

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Filipina Red Cross worker freed

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Governor Nuranna Sahidulla, who went near Paligui after having been told by Congressman Yusop Jikiri to go there. "She was released) somewhere near the Barangay of Paligui, it's a fishing village just adjacent to Barangay Kuppong, and Vice Governor Nuranna Sahidulla was already notified by Sulu Congressman Yusop Jikiri to secure her from the area," the source said. Sahidulla, he said, was escorted by Brigadier General Eugene Clemen, commander of the 3rd Marine Brigade. The informant said the Abu Sayyaf group that handed her over

was led by Abdul Gafur who could not be contacted despite repeated attempts. "The governor (Sakur Tan) has no knowledge about all these things here, in fact he was surprised about the report," the source added. "She's fine and she is undergoing medical treatment," Serapio said without elaborating. Serapio said that Lacaba would immediately be brought to this city "first thing early in the morning tomorrow (Friday)." But a source from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said they wanted to get hold of her as soon as they could. "And we are not going to allow any agencies from the Philippine government to conduct the debriefing, it's a policy of the ICRC that the debriefing will be done by the ICRC," the source said. The ICRC informant said Lacaba was expected to be flown out of the country soon.

Cedric Piralla, ICRC head of delegation in Davao City, where Lacaba came from, said they could only confirm her release if they saw her.

"I am sorry but I cannot confirm or deny if Mary Jean is free, we need to see her in person," Piralla said.

As of posting time, Lacaba is undergoing check up and debriefing at the marine camp, said assistant secretary for public affairs Brian Yamsuan of the Department of Interior and Local Government in a phone interview with INQUIRER.net. Yamsuan said they have yet to contact the kidnappers again on whether Vagni and Notter would be released soon.

Clemen, officer-in-charge of the Joint Task Force Comet, in a separate interview with INQUIRER.net said that Lacaba was now at the hospital of the 3rd Marine Brigade in Sulu.

Fadzlor Raman, spokesman of the Task Force ICRC crisis committee, said that Lacaba was in good and healthy condition.

It has been 78 days since the three Red Cross workers have been held captive by the Abu Sayyaf in the province of Sulu.

Task Force ICRC, headed by Sulu Governor Tan, was the multi-agency team that has been negotiating for the release of the hostages who were seized January 15. ■

11 Filipino veterans now dead

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little and wink to show signs that he was conversing," Filomena said.

Records from PVAO Cordillera showed that the following war veterans have since died after filing their claims: Leon Wacay, Balosdan Alcido, Gabriel Fabian, Francisco Agmalew, Maximo Lagiman, Ponciano Lawaguey, Martin Liampo and Perez Dinangwatan, all of Benguet; Mauro Bambico and Andres, of Baguio City; and Emilio Nacatab of Tadian, Mountain Province.

Marilyn Ngayodan, PVAO Cordillera chief, said only the surviving spouses of these veterans could claim the money.

Ngayodan said the benefit would not be given to the veterans' children because the law specifies that only the surviving spouses could claim it on behalf of the veterans.

She said it is important that the veterans personally file their claims.

PVAO, she said, is accepting applications until Feb. 16 next year.

"Their families deserve [to receive the benefit] because their fathers fought and served [during World War III. I feel very bad that they will not be receiving

the benefit. they should be compensated. [They should not] lose hope," Filomena said.

Ngayodan said the city government would recognize more than 300 war veterans on April 27 for their contribution to the liberation of Baguio from Japanese soldiers in 1945.

Benedicto Alhambra, city tourism officer, said the surviving veterans and the widows of Filipino soldiers who fought during the war would be given medals.

As a military nurse, Andre looked after the wounded and sick soldiers, she said.

"They had nothing to eat when they were in the mountains. They would run and hide to avoid the Japanese soldiers," she said.

When Andres retired as chief nurse in the Antamok mines in 1983, he worked as an insurance agent until last year when his health deteriorated.

Andres and Filomena have two children—Therese Sumbillo, a doctor, and Joey Andres, a nurse at the US Navy.

"[Andres experienced] memory lapses last year. He would talk about the past, not the present. [He would talk about] his childhood memories of his hometown in Antique and his memories of the war," Filomena said. ■

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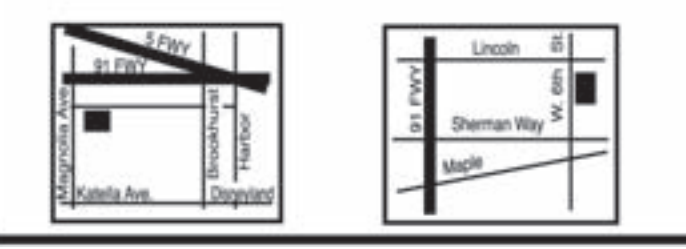


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Language discrimination bill approved by Senate Committee

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thored by Senator Leland Yee (D-San Francisco/San Mateo) to add the use of any language to the list of protections under the Unruh Civil Rights Act.

The issue stems from a proposed policy announced last summer by the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) to suspend players who do not speak English. The LPGA later rescinded the proposal after objections from Senator Yee and over 50 civil rights organizations.

"No one should be discriminated against simply for speaking their language," said Yee. "SB 242 will rightfully add lan-

guage to the list of protected classes within California's civil rights act."

In September of 2008, Senator Yee led an effort to oppose a discriminatory policy by the LPGA which would have required players on Tour to be proficient in English starting this year. Despite there being no relevance to the sport, the LPGA claimed that it was important for players to be able to interact with American media and event sponsors. Ironically, many of the sponsors are international companies and a number of the tournaments are not held in the United States. No other professional sports league in the United States has

such a mandate.

"It is quite disheartening that in the 21st century any organization would think such a policy is acceptable," said Yee. "With the passage of SB 242 such discriminatory mandates will not only be unfair, but illegal."

Under SB 242, it would be a violation of state law for an entity to adopt or enforce a policy that limits or prohibits the use of any language in a business establishment, unless the language restriction is justified by a business necessity and notification has been provided of the circumstances at the time when the language restriction

is required and of the consequences.

A business necessity would be defined as "an overriding legitimate business purpose for which all of the following are true: the language restriction is necessary to the safe and efficient operation of the business; the language restriction effectively fulfills the business purpose it is supposed to serve; and an alternative practice to the language restriction that would accomplish the business purpose equally well with a lesser discriminatory impact does not exist."

SB 242 will now be considered by the entire Senate. (AP)

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