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Fil-Am turns to God after a life of drugs and gangs

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SAYS DE VENECIA

'Arroyo behind Charter change'

JDV: Mikey offered speakership for my support

by MICHAEL LIM UBAC, GIL C. CABACUNGAN JR. Inquirer.net

MANILA — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is behind a move to amend the Constitution that is being pushed by her son in Congress. Pampanga Rep. Mikey Arroyo attempted but failed to enlist the support of Pangasinan Rep. Jose de Venecia in exchange for his reinstatement as House Speaker, the former Congress leader said.

De Venecia said that Representatives Arroyo and Martin Romualdez came to his office two days before the House adjourned for a Lenten break March 5 to request him to shepherd the passage of the draft resolution calling for a constituent assembly (Con-ass).

“political assassination” after his name-sake son exposed the NBN-ZTE deal with China. Mikey and his brother-congressman, Dato, engineered the ouster. “I preempted them by saying ‘no,’” De Venecia told reporters. “I turned down the request for me to help because they are not telling the Filipino people the truth,” he said, pointing to the obvious motive of Con-ass—“so that Gloria’s term

can be extended.” De Venecia said as long as administration allies could muster the 197 votes in the House and get the Supreme Court to uphold their move, “there will be no stopping Cha-cha.” Mikey denied De Venecia’s allegation. “I never offered him the speakership,” he said. “What will I offer him? He’s the one who volunteered to help.”



Pangasinan Rep. Jose de Venecia

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New America Media holds historic meeting with White House

Discusses ways to improve communication with ethnic communities in the US

WASHINGTON—Representatives of New America Media (NAM) recently met with the White House communications office to discuss ways the NAM ethnic media network can be utilized to help deliver important public policy, safety and health information to ethnic communities in the US.

With more than 2,500 members, NAM is the nation’s largest organization of ethnic media outlets and organizations. More than 51 million ethnic adults connect to each other, to home countries and to America through the ethnic media, one of the few growing sectors of American journalism.

“We are pleased that the Obama administration was a catalyst for this historic meeting,” said Sandy Close, NAM’s executive editor and director. “It demonstrates that the White House communications office is serious about ensuring that all Americans receive critical information about policy issues that impact their lives.”

Already, NAM has engaged in discussions with some government agencies about utilizing their network as frontline messengers to reach ethnic communities, including those that are non-English speaking. NAM’s network of ethnic media partners ranges from the major news outlets serving African-American, Hispanic, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Native American to niche outlets reaching the Burmese and Turkish in Nashville, Somali and Hmong in Minneapolis, as well as the Mixtec, Iranian and Rumanian communities in Los Angeles.

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Coron islet to be next Asian tourism jewel

by NIÑA CATHERINE CALLEJA Inquirer.net



Coron, Palawan

CORON, PALAWAN—Standaside, Phuket. Here comes Diwaran. By 2012, the 55-hectare Diwaran Island, part of Coron Reefs in northern Palawan, will be transformed into the “single largest integrated island resort in all Asia.”

This is the hope of Ho Kwon Ping, the Singaporean executive chair of Banyan Tree Holdings, a big developer of resorts, hotels, spas and residential homes in the Asia Pacific. He spoke at the groundbreaking ceremony of the planned resort on the largely uninhabited island last Wednesday, March 25 attended by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Dressed in casual attire, Ms Arroyo came with Tourism Secretary Ace Durano and Trade Secretary Peter Favila.

Challenge to Phuket
Ms Arroyo said that the project, which is estimated to cost \$240 million, would be the next Phuket, the popular resort in Thailand. Ho’s company pioneered the development in that area.

“What he had been able to do there, he can certainly do here,” she said. Ho showed the master plan of the Isla Diwaran project to Ms Arroyo under the shade of tents.

The island’s map shows that the beach with only fine white sand and few indigenous trees will have three hotels with villas, a marina with facilities for arrival by boat or by seaplane, and a town center where there will be recreational facilities and retail outlets.

“All together, if fully developed, these (hotels) will have 600 rooms... At its full occupancy, we will have more than 1,500 tourists on this island alone,” Ho said.

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Filipinos aboard ship spread love of reading

by CARLA GOMEZ Inquirer.net

BACOLOD CITY – Bringing the love of God to many different countries and serving others.

That, according to Jaime Chua, is the joy of being a volunteer on board the MV Doulos, the world’s largest floating bookstore whose mission is to bring knowledge, help and hope to nations. The vessel docked for two weeks at the Breco Port 3 in Bacolod City and left on March 3.

Chua, who hails from the village of Bakyas in Bacolod’s Mansilingan area, is one of 330 crewmembers from 50 countries of the Doulos. He had worked at the Pohang Badminton Center and was badminton coach of Bacolod’s Trinity Christian School before he joined the crew last year.

Fourteen Filipinos are on board the

ship, with Chua being the lone volunteer from Negros Occidental.

The Doulos’ last visit to Bacolod was in December 2006. It has been to 100 countries in the last 30 years, according to Marli Santos-Tirelli, its media relations officer.

It has half a million books in its hold, Tirelli said. These include 6,000 English titles covering a wide range of subjects from education, science, sports, hobbies, cookery, the arts, management, Christian living and children’s books, music CDs and gift items, which are sold cheaper than those in regular bookstores.

‘Younger’ than Titanic

Built in 1914, the 6,818-ton Doulos is two years younger than the Titanic and

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Kenney: Filipino vets to get US lump sum soon

by VERONICA UY Inquirer.net

MANILA — Filipino World War II veterans qualified to receive a payout from the United States will start getting their checks in late April or early May, US ambassador Kristie Kenney said Wednesday.

“We’re hoping that the first batches that we’ve gotten by the end of April, early May. But this is a rolling process; some people applied [on] Day 1, there are probably people applying today,” she told reporters after the launch of the Kraft-Save The Children partnership.

The \$197-million payout for the veterans was part of a US \$787-million stimulus package that became a law last February. Veterans living in the US will get \$15,000, those in the Philippines, \$9,000. The ambassador said that as of March 24, the US embassy has received

about 23,000 claims. She said the claims are already being processed.

“Everyone who files for claims will get a written response, letting them know their claim was either accepted or not, depending on the different criteria. No one needs to wonder. We hope by the end of April to send those letters out for applications we’ve already received,” she said. Kenney reminded other veterans who have yet to apply for the payout that they have until February 16, 2010 to do so.

She also said that, in case the veteran dies between the time he applied and the time his claim is approved, his family will get the benefit. Veterans may visit, call in, or e-mail their queries to the US embassy. “Application is absolutely free,” she said.

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