

# PAGASA chief wants more Filipino Galileos

by **ALCUIN PAPA**  
Inquirer.net

technology among Filipinos.

To illustrate his point, he cited the discovery of a second red spot on Jupiter in February 2006 by Christopher Go of the University of San Carlos in Cebu.

He said the discovery merited front-page treatment in the New York Times and was big news in the scientific community in other countries, but was not even reported in the Philippines.

To get Filipinos, particularly the youth, interested in science and technology, we should first get them interested in astronomy, according to the chief of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astrological Services Administration (PAGASA).

At the launch of the Philippines' participation in the worldwide celebration of "100 Hours of Astronomy" on April 2-5, PAGASA chief Prisco Nilo observed a waning interest in the pursuit of science and technology as a specialized field in the country.

"Most of the graduates we have today are in nursing. In fields like engineering and agriculture, we are noting a sharp decline," Nilo said.

### Oldest science

"Astronomy is the parent of other sciences like physics, and is the basis for space discovery. It is the oldest science. So we need to increase awareness in science

and technology and make Filipinos more scientifically aware. And we can do that through astronomy," Gabriela said.

Astronomy has wide appeal, he said, adding: "You put up a telescope anywhere and people from all walks of life will come and take a look. It's our natural inclination to be curious. A telescope can catch attention and lead to interest in other sciences."

### Scientific revolution

According to Gabriela, the global observance of "100 Hours of Astronomy" is aimed at spurring deeper interest in the sciences.

The exercise coincides with the first time Galileo Galilei peeked into his telescope 400 years ago.

"That act of Galileo started the scientific revolution. Many scientific breakthroughs are credited to Galileo's act," Gabriela said. ■

# Proposal to peg SMS at 50 centavos

by **LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ**  
Inquirer.net

MANILA—The House of Representatives would pass a resolution that would peg the cost of each text message at no more than 50 centavos, a lawmaker said.

Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez, the author of the resolution, said the measure would also impose 5 centavos metering fee for every calls made and text messages sent.

But the measure stressed that this would be shouldered by the telecommunications companies.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has given her nod to the resolution as long as it would result to the lowering of costs of text message and that the new fee would not be passed on to the consumers, said Suarez, the chairman of the ways and means committee, in a news briefing.

The President also wanted to

ensure that the revenue generated from the metering fee would go only to a trust fund for computer literacy program, Suarez added.

Suarez said the resolution was approved at the committee level after a meeting, which included officials of telecommunications companies.

He said he expects the resolution to be tackled in plenary when sessions resume on April 13.

"It was a long debate, but at the end of the day, they really don't have to agree, we feel that what we are asking is fair and equitable," Suarez said.

Even with the 50-centavo ceiling for every text message, Suarez said telecommunications firms would still rake in profits because the real cost of each text message is only 18 to 19 centavos.

The 5 centavos metering fee,

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## PDEA SAYS

# Anti-drug agents proven clean on drug use

by **TARRA QUISMUNDO**  
Inquirer.net

THE Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) said Tuesday, March 31 that all its 400 officials and personnel tested negative for drug use following a surprise test on Monday, March 30.

"All key officials and personnel of the PDEA national headquarters passed the surprise drug test," said the anti-drug agency in a statement.

Conducted at the PDEA headquarters in Quezon City, the test required agents and office personnel to submit urine samples to be checked for use of shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride), marijuana and party drug Ecstasy.

"This exemplifies the dedication and commitment of PDEA officials and personnel to uphold the integrity and moral ascendancy of the agency as the country's premier drug law enforcement organization," said the agency.

Drug testing is an annual activity at the PDEA to ensure its officials are clean and fit to perform their duties. ■

# RP team bags awards in int'l robot tilt

WITH few resources, guts and vision, the Philippine Science High School team sent to the regional FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) in Hawaii bagged two awards, besting over two dozen teams.

The Filipino team also earned a slot in the world finals in Atlanta, Georgia, USA where they would be facing teams from Brazil, Canada, Chile, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, Turkey and Britain.

Team Lagablab (Filipino for "fiery") and their robot entry, "Larry Labuyo," first won the Highest Rookie Seed Award, then the Rookie All-Star Award.

The first award is given to first-time participating teams that get the highest seeds at the end of the qualifying rounds.

The Rookie All-Star Award puts the Philippines on the top three regional finalists for the International FIRST Robotics Championships. (Inquirer.net)

# PGMA to launch joint government-youth project to focus attention on need to protect ecosystem

TAGBILARAN CITY—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will launch (Wednesday), April 1 the *Sama-sama Para sa Kalikasan*, a joint government and youth environmental project to focus national attention on the urgent need to protect the world's ecosystem from the catastrophic consequences of global warming.

An undertaking of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) under the President's Green Philippines agenda, the "Sama-sama Para sa Kalikasan" will be launched at the Bohol Wisdom School gym.

To welcome the President are some 4,500 SK members and local officials led by Bohol Gov. Erico Aumentado, Tagbilaran City Mayor Dan Lim, Bohol 1st District Rep. Edgardo Chatto, 2nd District Rep. Roberto Cajés, 3rd District Rep. Adam Nelson Jala, SK National Federation President Jane Cajés, SK Secretary General Patrick Bench Marco, and SK VP for Visayas Karl Giuseppe Gumban.

Expected to accompany the President are Labor Secretary Marianito Roque and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Chairman Emmanuel Angeles.

The launch of the *Sama-sama Para sa Kalikasan* project will highlight the three-day SK national directorate meeting (March 31-April 2) here.

The SK is scheduled to present to the President their support for the Green Philippines project by way of planting trees, coastal cleanup and infor-

mation campaign to promote public involvement in various environmental activities nationwide.

The President has issued Executive Order (EO) 774 last December calling for the drastic reduction of the country's greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 50 percent within the next two years through massive tree-planting, coastal cleanup and marine protection, garbage segregation, composting and the establishment of sufficient materials recovery facilities (MRF) across the country.

In launching the Green Philippines project at the La Mesa Dam in July 2007, the President encouraged the public, schools and organizations to carry out tree-planting and other environmental activities in critical watersheds, mangrove and coastal areas, parks, highways and campuses including housing subdivisions nationwide.

During the SK national convention in Cebu in October last year, the President urged the youth to involve themselves in worthwhile activities such as environmental protection projects. She also turned over a P10-million check as the government's equity in the projects of the youth organization.

In signing EO 774, the President pointed out that climate change is already impacting adversely on the world and will have catastrophic effects if no immediate action is taken to curb industrial emissions and forest loss. ■





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