

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

# Puno moral force movement in place

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launch of its own moral force movement, said the Philippines has become a "moral pariah" in the community of nations because of widespread corruption.

Puno said that the country was a "social volcano about to explode."

"We would like to choose and have elected transformational leaders from the highest post to the lowest post being contested in the forthcoming 2010 elections and the moral force movement would also like to unite all similarly minded organizations,"

Marquez said.

He said that the core group in its two meetings was briefed by Jesuit experts and has decided to focus on defining leaders that would bring about transformation in the country.

"It will not be endorsing any specific candidate. It will only give the qualities of the candidates that we need to be elected," Marquez said.

He said that a technical working group of volunteers has been formed to assist the movement.

"The core group will again meet after Holy Week. In between meetings, a lot of assignments are being given to the technical working group," Marquez said.

**Advocacy vs corruption**

Marquez said the movement is Puno's personal advocacy against corruption. "This is a personal call, a personal crusade of the Chief Justice. It does not involve the court in whatever manner," he said.

"The judiciary is as much as possible being shielded from this," he said. Once the movement is in full operation, Marquez said Puno plans to step aside.

He said the group would have its launch sometime in May, a year before the 2010 elections.

"We don't want it to be identified with the administration nor do we want any of the members identified with the opposition or supportive of either group," Marquez said.

"So it was really not very easy to get a respected member of the business community who is not allied one way or the other," he said.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita welcomed the movement.

"That serves as a wake-up call for many, especially those serving in government. That's how we should look at it. We can't say we're all clean," he told reporters at the Mt. Samat Shrine in Bataan province.

Ermita, however, said that rooting out corruption was part of the program of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who has ruled for more than eight years since January 2001.

"All leaders of countries would like to rule under a program of morality," he said.

Ermita also said that it wasn't surprising that Puno made such a call, pointing out that having rose through the ranks of the judiciary he was "aware of the causes of anomalies."

**Touchy issue**

"Chief Justice Puno knows what to do, and knows why our morality has dipped because of the crimes he has witnessed," he said.

Corruption has been a touchy issue to the Arroyo administration, which has been rocked by a string of scandals since 2001. ■

# Filipina migrant among dead in NY massacre

**B**INGHAMTON, New York—Their pursuit of the American dream collided with the nightmare of a mass killing.

In an all-American city that had seen better days, they were true strangers from lands as far apart as the Philippines and the former Soviet republics.

The American Civic Association was the place they turned to for help navigating their journey. But their bridge to a better life is now a monument of immigrant sorrow, the site of the April 3rd shooting rampage that killed 14 people—among them Dolores Carbonilas Yigal, from Cebu province, who had been living in the United States for two years.

The dead included the gunman himself, Vietnamese immigrant Jiverly Wong, 41, who killed himself on hearing the approach of police sirens, officials said.

The center is a stepping stone

for recent arrivals, many of them with poor or nonexistent English-speaking skills.

Yigal was learning English there as she dreamed of getting a job working with children, her American husband Omri Yigal said.

"She wanted to learn English so she could find work," he said.

Police arrived at the Yigals' house on Saturday night to tell him his wife was among the dead.

"They said she probably went quickly so she didn't suffer, I pray," Omri said in a shaky voice.

**DFA condoles**

Ed Malaya, spokesperson of the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs, said the Philippine Consulate General had sent an official to Binghamton to provide assistance to the Yigal family.

Binghamton has always

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# Confidence on RP economy remains

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rates of economic expansion in a slowly growing world economy to the extent they are able to extract more growth from domestic demand, boost competitiveness, penetrate new markets, and further improve the attractiveness of the region as a key destination for foreign investment."

It added: "Convergence to developed countries will depend

to an ever greater degree on the ability of firms to move closer to the technological frontier and be driven more by innovation than imitation. Innovative firms need different public institutions and policies, including more openness, less government intervention, enhanced flexibility, a more educated labor force, and better developed and properly regulated private finance." (PNA)

# 'Moral Force' should work for judicial reform

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"That's within the effort of the judiciary to really see to it that everything is in order," Defensor said in a phone interview.

He also said he didn't think people would argue against the need for a moral force.

Valenzuela Rep. Magtanggol Gunigundo, a lawyer, said the Moral Force Movement should address corruption wherever it may be found, including the

judiciary, so that it would not be misconstrued as being used simply for politicking.

Zambales Rep. Ma. Milagros Magsaysay also called on the chief Justice to clean his own backyard first, which is within his mandate and control, even as she agreed on the need for a moral force movement.

The other day, the members of the Moral Force Movement's

Core Group were identified. They are Henrietta De Villa, chair of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting; Msgr. Gerardo Santos, executive secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines Episcopal Commission; Methodist Bishop Emerito Nacpil; Retired Brig. Gen. Jaime Echeverria, president of the Association

of Generals and Flag Officers; former Finance Undersecretary Milwida Guevarra; Far Eastern University law dean Andres Bautista; Ten Outstanding Students of the Philippines 2008 awardee Noorain Sabdulla; and Inquirer chair Marixi Prieto.

The formation of the movement came amid reports that Puno was being convinced to run for President. The Chief Justice has turned down the idea, saying his grandchildren have advised him against it. ■

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