

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Imelda Marcos at 80: Penniless with diamond ring

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engagement. Ferdinand died in 1989 and Imelda was allowed to return home in 1991. Despite her notoriety for extravagance in a nation wracked by poverty, she still has her supporters and even won a congressional seat in 1995. She ran, unsuccessfully, for president in 1992. These days she keeps busy working on her own jewelry collection, making the pieces from her old accessories and clothes, mixed with newly bought stones and other materials. Some Filipinos were incensed at her unashamed opulence, but others, especially the generation

born after 1986 with no memory of martial law under the Marcos regime, view her as an entertaining curiosity. "She's captivating and mesmerizing, whether or not you share her politics," said architect Gigi Gonzalez. Despite some 900 civil and criminal cases she had faced in Philippine courts since 1991—cases ranging from embezzlement and corruption to tax evasion—she has emerged relatively unscathed and never served prison time. All but a handful of the cases have been dismissed for lack of evidence and a few convictions were overturned on appeal.

But she still does not weary of complaining of her lot. Imelda, her hair coifed and cheeks rouged, teared up as she complained she had to withdraw money from her husband's meager war pension to post bail so she could travel to Singapore earlier this month for an eye checkup paid for by her children. "I was first lady for only 20 years. All the beautiful things I gave to the Philippines, am I being persecuted for that? I didn't know you can inherit a crime from your husband." Her husband and his cronies allegedly amassed ill-gotten wealth estimated at \$5 billion to \$10 billion during Marcos' 20 years in power, but the Presidential Commission on Good Government, created to recover the Marcos billions, says the government has only found cash and assets totaling \$1.63 billion. The assets include three separate sets of diamond tiaras, ruby brooches, emerald necklaces and other jewels. She remains unashamed of her past, when she shopped in the world's richest boutiques and launched lavish beautification projects at home in the midst of the Philippines' extreme poverty. ■

Overseas Filipino voters exceed . . .

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"This has always been the case in previous registration drives. The nearer it is to the deadline, the greater the number of last-minute registrants," Seguis said. As of June 17, the number of absentee voting registrants is 104, 475, with Asia and the Pacific getting the most number at 28,770, followed by the Americas at 21,386, then by Middle East and Africa at 18,627, then Europe at 12,618, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration offices at 13, 588, the Ninoy Aquino International Airport at 8,757, and the Commission on Filipinos Overseas at 729. The same report shows that the top ten countries in terms of OAV registrants are: the United States of America with 17,262; China with 11,250; United Arab Emirates with 7,297; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with 5,176; Singapore with 4,577; Taiwan with 4,136; United Kingdom with 4,066; Canada with 4,009; Japan with 3,510; and Italy with 2,799.

Seguis noted that 27,000 Filipinos set to leave for abroad or who are here on vacation have availed of the OAV registration service at the POEA, NAIA, and CFO. "We are calling on all Filipinos overseas and those who are about to leave the country to work abroad to register as absentee voters so they can exercise their right to vote in the 2010 presidential elections," he said. Seguis said his office is in touch with different posts and have called on every embassy and consulate to intensify its campaign on absentee voting registration. The Philippine consulate general in Hong Kong has reported the highest number of registrants at 10,455 followed by the Philippine consulate general in Los Angeles, California with 6,534 registrants. In the Middle East, 5,571 Filipinos in Dubai have registered with the Philippine consulate general

thus taking the number one spot among the different posts in the said region. The Philippine embassy in London leads the different posts in Europe with 4,066 registrants. According to the OAVS, registration activities are ongoing in all 93 foreign service Posts, three Manila Economic and Cultural Offices (MECO), and one Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO). A Memorandum of Agreement between the DFA-OAVS, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, and the Commission on Elections-Committee on Overseas Absentee Voting was signed on June 4 to increase the participation of overseas Filipinos to register as absentee voters. These include Filipino permanent migrants or permanent residents abroad, Filipinos overseas who have become citizens of other countries, and Filipino spouses and fiancées of foreign nationals leaving the country. (Inquirer.net)

H1N1 death shuts down Batasan

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Roque, who appealed to media not to reveal the names of the two victims. He said the woman who died last June 19 was a resident of Sta. Rosa, Laguna. The second patient, a male who is recuperating at home, works at the Congressional Planning and Budget Department (CPBD). He said the female victim even attended the seminar of committee affairs department last June 15 and 16, after going to Kalinga province last June 11 to 14. The male employee just came from Malacañang before being tested positive with A(H1N1). "The two did not go abroad. The female victim had just came from Kalinga while the male victim, who is now doing well in his house, went to Malacañang," he said. Roque said the Speaker has been apprised of the situation, and that he ordered the suspension of operations of the House until Sunday (June 28). "We

will resume operations on Monday (June 29)." He said experts from the Department of Health (DOH) would help the institution to sanitize all the offices and give its employees time for self-quarantine, particularly those who had direct contact with the victims. "We will have special treatment to those employees who have engaged the infected ones," said Roque. Nograles said he has "already instructed the concerned House officials to coordinate and maintain close coordination with the Department of Health in order to mitigate possible effects on other employees and their families." "Our Medical services will spearhead, in coordination with the DOH, all the necessary precautionary steps needed to eliminate further health hazards. This includes the necessary contact tracing of possible victims and their families," the Speaker said. ■

Asians reject gov's plan to slash CA's . . .

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ly visits to the emergency room, the possibility of going hungry, and the threat of homelessness," explained Farhana Shahid, Lead Community Advocate for CHAI with the South Asian Network. "The Governor's suggested cuts would dismantle the state's safety net services," said Stella Kim, Health Project Coordinator with the Korean Resource Center. "California cannot afford to abandon its residents at a time when families are struggling simply to make ends meet." "By slashing critical services, California would lose billions of dollars in federal funding," explains Hala Masri, State Policy Advocate with the Asian Pacific American Legal Center. "Lawmakers must fully utilize federal dollars and raise revenues to resolve our budget crisis, care for our children and seniors, and preserve our values as a state." ■

FilAms Protest GMA's Visit

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL
AJPress

LOS ANGELES – THEIR chants from the street could be heard from inside the Sheraton Hotel. Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo made a brief visit to Los Angeles and held a breakfast event at the Sheraton Hotel last Saturday. And demonstrators from across Southern California made their voices heard. Chanting, "What do you really want? What do you really, really want? Justice!" a group of about 20 Filipinos gathered outside the Sheraton protesting the president's visit. "We came here today to tell Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that we don't approve of her con-ass (Constituent Assembly) and human rights violations," said Kuusela Hilo, vice chairperson for Bayan USA. "It's important for us to be here because we part of the Filipino people even though we are overseas," she added. "We support the country's economy but most importantly, we support the country and the movement to keep the country a national democracy. We don't want charter change." A few weeks ago, the Philippine House of Representatives passed a controversial resolution 1109, a Charter change measure seeking to convene Congress into a constituent assembly. Senate and House leaders are planning to vote on the issue next month. Meanwhile, other groups have set a Manila-wide protest rally on June 30 to start the countdown to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's last year in office, according to the Inquirer.net. ■



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