

Police dragged into Boracay land dispute

by NESTOR P. BURGOS JR.
Inquirer.net

ILOILO CITY—The police force of Boracay has been dragged into the controversy involving a land dispute after the island's police chief was removed from his post for alleged partiality.

Aklan police director Senior Superintendent Clarence Guinto said he had directed Superintendent Anthony Maghari to replace Supt. Arnold Ardiente as chief of the Boracay Special Tourist Police Office (BSTPO) effective Monday, June 1.

In a telephone interview last May 28, Guinto said Ardiente was facing a complaint for partiality and illegal arrest filed by security guards of Winace Holdings Philippines Inc.

Guinto said Ardiente was relieved to pave the way for an impartial investigation of the complaint filed by the security guards.

The BSTPO arrested two security guards of Winace last May 19 after a guard shot

and wounded two workers of property claimant Ruth Tirol-Jarantilla during a confrontation in Barangay Balabag at the northern end of the 1,032-hectare island.

The workers were putting up fence on a disputed 700-square meter lot when a security guard allegedly shot at them, according to an earlier report of the BSTPO. The two workers were wounded in the leg and were hospitalized.

Ardiente, who was reassigned to the police regional office in Iloilo City, denied any irregularity in the arrest of the security guards.

"I was just doing my job and I was not taking sides," Ardiente said by phone.

He said he hoped the investigation would clear him.

Two teams of policemen have been assigned to the disputed property to prevent further violence, according to Guinto.

Police also initiated dialogues between the feuding parties. ■

Manila to sign 10 labor, trade, energy pacts with Seoul during PGMA visit to South Korea

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is due to sign 10 agreements on labor, trade and energy with South Korean President Lee Myung Bak during her official visit to South Korea on May 30 and 31, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

After the two-day visit, President Arroyo moves to Jeju island, south of Seoul, for the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)-South Korea Commemorative Summit on June 1 and 2.

PGMA's visit to South Korea comes when the two countries celebrate the propitious 60th anniversary of their diplomatic relations, with the Philippines declaring 2009 as "Philippine-Korea Friendship Year."

South Korea was the first destination of the Philippines' peace keeping operations contingent, known as the Philippine Expeditionary Forces (PEFTOK), in 1953 when hostilities broke out between the north and south factions of Korea.

Of the 10 agreements, DFA said five would be government-to-government undertakings to be signed at the Korean Blue House, including the US\$ 13-million grant-in-aid by the South Korean government for the construction of

Rice Processing Complexes in Pangasinan, Bohol and Davao del Sur.

Signatories to the South Korean grant includes Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo and South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung Hwan.

The other four are Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) for employment permit system (EPSD), on labor and manpower development cooperation, feasibility study on the multi-industry cluster (MIC) program, and agricultural, scientific and technical cooperation.

The MOUs, EPS and Labor and Manpower Development Cooperation are to be signed between Labor Secretary Mariano Roque and Korean Labor Minister Yee Young-Hee.

According to the DFA, the EPS deal would allow skilled Filipino workers to avail of jobs in South Korea because it renews a similar agreement that had expired in 2006. The other MOU is an institutional cooperation agreement.

Both Romulo and Yu will also sign a deal on MIC where a feasibility study on synergistic cooperation is funded by the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and the president of the Korean Rural Development Authority are also slated to sign an agreement on agriculture cooperation.

The five government-to-private deals are MOUs on information exchange and cooperation between Philippine International Sisterhood and Twinning Association and the Korea Local Authorities Foundation for International Relations.

An MOU on friendship exchange between Benguet province and Chungcheungbukdo province is also to be signed.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Korea Trade and Investment Promotion Agency will sign an institutional cooperation agreement.

An agreement between the DENR and the Korea Energy Economics Institute is also scheduled to be signed. According to the DFA, PGMA is scheduled to meet with the Filipino community in Seoul who will witness the signing of the various government-to-private deals.

Philippine-Korean bilateral trade amounts to US\$ 5.06 billion. Korean investments here is estimated at US\$ 3 billion. (PNA)

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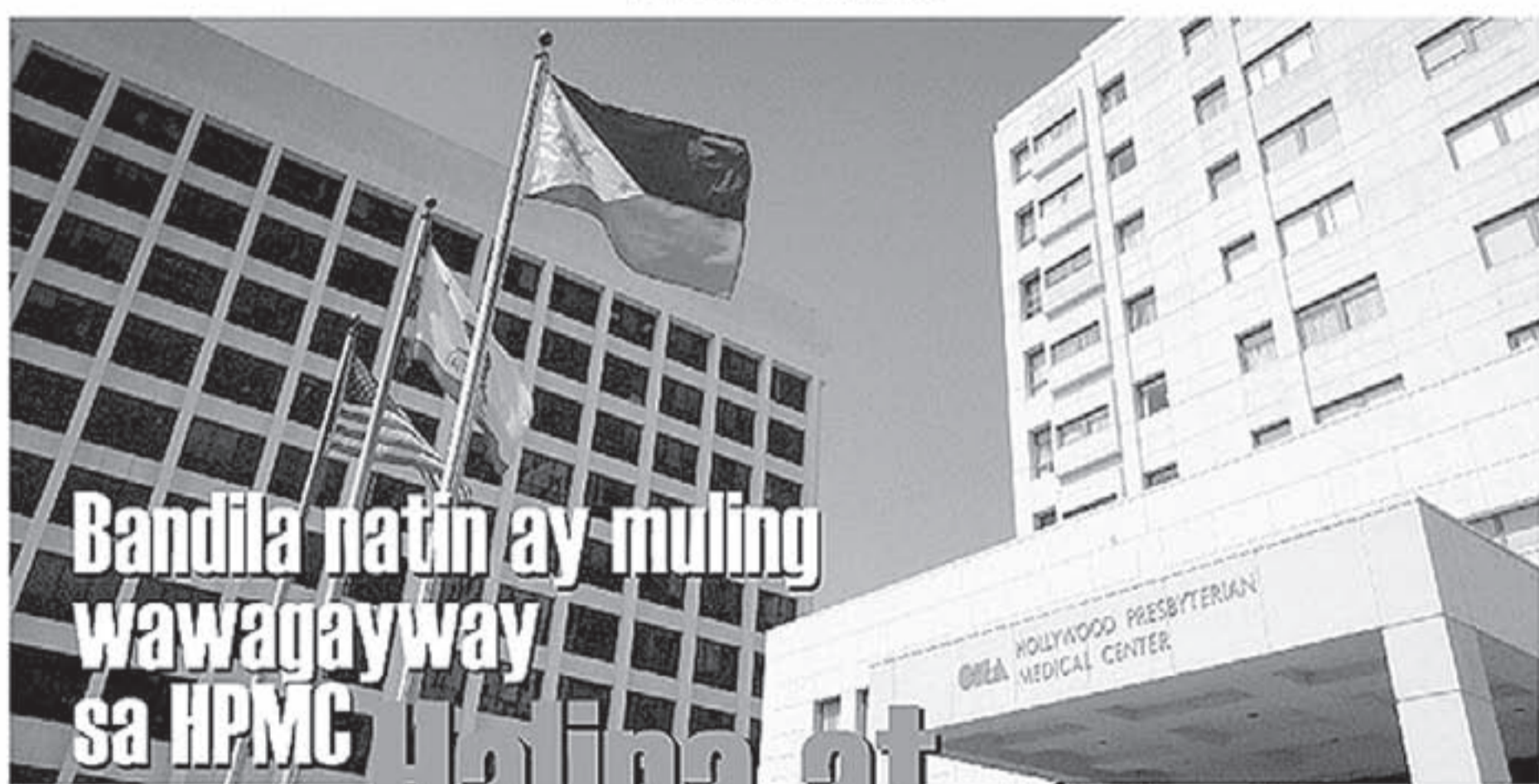


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