

## ACROSS THE ISLANDS

### Comelec to hold plebiscite on Quezon split Nov. 29

LUCENA CITY – The Commission on Elections will hold a plebiscite on the proposed division of Quezon province into two separate political units on Nov. 29, according to Rep. Danilo Suarez.

In an interview last Sept. 24, Suarez, who represents the Bondoc Peninsula, said he was called by Comelec officials led by their chair, Jose Melo, and informed that the political exercise had been scheduled on the last Saturday of November.

The date is the 60th day after Republic Act No. 9495 creating Quezon del Sur will take effect following its publication in two newspapers of general circulation.

Gov. Rafael Nantes, one of the original authors of the measure, has now declared his opposition to the planned division of the province. Two weeks ago, he reportedly met all his political allies, including mayors and provincial officials led by Vice Gov. Carlos Portes to ensure the proposal's defeat in the plebiscite.

Dividing Quezon will disrupt his general plans for the progress in the province, Nantes maintained.

Former provincial board member Sonny Pulgar and businessman Hobart Dator Jr. have also launched the Save Quezon Province Movement.

Suarez urged the officials to allow the people to finally decide on whether they wanted to divide the province into Quezon del Sur and Quezon del Norte.

He said the Comelec had allotted P50 million for the plebiscite.



### Arroyo approves rehab of Sorsogon Bay

SORSOGON CITY – President Macapagal-Arroyo has approved the rehabilitation of Sorsogon Bay through an executive order creating the Sorsogon Bay Rehabilitation and Development Council.

She issued Executive Order 750, acting upon the request of municipal mayors led by Sorsogon Mayor Leovic Dioneda and Rep. Salvador Escudero III, following the regular occurrences of red tide in the bay that considerably affected the lives of most fishermen.

Escudero said the creation of the council would stem red tide and revive the province's once vibrant fishing industry.

Ms Arroyo has appropriated P1 million for the creation of the council and its initial operation.

The council will draw a five-year master plan covering the coastal areas of this city and the towns of Casiguran, Castilla, Juban, Magallanes and Pilar.

It will promote investment opportunities and economic projects consistent with the planned rehabilitation and development of the bay area, enhance ecological balance, protect and rationalize the use of coastal marine resources, and empower the local communities.

Mayor Dioneda thanked the President for finally approving the creation of the council, saying it would greatly help most residents and fishermen near the Sorsogon Bay. (Inquirer.net)



### 2 Davao del Sur politicians reconcile

DIGOS CITY – Political tension eased in Davao del Sur after allies-turned-rivals, Gov. Douglas Cagas and Digos Mayor Arsenio Latasa, finally reconciled.

The two, former law partners who are now considered among the influential politicians in Southern Mindanao, hugged each other inside the governor's office at the capitol here at around 4:00 pm last Sept. 24.

Cagas extended a reconciliatory hand to his erstwhile political enemy the day before.

Their feud started shortly before the 2007 elections when Latasa decided to support former Rep. Claude Bautista, Cagas' rival in the gubernatorial race. Since then, tension between the two politicians had worsened.

Latasa said he was overwhelmed by the development because, in the first place, he had nothing personal against Cagas. He said he stood by Cagas since the latter started in politics, only that "serious misunderstandings" had prompted them to part ways.

"Our paths have not crossed since the 2007 elections, but his humility to offer reconciliation to me and all the barangay officials is an act that I could not refuse," the mayor said.

Cagas said his gesture was a wise decision so that peace and development plans could move forward. "Too much politics drags our efforts down," he said. (Inquirer.net)

## Immigration bureau surpasses 2008 target of P1.47 B

by RUDY SANTOS  
Philstar.com

IMMIGRATION Commissioner Marcelino Libanan said September 25 they reached a first in terms of revenue generation as their agency already exceeded its 2008 target of P1.47 billion with more than three months to spare.

The Bureau of Immigration exceeded its target this early, giving the agency the much-needed surplus to be used in the construction of a world-class immigration office in the country.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez who personally attended the BI's anniversary recently praised Libanan for his exemplary leadership.

"What was remarkable is that the BI's income rose sharply even if the bureau did not implement any increase in the amount of fees it charges the transacting public," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez attributed the record rise in income to innovations in processes that cut down transaction time with the bureau by about 86 percent. "We have set record increases in income that can only come from an organization determined to excel in these most challenging times. Each of us had made these record results in income and performance happen. But some did better than most, they exerted their level best. They are the best of the best," Gonzalez added.

With Libanan at the forefront, the Bureau of Immigration is taking great strides in its flight against human trafficking and entry of illegal aliens in the country.

The BI has been at the center of reforms in the past years. What used to take months to do at the bureau, is done now in one day," Gonzalez added in acknowledging the reforms made by Libanan to make the agency more efficient in responding to the needs of Filipinos and foreigners alike.

Libanan also reported to Gonzalez that the BI is intensifying its fight against human trafficking through the massive education of departing overseas Filipino workers on the hazards of leaving the country without proper documentation.

"The problem is that most victims of illegal recruitment usually leave the country as tourists, riding on their constitutional right to travel," he said.

But Libanan said he has found another way of dealing with the problem, by tasking his immigration agents based at the premier airports of the country to brief suspected OFWs of the risks they are taking if they leave the Philippines without the right documentation. ■

## RP still a top biofuels market

by TED TORRES  
Philstar.com

THE Philippines remains one of the most attractive markets for the development and sale of biofuels, an energy advisory firm said.

Citing an Ernst & Young UK report on Biofuels Country Attractiveness Indices which covers the first semester of 2008, former Energy Secretary Vicente Perez pointed out that the Philippines was ranked 11th in terms of attractiveness in the biodiesel market and 13th in the overall biofuels index.

Perez now heads Merritt Partners, a global energy advisory firm providing advice to energy economies in Asia.

The Philippines maintained its strong ranking following decisions to allot farmlands for the cultivation of biofuel feedstock.

However, the country lost its ranking in the ethanol index. The Philippines was dropped due to its plan to import ethanol from Brazil and Thailand, which will depress domestic investments.

"The Philippines' stable ranking is a confident booster to current and interested investors in the country's biofuels industry even as other countries have recently experienced downsides in the implementation of their respective programs," Perez added.

The biofuels country attractiveness report ranks the country's attractiveness based on infrastructure index such as market regulatory risk, supporting infrastructure and access to finance; and fuel specific indices such as, among others, offtake incentives, tax climate, do-

mestic and export market growth potential and project size.

Perez noted that the E&Y report confirms the market assessment earlier made by Merritt Partners last May on the biofuels outlook of the Philippines.

The report noted that the domestic demand for biodiesel is expected to reach 151 million liters by 2009 from the current demand of about 70 million liters per year.

Merritt Partners also estimates that the existing capacity is sufficient to cover the two-percent mandated biodiesel blend nationwide.

For ethanol, Merritt Partners forecasts a promising domestic market of about 309 million liters per year by 2009. This is expected to further increase to 664 million liters by 2011 and 713 million liters by 2013.

It further underscored that locally-produced ethanol can be competitive with gasoline given the continued volatility of oil prices.

The Philippines has achieved significant inroads in the development of biofuels with the enactment of the Biofuels Act of 2006, setting mandates on its use and the provision of reasonable fiscal incentives.

Overall, Brazil has overtaken the United States as the leading producer of biofuels. That includes not just production of ethanol and biodiesel but also the infrastructure required.

After Brazil and the US, the other major leaders are France, Spain, Canada, Germany, Thailand, China, Colombia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, India, Italy, the Netherlands and Indonesia. ■

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**KATHLEEN MEDINA, Accounts Coordinator**  
Huntington Beach, California  
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"When my wife's H-1B was approved, our three children and I hoped to join her in the U.S. to keep our family together. I applied for H-4 consular processing on my own, but the process was difficult and confusing. After the fourth time of being asked by the U.S. Embassy in Manila to come back for more documentation, we finally sought help from Nelson & Associates. Because of Attorney Nelson, the rest of my family was finally able to enter the U.S. with H-4 visas and we were reunited at last!"\*

**JOSE GIL "BONG" VERA CRUZ**  
Los Angeles, California  
Approved H-4 Visa  
U.S. Consulate, Manila, Philippines

### FRANKLIN W. NELSON, ESQ.

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- More than 15 years experience in all aspects of immigration law
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