

CALLS MOUNT FOR DEATH PENALTY REVIVAL TO STOP CORRUPTION

High Court asks PBBM, Sotto, Romualdez to answer petition
By ALFRED GABOT, Editor in Chief

MANILA – As people’s anger soars over what they perceive as slow progress in the multi-billion-peso flood control projects scandal investigations, various sectors are mounting more protest rallies nationwide as calls for the reimposition of the death penalty, particularly for plunder, have mounted. ▶Page 9

California celebrates Larry Itliong Day

By Cesar Antonio Nucum Jr.



Larry Itliong

SAN FRANCISCO -- As part of tradition, California is celebrating Larry Itliong Day to coincide with the 112th birthday of the Filipino American pioneer labor leader on October 25. Governor Gavin Newsom led the commemoration when he issued a proclamation in 2024 declaring October 25, as “Larry Itliong Day” in the State of California. The Newsom proclamation was preceded ▶Page 7



UNIFIED RFID. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. greets business leaders Manny Pangilinan of Metro Pacific and Ramon Ang of San Miguel during the launching of the unified RFID for Luzon expressways which their firms operate. (Story on page 13)

Filipinos unhappy with Marcos’ handling of corruption, inflation

By Beting Laygo Dolor, Editor

MANILA – It may not have reached boiling point yet, but a growing number of Filipinos are growing more and more restless with the Marcos regime. Specifically, Filipinos are now most concerned over corruption and the rising prices of basic goods and services, according to a recent survey conducted by Octa Research. Results of the survey were released at the start of this week, and it revealed that concern over corruption rose from 13 percent in July to 31 percent in September. ▶Page 9

Unfit for trial? ICC orders medical examination of Duterte

THE HAGUE - The International Criminal Court has ordered a medical examination of former President Rodrigo Duterte to determine his fitness to participate in pre-trial proceedings, including the confirmation of charges. Earlier, the ICC denied Duterte’s petition for interim release and ▶Page 9

PHL embassy: No US drive vs dual citizens

By Claire Morales True and Cesar Antonio Nucum Jr.

WASHINGTON D.C. -- The Philippine Embassy in Washington DC has clarified the United States government has not changed its policy on dual citizenship and assured that Filipinos who have been naturalized as US citizens could stick to their dual citizenship. The embassy made the clarification as it warned the public against a viral video claiming that the US government launched in October a crackdown on dual citizens. “This is not true,” the embassy said in a statement, adding that the US government “has ▶Page 9

ALLICE tackles domestic abuse at 2 City Council meetings

Part 2 & Conclusion



Education is the first step to empowering people living with abuse, ALLICE clinical director Dr. Jei Africa says in presentation at the Oct. 13 Daly City Council meeting. Photo by LYDIA POMPOSO

DALY CITY, Calif. - ALLICE traces its roots to Daly City, where the all-volunteer team reorganized themselves in 2009 after becoming an independent nonprofit. Their name, an acronym for Alliance for Community Empowerment, honors Alice Peña Bulos, a pioneer community leader who became a Kumare and honorary chair in 2005. “We must do our best to reach out and empower the community,” was the former UST sociology professor’s re-▶Page 10

Only 22 classrooms built in 2025, people alarmed P6

Cebu quake toll rises to 79, Davao Oriental to 10 P6

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Team Asia with Pinoy cue artists retain Reyes Cup title
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Romualdez points to Escudero as scam mastermind

It was not exactly unexpected.

The Philippines' former House Speaker pointed at the former Senate president as the mastermind behind the multi-billion peso public works scandal that has become the biggest crisis to face the Marcos regime.

Both Martin Romualdez and Chiz Escudero have been invited by the Independent Commission on Infrastructure (ICI) to shed light on their alleged role in the budget insertions, which is seen as the primary source of funds for substandard and/or non-existent public works projects.

Offhand, Escudero appears to be the guiltier party. This is not to say that Romualdez's hands are clean. His former top lieutenant at the House, now resigned congressman Zaldy Co, has been tagged by witnesses as having received the biggest kickbacks totalling hundreds of billions.

The fact that Co conveniently left the country, then declared he was undergoing medical treatment in the US, after which he was seen traipsing all over Spain, ending with his resigning his post is strongly indicative of his guilt.

Romualdez, meanwhile, appears to have played it smart. There is no paper trail to show that he did indeed receive the massive sums of cash that witnesses attested to in the Senate Blue Ribbon committee hearings on the matter.

Not so with Escudero. There is more than enough proof that he had a hand in the billions of pesos inserted in the national budget.

While serving as Senate president, Escudero assigned himself to be part of the 2025 Budget bicameral committee tasked with fine tuning the national budget.

As one analyst put it, never in history has the incumbent Senate President or House Speaker been part of the bicam.

Why Escudero took the unusual step becomes clear following the testimony of former senator Grace Poe that she had been eased out of the bicam by the Senate president.

Escudero was then seen on CCTV visiting the House of Representatives on Nov. 30, a holiday. He had no rational explanation for the questionable step.

Indeed, the finger of guilt points directly at now ex-Senate president Escudero, who had earlier admitted receiving a huge sum from a contractor for his Senate campaign back in 2022. This alone was illegal, and his lame excuses have fallen flat.

After all his hijinks, Escudero asked: Why just me?

Everyone was taking part in taking advantage of the budget insertions to sponsor projects, he claimed.

Such statements make him look guilty as sin.

Which is not to say that Romualdez is innocent as the driven snow.

He was Speaker when the scandal erupted, and must shoulder much of the responsibility of his congressmen/women looking for their share of the over-bloated budget to earn a few millions from their pet projects.

Word on the street is that Romualdez will seek to tag Zaldy Co as really a Duterte minion, not his favored sidekick in the House.

Nice ploy if he can get away with it.

With the ICI hearings being held in secret, it should come as no surprise if the Marcos-appointed body eventually clears favorite cousin Romualdez of wrongdoing.

Escudero may become a sacrificial lamb, acceptable to the public because his cocky demeanor has already made him a figure worthy of the people's anger.

As for Romualdez, we can quote the title of a book about the Marcos/Romualdez clan: Some Are Smarter Than Others: The History of Marcos' Crony Capitalism.

ALLICE tackles... (From page 1)

curring message. She died of heart failure in 2016.

Bulos inspired Filipinos of every generation from the 1970s to their descendants including current Daly City Mayor Dr. Rod Daus- Magbual, now ethnic studies professor at Skyline College.

Daus-Magbual leads his City Council with fellow FilAms Vice Mayor Glenn Sylvester and Council Member Juslyn Manalo, the first FilAm woman elected to the City Council of Daly City. With Council Members Pamela DiGiovanni and Teresa Proaño, each took turns recalling how ALLICE enhanced their understanding of intimate partner and family abuse as they praised the Kumares & Kumpares at their Oct. 13 regular meeting.

In this his second mayoral term Daus-Magbual had invited ALLICE to receive his city's DVAM proclamation as he did as first-time mayor.

"The importance for Daly City to acknowledge Domestic Violence Awareness is to break the cycle of intimate partner violence," the Winnipeg, Canada-born educator-politician told author. "We as a community have to educated, empowered, and engaged in modeling what healthy relationships look like."

He added: "Breaking the cycle of violence starts at all levels of society and I hope our partnership with ALLICE Kumares and Kumpares plants the seed for present and future generations that love is not demonstrated through violence, but through lifelong practice of dialogue, mutual understanding, and care."

Manalo stressed the effectivity of cross-collaboration among multisectoral entities to keep the community safe. She recognized the Daly City Police chief Cameron Christensen and the department for their swift response in the IPV case of Frances Lucero, which emboldened her mother Liezel Lucero to advocate for justice for IPV victims and their loved ones.

Sylvester concurred. He shared how he, while a sergeant with the SF Police Dept., learned the critical role law enforcement plays in successful response to IPV calls.

"It takes deep understanding of the dynamics of abuse to appropriately to these cases," he said, knowing fear often inhibits a survivor from speaking up in the presence of the perpetrator. He added the importance of sensitivity, to discern when the situation requires speaking to intimate partners separately to avoid escalation.

DiGiovanni gave a nod to "powerful" survivor testimonies at ALLICE events, such as that given by Colma Council Member Joanne del Rosario at the ALLICE 2019 DVAM presentation at the very same venue.

Proaño commended the team for assuring survivors they are not alone and spreading the word about resources.

With his wife Arlene, Daus-Magbual directs a nonprofit to build a community of volunteer teachers with institutions to "implement a transformative and decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy...to receive a unique opportunity to teach critical Filipino/a/x American studies." A vision clearly akin to that of ALLICE.

In 2022, Daus-Magbual invited ALLICE to speak at his ethnic studies class with another Kumare who spoke about the forms of abuse she had suffered in a past relationship. She explained how her childhood growing up brown (Continue on page 20)

Ramon Ang walks the talk on flood control

When typhoons unleash torrential rains over Metro Manila, one name now surfaces in conversations about real solutions to flooding: Ramon S. Ang.

For years, the San Miguel Corporation (SMC) Chairman and CEO has been quietly but determinedly pushing a nationwide dredging and river rehabilitation initiative that is proving that action, not rhetoric, is what the country needs to end decades of water-borne misery. The results speak for themselves.

Through SMC's Better Rivers PH initiative, a total of 8.6 million metric tons of silt and waste has been removed from 165 kilometers of waterways since 2020 translating into better water carrying capacities.

"For five years now, we have been cleaning rivers because flooding disrupts lives and the economy," RSA said. "This is our way of contributing to long-term solutions that affect millions of Filipinos."

Actually, it's been three years since SMC and its team of dredgers completed the rehabilitation of the Tullahan River. Traversing the cities of Quezon, Caloocan, Valenzuela, Malabon and Navotas, the cleanup of the 27-kilometer river was the maiden project of SMC's Better Rivers PH initiative launched in 2020.

Today, SMC has returned to desilt the Tullahan River anew. "It is not unexpected that silt and garbage have re-accumulated. Heavy rains have brought more erosion, and waste dumping continues. That's why we really need to go back," SMC Chairman and CEO Ramon S. Ang said.

Meanwhile, in just the last two weeks, the Las Piñas River alone has yielded an astounding 30,000 tons of silt and solid waste under SMC's Rivers Project. That's 30,000 tons of obstruction cleared—30,000 tons of potential flooding avoided. Las Piñas joins other major waterways such as the Pasig, Tullahan, and San Juan rivers, where SMC's heavy equipment and dedicated teams have been working daily to restore flow, deepen channels, and remove accumulated debris that for decades has turned rivers into open sewers.

The Las Piñas phase—executed in partnership with Mayor Imelda Aguilar and the DPWH—marks another milestone. The volume of silt extracted in mere weeks shows the enormity of the problem, but also the effectiveness of decisive intervention. Each truckload of silt removed is equivalent to less floodwater threatening homes, schools, and businesses in southern Metro Manila.

Walking the Talk

Ramon Ang's campaign is not a showpiece. It's a continuing mission anchored in environmental responsibility, engineering excellence, and empathy for affected communities.

While RSA has publicly offered to help solve Metro Manila's flooding at no cost to the government, it takes more than what SMC can offer to solve the flooding problem. More (Continue on page 20)



CHERIE M. QUEROL MORENO



MELANDREW T. VELASCO

Upside... (From Page 10)



Daly City Council (back row) honors ALLICE Kumares & Kumpares and Celeste Mercado of CORA with special guests Perla Ibarrientos, PBRC chair emerita, and Liezel Lucero (front row) in commemorating DVAM. Photo by LYDIA POMPOSO

and an immigrant in an unwelcoming California community diminished her sense of self-worth, compelled her to endure put-downs and criticism, not to mention the physical attacks by her ex.

The testimony underscored lessons on the continuum of abuse from colonization to immigration. Unless acknowledged and unrecognized, prevailing over the consequences would be doubly challenging for impacted individuals, Daus-Magbual propounded. Hence the crucial need for professionals, particularly educators and therapists, to be aware of the correlation.

Next month the Skyline College professor will feature ALLICE to speak to his class on IPV Effects on Children. Jimenez Wong will expand the presentation she did at the Colma Town

hall event to cover teens and younger adults.

Forty-four years ago the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) launched the National Day of Unity to unite all entities working to end violence against women and children.

The rite grew with the movement into a weeklong observance until 1987, when the commemoration stretched into an entire month.

Two years later the United States Congress took notice and officially designated October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. – Adapted from original reprinted with permission from INQUIRERUSA.COM.

TO BE CONCLUDED

As I See It

(From Page 11)

Caloza and Cal-JAC leaders, and an opportunity for the media to meet firefighters in training.

The 52nd Assembly District includes the Los Angeles County communities of Angelino Heights, Atwater Village, City Terrace, Cypress Park, Eagle Rock, East Hollywood, East Los Angeles, Echo Park, El Sereno, Elysian Heights, Glassell Park, Garvanza, Hermon, Highland Park, Lincoln Heights, Los Feliz, Montecito Heights Monterey Hills, Mount Washington, Silver Lake, South Glendale, and University Hills.

With this funding, I think California will be able to provide the much-needed training in addressing the fire problem in California which has been a problem for the state and the residents of California for so long.

Jessica Caloza is the first Filipina elected to the California State Legislature serving as the Assistant Majority Whip.

She was born in Quezon City, Philippines, and immigrated to the United States as a child. She comes from a working-class background and graduated from the University of California, San Diego with a bachelor's degree in international relations and ethnic studies. Caloza is the first person in her family to graduate from college in the United States.

Caloza is a longtime public servant and started her career working as a community organizer for President Barack Obama's campaign in Virginia. She went on to work as a policy advisor in the Obama Administration at the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C. After serving at the federal level, Caloza worked for Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti in the Office of Immigrant Affairs. In 2019, she was appointed by Mayor Garcetti to serve as a Commissioner on the Board of Public Works, which is the only full-time commission in the City of Los Angeles. After working at the local level, Caloza joined the California Department of Justice and served as the deputy chief of staff to California Attorney General Rob Bonta.

Will the funding be able to solve California's perennial problem or at least minimize it?

(Elpidio R. Estioko was a veteran journalist in the Philippines and an award-winning journalist here in the US. He just published his book Unlocking the chain of Poverty: In Pursuit of the American Dream which is now available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Xlibris Publishing. For feedbacks, comments... please email author at estiokoelpidio@gmail.com).



Diliman Way

(From Page 11)

Who are these? First, the Duterte forces who are in government and outside the government. They are quite numerous in number and they are as blind as the members of a cult who will march as soon as their leader gives them the battle order. Who are their leaders – Rodrigo, Sara, Paolo, Baste – all surnamed Duterte – and Senators Bato dela Rosa, Bong Go and Robin Padilla. The consoling thought for PBBM is that like him and his gang, the Duterte crowd does not have the brains or balls to do it. They are good in talking and demonstrations but beyond that they are good for nothing.

The second group is composed of military adventurers like former Senators Gregorio and Antonio Trillanes. They are spent forces and they really don't know how to pull a coup d'etat unless Honasan's surrogate father, PBBM's Chief Legal Counsel does a repeat of 1986, betrays PBBM and spend his billions to throw BBM out of Malacanang. But will the US support them considering Enrile's history in 1986 and 1989? I have my serious doubts. Without US support, Enrile and Honasan will be out in the cold.

What then: As of today, I don't believe there is a group in the country which can successfully pull a coup d'etat against the PBBM government. But there is no certainty about tomorrow. In the current situation, with continuing political turmoil, it is difficult to make an educated guess of how events will turn out.

There is one thing certain - PBBM has run out of options in containing the present situation. His cabinet is of no help. They are all NPAs – Non-Performing Assets. So are his advisers. PBBM is teetering at the brink of the precipice. He is offered help but he does not realize that the offered help is his only road to survival. But like all leaders about to fall – he keeps admiring himself before the mirror with his flatterers applauding him. Flattery does not work wonders – it is the sound you hear before the fall.

Health & Wealth

(From Page 11)

tian Worship” subtitled “Plus GOSPEL MESSAGES.”

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Kumare Jackie Yujuico offers information on ALLICE partner organizations providing resources for people in need. Photo by LYDIA POMPOSO

The Outsider

(From Page 10)

than ever, it needs the collaboration and coordination of national government agencies as well as local government units concerned. It also demands cooperation from the local communities. We are aware that dredging is not a one-time solution as rivers continue to be receptacles of silt from the upstream and of garbage disposed of improperly. But it has been proven that dredging helps abate flooding.

While others talk about master plans and feasibility studies, Ang is out there “walking the talk”—deploying barges, backhoes, and dredgers to do the hard, messy work of unclogging rivers and floodways. The results are tangible: improved water flow, reduced inundation in low-lying communities, and reclaimed riverbanks transformed into green spaces.

Flood Control with a Heart

Ang's approach humanizes engineering. He believes infrastructure must first and foremost serve communities, particularly the poor who suffer the brunt of flooding. His field visits—often unannounced—demonstrate personal oversight and empathy rarely seen at the top corporate level. When Ramon Ang says SMC will help solve flooding in Metro Manila, he means it. And the heavy equipment humming along Las Piñas River today is proof that he doesn't wait for the next crisis to act.

As the dredging continues, and as thousands of tons of silt are lifted from our waterways, we are reminded that nation-building is not confined to boardrooms or speeches. Sometimes, it happens knee-deep in mud, guided by the conviction of a man who truly walks the talk.

This is a testament of SMC's long-term commitment to mitigating flooding through river cleanups. Aside from Tullahan, Pasig, San Juan, and Parañaque rivers, SMC has also cleaned up river systems in Bulacan, Laguna and Pampanga.

Let us therefore institutionalize dredging as a multi-year activity for the river basins nationwide as flooding is a problem not only in Metro Manila and provinces in Luzon. It has also become a perennial problem in other parts of the country down south especially during the onset of the rainy season.

Likewise, local government units and other agencies must strictly enforce solid waste disposal laws and regulations alongside ensuring that pumping stations which form part of the flood control infrastructure are operating.

Ghost Flood-Control Projects, A wake Up call

Moreover, the recent controversies over ghost flood-control projects should serve as a wakeup call to everyone: for government officials to remain true to the ideals of public service; for contractors to deliver contracted projects based on agreed specifications; and for the general public to be vigilant in ensuring taxes are spent properly.

It has been said that economic losses from flooding for the period 2023 to 2025 was at ₱42.3 to ₱118.5 billion, with job losses in the tens to hundreds of thousands.

There are some things worth considering to improve the country's flood control program especially in the metropolitan area.

One is the adoption of a Metro Manila-Bulacan single water table plan whereby the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and the provincial/city LGUs publish one map with one schedule and one set of depth targets which would be updated quarterly.

Another is a long-term Operations and Maintenance following an established rule on threshold level of silt.

Discipline must be instilled in barangays. Those that keep waste out of feeder creeks earn priority on local flood-mitigation microprojects such as drains, sidewalks, and pocket parks.

With corruption scandals tainting flood control projects, academe, engineering societies, citizen auditors could act as validators to verify volumes dredged, depths achieved, and contracts delivered. The findings can be released using simple language.

RSA and SMC have shown us what can be achieved to lessen flooding. Let us give them their due. But the responsibility of a flood-free metropolis does not rest on their shoulders alone. It is a shared responsibility. We can govern as well as we dredge.