

# CHR calls for more media reporting on human rights abuses

**T**HE Commission on Human Rights (CHR) calls on media practitioners to further enhance the reporting of human rights abuses in the country.

"We hope that our organizations will continue to collaborate and coordinate into the future for our future," CHR Chairperson Leila de Lima said as Philippine Human Rights Reporting Project (PHRRP) proponents launched in Quezon City a handbook entitled *Reporting Human Rights in the Philippines: A Field Guide for Journalists and Media Workers*.

PHRRP is a collaboration between international media organization Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) as well as national media development and support partner-organizations in the Philippines to help hike and improve coverage of human rights issues.

The partner organizations are Center for Community Journalism and Development, Mindanao News and Information Cooperative Center as well as National Union of Journalists of the Philippines.

De Lima said the support of media practitioners was needed since they were in the forefront of efforts to ensure respect for human rights.

"It is your vigilance that alerts us to abuses carried out by government and private individuals,"

she told guests at the launch.

By bringing such abuses to public attention, she said, media helped derail attempts of the powerful to trample upon human rights of the less privileged.

De Lima lauded PHRRP proponents for coming out with the handbook, noting it offered operational advice and information for media practitioners.

"This handbook is a welcome addition to the body of work at our disposal," she said.

During a press briefing, the Amnesty International Philippines (AIPh) also called for more improvement in the country's human rights situation.

"In the Philippines, people still suffer from insecurity and indignity in their homes and almost everywhere else," said AIPh section director Aurora Corazon Parong.

She cited over 600,000 civilians' displacement last year from renewed armed conflict in strife-torn Mindanao.

Judicial executions, journalists' killings, sub-standard detention conditions and indigenous peoples' struggles against abuses of corporations in their ancestral land still mar the country's human rights situation, she added. (PNA)

# Tokyo gives P2B grant aid to RP

**T**OKYO has provided P2 billion grant aid to Manila to finance the installation of weather monitoring system and the construction of bridges, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) said.

The agency said the governments of Japan and the Philippines signed the grant on Wednesday, May 27 through Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and NEDA Director General Ralph G. Recto and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), represented by JICA-Philippines Chief Representative Norio Matsuda.

The projects include the Improvement of the Meteorological Radar System in the Philippines worth P1.64 billion; P302 million worth bridge construction for expanded agrarian reform communities development and the P149 million grant aid for human resource development scholarship.

"We appreciate the Japanese government's initiative to provide, among others, radar systems, dams and reconstruction of damaged infrastructure such as bridges in the country. These equipment and infrastructure support are very much aligned

with one of the Philippine government's priorities, that is, natural disaster prevention and mitigation," Recto said.

The radar system project, with the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services (PAGASA) as proponent, involves the replacement of three existing meteorological radar systems in Aparri, Cagayan; Virac, Catanduanes; and Guian, Samar.

The radar system project aims to effectively prevent damages caused by tropical storms or typhoons by enhancing the capability of PAGASA in weather monitoring and weather information or warning dissemination.

The diplomatic exchange of notes for this project was signed last March 30.

Meanwhile, the Bazal bridge construction project involves the construction and replacement of existing wooden bridge that crosses Bazal river along the boundary between two barangays in Maria Aurora, Aurora province.

The grant agreement for the conduct of the detailed design study for this project was signed by Recto and Matsuda last April 20.

The JDS, another Japan grant-aided project, aims to provide qualified Filipinos with the opportunity to obtain Master's degree at Japanese universities to support the human resource development policy of Japan, and eventually to extend and strengthen the bilateral relationship between Japan and the Philippines.

The JDS project funds 20 scholarship slots for young Filipino government employees who are expected to play leadership roles in the Philippines and those who will contribute to the socioeconomic development of the country in the following fields of study: Economics, Business Administration, Public Administration, Information and Communications Technology, and Industrial Development.

About 84 scholars out of 159 grantees had graduated and came back to use their skills and knowledge gained in Japan while 50 grantees have ongoing studies in Japan and 25 more successful candidates were selected under the seventh batch for July 2009 intake.

The exchange of notes for the eighth batch of JDS scholars was signed last May 19. (PNA)



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# Comelec executive blows top over bribery allegations

by SHEILA CRISOSTOMO  
Philstar.com

**T**HE head of the Commission on Elections-Special Bids and Awards Committee (Comelec-SBAC) blew his top last May 28 over a circulating text message that he received a P2-million bribe from leading bidder Smartmatic and Total Information Management Corp.

"That is malicious! I deny that categorically. I never received anything, asked for anything and I have no intention to receive or demand anything," said SBAC chief Ferdinand Rafanan when informed by Comelec reporters about the text message.

The message read: "Smartmatic machine broke down last May 27 and Comelec still wants to award the deal to Venezuelan

government-owned corporation. Was it because Rafanan got P2-million bribe from Smartmatic?"

The text was referring to a precinct count optical scan (PCOS) machine of Smartmatic that emitted smoke during a demonstration the other day. It turned out that the cable used to connect the machine to the battery was thin, causing a short circuit.

Rafanan vehemently denied the allegation as he challenged those circulating the message to "come out and face me... in any venue. They choose the place, I will go there alone."

"They want to destroy everything—Smartmatic, me and the Comelec. If they know this is

true, they should present their evidence and they should come out and identify themselves...

They should be careful. They can be traced and if they cannot be found, they will answer to God," he said.

The allegation was also belied by Smartmatic sales director Cesar Flores who claimed that the company is "going through very strict and stringent proceedings of qualification made by Comelec."

"This has been very transparent. We deny any type of accusation of any wrongdoing. We are a very honest company and we are hoping that we be awarded this contract on a clean basis," Flores added. ■


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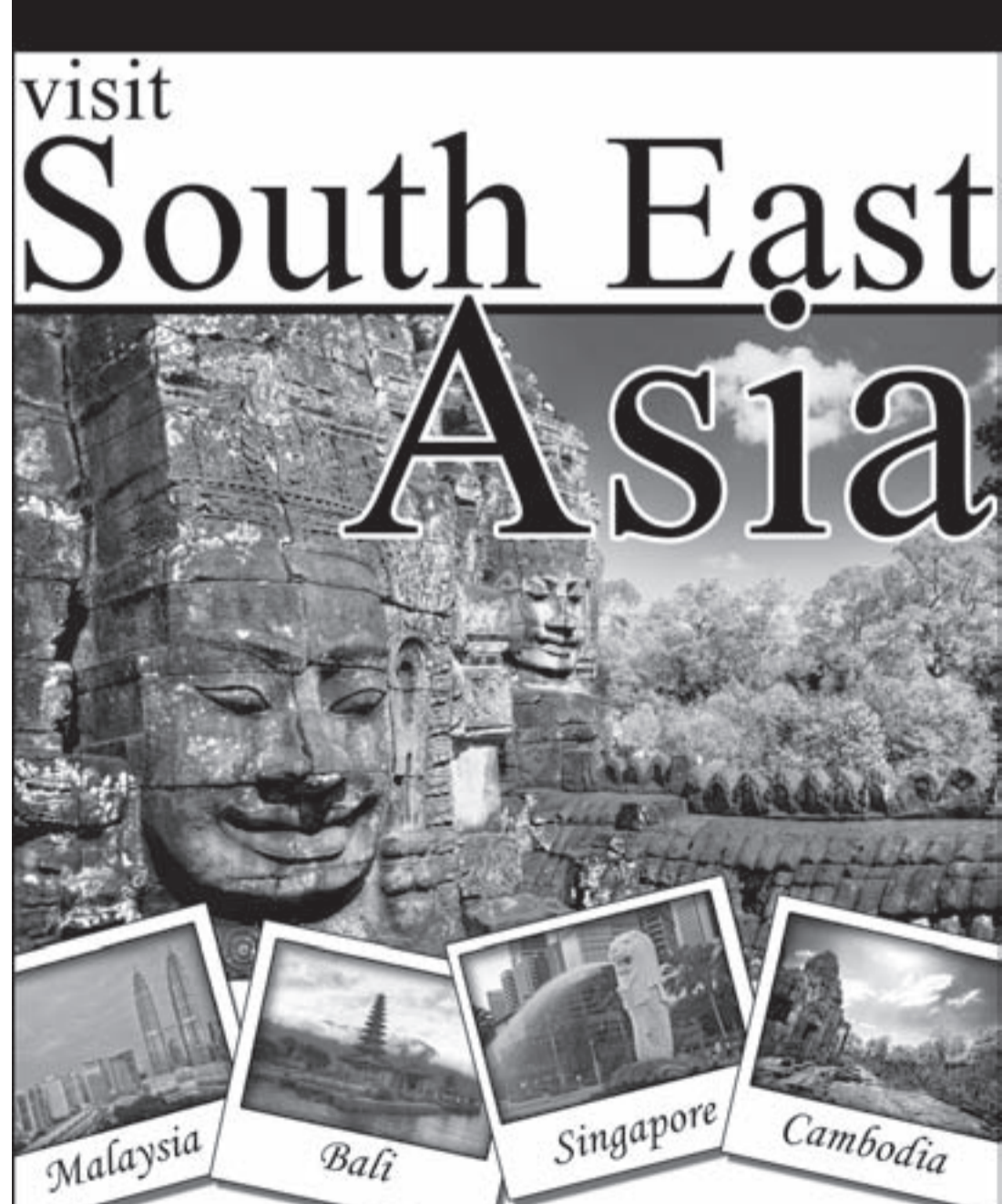
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