

# Palace to report to US government efforts against human trafficking

by **MARVIN SY**  
Philstar.com

MANILA – Malacañang is set to file an official communication with the US government detailing the accomplishments made by the Philippine government against human trafficking.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the communiqué, which would be coured through the US Embassy in Manila, would not be in the form of a protest.

Ermita though admitted the Philippine government was disappointed with the decision

of the US State Department to downgrade the Philippines in its scorecard of countries and their efforts against human trafficking.

After three years in the Tier 2 category of countries, the Philippines was placed in the Tier 2 watch list by the State Department in its 2009 Trafficking in Persons Report.

Tier 2 means a country is making significant efforts to fully comply with minimum standards against human trafficking, while the Tier 2 watch list indicates the country has not made any significant progress in convicting offenders.

The US State Department report indicated that only four were convicted from the total of 97 trafficking cases filed with courts, out of the 168 cases hauled by law enforcement agencies to the Justice Department last year.

Ermita blamed the slow pace

of resolving cases of human trafficking that contributed to the perceived lack of prosecution and convictions.

He said the executive branch would be communicating with the judiciary the need to hasten the resolution of human trafficking cases.

Justice Undersecretary Ricardo Blancaflor, chairman of the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), said the reason why the Philippines was placed on the watch list is the lack of convictions.

Blancaflor said a lot of cases have already been filed against suspected traffickers but they remain pending.

"The more or less 256 cases are now proceeding continuously and we hope to get more convictions," he said.

Justice Secretary Agnes Devanadera, on the other hand, told prosecutors to expedite the

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# 10 Rizal monuments around the world – Gordon

MANILA – National hero Dr. Jose Rizal is recognized in many parts of the world for his intelligence and heroism, earning him at least 10 Rizal monuments in four continents around the world, Richard Gordon said Friday.

At the commemoration of Rizal's 148th birthday, the senator paid tribute to the national hero.

"Jose Rizal showed us that even if we were colonized by foreign nations, we can refuse to be bound by them, by having a vision and strengthening our values. He showed that Filipinos could excel and compete with the best," he said in a statement.

"Jose Rizal was the first Filipino to break the walls in his mind, walls which were built by the foreign invaders. Other countries also recognize his heroism and have chosen to erect monuments in his honor," he added.

Gordon pointed out that Filipi-

nos should be proud that other nations recognize that Rizal's short but meaningful life is an ideal model which shows that a person can achieve far beyond what he may seem to reach if only he has a vision and strives hard to achieve it.

He welcomed the development of a Rizal Park in New South Wales, Australia as a fitting tribute to Rizal's heroism. (Earlier, the Department of Foreign Affairs said a 2.2-hectare property in the city of Campbelltown, New South Wales will be developed to become the Rizal Park in Australia. It was through the initiative of a group of Filipino-Australians and their friends who petitioned the city council of Campbelltown to name it Rizal Park. Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd gave A\$120,000 for the initial construction of the park while the Campbelltown city council will provide another A\$140,000.)

Aside from the park being built in Australia, he said there are monuments in Rizal's honor in Madrid, Spain; Wilhelmsfeld, Germany; Jinjiang, Fujian, China; Cherry Hill Township, New Jersey; San Diego, California; and Seattle, Washington; Reforma Avenue in Mexico City, Mexico; La Molina in Lima, Peru; Litomerice, Czech Republic; and Singapore.

Guided by the values inculcated by Rizal, Gordon started the Bagumbayan Movement which seeks to rediscover and revitalize the Filipino identity by having a vision grounded on values and empowered by volunteerism.

He explained that the Bagumbayan movement aims to regain the Filipinos' sense of responsibility, to reinvent the government that it may faithfully perform its duty to serve and protect the people, to fortify law and order, and to build a strong and growing economy.

It also strives to prioritize education, provide adequate health care, create jobs, assist people in securing homes and land, strengthen the family as the foundation of the nation, and protect and preserve the environment for posterity. (*Inquirer.net*)

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