

# Youth voters need to register again for 2010

by ANNA VALMERO  
Inquirer.net

YOUTH voters who registered during the 2007 Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth Council, SK) elections should register again with the Commission on Elections (Comelec) if they want to vote in the 2010 elections, an election official said.

Filipinos aged 15 to 17 years old may have registered for SK elections but this registration does not

make them "qualified for regular elections," Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said.

Under the Omnibus Election Code, a person should be at least 18 year old on Election Day and is a resident of the country prior to the elections before he or she can register, Jimenez said.

The verification process for voters in regular elections is more thorough compared to that in SK

elections, he said.

At least 3.154 million youth registered for the 2007 SK elections.

Voters who will be turning 18 by May 10, 2010, Election Day, can start registering on Tuesday.

To register, an applicant must appear before the election officer of the city or municipality where he or she resides and present any of the following identification documents: employee's ID with the signature of the employer or authorized representative, postal ID, student's ID or library card signed by the school authority, senior citizen's ID, driver's license, National Bureau of Investigation or police clearance, passport, Social Security System or Govern-

ment Service Insurance System ID, or Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) license.

In the absence of any of the required identification documents, the applicant may be identified under oath by any registered voter of the precinct, or any of his relatives within the fourth civil degree of consanguinity or affinity.

Upon receipt of the application forms from the election officer, the applicant must accomplish the forms, submit the accomplished forms to the election officer and go to the data capturing machines for to get his biometrics.

Deadline of registration for the 2010 elections is on October 31. For absentee voters, deadline of registration is on August 31. ■

# Pinoys naturally immune to killer viruses?

DEPUTY presidential spokesman Anthony Golez said there is no scientific research to back up his theory that Filipinos are genetically immune from certain viruses, but he said a lot of doctors, especially those working in the frontlines to prevent the entry of the A(H1N1) or swine flu virus in the country, share his suspicion.

"This idea could be a possible avenue of research. We Filipinos might have some genetically acquired resiliency against certain diseases," Golez said in a telephone interview.

He said up to now, the Philippines remains free of the avian flu virus and had only one questionable case of the deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) several years ago even after its neighbors have had repeated outbreaks.

He also said Filipinos are known to be "clean" or hygienic, and bathes once or twice a day, which helps prevent the spread of diseases.

Golez, however, said that what is certain is that the system put in place by the country's health authorities has helped greatly in preventing the entry of deadly viruses. The system includes disease surveillance and tracking.

He added that the country's health and quarantine authorities have extensive experience in preventing the entry of deadly viruses into the country, such as SARS and avian flu, or containing outbreaks such as the case of the non-fatal Ebola Reston virus.

"I still go to our system, as ordered by the President, as the primary reason why the country remains free from the A(H1N1) virus," he said.

Golez said the Department of Health has also launched seminars in all concerned government agencies to prevent or address a possible epidemic in the country.

**Legarda eyes EU aid**

At the Senate, Sen. Loren Legarda welcomed an offer made by the European Union

(EU) to help the Philippines in the event of an outbreak of the dreaded virus in the country.

Appointed as the United Nations disaster risk reduction champion for the Asia-Pacific region, Legarda urged the government to communicate early with the EU so that the channels of cooperation on emergency response would be open when needed.

"While the Philippines has yet to have a single case of the virus, we should be pro-active in getting all the available help from other nations, including this pledge of assistance from the EU," she said.

Sasa Borko, policy officer of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Environment Civil Protection, said the EU's civil protection mechanism can be adopted to deal with potential pandemics like A(H1N1).

The Philippines, along with 26 other countries, has concluded a five-day response exercises to counter the possible outbreak of the virus, among other emergencies.

"We're always prepared to assist upon the request by any country in the world, including the Philippine government, and we have a lot of capabilities," Borko said.

Legarda said the EU disaster assistance team had helped the government confirm the large quantities of pesticides and other toxic chemicals that leaked from the capsized MV Princess of the Stars.

Borko led a team of experts from Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Norway and Sweden that showcased the EU's disaster preparedness model dubbed Civil Protection Mechanism.

"The Philippines should look into the EU model and if applicable, adopt it along with our Southeast Asian neighbors. The setting up of an emergency response mechanism is very important in disaster risk reduction, whether natural, man-made or due to the breakout of

## FOR 1ST QUARTER OF 2009

# Cebu now RP's top tourist destination

by NESTOR P. BURGOS JR.  
Inquirer.net

ILOILO CITY, Iloilo—Cebu has become the country's top tourist destination based on tourist arrivals, according to the Department of Tourism.

The province led 14 other key tourist destinations in the country, including the world-famous Boracay Island in tourist arrivals from January to March.

Data from the DOT on tourist arrivals for the first quarter showed that 422,239 tourists went to Cebu, nearly 3 percent higher than the 410,597 tourists who went to the province during the same period last year.

Boracay was second with 158,030 arrivals, followed by Davao City (156,468), Camarines Sur (140,220), Zambales (88,718), and Bohol (71,876).

The increase reflected the growth in over-all tourist arrivals in the country during the period, reaching 10.33 percent or a total of 1.3 million from last year's 1.1 million, the DOT said.

Cebu was also the most frequently visited destination by foreign tourists with 184,790 ar-



The Magellan's Cross  
Photo from wikipilipinas.com

rivals, or drawing nearly half of the 383,608 foreign tourists who visited the country. It was followed by Boracay (63,903), Zambales (25,252), Camarines Sur (24,976), and Bohol (24,350).

Overall, the volume of domestic tourists visiting key destinations grew faster at 13 percent while, foreign arrivals recorded a 4-percent increase in the first

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