 MULA JANUARY 2010!

SALIENT FEATURES OF REPUBLIC ACT NO.9679:

- Membership is mandatory to all Filipinos employed by foreign-based employers, whether they are deployed here or abroad or a combination thereof (*immigrants/former Filipinos may become members on a voluntary basis but shall also be covered by the pertinent membership guidelines*)
- Membership applicant should NOT be more than 60 years old;
- An OFW shall contribute an equivalent to 2% of his/her monthly compensations (based at P5,000 ) or P100 per month. Said employee may opt to pay the employer counterpart (additional P100 for a total of P200). A member may contribute more than

what is required herein;

- Membership with the Fund shall be for a period of twenty (20) years commencing from the first day of the month to which the initial contribution payment applies, provided that said member shall have contributed the corresponding 240 monthly membership contributions;
- Member may also withdraw the total accumulated savings upon the occurrence of any of the following:
  - Compulsory retired with the Fund at age 65
  - Retirement
  - Permanent departure from the Philip pines
  - Permanent/total disability
  - Other causes as may be provided by the Board of Trustees

### Benefits of Fund Membership

- A member's Total Accumulated Value (TAV) shall consist of the member's accumulated contributions, the employer counterpart, if

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