

# 'RP-US ties to stay strong whoever wins in polls'

by JOSE KATIGBAK  
Philstar.com

WASHINGTON — No matter who wins in November, US ties with the Philippines, one of only two US treaty allies in Southeast Asia — the other is Thailand — will likely remain strong and on course, political analysts here said. Charles Morrison, head of the East-West Center, said the pressure of dealing with the paramount issue of the economy suggested both Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama would hold a relatively steady course on the basics of US foreign

policy. "There will be one clear change: the atmosphere abroad will be more positive. Right now, the US standing in the world is low. Either president would start with a honeymoon on the domestic side and excitement on the international side," he said. The East-West Center is a Honolulu-based research organization established by the US Congress in 1960 to strengthen relations and understanding among the peoples and nations of Asia, the Pacific, and the US. Political analysts said unless he does extremely well in their third

and final debate on Oct. 15, McCain seems headed for defeat. Many polls suggest the results are a foregone conclusion and the only question is will Obama's victory be by a landslide or will it be a close race. There are no statistics on the political persuasion of Filipino-Americans and it is not known how they will vote on Nov. 4. According to the 2000 Census, there are about three million Filipino-Americans, many of them in California, Hawaii, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Texas and Florida and they can play a deciding role in tight congressional races.

# Drug companies: No cold medicines for kids under 4

by RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR  
AP Writer

WASHINGTON — Don't give over-the-counter cold remedies to kids under 4, drug companies said October 7. What sniffing little ones need, doctors said, are plenty of fluids and lots of tender, loving care. "The best thing a parent can do is comfort their children," said Dr. Laura Herrera, a Baltimore family practitioner and mother of two. "Keeping them as comfortable as possible is certainly better than giving cough and cold medicines."

products work in kids, and there is definitely evidence of serious side effects." Problems with over-the-counter cough and cold medicines send some 7,000 children to hospital emergency rooms each year, with symptoms including hives, drowsiness and unsteady walking. Many kids overdose by taking medicines when their parents aren't looking. "The 2- and 3-year-olds are definitely the highest risk," said Sharfstein. "More than 50 percent of the problem is with these kids. If they don't have this stuff around the home, they're less likely to grab it and ingest it."

sure the safety and well being of our children, I am disappointed that the FDA has not followed the recommendations of its own advisory panel," Dodd said. Dr. Janet Woodcock, a senior FDA official, said restricting use of the medicines to children over 4 makes sense as an interim step, while the agency continues to study the risks and benefits in children under 12. It's a process that could take years. "This was a logical cutoff," said Woodcock, adding, "It was somewhat of a judgment call." She said government officials fear that taking the medicines off the shelves might prompt parents to give their children adult medicines instead.

In a concession to pediatricians, who doubt the drugs do much good for children and worry about risks, the companies that make over-the-counter remedies like Dimetapp and PediaCare announced they had changed their advice to parents for the second cold season in a row. Besides recommending against cold medicines off drugstore and grocery shelves, the companies say not to give antihistamines to kids to help them sleep. The new instructions are on packages that started hitting stores this week.

The new advice could create its own kind of quandary. For example, what to do in a family with a 3-year-old and a 6-year-old? Dr. Herrera said parents should resist the urge to give the medications to the older child. "They feel like they're doing good by giving these medications, but in some cases they could be doing more harm than good," she said. Herrera has a 6-year-old daughter and 7-year-old son, and neither of them have gotten cold remedies.

Leading cough and cold brands include Dimetapp, PediaCare, Robitussin, Triaminic, Little Colds and versions of Tylenol that have ingredients to treat cold symptoms. U.S. families spend at least \$287 million a year on cold remedies for kids, according to Nielsen Co. statistics that do not include Wal-Mart sales. Herrera, the Baltimore family doctor, said kids with colds usually get better in a few days. Coughs and sniffles can be distressing, but they are also a sign that the body is doing its work. Parents may want to give Tylenol or Motrin if a child is running a fever of 101 degrees or higher, Herrera said. Sniffles can be cleaned up with tissues or gently suctioned if kids are too young to blow their noses. And children should be watched for any signs of trouble breathing, which could signal more serious problems.

Last year, the industry went against cough and cold medicines for children under 2. The latest changes came after discussions between drug companies and the Food and Drug Administration. The talks were kept quiet for months as federal health officials debated how to respond to a pediatricians' petition seeking to ban the medications for kids under 6. At a public hearing last week, neither industry officials nor regulators gave any hint of an impending announcement. Cough and cold products have been given to children for decades, but it turns out the medicines were never scientifically tested to see how well they work in kids. And recent research has found some untoward side effects, mostly stemming from accidental overdoses.

The drug makers said they are also introducing new dispensers to help parents make sure they give the right amount of medicines, and not too much. The industry is expanding a nationwide educational campaign aimed at getting parents to be more careful. "We are doing this voluntarily out of an abundance of caution," Linda Suydam, president of the Consumer Healthcare Products Association, said in announcing the changes on behalf of the companies. "The vast majority of the serious adverse events are in 2- to 3-year-olds. They are the ones who get into the products by being curious toddlers."

And parents should: • Give the exact recommended dose, using the measuring device that comes with the medicine. • Keep medicines out of sight and out of reach. • Consult their doctors if they have any questions.

Pediatricians who support a ban for kids under 6 nonetheless said they were pleased with the industry announcement. "It's a huge step forward," said Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, Baltimore's health commissioner. "There is no evidence that these

future, as well as a visionary plan to promote offshore wind energy in the United States. Currently, there are no offshore wind power projects anywhere in the US. According to environmentalists, only two others have been approved for areas off Rhode

Island and Delaware. Corzine also explained that the project would create new jobs, and although there would be some negative aspects on tourism, these would be temporary and would decline quickly. (Ma-lou L. Aguilar)

# AIG throws \$440,000 party after bailout

WASHINGTON — Days after it got a federal bailout, American International Group Inc. (AIG) spent \$440,000 on a posh California retreat for its executives, complete with spa treatments, banquets and golf outings, according to lawmakers investigating the company's meltdown.

"Those executives should be fired," Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama said at a debate with Sen. John McCain on Tuesday, referring to the retreat participants. Obama also said AIG should give the Treasury \$440,000 to cover the costs of the retreat.

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AIG sent its executives to the coastal St. Regis resort south of Los Angeles even as the company tapped into an \$85-billion loan from the government it needed to stave off bankruptcy. The resort tab included \$23,380 worth of spa treatments for AIG employees, according to invoices the resort turned over to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. The retreat didn't include anyone from the financial products division that nearly drove AIG under, but lawmakers still were enraged over thousands of dollars spent on outings for executives of AIG's main US life insurance subsidiary.

But Eric Dinallo, superintendent of the New York State Insurance Department, said he could see the value of such a retreat under the circumstances. "Having been at large global companies and knowing what condition AIG was in ... the absolute worst thing that could have happened" would have been for employees and underwriters in its life insurance subsidiary to flee the company. The hearing disclosed that AIG executives hid the full range of its risky financial products from audi-

itors as losses mounted, according to documents released by the committee, which is examining the chain of events that forced the government to bail out the conglomerate. The panel sharply criticized AIG's former top executives, who cast blame on each other for the company's financial woes. "You have cost my constituents and the taxpayers of this country \$85 billion and run into the ground one of the most respected insurance companies in the history of our country," said Rep. Carolyn Maloney. "You were just gambling billions, possibly trillions of dollars."

AIG, crippled by huge losses linked to mortgage defaults, was forced last month to accept the \$85-billion government loan that gives the US the right to an 80 percent stake in the company. (AP)

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# New Jersey's wind power

PAGE A1 ♦ ocean, about 16-20 miles off the coast of Atlantic City, which would be able to power about 125,000 homes. Environmentalists have hailed the plan, saying that it is a force for change to move away from a dirty


future, as well as a visionary plan to promote offshore wind energy in the United States. Currently, there are no offshore wind power projects anywhere in the US. According to environmentalists, only two others have been approved for areas off Rhode

Island and Delaware. Corzine also explained that the project would create new jobs, and although there would be some negative aspects on tourism, these would be temporary and would decline quickly. (Ma-lou L. Aguilar)



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