

Exit fee at airports dropped for Filipinos

THE Bureau of Immigration officers at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport and other ports have been ordered to stop collecting a P1,200 exit fee from departing Filipino passengers who hold foreign passports.

Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan said he issued the directive on April 17 following complaints from Filipino travelers who were made to pay the exit fee after they presented their foreign passports to immigration counters at the NAIA.

"It is not right to collect exit fees from these passengers who, even if they are holders of foreign passports, are actually Filipinos entitled to all the rights and privileges of a Philippine citizen," Libanan said.

In his order, Libanan also directed immigration officers "not to collect exit fees from departing passengers who are holders of BI-issued identification certificates even if they are using foreign passports."

An identification certificate is issued by the BI to a foreigner who has been granted dual citizenship under Republic Act No. 9225 or whose petition for recognition as a Philippine citizen has been approved by the BI and affirmed by the Department of Justice. (*Inquirer.net*)

Such travelers, Libanan said, were either former natural-born Filipinos who reacquired their Philippine citizenship under the dual citizenship act or foreigners who were recognized as Filipinos under the 1935 and 1987 Constitutions.

Press freedom in RP not deteriorating, says Palace

by PAOLO ROMERO
Philstar.com

MALACANANG disputed last May 3 the report of the US-based Freedom House on the deteriorating press freedom in the Philippines.

Speaking over government-run dzRB, Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said the Freedom House report "has no basis."

Remonde said at the rate Pres. Arroyo and the administration are being criticized every day, this was the best proof that the country is enjoying press freedom.

Many newspapers and TV and radio stations here are privately owned, compared with other countries where media are controlled by the government, he added.

The Freedom House reported that a number of emerging democracies, including the Philippines have suffered considerable decline in press freedom over the last five years.

"The journalism profession today is up against the ropes and fighting to stay alive," said Freedom House executive director Jennifer Windsor.

Over the last five years a number of emerging democracies have suffered considerable declines in press freedom including the Philippines, Thailand, Mexico, Argentina, Peru and Senegal,

according to Freedom House. In the 2009 report released on Friday, not one of the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations was deemed to have a free press.

Three—the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand—were rated partly free while the rest—Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar—were rated not free, the statement added.

World Press Freedom Day

Various media organizations observed World Press Freedom Day last May 2. Members of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), the Malacañang Press Corps (MPC), the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, and the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) laid wreaths at the shrine of hero and journalist Marcelo H. del Pilar in Bulacan.

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June 5, 2009	June 20 - June 25, 2009
June 12, 2009	June 27 - July 2, 2009
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