

Ninth ray to RP flag's sun proposed

SENATOR Richard J. Gordon wants to add a ninth ray to the sun in the Philippine flag to symbolize the Muslims who fought against foreign invaders.

"Our national flag not only represents principles of sovereignty and solidarity of the Philippine nation, but also embodies the ideals and traditions of the Filipino people developed over the course of national history," he said in a statement.

Gordon said the Philippine flag symbolizes the nation's struggle for independence and victory against foreign colonizers.

The three stars in the flag represent the three major geographical divisions of the country: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao; while the eight rays of the sun represent the eight provinces that revolted against the Spanish regime: Batangas, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, Manila, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, and Tarlac.

Gordon said that behind the stories of the most celebrated names of national heroes who fought for our independence lie the stories of our mostly-



forgotten Muslim heroes, including Lapu-Lapu, Sultan Kudarat, and Rajah Sulayman, who displayed courage and integrity.

The senator explained that this is the reason he proposed to add a ninth ray to the sun in the Philippine flag—to acknowledge the courage and integrity of Muslim Filipinos who fought for the

nation's independence.

"Our Muslim heroes left an imprint on national history that, at the very least, must be given due recognition in the most heraldic item of national importance—the Philippine flag," he said.

Gordon authored Senate Bill 2590, which proposes that the rays of the sun on the Philippine flag be increased from eight to nine, to symbolize the community of Muslim leaders who defended the country from foreign invasion.

"By adding a ninth ray in the sun to represent our Muslim brothers, I think we make ourselves one with them. They are the Filipinos who were very successful in thwarting colonialism in our country," Gordon said. (*Inquirer.net*)

Tearful homecoming for fishermen, seafarers at NAIA

FIVE Filipino fishermen from Pangasinan who were rescued in the South China Sea arrived in Manila last May 28 from Beijing, met by their relatives at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

Hours earlier, nine of the 16 Filipino seafarers of the M/V CM Spirit hijacked by militants in Nigeria arrived at NAIA on the night of May 27 and five more are set to fly in.

The Philippine embassy in Beijing said in a report to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) that the embassy made arrangements for the repatriation of Wilson Etac, Israel Dumas, David Querubin, Ariel delos Angeles and Jimmy Bajar.

They were turned over to Consul Pablito Mendoza by Chinese authorities at the Rizhao port in China's Shandong province last May 26.

The fishermen left Infanta in Pangasinan on May 1 to fish near Bajo de Masinloc (Scarborough Shoal) in the South China Sea. A few days later, the engine of their fishing boat failed, forcing them to tow it towards the shoal for repair.

When they failed to repair the

boat, the fishermen decided to return to Pangasinan using their four service boats or life rafts. However, Typhoon Emong destroyed the service boats and drifted them away to the South China Sea.

Their service boat, Four Sisters, was rescued by a passing Chinese shipping vessel, Hebei Shenong, at the South China Sea last May 20.

The DFA is coordinating with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) in Pangasinan for possible information on the whereabouts of the four missing fishermen.

As for the seamen, eight arrived Wednesday, May 27 on board an Emirates Airlines flight. The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) reported 14 Filipino seafarers were rescued in a series of operations conducted by Nigerian security forces against the militants in the Niger Delta.

Two more seamen—Roi Allan Cuasay and Carlo Dagon—are still missing, and Vice President Noli de Castro said the Philippine embassy in Nigeria is contacting their employer, Orion Marine, to help in the search.



Fisherman Wilson Etac cries as he is embraced by his wife, Emma, at the arrival area of the NAIA Terminal 2 last May 28, while seafarer Marcelo Roloma (right) shows the shrapnel wounds he suffered when he and his companions were rescued from their Nigerian abductors.

Philstar Photo by Cesar Ramirez and Boy Santos

During the encounter, seaman Epe Marcelo Roloma sustained shrapnel wounds in his right leg.

Aside from Roloma, others who returned to the country included were Ernesto David Flores, Richard dela Cruz Mosuela, Ronald Delatado Cuaresma, Joel de Castro Villanueva, Jose Nicholas Lagura, Marciano Calangi Grantosa and Maric Berja dela Cruz. (*Philstar.com*)





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Los Angeles, CA 90010

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Bicameral report on new Rent Control Law ratified

by JESS DIAZ
Philstar.com

THE House of Representatives has approved the bicameral conference committee report on the proposed new rent control law.

The report puts a cap of seven percent on the annual rental increases, down from the 10 percent fixed by the old law.

Speaker Prospero Nograles authored the House version of the rent control bill.

He said a new law was needed to ease the people's suffering brought about by the financial crisis.

Nograles said millions of people still rent apartments and other dwellings in Metro Manila and other urban areas, and even in small towns in the provinces.

The proposed new law would control rent for four years starting from the time the law takes effect 15 days after its publication in two newspapers of general circulation.

There would be no rent increase on the first year. For the succeeding three years, only a seven-per-

cent annual adjustment would be allowed.

The proposed law would cover boarding houses, dormitories, rooms, and bed space.

Residential units to be covered would be those renting for P10,000 a month in Metro Manila and other highly urbanized cities, and those renting for P5,000 a month in all other cities and towns.

After the expiration of the proposed four-year rent control, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council would be authorized to continue the regulation of dwelling units for rent.

Property owners would be prohibited from demanding advance rent of more than one month and deposit of more than two months. Renters, on the other hand, would not be allowed to assign or sublease the rented premises.

The owners may petition the court to eject renters in case the latter sublease the rented property, they are in arrears for three months or the owners need the property for themselves or immediate members of their families. ■

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