

# National Day of Celebration not a holiday—Palace

by MARVIN SY  
Philstar.com

THE National Day of Celebration for Filipino boxing hero Manny Pacquiao on May 8 is not a holiday, Malacañang announced. The usual motorcades that accompany the arrival of Pacquiao from his successful bouts would still take place as well as other activities to be organized by the Metro Manila Development Authority and the Department of the Interior and Local Government. President Arroyo issued Proclamation No. 1764 declaring Friday, May 8, as a National Day of Celebration to honor Pacquiao on his latest victory against Ricky Hatton in Las Vegas last weekend. "His spectacular victories show the world the best in the Filipino and that his determination and love of God and country exemplify the indomitable Filipino spirit," the proclamation stated. Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, palace spokesperson, explained that the decision of the President to declare a National Day of Celebration for Pacquiao was meant to stress the significance of his victory. He said the celebration would underscore the status of Pacquiao as one of the greatest Filipinos of the era "who has put the country on the highest pedestal of international professional boxing, for depicting the Filipino athlete at his best and for projecting a positive image of the Filipino that is now being emulated by peoples around the world." Just like what was done after his previous fights,

Pacquiao would make a call on the President at Malacañang after his arrival this May 8. Secretary to the Cabinet Silvestre Bello III confirmed that the President would be hosting a lunch for Pacquiao at the Palace. Bello said the motorcade before and after his visit to Malacañang should be expected as part of the celebrations. Asked about the presence of politicians during his motorcades, Bello said that it would be better for all concerned to let Pacquiao bask in his glory alone. He admitted, though, that some politicians would try to get a seat on the motorcade alongside Pacquiao in order to get maximum exposure. "This just can't be avoided. But if you want me to give an advice to them, although I'm sure they will not appreciate my advice, just allow Manny Pacquiao to enjoy his celebrity status since he was the one who was involved in the brawl. So he should be the one who should benefit," Bello said in Filipino. Before taking part in the celebrations, the members of Team Pacquiao would first have to pass the screening process at the airport for the influenza A(H1N1) virus. Bello said he expects Pacquiao and his delegation not to be given any special treatment because "they know their responsibility to our country and to our people." ■

# Local tourism stalled by cheap international airfares

by MA. ELISA P. OSORIO  
Philstar.com

VERY cheap airfares to international destinations are cutting into domestic tourism which may result in lower tourism revenues for the country, the Department of Tourism (DOT) said last May 5.

"Low priced international airfares are encouraging people to travel out of the country," Tourism Director for Development Planning Rolando Canizal said. "A big chunk of tourists are locals. In fact a study showed that young Filipinos travel four times a year," Canizal said, adding that here was a good domestic travel movement. "It (low priced plane ticket for international destinations) makes traveling outside the country more expensive than touring the Philippines," Canizal said. Filipinos make up 80 percent of the local tourism market.



The statement was made following the seat sale by flag carrier Philippine Airlines (PAL) late last month during which the Lucio Tan led firm sold international plane seats for as low as \$8. The seat sale likewise angered travel agents who said they were not informed of the seat sale before hand. In the same conference, Philippine Travel Agents Association (PTAA) president Pat Alberto said that they were disappointed that PAL, their long time partner, failed to include them in the seat sale. PTAA said that the two-day super sale of PAL had an adverse effect on their business because PAL did not allow them to participate in the sale. PAL sold plane

tickets directly to consumers via their website and offices. PTAA said that during that week, their sales plunged by as much as 50 percent. A travel agency has an average gross sales of P5 million per week. As a result, Alberto said that if PAL refused to heed their call to include and inform them in the next seat sale, they will be forced to implement a share shifting. This means that travel agencies will now push the sales of other airline carriers for both international and domestic travel. As per their agreement with PAL, Alberto said that they have an exclusive contract which means that they cannot sell tickets of other airlines for domestic travel. This means that agencies who sell PAL domestic tickets

can only sell PAL and is not allowed offer Cebu Pacific or Zest Air tickets. Alberto said that cutting the exclusivity for domestic travel will be a "big loss" to PAL given that 80 percent to 85 percent of their business come from travel agencies. At the same time, Alberto said that they will go to the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to make sure that airlines are still protecting the interest of the consumers. Alberto said that they are not sure if safety and efficiency are not compromised as a result of the drastic reduction in ticket prices. She noted that budget carriers often delay and even cancel their flights. ■



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# House OKs 'biometrics' voter registration

THE House of Representatives approved on third and final reading last May 5 a bill requiring all voters to undergo biometrics registration for elections. All those present at the session hall, a total of 186, voted in favor of passing the bill. Nobody logged a negative vote or abstained. House Bill 6052 seeks to require all voters whose biometrics information have not been

recorded by the Commission on Elections to troop back to their local election offices and have their photographs, fingerprints, and signatures captured. This is to ensure that the automated fingerprint identification system could be used to cleanse the voters' list of double or multiple registrants. Some of these registrants are called "flying" voters, paid to vote several times. (Inquirer.net)



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