

# Software firm imports Filipino consultants

THE Philippines is becoming a rich source of expertise in the highly specialized area of the business intelligence. Business intelligence, or referred to as BI, refers to software-based solutions that rely on analytics that help companies analyze customer data, for example, and create revenue streams. North Carolina-based SAS has been an acknowledged pioneer in BI. In the Philippines, SAS has grown its employee base from 20 people in 2003 to more than 140 last year.

Employees take on the role of BI consultants deployed abroad to work with SAS customers. Recognizing the rich amount of talent from the Philippines, SAS formed a "Center of Excellence" in the country to train and create a sustainable pool of BI consultants. "Our consultants mostly support customers in Southeast Asian countries and as far as Pakistan, Australia and Germany," said SAS Philippines managing director Sonny Halili in an interview with Inquirer.net. These consultants normally

get deployed to work with companies installing SAS for the first time, an indication of confidence in the skills of Filipino IT professionals. Last year, SAS Philippines named the top subsidiary among the company's local units in Asia Pacific. It is the fourth time the Philippine subsidiary earned this recognition which, according to Halili himself, is based partly in revenue and ability to retain customers. Revenue-wise, services play a significant role since those derived from projects abroad go to SAS Philippines. (Inquirer.net)

# PAL drops fares for off-season int'l travel

PHILIPPINE Airlines is courting off-season international travelers with a new round of low fares on 20 international and regional routes. The flag carrier announced Saturday its new promo dubbed *Way to Go* would be available on June 1-5. During this time, PAL will offer all-in, round-trip, economy fares (exclusive of government taxes) starting at \$98 (roughly P4,700). Customers may buy promo tickets for the travel period Sept. 1 to Dec. 25, 2009, for five trans-Pacific destinations (San Francisco, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Honolulu and Vancouver), and July 1 to Nov. 30, 2009, for 12 regional destinations,



including Australia. Customers may avail themselves of the promo through PAL's website (philippineairlines.com), at any PAL ticket office or accredited travel agent. Tickets must be purchased within 24 hours after getting confirmed booking, but not later than June 5, 2009. (Inquirer.net)

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# Baguio puts up centennial trust fund for 2109

by VINCENT CABREZA  
Inquirer.net

BAGUIO CITY—The country's summer capital marked on May 24 its 100-day countdown to September 1, when it celebrates its centennial as the only Philippine city to be designed and built by the American colonial government. The countdown was delivered with less pomp than usual, beginning with the opening of a souvenir shop and ending with the lighting ceremony of a "Centennial Bouquet," an art installation by artist Pyx Picart which en-

closed a concrete pine tree on Session Road. Behind the ceremony, however, the event was highlighted by a trust fund created and dedicated to Baguio residents of the year 2109. The Baguio Centennial Commission opened the trust account with banker Avmir Panganiban, the Baguio-based vice president of Metrobank, hoping to store enough resources that can be tapped by future residents. The commission was financed by no more than P15 million by the city government

and has labored to draw donations and commercial support with little success. The Centennial Fund has a trust agreement that could not be broken for 100 years, said Virgilio Bautista, centennial commission chairman. A brochure describes the fund as "the accumulated donations or contributions of any natural person who wishes to be remembered until the second centennial celebration of Baguio City and whose legacy will be continued to the future generations of heirs." The commission said it would seal the names of the donors inside a time capsule, which would be opened only on Baguio's bicentennial celebration. Donors are obliged to donate only up to P2,000. Half of the money will be held in trust, while the rest would be used to complete the centennial projects lined up this year. The commission said the trust fund would be turned over to the city government with the understanding that it would go to programs benefiting the summer capital based on plans developed by this generation of "Baguio lovers." Retired city architect Joseph Alabanza, a centennial commission member, has been pushing the creation of a think tank to draw up a definitive plan for a future Baguio. Alabanza and several members of the centennial commission have been candid about their frustrations regarding the state of the city. A year ago, the commission hoped to use the centennial to draw together experts and civic groups and draft a working program for conserving Baguio relics and historical artifacts, write a correct history of the summer capital, and enforce a new urban development plan for Baguio. Former Councilor Edilberto Tenebrancia, who is also a centennial commission member, said the city council also adopted a resolution endorsing designs created by graduate students of the Saint Louis University which illustrate a well-managed downtown Baguio. But problems continued to pile up in the city. Garbage remains uncollected and the 101-year-old public market could not be modernized because of a 12-year-old suit. Traffic woes, population boom, and garbage collection was already foreseen after the city was devastated during the July 1990 earthquake, said Alabanza. ■

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# Villar snubs ethics probe

by CHRISTINA MENDEZ  
Philstar.com

EMBATTLED Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. remained unfazed even as he skipped the resumption of the proceedings of the Committee of the Whole and instead opted to air his side on the accusations of Sen. Jamby Madrigal outside the plenary. Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile, however, assured Villar that his substantial rights will be respected and that he or his counsel, and even "all the other petitioners in the case now pending before the Supreme Court (SC), are free and welcome at any time during the entire proceeding to join and participate in the adjudicatory hearing." The Senate scrutinized the pieces of evidence filed by Madrigal against Villar on the first day of the ethics trial. Madrigal discussed with the majority senators how Villar's corporations supposedly benefited in the millions from the road right of way acquisition along two key areas at the C-5 Road extension project. Enrile earlier declared that the Senate is proceeding with the first day of trial with due respect to the SC where a petition for certiorari with request for temporary restraining order (TRO) is pending. Enrile vowed that the Senate will comply with the SC's order for the Senate majority to respond until 9 a.m. today on the petition filed by the minority questioning the fairness of the rules of the Senate committee of the whole and the apparent abuse of discretion by its chairman. "The Senate is simply relying on our time-honored constitutional principle that the three branches of government are separate, co-equal and coordinate. One is not above or under any other," the Senate chief said. Madrigal used a slide show to illustrate that Villar, with two other business corporations—Amvel owned by El Shaddai's Mariano "Mike" Velarde and the SM Properties Inc.—pushed for the realignment of the road construction project in 1998. Madrigal also cited several documents showing how an original plan to construct the Manila-Cavite toll expressway was scrapped in favor of the new C-5 Road project. The Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) project was part of a toll operation agreement dated July 20, 1996 between the government, through the Public Estates Authority (PEA), and private Malaysian company UEM Mara. Madrigal told the committee that 16 of the 39 lots acquired by the government for road right of way belong to the corporations owned by Sen. Villar and his wife, Las Piñas Rep. Cynthia Villar, which were the Adelfa Properties Inc. and Golden Haven Memorial Park Inc. Sen. Villar owns 52 percent of Adelfa Properties Inc. while his wife owns 48 percent, said Madrigal, according to the Articles of Incorporation presented by the couple to the Securities and Exchange Commission. The 35-hectare Golden Haven Property is registered under the ownership of Adelfa Properties. Madrigal also questioned why the government paid the Villar-owned firms for three of the 16 lots when these have already been foreclosed by the Central Bank. Villar's counsel, Nalen Galang, said Madrigal's claims about the foreclosed properties were misleading. She explained that about P10.7 million paid by the Department of Public Works and Highway (DPWH) for the properties were already forwarded to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). At the time of the government acquisition, Galang explained that the land titles of the three lots involving about 4,000 square meters in total were indeed foreclosed, but they were not yet registered under the BSP. At one point during the hearing, Enrile asked Madrigal if she has authenticated the signatures in the toll agreement between then DPWH Secretary Gregorio Vigilar and officials of a Malaysian firm. ■

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