

Few Filipinos availing of France's all-access cards – envoy

by VERONICA UY
Inquirer.net



French Ambassador Gerard Chesnel

MANILA – Only 10 Filipinos have so far availed themselves of France's competence and talent card, which would allow bearers to bring their families and indefinitely stay there, French Ambassador to the Philippines Gerard Chesnel said.

At the opening of Cinema Europa 2008 last Sept. 11, Chesnel attributed the low response rate to lack of information. He said he has 90 more such cards to give away to qualified Filipinos for the year.

"This is especially for people who have special projects in France, who have special talents or competence, or who want to work in France...So far, only about 10 percent [have gotten these cards], only because people don't know [about it] very well. They only begin to see or maybe I suppose they don't even believe it," said Chesnel.

Asked how a Filipino can get such a card, Chesnel said interested parties should only go to the French embassy in Makati City and see the consul or himself to explain about their intention of going to France.

"It is simple. They come and see the consul or I and explain to us what is their project, why do they want go to France, what they intend to do there, and then I deliver them a special kind of visa," he said.

Chesnel said the card would come with a working visa immediately that would also allow the applicant's family to tag along. He said the card was valid indefinitely, although approved applicants might have to renew their visas regularly.

The ambassador also pointed out that the French immigration policy was geared towards temporary stay in France.

"What we try to encourage is for people to come back to the Philippines. We don't want to organize brain drain. We want people to bring their competence to France so we will benefit from it, but also we want to train them in our ways. We want them during their stay in France to get a new competence and then go back in the Philippines to create their own enterprise, maybe earn some money in France and invest it back in the Philippines in an enterprise which is something that will be fruitful for the Philippine economy," he said.

According to the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, as of December 2007, there are an estimated 47,000 Filipinos in France, 7,000 with permanent status, 1,026 temporary, and 39,000 irregular. ■

Departing Filipino 'tourists' to sign immigration waivers?

by EVELYN MACAIRAN
Philstar.com

SINCE the Bureau of Immigration (BI) cannot stop all illegal overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) from leaving the country, it has thought of doing the next best thing: ask travelers to sign a waiver releasing the bureau from any blame for whatever misfortune they would meet by working abroad using tourist visas.

Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan said starting today, September 13, the bureau would be issuing waivers to selected travelers, particularly those suspected to be illegal OFWs who are posing as tourists to be able to get out of the country.

This was announced during the agency's 68th anniversary.

Libanan said they would be distributing waivers to travelers at the departure area of airports. In the waiver or affidavit, written in Tagalog, the passenger would state his or her name, passport number, country of destination, airline and flight number, and the length of stay in the country of destination.

The passenger would also indicate that despite the lengthy explanation on the dangers that he may encounter in the country of destination, he still decided to push through with the trip. He would also be asked to absolve the bureau or its officer, who signed the passport, from any responsibility.

Libanan said there were many

instances in the past when OFWs, at times involved in human-smuggling, would pretend to be tourists to be able to leave the country without hassles. There were also numerous reports of OFWs victimized by prostitution

and slavery.

"These waivers would only be issued 'in case of doubt.' Some of the factors that we will consider are: the appearance of a person (if he or she looks like a tourist or an OFW), the absence of a hotel

booking, show money, or Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) clearance, and whether he or she is accompanied by a foreigner who might be his or her employer," said Libanan. ■

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