

1st Muslim Filipina envoy, off to Bahrain

MANILA – The recent confirmation of Corazon Yap-Bahjin as ambassador to Bahrain made Philippine foreign service history as she is the first career Muslim Filipina ambassador.

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs, other career Muslim diplomats who headed Philippine missions abroad are former Philippine Ambassador to Turkey and currently Assistant Secretary DFA-Mindanao Bahnamir Guinomia, Philippine Consul General and Deputy Chief of Mission to Dhaka Usop Kadatuan, former Philippine Ambassador to Oman Candidate Gutoc, and former Philippine Ambassador to Libya Mukhtar Muallam.

Other Muslim who previously served as non-career Ambassadors include former Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait Alunan

Glang, former Philippine Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Abraham Rasul, and former Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait Maanyag Tamano.

“Ambassador-designate Bahjin is the first Filipina Muslim to pass the career Foreign Service Officers’ examination and now to head a diplomatic mission,” the DFA said.

Bahjin, who was recently Assistant Secretary for Personnel at the DFA, replaces former Ambassador Eduardo Pablo Maglaya in Manama.

Bahjin’s grandmothers and her late husband, Datu Samsuddin Rasul Bahjin, are Taugs from Sulu.

She graduated cum laude from the University of Santo Tomas in 1967 with a Bachelor of Science in Education, majoring in English and Theology. In 1974, she obtained

her Master of Arts, major in Social Studies, at the University of the Philippines.

Before embarking on a diplomat career, Bahjin was an educator. She taught at the Holy Trinity College in Palawan, the Centro Escolar University, and then the Palawan State University, where she became an Assistant Professor.

She was previously assigned in Cairo, Amman, Bangkok, and Xiamen, where she was Consul General. In the home office, she also served as Assistant Secretary of the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Coordination as well as Acting Assistant Secretary of the Office of Consular Affairs.

Bahjin’s constituents in Bahrain will consist of around 45,000 Filipinos of a total 570,000 expatriate population there. (*Inquirer.net*)

2010 presidential race remains tight – poll

by ANNA VALMERO
Inquirer.net

MANILA – If the presidential elections were held today, five contenders will have a tight race for the post as they would garner about the same percentages of Filipino votes, the Pulse Asia May 2009 survey said.

Filipinos would likely vote for Vice President Noli L. De Castro (18 percent), Senator Francis G. Escudero (17 percent), former President Joseph Estrada (15 percent), Senator Manuel B. Villar, Jr. (14 percent), and Senator Manuel A. Roxas II (13 percent), said Pulse Asia’s May 2009 Ulat ng Bayan national survey.

Other candidates got only 7 percent or less, namely Senators

Loren Legarda, Panfilo Lacson, Richard Gordon, Manny Pangilinan, Justice Reynato Puno, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, religious leader Bro. Mike Vellarde, Bayani Fernando, and Pampanga Governor Ed Panlilio.

Despite continued talks about a no-election scenario and uncertainties regarding the automation of the May 2010 elections, the level of public interest in the elections remains high as virtually all Filipinos have a preferred candidate in mind, said Pulse Asia.

However, Filipinos are still divided when it comes to their choice of their next president as shown by the results, it said.

In Metro Manila and the best-

off Class ABC, Escudero topped the presidential bet with 26 percent. In Mindanao, Estrada and De Castro have almost the same voter preferences at above 20 percent, said the survey.

In the Visayas, the favored presidential candidates are Roxas (22 percent), Villar (20 percent), De Castro (18 percent), and Escudero (15 percent), while class E favors De Castro (25 percent), Estrada (19 percent), Escudero (15 percent) and Villar (13 percent).

The five presidential candidates currently leading at the national level also enjoy nearly the same levels of electoral support in the rest of Luzon and the most numerous Class D.

About one in three Filipinos is voting for his/her preferred presidential bet because of the candidate’s being helpful to others, particularly the poor and the overseas Filipino workers, said Pulse Asia.

One in 10 Filipinos chose a candidate based on his or her many accomplishments, followed by being clean or not corrupt, being a good person, and being a fighter among others.

Between February and May 2009, Roxas enjoyed 5 percentage-point improvement while Legarda had a 5 percentage-point erosion in terms of following.

The nationwide survey had 1,200 respondents from all over the country. ■



NO SMOKING. Marchers display streamers and placards showing the bad effect of smoking to our health and environment during the celebration of World No Tobacco Day on May 31, in Manila. AP Photo by Joseph Agcaolli

Villar: My conscience is clear

Slams Madrigal’s ‘big lie’

MANILA – Senator Manuel Villar said Senator Ana Consuelo Madrigal’s allegation that he profited over P400 million from the C5 road extension project was a “big lie” and that his conscience was clear.

“Nabasa ko sa dyaryo na may natanggap daw ako na P400 million. Malaking kasinungalingan yan. Wala akong tinanggap na P400 million o mga kompanya ko II read in the papers that I got P400 million. That’s a big lie. I did not receive P400 million, neither did my companies,” Villar said, referring to a story published on the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.

The *Inquirer* report quoted Madrigal’s lawyer, Ernesto Francisco. Madrigal testified on Monday before the Senate Committee of the Whole, which was hearing the ethics complaint she filed against Villar.

Madrigal said Villar and his companies got P136 million and stood to get P84 million more after their properties were affected by the C5 extension project.

Asked about the hearing, Villar said: “Malinawanang ang konsensya ko. Wala kong itinago, wala akong ginawang illegal [My conscience is clear. I did not do anything illegal.]”

Villar, who has declared his candidacy for president in 2010, said there was nothing illegal if government compensated property owners who were affected by road projects.

“Bakit parang masamang tumanggap ng pera? Sabi ko nga, hindi labag sa batas po ang mabayaran kayo pag dumaan sa inyo ang kalye [Why is it wrong



Sen. Manny Villar

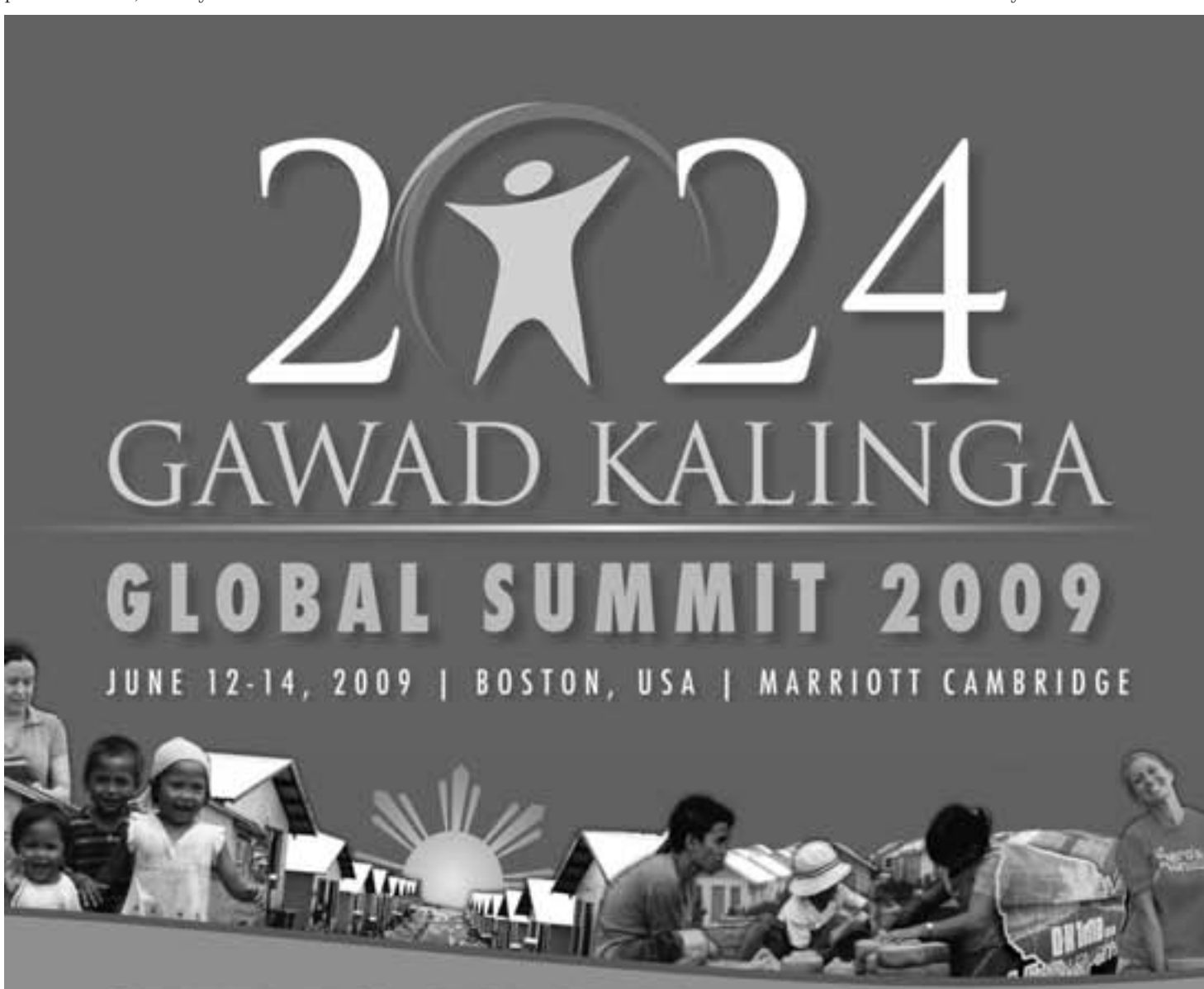


Sen. Jamby Madrigal

to accept money? Like I said, it is not against the law if you get paid by those who use your road,” he said.

“Nagtataka nga ako kung bakit parang pinalalabas naman ni Senator Jamby na parang masama na nabayaran ka? [Why is Senator Jamby making it appear that it’s wrong to get paid],” he said, referring to Madrigal by her nickname.

Villar also said that the payments made to him and his companies were not overpriced. (*Inquirer.net*)



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