

# Taxis to issue receipts next month

THE Land cover around 33,000 taxi cabs in Metro Manila and key cities across the country. LTFRB chief Alberto Suansing said operators of taxis with plate numbers ending in 1 and 6 will have to present their meter,

approved by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), before they can renew the registration of the vehicles.

He said the taxi meter scheme, initially scheduled last January, is expected to

cover all taxis by yearend.

Suansing said the meter receipt scheme will address the problem of overcharging and "contracting," as receipts will carry the name and license plate of the taxi.

Taxi operators earlier questioned the meter receipt scheme before the Court of Appeals, which dismissed the petition. The case was elevated to the Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of the

government's new regulation. The new scheme will be imposed on taxis when their operators renew their vehicle registration or application for a certificate of public conveyance (CPC). (Philstar.com)

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**Crispin Caday Lozano, Esq.**  
Graduated Juris Doctor from Western State University in Fullerton, CA. He is a CPA, and a BBA Cum Laude and an active member of the State Bar of California. All legal services are performed under the supervision of an active member of the State Bar of California.

## Senate will be impartial in ethics complaint vs Villar—Enrile

by CHRISTINA MENDEZ  
Philstar.com

SENATE President Juan Ponce Enrile said the chamber would exercise fairness and impartiality in tackling the ethics complaint against Sen. Manuel Villar Jr.

"It is our duty to preserve the institutional credibility of this august chamber and to show to the people who elected us into office that we will not shirk from the responsibility, no matter how painful it is, to call on any of our peers to account for his or her own acts when such is questioned on ethical grounds," Enrile said in his opening state-

ment during the first hearing on the case by the Senate Committee of the Whole.

The case stemmed from alleged double-entry in the appropriation of budgets for road projects in areas near real estate properties associated with Villar.

Enrile clarified that the proceedings last May 4 were "adjudicatory in nature" and that a formal preliminary investigation is set on Thursday, May 7. It was Sen. Jamby Madrigal who filed the ethics complaint.

"In the preliminary inquiry, we will see whether there is basis to continue with the hearing," Enrile said.

At this point, Enrile said the presence of Villar is not yet necessary, explaining that Villar's trip abroad had prior approval from the Senate leadership.

Enrile pointed out that it is the senators' duty "to give our colleague the full opportunity to defend himself and clear his name and his integrity of any cloud of doubt resulting from the charges against him."

Villar is in Spain until May 10 to meet with Filipinos in Barcelona and Bilbao, according to a letter his office sent to the Senate President.

Under the rules of the Ethics committee which were adopted by the Committee of the Whole, Enrile said a respondent should be given an opportunity to seek the dismissal of the case against him or raise questions on jurisdiction.

Sen. Joker Arroyo said there is a need to "disabuse the minds that (the rules) were not tailor-made for Sen. Villar."

"Senator Manny Villar will visit and meet with the Filipino communities... to acquaint himself with their socio-economic conditions and listen to their concerns, especially those of our OFW (overseas Filipino worker) *kababayans* (countrymen)," said Caroline Cadelina, Villar's chief of staff.



Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile

Cadelina said the trip was at no cost to the Senate and that the senator has sought permission as early as March 24, even before the ethics issue heated up.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Sen. Alan Cayetano raised issues regarding the rules and sought some amendments, particularly on Section 16 and 17 which dealt with the processing of sworn and verified complaints.

At one point, Pimentel and Sen. Panfilo Lacson even traded barbs, with Pimentel saying that the Senate hearing is not like a police investigation. Lacson also hit Cayetano and Pimentel for interchangeably "lawyering" for Villar.

Earlier, Cayetano and Pimentel also accused lawyer Johnmuel Mendoza, legal counsel of the Ethics committee, of showing bias for Lacson. Lacson said Mendoza was a consultant at the Senate Electoral Tribunal (SET) but vouched for his integrity.

Lacson relied on Mendoza when the Ethics committee, which he chaired, amended the rules on the ethics proceedings. The minority group questioned the order, which Mendoza circulated on April 14, or a day ahead of the official hearing of the Ethics committee.

Cayetano noted what he described as "a continuing objection" to the composition of the Committee of the Whole. ■

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## 100,000 jobs await OFWs

by CHRISTINA MENDEZ  
Philstar.com

AT least 100,000 more jobs in Guam, Saudi Arabia and Qatar await Filipino workers.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) reported that the government is currently negotiating agreements for the hiring of more Filipino workers abroad.

POEA chief Jennifer Manalili said the government is looking at 15,000 to 20,000 jobs for highly skilled Filipino workers in Guam.

Manalili said Guam will be requiring massive manpower with the impending construction of camps and other buildings to house American military officers who will be relocating in the area in 2010.

She said Guam would initially be needing construction workers and eventually service workers after the completion of the construction projects.

Manalili said during a recent marketing mission in Guam, employers expressed preference to hire Filipino workers.

Labor Secretary Mariano Roque also reported that Saudi Arabia is set to embark on massive construction projects that will generate about 60,000 jobs for Filipinos.

Roque also noted that Qatar agreed to provide 20,000 additional working visas for Filipino workers.

"Qatar initially pledged to allocate 120,000 visas, but they agreed to provide another

20,000 for us," Roque said in an interview.

According to Roque, a group of employers from Singapore and France are also coming to Manila to look at the possibility of hiring Filipino workers.

"There are so many overseas jobs available for Filipino workers, the challenge now is for us to generate the qualified workers to fill those demands," Roque pointed out.

The recruitment industry, however, doubted that the country would be able to capture the biggest share of manpower requirement in Guam.

Recruitment leaders said jobs will remain elusive for Filipinos in Guam if the government fails to resolve issues on hiring of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

They said the standard employment contract of POEA runs contrary to Guam labor laws, which require workers to pay for their food and accommodation expenses.

Also under Guam laws, all workers have to pay 28 percent tax on earnings which our OFWs may find oppressive.

Filipino OFWs also face competition for the Guam jobs with Chinese sub-contractors who will pay their workers only \$500 as against the \$1,500 salary for an ordinary laborer from the Philippines.

Recruiters said the POEA should not mislead the public that the jobs available in Guam are exclusive for Filipinos. ■