

'Witnesses in Marcos ill-gotten wealth cases distrust OSG'

by RAINIER ALLAN RONDA
Philstar.com

MANILA—State and other potential witnesses are reportedly losing interest in helping recover the Marcos ill-gotten wealth due to the failure of Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) lawyers to show enthusiasm or trustworthiness in litigating cases.

Sources at the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) said a serious cause for concern among them and PCGG insiders is that defense lawyers of the Marcoses and their cronies have started calling for OSG lawyers to be the lead counsels for the PCGG in the wealth recovery cases.

"They prefer OSG lawyers to be the lead counsels of PCGG in the recovery cases, which is very mysterious for some of us," sources said.

Earlier, PCGG chairman Camilo Sabio had said the commission was bound to retain the OSG as lead counsel in the ill-gotten wealth recovery cases.

He said the PCGG was mandated to keep OSG lawyers as their lead counsel despite some problems in their performance in past cases, especially those dismissed by courts.

Sabio issued the statement when asked if his office would seek a change in legal representation, especially in graft complaints filed by the PCGG against businessman Eduardo Cojuangco Jr., the late President Ferdinand Marcos, his wife Imelda Marcos, and six others.

Their case involves the alleged diversion of some P840 million in coconut levy funds from a controversial coconut plantation development project in Bugsuk Island, Palawan in the 1980s.

The government stands to lose over P13 billion they are seeking from Cojuangco and the Marcoses if they lose the case.

The Sandiganbayan First Division ordered the case removed from its docket last Nov. 14

because of the PCGG's alleged failure to pursue the case.

The case's removal was reportedly brought about by the failure of the OSG lawyers to show up in pre-trial meetings.

While it ordered Civil Case No. 0033-C or the Bugsuk Island project removed from their docket, the first division had left open an option for the government to re-file the complaint when it was ready to pursue it again.

At the time of resolution, the anti-graft court division noted that there has not been a single hearing on the case since the original complaint was filed in July 1987.

"Considering that nothing had been done by the parties to pursue this case notwithstanding the lapse of more than eight years, the court deems the parties to have abandoned this case and hereby dismisses this sub-divided complaint, without prejudice to the re-filing thereof," they said. ■

Cory back in hospital

by JOANNE RAE RAMIREZ
Philstar.com

MANILA—Barely two months after undergoing laparoscopic surgery to excise a cancerous tumor from her colon, former President Corazon Aquino is back in hospital.

A close family friend who asked not to be named because he was not authorized to speak on Mrs. Aquino's health condition said the former president was hospitalized due to loss of appetite.

He asked for prayers for her swift recovery, as Mrs. Aquino has always attributed her resiliency to the power of prayer.

The former president, 76, was diagnosed with colon cancer in March last year.

After undergoing chemotherapy, she underwent a two-and-a-half-hour long laparoscopic surgery last May performed by a team headed by Paris-trained Dr. Catherine Peh and her mentor, Frenchman Joel Leroy at the Makati Medical Center in Makati City.

"The surgery was a success. They were able to take out the cancer-affected area entirely," Kris Aquino, the former president's youngest daughter, told *The Star* in a telephone interview after the surgery. Kris Aquino recently said on television that the surgery was followed by radiation therapy.

Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, told *The Star* last May that his mother had at times felt she has led a full life and was "ready to go."

"But she promised all of us she will do everything to get well," Aquino III said.

"She was aware of her options and could have just opted for palliatives for a better quality of life. (But) she is a fighter," added the senator. ■

Government agency spends P14 million for Bible study

by RAINIER ALLAN RONDA
Philstar.com



nesto Sacro who, like the CAAP chief, is a retired military general or a Philippine Navy commodore.

So-called "organic" CAAP employees, or those that have been absorbed from its forerunner, the Air Transportation Office (ATO), characterized the SAVE program

as a highly suspicious and unnecessary undertaking that uses up much of the agency's funds and even diverts its focus as it tries to regain a Category I status with the United States' Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) that it lost in December 2007.

"We should be focusing our resources and our energies towards satisfying the US FAA requirements so that we can regain

Category I status which is the main reason why the CAAP was created," a source said. ■

MANILA—The newly created Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) is currently spending more than P14 million for a "values education" and "purpose driven life" seminar for all its employees.

Employees of the CAAP, who requested anonymity, said that retired Philippine Air Force (PAF) general Ruben Ciron, CAAP director general, has allotted a budget of P14,819,080 for a supposed "Spiritual Advancement Values Education" (SAVE) program that started in September 2008.

The program reportedly entails an employee attending "multi-level" 25-hour values education and "purpose-driven life" seminars supervised by Ciron's consultant, Bishop Er-

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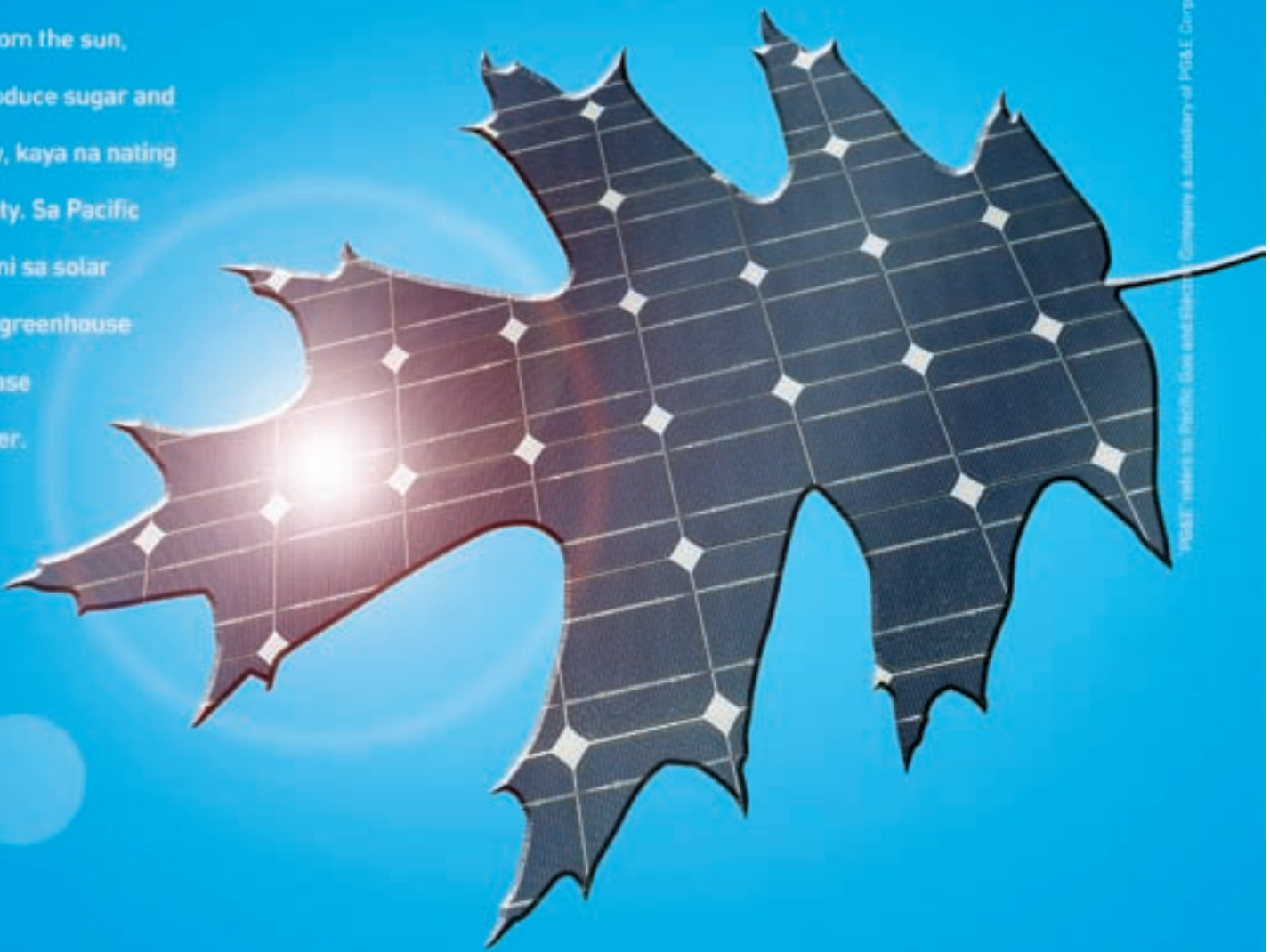
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