

US Millennium Challenge Corp. finds RP eligible for large-scale grant

THE Philippines has been selected as eligible to apply for a large-scale grant known as "compact" from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), a US government corporation that grants assistance to developing countries.

The elevation of the Philippines from MCC "threshold status," receiving only small MCC grants, to "eligible status" in the eyes of the grant-awarding US government body was announced last March 12 by Press Secretary Cerge Remonde who stressed that the MCC Board decision is its "seal of good housekeeping" on the Arroyo administration.

In its press release dated March 11, the MCC said its Board of Directors "announced today at the conclusion of its March Board Meeting that the Philippines has been selected as eligible to apply for an MCC compact."

"The MCC Board determines eligibility for this large-scale grant funding based on independent indicators that measure good governance, the country's

investments in its people and policies that encourage economic freedom," said the MCC.

"The MCC Board today noted the Philippines' consistent passing performance on eligibility criteria and its effective implementation of the MCC-funded Threshold Program focused on helping curb corruption through improved tax and customs administration and strengthening of their Ombudsman office," it added.

Remonde said an earlier MCC grant of \$20 million was used by the Arroyo administration to hire more government prosecutors.

"For a country to be selected as eligible for an MCC assistance program, it must demonstrate a commitment to policies that promote political and economic freedom, investments in education and health, the sustainable use of natural resources, control of corruption, and respect for civil liberties and the rule of law, as measured by 17 different policy indicators," stressed the MCC.

In the same press release, MCC CEO Ambassador John Danilovich

expressed his "congratulations to the Government of the Philippines for its demonstrated commitment to tackling difficult challenges and improving the lives of its people."

Eligibility is an essential first step towards a poverty reduction program grant from the MCC; and countries selected as eligible for a large-scale grant or compact have the opportunity to submit a proposal for a five-year program to reduce poverty through sustainable economic growth, according to the MCC.

"Once selected as eligible, countries begin a consultation process that include citizens, nongovernmental organizations and representatives of the private sector and government to identify the barriers to poverty reduction and economic growth.

Led by a Chief Executive Officer and overseen by a Board of Directors, MCC is responsible for the stewardship of the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), which receives funds appropriated by the US Congress every year. ■

Greetings to a wounded warrior



(L to R) Rudy Panaglima, 79, and Celestino Almada, 92, of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans, greet Eric Shinseki, the new Secretary of the Department for Veterans Affairs, during a reception at the Arlington National Cemetery on the 20th anniversary of the cabinet status of the VA department, March 15, 2009.

Almada requested Shinseki to meet with visiting Filipino veteran leaders on April 9, the Bataan Day of Valor in Washington. Almada asked about their new benefit law. Shinseki said, "We're working on it" to promptly implement their "Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund" (P.L. 111-5 Title X, Sec. 1002), that provides \$15,000 in one-time lump sum payments to US citizens and \$9,000 to Filipino citizen veterans and to recognize their US military "active service" in WWII. Gen. Shinseki (ret.) was wounded twice in combat in Vietnam and was a former US Army Chief of Staff.

ACFV photo by Eric Lachica

Consular outreach in San Fernando Valley

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Personal checks will not be accepted.

Application forms and requirements can be downloaded from the Consulate's website at www.philippineconsulatela.org.

In view of the anticipated high volume of applicants and in order to ensure an orderly flow of operations, this Consular outreach shall be guided by the following:

1. All Applicants for any of the above consular services are requested to set up an appointment with the Consulate, not later than 18 March 2009, either through fax at (213) 639-0990, or through e-mail at losangelespcg@earthlink.net.

2. Passport Applicants should send an advance copy of their passport application forms and data page (bearing the name and photo) of their passports to the Consulate (Attn: Seafood City Outreach) either by fax or by email. Incomplete forms will

not be processed.

3. Dual Citizenship Applicants should send an advance copy of their application forms and supporting documents to the Consulate (Attn: Seafood City Outreach). Incomplete forms will not be processed.

4. OAV Registrants should also send an advance copy of their application forms and supporting documents to the Consulate (Attn: Seafood City Outreach). Incomplete forms will not be processed.

5. Confirmed appointments of all applicants will be posted at the Consulate's website (www.philippineconsulatela.org) by March 18, 2009. Personal appearance is required for all applicants.

6. While walk-in applicants will also be entertained, priority will be given to those with confirmed appointments with the Consulate, as posted in the website. All walk-in applicants are advised to transact their business directly with Consulate officials and not

through travel agencies. Walk-in applicants are by definition those who did not pass through travel agencies.

For general information, interested parties may wish to call or e-mail Vice Consul Ruel U. Gunabe at (213) 637-3020 / losangelespcg@earthlink.net, or Ms. Charina Carrera at (818) 815-9400 / charina@3mcplus.com.

For the information of the public, the Philippine Embassy and Consulates General in the US started to accept and to process applications for Machine Readable Passports (MRP) on June 2, 2008.

This is in compliance with the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for its member states, including the Philippines, to issue MRPs not later than 1 April 2010.

Since applications received by the Philippine Foreign Service Posts in the US will be sent to the Department of Foreign

Affairs in Manila via diplomatic pouch, it will take six weeks for a passport to be released to the applicants, from the time the application is accepted. Personal appearance for all applicants will be required for data verification, fingerprinting and signature capture. Applications by mail will no longer be accepted.

In compliance with the new photo requirements for the MRP, applicants are requested to visit the Consulate's website.

While some countries may still honor valid green Philippine passports beyond 1 April 2010 as bona fide travel documents until they expire, most countries will require travelers to hold either MRP or e-Passport for their sojourn by 2010.

Thus, all Filipinos, including those with valid green passports, are therefore encouraged to apply for their machine readable passports as early as possible. ■

Historic Filipino-American...

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national NAACP, the nation's most prominent African American civil rights organization, informed Mabuhay Alliance at a Washington, DC meeting that it would join in this effort to end racial stereotyping. The FCC is likely to request that all Hollywood and TV network CEOs attend.

Call for a unified voice

Bautista also believes that it is time for the Fil-Am community to unite. "It's time to have a unified stand—one voice—collaborating in the issues that matters," she said.

Bautista, who helped arranged the Washington, DC government meetings stated, "Desperate Housewives demonstrated to four million Filipino-Americans that unless we are united and outspoken, we will continue to be attacked. Mabuhay Alliance and NaFFAA are proud to be part of a growing and long awaited united Filipino-American effort to expand our influence and ensure that never again will the Filipino-American community be negatively stereotyped or unfairly attacked."

"Our successful DC meetings with key Obama Administration leaders demonstrated our growing influence and unity. We are optimistic that our efforts regarding averting to end the foreclosure crisis, expand small business opportunities and create more minority job opportunities will help expand the economic, social and political rights of our community. We are particularly optimistic because we have growing support for these efforts from the Pan Asian, the Latino and the African American communities. (Due to the efforts of Mabuhay Alliance, the Filipino-American community now has effective working relationships with the CEOs of more than two dozen Fortune 500 corporations including, Sempra, AT&T, Verizon, BofA, Wells Fargo, and JP Morgan Chase.) We will be meeting with the CEOs of US Bancorp and AT&T early next month in Los Angeles on further empowering the Filipino American community." ■



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