

# DATELINE PHILIPPINES

## CBCP backs media in denouncing Right of Reply bill

**M**ANILA—Catholic bishops are backing the media in its campaign to stop Congress from passing the Right of Reply bill. Monsignor Pedro Quitorio III, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines spokesman, said yesterday the bill seeks to infringe on the freedom of the press as guaranteed by the Constitution. "It is not democratic or political as some legislators might want to understand it," he said. "It is about the truth and the editorial way of presenting it." Once it becomes law, the Right of Reply bill would require a news organization to give equal space or air time to a person or

entity that is the subject of a negative story or report. Journalists fear that they would receive a "deluge of replies" before next year's elections that would give free publicity to candidates. "The cost of compliance would be a flood of so-called 'replies' among which one can expect more than a fair amount of efforts at free and biased publicity, at the cost of reporting on other issues of public interests," said the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility. A similar Right of Reply bill has been struck down as unconstitutional in the United States, it added. (Philstar.com)

## Illegal recruiters becoming 'more aggressive'

OPLE SAYS

by MARJORIE GOROSPE  
Inquirer.net

**F**ORMER labor undersecretary Susan Ople called for people's action against human traffickers and illegal recruiters who "become more aggressive" as the financial crisis bites.

"Illegal recruiters and human traffickers become more aggressive and they prey the desperation of the unemployed especially during this financial crisis," Ople said. She said human traffickers

even conduct door-to-door search for new victims and warned the public against some recruiters offering overseas jobs with high placement fees. Ople, president of the Blas F. Ople Policy Center, cited the continuing displacement of workers for their vulnerability. Citing data from the Department of Labor and Employment, she said there are 4,191 displaced workers in the country while about 40,000 workers are given two working days a week. Meanwhile, about 5,700 overseas workers have been retrenched and 90,000

overseas workers have gone back to the country, she said. Rogelio Orayan, a taxi driver who came forward with information that led to the closure of an illegal recruitment firm, told the forum his experience as victim of illegal recruitment. Orayan said that he met a woman passenger and offered him a job abroad. "She said all I have to do is go to their office for application. A week after I applied, they called me up to say I passed and I just have to undergo medical examination," he said.

"Then, they asked me to pay 20,000.00 as down payment for the 65,000.00 placement fee," Orayan said. That time, he said, he began to be suspicious and reported it to the Blas F. Ople Policy Center. The center coordinated with the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group for an entrapment operation that led to the arrest of the suspects. "It's important that we know how to assess if people are just taking advantage on us. I'm glad that I heard Ma'am Susan's voice on the radio. I could have been one of their victims," he said. ■

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