

News Briefs from the Philippines



July 31

Mt. Bulusan Erupts Anew

Mount Bulusan in Sorsogon province erupted at about 9:30 am, with ash shooting up six kilometres above the crater. It was the volcano's 25th eruption recorded for this year according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs). The ashfall affected the towns of Juban and Irosin, particularly the villages of Cogon, Gulang-Gulang, Bolos, Monbon, Gabao, Puting Sapa, Sankayon and Buraburan. Local volcanologists reported no casualties from the eruption. No evacuation was ordered unless the apparently short-term eruption of Mount Bulusan worsens. According to Phivolcs, a major eruption was possible, and they were watching the volcano's activity closely.

August 1

Nothing to Fear About Hog Cholera - DOH

The Department of Health (DOH) stressed in a statement that the public need not worry about hog cholera since humans are not susceptible to the illness. In a statement, DOH informed the public that the hog cholera virus (HCV) infection, which has affected the swine population in some areas of the Philippines, is a specific viral disease that does not affect other species. It should not cause alarm because the virus cannot spread through the wind or birds, the statement said. The DOH announced that it is safe to eat cooked pork that has met the inspection requirements of the National Meat Inspection Committee (NMIC), but warned that HCV persists in uncooked and cured meat.

August 2

Fact-finding Panel on Beheadings Points to Abu Sayyaf

A fact-finding panel from the Coordinating Committee on

the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) pointed to Abu Sayyaf extremists and not Moro Islamic Liberation Front fighters as earlier reported. The panel was set up to find out who were responsible for the beheading of the ten Marines in an ambush in Basilan last month. The panel concluded that four Abu Sayyaf members cut off the heads of four Marines as 10 other Abu Sayyaf comrades watched. The four beheaders had been identified as Nurhasan Jamiri, Buhari Jamiri, Suaib Kalibon and Umair Indama. One of the four was already charged as a suspect in the killings according to acting Defense Secretary Norberto Gonzales. He told the press in Camp Aguinaldo that two witnesses volunteered information to investigators. The panel's investigation report did not mention if the al-Qaeda-linked group was cooperating with the MILF. The panel was not also able to get witnesses for the beheading of the six others, Gonzales said.

August 3

Muntinlupa City Hall Razed by Fire

The Muntinlupa City Hall went up in flames just before noon destroying municipal documents, millions worth of office equipment and halting government operations. No one was reported injured during the fire. Employees left their offices as soon as the flames started to raze the City Hall. Witnesses said the fire started from shanties beside a wall that separated the building from the residential area. The fire quickly spread to the City Engineering Office and to the rest of the offices at the second floor, not sparing the office of the mayor. It also destroyed the Muntinlupa Police Station, which prompted police to transfer inmates to other jail facilities in the city. Mayor Aldrin San Pedro, who was in an event in Alabang, rushed to the City Hall when the fire broke out. He instructed authorities to investigate on the cause of the fire, focusing on the angle of arson. San Pedro said that the City Hall Annex and People's Center will be used as temporary offices while the main building is being rebuilt.

August 4

Corporate Filipino Women Becoming More Dominant

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) bared that Filipino women had steadily outnumbered men in terms of holding executive and supervisory positions over the past five years. Based on the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES), there were 2.257 million Filipino women executives in 2006 compared to the total number of 1.629

million men holding the same position last year. In comparison, the DOLE stated that about 97,000 Filipino women had become managers during a two-year period, with only 16,000 additional male executives from 2004 to 2006. All this considering that one in every three employed women or 32.8 percent of the 12.8 million employed entered college last year. Aside from supervisory and executive positions, women outnumbered men in professional, technical, associate professional, clerical, service-oriented and shop and marketing, sales positions. Women laborers and unskilled workers also outnumbered men.

August 5

Typhoon Chedeng Expected to Cure Dry Spell

Tropical cyclone Pabuk, locally named Chedeng, entered the Philippine area of responsibility East of Northern Luzon amid the dry spell in the region. According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), the tropical cyclone was expected to bring rains over Central and Northern Luzon and Metro Manila in the coming days. Its entry was seen as good news due to the critical water levels in Luzon dams. The tropical cyclone was also expected to enhance the southwest monsoon and could likely intensify into a typhoon. Chedeng was the third tropical cyclone to enter the country this year after Amang and Bebeng.

August 6

Tourists May Now Stay Up to 2 Years

In a memorandum order, Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan announced that foreigners with temporary visitor's visas can now extend their stay in the Philippines every two months and up to 16 months without prior approval from the Bureau of Immigration. A foreigner may still extend his stay after 16 months by another eight months or up to 24 months if his application is approved by the head of the immigration regulation division (IRD) of the bureau. Libanan's order, which took effect immediately, also directed the immigration bureau visa extension office to hasten the processing of all pending applications for extension of stay. Reports coming from the visa extension office indicated that a total of 196,172 applications for extension of stay from January to June this year had been approved. It was much higher to the 161,984 approved applications in the same period last year. (AJ)

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Filipinos Sweep Awards in Hollywood

10 Pinoys strike gold in the 2007 World Championship of Performing Arts

By Cynthia De Castro / Asianjournal.com

ALL ten members of the Philippine team bagged the top prizes in the recently concluded finals of the World Championship of Performing Arts (WCOPA).

"Highly entertaining, highly marketable in Hollywood," that's how the judges described Aria Clemente, 11-year old pretty Filipina who

won the coveted prize of Junior Grand Champion Performer of the World in Hollywood.

Clemente, a 6th grader from Stella Maris Academy in Malolos, Bulacan, bested over 5,000 acts from more than 50 countries at the 11th Annual World Championships of Performing Arts which took center stage from July 28 - August 5 in Los Angeles. Aside from getting the top Grand Champion prize, she also bagged 4 gold medals, 1 silver medal, 1 Industry Award, 5 Champion of the World plaques for all her 5 entries, and the trophy for the 2007 Junior Grand Champion Vocalist of the World.

Raymond Sajor, one of the finalists of the Philippine Idol, won the gold and was awarded the Grand Champion Vocalist of the World in the senior category. Other gold winners are Raki Vega (acclaimed "born diva" by ABS-CBN) who made it to the top 5 in the senior vocals category and Iago Raterta, who got the top prize in the model division.

The Revelation Band (composed of siblings Jeremiah Calising, Jerushalmi Calising, Emmanuel Calising, Isaac Calising and good friend, Bobby Piedad) won several gold medals including the top prize in the Instrumental category. The band members also received individual gold



The WCOPA team Philippines pose with Consul General Mary Jo Bernardo-Aragon in Los Angeles. Seated from left to right are Raki Vega, Raymond Sajor, Consul General Aragon, and Aria Clemente. Standing behind them are (from left to right) Oliver Oliveros, group publicist; Carlo Orosa, National Director; Jerushalmi Calising, Emmanuel Calising, Isaac Calising, Jeremiah Calising and Bobby Piedad of the Revelation Band.

medals: Bobby Piedad (who won with his amazing performance of the song Hotel California, playing the guitar, using not his fingers but his teeth!), Jim Calising got the prize in the Opera division, while Jerushalmi Calising won gold in the rhythm and blues category.

Carlo Orosa, the Philippine National Director for the WCOPA Team Philippines presented the winners in a press conference at the Philippine Consulate General in Los Angeles where they performed before Consul General Mary Jo A. Bernardo-Aragon, Cultural Officer Rowena T. Sierra, the staff and guests.

"We're very proud of all of you," Consul General Aragon told the team. "Thank you for giving honor to our land and our people. *Maraming salamat sa inyo. Magaling talaga ang Pinoy. Mabuhay ang Pilipinas at Mabuhay kayo!* (Thank you to you all. The Filipinos are truly great. Long live the Philippines and more power to you.) You make your country and your countrymen feel so proud."

Orosa revealed that even before the competitions ended, the Filipino performers were getting offers from left and right. "Aria was being persuaded to stay here by Totally Kids Management,

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US Congress Acts on RP Killings

Gets praises from Church Group

MANILA -- A local interfaith organization on Saturday welcomed the letter from 49 United States congressmen to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo calling for an end to the extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances in the Philippines.

The Ecumenical Voice for Peace and Human Rights in the Philippines also vowed to step up its lobbying efforts in the US Senate and House of Representatives to step up action on the human rights situation in the Philippines.

Fr. Joe Dizon, one of the organizers of the movement, said the US lawmakers' action showed the Arroyo administration was not doing enough to address the human rights crisis in the country.

"The letter was another

wake-up call for President Arroyo and she should follow one of the recommendations in the [recent] summit called by Chief Justice Reynato Puno: to order the military and the police to stop the killings," Dizon said.

Fr. Rex Reyes of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines said Protestant churches and Filipino communities in the United States would continue with their lobbying efforts to ensure that the proposal in the US Congress to slash American foreign military aid to the Philippines by fiscal year 2008 would push through.

"If the US pushes through with this recommendation, this will be a major victory for the kith and kin of victims of extrajudicial killings, en-

forced disappearances and other human rights violations perpetrated by Philippine state security forces," Reyes said.

Dizon said Americans appalled by the human rights situation in the Philippines played "a very big role" in lobbying their congressmen to do something about the spate of killings, which included that of about 26 church people in the Philippines.

Reyes, for his part, said churches in the Philippines should emulate their counterparts in the US.

During a meeting of United Methodist groups in Virginia Beach on July 15-19, members of the National Association of Filipino-American

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