

# More congressmen support media call to trash Right of Reply Bill

by MIRIAM DESACADA & DELON PORCALLA  
Philstar.com

CAMP RUPERTO KANGLEON PALO, Leyte — More congressmen are supporting media's call to trash the Right of Reply Bill (RORB).

Rep. Reynaldo Uy of the first congressional district in Samar joined Makati Rep. Teddyboy Locsin and other lawmakers who back the media in seeking to junk the RORB at the House of Representatives.

"I hope the proponents of this bill would not impair press freedom or dictate to media what to say. Media should be given a voice," Uy said in a chance interview with reporters here.

Eastern Samar Governor Ben Evardone, for his part, said he would urge congressmen to junk the bill.

Uy has assured the local media in the region that he would not support the bill but instead back up the media and continue to respect press freedom.

He warned that approval of the RORB would affect press freedom. The solon said he has never encountered an irresponsible journalist or received unfair treatment from the press in his close to 20 years in public service.

"I am happy the media in the region has always been fair and balanced in treating issues and I salute them," Uy said.

The RORB seeks to punish media firms through fines, closures if they fail to immediately give the complainant equal airtime or equal print space. The media criticized the bill because they believe it curtails press freedom.

House Speaker Nograles, in an informal survey conducted by his office, noted that the majority of members of the House of Representatives favor the approval of a right of reply law despite resistance from the media community.

Meanwhile, the leadership of the House decided last March 4 to defer approval of a measure related to the RORB that seeks to decriminalize or remove penalties of imprisonment in the libel law.

Nograles ordered the defer-



Rep. Teddyboy Locsin

ment of the third reading approval of House Bill 5760, which would then provide lawmakers the opportunity to take a second and closer look at the bill, which apparently still contains penal provisions despite its original intent.

"The spirit and intent of the bills in relation to the decriminalization of libel is incompatible with the provisions of the substitute measure. I think that the provisions which are supposed to remove the imprisonment clauses in the measure did not see print," Nograles said.

He said this prompted some of the congressmen to withdraw authorship.

# Arroyo to visit Brazil in June

by VERONICA UY  
Inquirer.net

MANILA—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has accepted the invitation of Brazil President Luis Inacio Lula Da Silva for a state visit there on June 24, the Department of Foreign Affairs said last March 5.

"The two heads of state are expected to discuss ways to further enhance cooperation between the Philippines and Brazil," the DFA said in a statement.

Lula, a founding member of Brazil's Workers' Party, became Brazil's president on the platform of debt repudiation, among others.

Brazil's leftist inclination represents such a trend in South America.

The DFA said the state visit to the Latin American country will be a first for a sitting Philippine president.

It said the highest ranking Philippine official who had visited Brazil was the President's father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal. The former president went to Brazil in 1960 when he was vice president.

Brazil is the world's fifth largest country by land area, occupying nearly half of South America. It is the fifth most populous country, the 10th largest economy at market exchange rates, and the ninth largest in purchasing power.

# 100 dolphins beached off Romblon

by EVELYN MACAIRAN  
Philstar.com

MANILA—A month after 300 melon-headed whales were stranded and rescued in Pilar, Bataan, some 100 dolphins, this time, were seen beaching themselves in shallow waters off Romblon province last March 3.

The dolphins were immediately rescued and guided to deeper waters by Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) members and local fishermen. There were no reports of injured or dead dolphins.

PCG on scene commander Captain Lino Paiton informed PCG commandant Vice Admiral Wilfredo Tamayo that some 100 marine mammals, initially reported to be dolphins, were found near the shore of Barangay Batiano, Odiongan Municipality in Romblon.

"Local fishermen spotted the dolphins floating on shallow waters at around 4 p.m. of March 3. With the help of the PCG and the local government in the area, we were able to shoo them back to the deep waters," said Paiton.

Without touching the marine mammals, the rescue team and fishermen employed different methods to drive them back to the sea. This includes making



PCG commandant Vice Admiral Wilfredo Tamayo

their presence felt or disturbing the dolphins.

It took them an hour or until 5 p.m. to drive away the dolphins to sea.

Paiton admitted that this was an "abnormal" occurrence since the dolphins do not swim in shallow waters. He said they have yet to determine the cause of the incident but they no longer coordinated with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) because the dolphins have already left.

Paiton also ordered his men in the area to conduct regular monitoring and patrolling to make

sure that dolphins would not again swim close to the shore.

Since last month's incident in Bataan, Tamayo ordered all the PCG district and station units and all shipping vessels to be on alert and check if there are other marine life that would require assistance.

"We have ordered our field units and traveling ships to be on the lookout for these dolphins and other endangered marine species that need help. The public should also immediately coordinate with the PCG, who in turn would alert the (BFAR) experts," Tamayo had said.

# Asteroid buzzes RP skies

by DING CERVANTES  
Philstar.com

ANGELES CITY—Filipino astronomers said an asteroid buzzed close to earth last March 2 at a distance less than twice that of the many telecommunications satellites orbiting over the earth, or one-seventh of the way to the moon.

Astronomer Dario de la Cruz of the astronomical observatory of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) told *The STAR* that the asteroid seemed to be one of many such objects found near earth.

The object, estimated to be around 35-60 meters wide, was about the size of the dead comet shard that exploded with the force of a large hydrogen bomb over a then largely uninhabited region of central Siberia on June 30, 1908.

However, De la Cruz said no alarm was issued on the approach of the asteroid, which was found to be nearing earth only three days earlier. It zoomed past the Pacific area at an altitude of 40,000 miles at 1:44 pm universal time.

Dubbed 2009 DD45, the asteroid was discovered last Friday by Australian comet hunter Rob McNaught.

News about his discovery came out in the Australian website Crikey.

According to the website, had the asteroid hit the

earth, "it would have exploded on or near the surface with the force of a large nuclear blast."

The Australian news website said the same asteroid might return for many more near misses in the future. "It will be a future danger to the planet," it added.

"For the astronomers working on the Siding Spring Survey of potentially dangerous near-earth objects or NEOs the closeness of the approach will allow more accurate predictions of future visits by this intruder, which is big enough to incinerate a large city if it hits

Earth or, as is more likely, turns into a Tunguska-like fireball on hitting the atmosphere at a closing velocity of tens of kilometers per second," the website said.

The Tunguska Event, or Tunguska explosion, was a powerful explosion that occurred near the Podkamennaya (Lower Stony) Tunguska River in what is now Krasnoyarsk Krai of Russia, at around 7:14 am on June 30, 1908.

The explosion was most likely to have been caused by the airburst of a large meteoroid or comet fragment at an altitude of 5-10 kilometers above the Earth's surface.

Some astronomers said that this asteroid may "suffer enough gravitational deflection to subsequently collide with us on 13 April 2036."

# P173-million lotto prize remains unclaimed

by PERSEUS ECHMINADA  
Philstar.com

THE Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) reported that the co-winner of the 6/49 Super Lotto draw last Feb. 22 has yet to claim the P173-million prize or half of the P347-million total jackpot.

Larry Cedro, PCSO spokesman, said the winner who bought the winning ticket from a Pasig online lottery terminal has not claimed his/her share of the biggest jackpot of P347 million. The other winner was a 50-year-old

woman from Caloocan City who already got her share of P173 million.

The winner has one year to claim the prize before the money is forfeited to the government and transferred to the charity fund of the PCSO.

This is the second time that a jackpot winner has taken more than a week to claim the jackpot prize.

A 61-year-old construction worker from Novaliches, Quezon City claimed the second biggest jackpot worth P249 million after

more than a week.

The construction worker told PCSO officials that he claimed the prize late to make sure that nobody was following him, "especially newsmen."

The winner said that when he was about to claim his prize a day after the draw he noticed a television crew at PCSO, prompting him to back out.

He said that for several days he kept returning and when the newsmen were no longer around, he decided to claim his prize.

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