

Athens Embassy launches anti-illegal drug campaign



Ambassador Rigoberto Tiglao discussing serious issues with the Filcom during the regular filcom meeting on 5 December 2009 in Athens.

Ang salot ng ilegal na droga na salot ng buong mundo ay umabot rin sa Gresya, at ayon sa mga balita, may mga ilan-ilang kababayan tayong nalululong na rin sa ilegal na droga.

Dahilan dito, minarapat ni Ambassador Rigoberto Tiglao na hikayatin ang mga Pilipino sa Gresya, sa tulong ng embahada, na maglunsad ng kampanya laban sa paggamit ng ilegal na droga sa Gresya, lalo na sa Athens.

Nagpatawag ang embahada ng pulong nang Filipino community leaders noong 5 December 2009 upang mapag usapan ang napapabalitang pagkalat ng iligal na droga lalo na ang "shabu".

Ang pakay ng Embahada ng Pilipinas ay makapagbigay ng impormasyon hinggil sa iligal na droga na napapabalitang kumakalat na rin sa komunidad ng mga Pilipino dito sa Gresya.

Sa pamamagitan ng binuod na impormasyon ng Embahada ay magkaroon ng sapat na kaalaman ang ating mga kababayang kabataan, magulang at estudyante, at iba pang sektor, upang pagtulungang hadlangan at puksain ang salot na ito na unti unting nanalasa sa mga buhay ng ating kababayan.

Sa malawakan at malalimang talakayan ng mga opisyal ng Embahada na pinamu-

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Madame Getsy S. Tiglao

Madame Getsy Tiglao, new President Emeritus of WIC

Madame Getsy S. Tiglao, the wife of Philippine Ambassador to Greece Rigoberto D. Tiglao, has been appointed as the new Honorary President of the Women's International Club (WIC) of Athens for the incoming year 2010 by the organization's officers.

Mrs. Tiglao said that she considers it a great honor to have been chosen as the President Emeritus of the WIC, a prestigious women's or-

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Ambassador Rigoberto D. Tiglao met last Christmas with Alternate Foreign Minister Dimitris P. Droutsas at his office at the Foreign Ministry building to discuss Philippine-Greece bilateral relations.

Filcom in Athens Celebrates "Paskong Pinoy"

With songs, laughter and food, the Filipino Community in Athens celebrated its version of "Paskong Pinoy" last December 13, 2009 in the Philippine Embassy premises at Paleo Psychico, Athens, Greece.

While the temperature dropped to 5°C, the sun suddenly appeared after days of cloudy skies and rain, a lucky sign for all Filipinos that congregated at the embassy.

Philippine Ambassador to Greece Rigoberto D. Tiglao and his wife Getsy Tiglao attended the festivities and



Ambassador and Madame Tiglao, Welfare Officer Venus Bravo, Embassy staff Gemma Coloma, POLO officer Tito Baldago, Mrs. Bataan and Mr. Robles enjoying the festivities.

enjoyed the full-day program prepared by the Filipino community and the Philippine Embassy staff members. Welfare Officer Atty. Venus Bravo was the Embassy and POLO's lead officer, together with cultural attaché Joan David, for undertaking and coordinating the event with leaders of the Filipino Community.

Also on hand for the festivities were Deputy Chief of Mission Fe Pangilinan, Consul General Constancio Vingno, and Labor Attaché Atty. George Eduvala.

The luncheon became a highlight of the day with kababayans gathering around

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Ano ang bawal na gamot?

Ang bawal na gamot ay anumang sangkap, maliban sa pagkain o tubig, na kapag pumasok sa katawan ay nagpapabago ng takbo ng isip at/o katawan. Kung gayon ang mga gamot, produktong may caffeine, tabako, mga sangkap na nilalanghap (inhalants), alkohol, cannabis (marijuana), heroin at mga steroid ay pawang mga bawal na gamot.

Anu-ano ang mga bawal na gamot?

- **SHABU** o *methamphetamine hydrochloride* o kilala rin sa tawag na *ice*, o *meth*
- **Ecstasy** o *methylenedioxymethamphetamine* (MDMA),
- **Marijuana**, *marijuana resin*, o *marijuana resin oil*;
- **Cocaine** o *cocaine hydrochloride*
- **Opyum**;
- **Morpina** at;
- **Heroin**

3 Grupo ng mga bawal na gamot:

Ang mga bawal na gamot ay madalas na pinaggugrupugrupo ayon sa kanilang epekto sa panggitnang sistema ng nerbiyos (central nervous system). Mayroong tatlong pangunahing mga grupo:

1. **mga pampahina (depressants)**
2. **mga pampasigla (stimulants)**
3. **mga pampatakbo ng guni-guni (hallucinogens)**

I. Mga Pampahina o depressants:

Ang salitang ito ay hindi nangangahulugang ang tao ay makakaramdam ng panghihina o pagkalungkot matapos na gumamit ng gamot. Ang mga pampahina ay nagpapabagal sa takbo ng mensaheng ipinapadala patungo at mula sa utak. Ang pintig ng puso at paghinga ay bumabagal din.

Ang patuloy na paggamit ng marihuwana ay nagiging sanhi ng bronkitis, kanser sa bibig, lalamunan at baga at iba pang mga sakit na may kaugnayan sa kawalan ng malay-tao sanhi ng pagbagal ng paghinga at pintig ng puso.

Kabilang sa mga pampahina ang mga sumusunod:

Cannabis (marihuwana, hashish, langis ng hashish), mga pampakalma tulad ng heroin.

Mga Epekto ng Depressant o Pampahina:

- di maliwanag na pagsasalita

- di tugmang pagkilos
- pagsusuka at pagduduwal
- kawalan ng malay-tao sanhi ng pagbagal ng paghinga at pintig ng puso
- *sa sukdulang mga kaso, pagkamatay*

II. Mga Pampasigla o stimulants

Ang mga pampasigla ay nagpapabilis sa takbo ng panggitnang sistema ng nerbiyos at ng mga mensaheng patungo at mula sa utak. Pinapabilis nito ang pintig ng puso at tumataas ang temperatura at presyon ng dugo.

Kabilang sa mga pampasigla ang:

Cocaine, hindi inireresetang mga amphetamine, speed, LSD at ecstasy.

Mga Epekto ng Pampasigla o stimulants:

- pagkabalisa
- pagkatakot
- mga atake
- panakit ng ulo at pangangalambre ng sikmura
- pagiging agresibo
- kakatuwang guni-guni
- pagkalito ng isip
- kawalan ng malay-tao

III. Mga Pampatakbo ng Guni-guni o hallucinogens

Ang mga pampatakbo ng guni-guni ay nakakaapekto sa pang-unawa. Ang mga taong nakagamit nito ay maaaring makakita o makarinig ng mga bagay sa baligtad na paraan. Ang mga pandama ay nagiging magulo lalong lalo na sa oras, ingay at kulay. Malaki ang pagka-kaiba-iba ng mga epekto ng pampatakbo ng guni-guni at hindi madaling mahulaan.

Kabilang sa mga pampatakbo ng guni-guni ang:

LSD, magic mushrooms, mescaline, ecstasy at marihuwana (sa matapang na dosis)

Mga epekto ng hallucinogens:

- panlalamig at biglaang pagkaramdam ng init
- panlalaki ng balintataw
- kawalan ng ganang kumain pangan-galambre ng sikmura o pagduduwal

- pagbilis ng paggawa, pagsasalita at pagtawa
- pagkatakot at mga pagkaramdam ng pagkaapi (kakatuwang guni-guni)
- mahabang panahong pagbabalik ng mga nakaraan.

Kabilang sa mga posibleng pinsala na may kaugnayan sa paggamit ng bawal na gamot:

- mga pinsala sa katawan
- mga pinsala sa mga relasyon sa iba: mga kaibigan, pamilya, komunidad
- mga pinsala sa gawi ng pamumuhay, trabaho, edukasyon, akomodasyon
- mga pinsalang kaugnay sa paglabag ng batas

Bakit gumagamit ng mga bawal na gamot ang mga kabataan?

- upang magsaya
- upang matakasan at malimutan ang kanilang mga problema
- upang magkaroon ng tiwala at tapang ng loob
- upang mawala ang pansariling responsibilidad sa mga pagdedesisyon
- upang makihalubilo
- upang magdiwang
- upang mag-eksperimento
- upang mawala ang pagkabagot
- upang magrelaks at mawala ang tensiyon
- upang mapawi ang sakit.

PARA SA MGA MAGULANG**Paano ko malalaman kung ang aking anak, ay gumagamit ng mga bawal na gamot?**

Hindi madaling malaman kung ang inyong anak ay gumagamit ng mga bawal na gamot. Ang mga epekto ng mga bawal na gamot ay nagkakaiba sa bawa't tao. Walang pisikal o emosyonal na mga pagbabago na partikular lamang sa paggamit ng bawal na gamot, ngunit kung ang inyong anak ay may pagkilos na hindi karaniwan sa loob ng mahabang panahon, maaaring may problema. Tandaan na ang lahat ng mga pagbabagong ito ay maaaring bahagi lamang ng kanilang paglaki. Mainat na makipag-usap sa inyong anak bago gumawa ng pabigla-biglang mga pagpapasiya tungkol sa posibilidad na

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paggamit ng mga bawal na gamot.

Kabilang sa ilang mga babalang palatandaan:

- panghihina
- pagbabago ng kagawian sa pagkain
- sobrang pagkasumpungin at mga silakbo ng galit
- lumalabas nang buong magdamag
- pagbaba ng mga marka sa paaralan
- problema sa paaralan
- bigla at madalas na pagbabago ng mga kaibigan
- isang hindi maipaliwanag na pangangailangan ng pera
- pagkakaroon ng maraming pera
- pagkawala ng mga mamahaling gamit
- problema sa pulis

Ano ang dapat kong gawin kapag nalaman kong gumagamit ng mga bawal na gamot ang aking anak?

Tandaan na:

Ang inyong pangunahing konsiderasyon ay ang kaligtasan ng inyong anak at gayundin ang kaligtasan ng mga iba.

Huwag matakot:

Ang sobrang reaksiyon ay magiging sanhi ng hindi gaanong pagsang-ayon ng inyong anak na kayo ay kausapin at

sabihin sa inyo ang tunay na nangyayari. Kausapin nang kalmado ang inyong anak at alamin kung ano ang nangyayari.



Alamin ang katotohanan:

Kausapin ang inyong anak at alamin kung aling bawal na gamot ang ginagamit at kung gaano ito kadalas. Maaaring ang inyong anak ay nag-eksperimento sa paggamit ng bawal na gamot at mula noon ay tumigil na sa paggamit nito.

Ipakita ang inyong pagmamalasakit: Ipaliwanag na mahal ninyo ang inyong anak ngunit hindi ninyo gusto na siya ay gumagamit ng mga bawal na gamot.

Piliin ang tamang panahon:

Maghintay hangga't wala na siya sa impluwensiya ng bawal na gamot at kayo ay nakakaramdam ng pagiging higit na kalmado.

Tanggapin ang mga problema:

Kung ang inyong anak ay regular na gumagamit ng bawal na gamot upang matugunan ang pangangailangan o

malutas ang isang problema, nangan-gahulugan na kailangan niya ng tulong at suporta. Huwag matakot na humingi ng propesyonal na tulong.

Huwag sisihin ang sarili:

Kung ang inyong anak ay gumagamit ng mga bawal na gamot, hindi ito nangangahulugan na kayo ay nabigo bilang isang magulang. Maraming mga kabataan na dumaaan sa mga panahon ng kagipitan o nag-eksperimento sa paggamit ng mga bawal na gamot kahit gaano pa sila kamahal o kalakas ang suporta ng kanilang mga magulang.

Magpakita ng magandang huwaran:

Ang mga anak ng mga magulang na naninigarilyo at umiinom ng alak ay mas malamang na maninigarilyo at iinom din. Isaalang-alang ang inyong sariling paninigarilyo, pag-inom ng alak at iba pang mga bawal na gamot at ang mensaheng maaaring ibigay nito sa inyong anak. Talakayin ang inyong paggamit ng bawal na gamot at ganoon din ng mga iba sa isang paraan na maaaring makatulong. ■

Mga Sanggunian:

- Pamplet: Impormasyon Tungkol sa mga Bawal Na Gamot para sa mga Magulang, 2003 gawa ng Kagawaran ng Edukasyon at Pagsasanay-State of Victoria in 2003.
- Vision 2010: A Drug-Free Philippines, Theme: "Drug-Free - Youth for a Safe Community and Sound Economy", publication produced by PDEA, JDAPA, DAPPF, and PIA;
- Tagalog na Wikipedia.

Confession of a former drug user

"I was shocked! I couldn't believe what I saw. A friend of mine was lying naked on the pavement of a busy street. Then he picked something up and put it in his mouth. He was no longer the responsible and good-looking man I knew. No, I will not let this happen to me." This is how Jay P., a 36-year-old beautician from Mexico, Pampanga and a former drug user, recounted what made him turn away from drugs.

"I also felt I was not acting normally. If I did not stop using drugs, I would have gone crazy. Thank God, I finally realized that drugs will only ruin my life," he added.

I used different types of drugs for eight years, from 1982 to 1990. I started with marijuana, cough syrup, then shabu and cocaine. If nothing is available, I even used toothpaste. I did all these simply because I feel happy and light after taking drugs."

According to Jay, plain curiosity was the primary reason why he tried using drugs. He just wanted to experience the joys people get from drugs. Another reason was "family problem." There was favoritism at home, especially with his father. And they cannot accept his being homosexual. Drugs were a very good escape from these problems.

Why did it take him eight long years to realize his mistake? "I believe I became a better beautician when I was high on drugs," he said. But not for long. After a while his customers began deserting him.

Whenever he used shabu, he could not sleep and eat because he did not feel hungry or sleepy at all.

He was very strong and hyperactive. But he also became suspicious of others. Whenever he saw people talking, he suspected he was being talked about. "I would suddenly shout and curse them."

He remembered moments when he talked to himself.

"I also hate night time. I cannot explain why, but I felt something odd when darkness came." His appearance also changed. "I looked untidy, even if I took a bath. I also lost my teeth. I pawned my jewelry and was not able to redeem them. Then I suddenly realized, what am I doing to myself?"

"I had lots of friends before. During those times, I kept telling myself that money is not important because I had so many friends around. But when I became a drug addict, not only did I lose my jewelries but my friends as well. My friends who were with me in times of plenty were nowhere to be found when I needed them most. I realized they could not be depended upon in times of need," Jay relates.

How was he able to resist drugs? Self-determination and self-control is all you need, Jay claimed. He swore not to suffer under the influence of drugs again. ■

COMMUNITY NEWS

We welcome Pinoy news!

Send us your letters, news stories, press or photo releases for publication in the newsletter via regular mail, e-mail.



Filipino Christian Fellowship of Athens' 25th Anniversary. Embassy officials and staff attended the FCFA's 25th anniversary celebration on 18 October 2009 in Athens.



Filipino Bowlers Association in Greece (FILBAG) Annual Team Tournament. Consul General Constancio Vingno, Jr. was special guest at the Filbag 7th Annual Tournament held 25 October 2009 at Gemma Bowling Center in Patission.



CBN Remittance Center Inauguration. Ambassador Tiglao with CBN Manager Javellana and was special guest at the inauguration ceremony of the CBN Remittance Center on 28 October 2009 in Athens. Standing beside him Branch Owner Ben Javellana.



Philippine Guardians Brotherhood, Incorporated (PGBI) 6th anniversary and induction. Amb. Rigoberto Tiglao attended the 6th anniversary foundation and inducted the newly-elected officers of the PGBI on 28 November 2009 in Athens.



Philippine Overseas Society's Christmas Party Celebration and Induction. Ambassador Rigoberto Tiglao was special guest at the Christmas celebration organized by POS. Ambassador Tiglao also inducted the new officers of the organization.



Philippine Embassy sponsored Two Masses. The Officers and staff of the Embassy led by Ambassador Rigoberto Tiglao sponsored and attended the Misa ng Bayan held on 15 November 2009 at St. Therese Church and Simbang Gabi held on 17 December 2009 at Miraculous Medal Center in Patission.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Embassy & FilCom Regular Meetings

The Philippine Embassy and the Filipino community, will have regular meetings in 2010 every 2nd Saturday of the month, 6:00 pm in the Embassy premises. Everyone is invited to join the meeting. ■

Athens PE announces OAVS voting schedules

The Philippine Embassy would like to announce that Overseas Absentee Voting period will be held from 10 April 2010 to 10 May 2010, from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm daily from Monday to Sunday at the Philippine Embassy. This is your chance to exercise your right to vote. Go to the Embassy and vote. ■

PAALALA

PINAG-IINGAT PO ANG LAHAT NG ATING MGA KABABAYAN LALUNG-LALO NA ANG MGA KABABAIHAN NA GINAGABI NG PAG-UWI. HUWAG TANGGAPIN ANG ALOK NG ISANG NAGMAMAGANDANG LOOB NA SUMAKAY SA KOTSE KAHIT NA PO NA MAY SAKAY NA ISANG KABABAYANG PILIPINO. ISA PO SA ATING KABABAIHAN ANG NABIKTIMA SA GANITONG MODUS OPERANDI AT BUKOD SA PERSONAL NA GAMIT NA NANAKAW SA KANYA AT SAKIT NG NATAMO SA KANYANG KATAWAN SIYA PO PINAGSAMANTALAHAN PA.

PINAG-IINGAT PO ANG LAHAT. ■

Paskong Pinoy....(Continued from page 1)

and enjoying three *lechons* sponsored by the Philippine Overseas Society and FCAIA led by Mrs. Charie Bataan and by FILBAG, led by Mr. Danny Robles, who incidentally also supervised their cooking Filipino-style in the premises.

Other traditional Filipino food such as barbeque, menudo, dinakdakan, bicol express, chopsuey, and various sweets, were also served to the crowd of about 200 people, the largest ever gathered at the Philippine Embassy for a single event.

The program proper began 9 a.m. as the Athens Filipino community watched a cultural program prepared by its own members. There was singing by the Catholic Union of Filipinos in Athens; dance numbers by the Couples for Christ and its Family Ministries Dancers; song numbers from children of the Candonian City Ladies Association; and group singing led by the Philippine Overseas Society and the Filipino Community Academy Institute Association.

Other musical participants were the Pamana Musical, a vocal solo by Hanelette Haboc, Purebats, the Christian Fel-

lowship Choir, the Filbag Singing Group, and the Guardians Singing Group.



Amb. Tiglao delivers his Christmas message during the "Paskong Pinoy" celebration.

A nativity play by the students of the Philippine School in Greece, delighted the crowd with endearing dramatization of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ in a manger in Bethlehem. The PSG Kabataang Tinig provided the narration and musical accompaniment to the nativity play.

In between the musical numbers, parlor games for both children and adults were

played, much to the enjoyment of the crowd.

Another high spot of the day was the parol-making contest which drew 12 entries from the Filipino community. The top winners had used recycled materials for their parols including used bottles, paper, and old CDs.

Ambassador Tiglao also delivered his Christmas message to the crowd gathered at the embassy. He said that celebrations like these show the Filipinos warmth and love for country and community, while it is also a commemoration of our Christian traditions.

"Filipinos, wherever they may be in the world, will always celebrate Christmas as it is a significant part of our cultural, religious and social heritage. Our version here in Athens is the traditional one with songs and dances, and of course Pinoy food and lots of fun and laughter," Ambassador Tiglao said.

The program closed with group singing led by the Philippine Embassy of the favorite Filipino Christmas song, "Ang Pasko Ay Sumapit." It was a truly enjoyable program that was ably emceed by Mrs. Shirley V. Manigbas and Mr. Joshua Escalante. ■



More photos of the "Paskong Pinoy" are available at the Philippine Embassy website: www.athenspe.net.

Thank you.

CONSULAR UPDATES

Passport Advisory to Filipinos Traveling to RP

Schedule an appointment for your passport application

To avoid long queues in applying for a passport in Manila, schedule an appointment by accessing the DFA website www.dfa.gov.ph and click Consular Services tab, type your complete name, date and place of birth, and if applicable your old passport number.

Once you have an appointment, it will take you less than an hour to process your passport at designated counters and encoding machines.

Reminder: Check the validity of your passport

Before traveling, check if the validity date of your passport is at least six

(6) months from the date of your departure to avoid problems at the airport.

Apply for a passport at the following DFA offices in the provinces:

Bacolod City, Baguio City, Butuan City, Cagayan De Oro City, Cebu City, Cotabato City, Davao City, General Santos City, Iloilo City, Legaspi City, Lucena City, Palawan City, POEA (satellite office) Mandaluyong City, San. Fernando La Union, San Fernando-Pampanga, Tacloban City, Tuguegarao City, and Zamboanga City.

Avail of the new e-passport

Everyone may now avail of the e-passport (initially available in Manila), a highly secure enhanced Machine Readable Passport. The e-passport system reduces identity theft by storing the biometrics and signature of the passport holder and by recording his thumb marks.■

Validity of Green (MRP) Passports

All green passports (non-machine readable passports) shall remain valid until the stated date of expiry and will be acceptable for use abroad. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) mandates all ICAO member countries to issue at least Machine-Readable Passports by 01 April 2010. Hence, green passports will only be issued until 31 March 2010. **Holders of green passports should also be reminded to renew their passports at least six months before the stated date of expiry.■**

The Passport Office is Moving to ASEANA Business Park

The Office of Consular Affairs (Passport Division, Authentication, Visa and Records) will be moving to a new building:
ASEANA BUSINESS PARK
 Corner Bradco Avenue and Diosdado Macapagal Blvd., Barangay Tambo, Paranaque City
 (Near SM Mall of Asia -MOA)

Please call Tel. No. 556 0000 or 834 4000 if you have further queries.■

Ambassador's Scholarship at UINDY Athens now in place

A Philippine Ambassador's scholarship program is now in place in the prestigious Athens Campus of the University of Indiana (UINDY-Athens).

Ambassador Rigoberto D. Tiglao entered recently into a Memorandum of Understanding providing for scholarships and tuition assistance for Filipinos at the university with Chancellor Vasilis Botopoulos of UINDY Athens).

The most important scholarship is the "The Philippine Ambassador's Scholarship", which provides for a 70% tuition assistance to a Filipino for an undergraduate college degree. The Philippine Ambassador will recommend the student who would avail of the scholarship. The only requirement is for the scholar to maintain an average grade of B.



Ambassador Tiglao with UINDY Chancellor Botopoulos at the signing of the scholarship agreement.

The University of Indianapolis (Athens Campus) is not merely a franchise or a branch of the American university. It is academically and legally categorized as a campus of the university.

The other forms of "Ambassador's scholarships" include five undergraduate scholarships providing for a 25% tuition assistance and another five graduate-school scholarships also providing a 25% tuition assistance.

In addition to these "Ambassador's Scholarships", the MOU provides for a General undergraduate scholarships which will grant a 20% tuition assistance for undergraduate studies for a child or spouse of an employee of the Philippine Embassy and the Philippine School in

Greece as well as for a graduate of the Philippine School in Greece .

There is also a General graduate scholarship program which provides for a 20% tuition assistance for graduate studies of an employee, child or spouse of the Philippine Embassy and the Philippine School employee at UINDY Athens.■



From left, UINDY Athens Vice Chancellor Sofia Hilentzaris, the Ambassador, Chancellor Vasilis Botopoulos, PSG Principal Roberto Fresnido.

Athens PE campaigns ... (Continued from page 1)

munuan ni Amb. Tiglao, nabuo ang determinasyon ng komunidad na itulak ang kampanya laban sa iligal na droga.

Nanawagan din ang embahada na magbigay ng impormasyon dito ang ating mga kababayan tungkol sa mga taong nagtutulak ng droga, para maipaabot sa mga kaukulang awtoridad. Maaring ipadala ang impormasyon na ito sa email address ng embahada: athenspe@otenet.gr. Maari ring magpadala ng 'text' sa 6979-282-92 Tiniyak n embahada na tutoring confidential ang mga datos na ito at hindi kailangang sabihin ng impormante ang kanyang pangalan.

Umaasa ang Embahada na ang pakikipagtulungan ng ating kababayan sa adhikaing ito ay matamo.

Sa dahilang ito nagtalaga ang embahada sa isyung ito ng mga ilang pahina para sa mga mahahalagang impormasyon hinggil sa ilegal na droga.

Tandaan: huwag hayaang masira ang inyong pamilya, magsumbong sa pulis o magreklamo sa Embahada laban sa mga nagtutulak at gumagamit ng ilegal na droga.■

CYPRUS CORNER

RP HonCon in Cyprus & Filcom Celebrates "Pamaskong Handog sa mga Filipino"

The Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Philippine Honorary Consulate and Overseas Filipino Volunteers in Cyprus (OFVC) organized a Christmas Party for the Filipino community in Cyprus dubbed as "Pamaskong Handog sa mga Filipino Cyprus " last December 20, 2009. This Christmas gathering program comprised of raffle draws, parlor games, exchanging gifts, choral rendition, singing and dance performances participated by the Filipino community in Pafos and Nicosia.

To spice up the activity, POLO-OWWA also took the opportunity to launch the Caregiving and Kabuyahan Pinoy Courses to be implemented this year 2010. The OFW Family Club also provided medical services during the occasion.

The whole affair lasted from 1:00 pm till 5:00 pm. The Grand raffle price was a roundtrip plane ticket from Cyprus to Philippines sponsored by Gulf Air. Other major prizes as well were also sponsored by different agencies in Cyprus. ■



Filcom in Cyprus singing Christmas carols during their Christmas celebration 2009.

Makabayang BALITA sa Gresya at Cyprus

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The Philippine Embassy in Athens, Greece

welcomes...



Ma. Clorinda Bonabon-Dankers
Consular Assistant-ATN

Claire arrived in Athens on 28 December 2009 to replace outgoing Consular Assistant and Assistance-To-Nationals Officer Nathalie Fajardo.

Claire has been in the foreign service for twenty years. She was assigned to the Philippine Embassy in The Hague, Netherlands from 2000 to 2006.

Born on 5 May 1969 in Allen Northern, Samar, Claire graduated from Lyceum of the Philippines with a degree in Foreign Service in 1989. She is married to Marcus Johannes Wilhelmus Dankers. ■

and bids farewell to...



Nathalie Fajardo
Consular Assistant-ATN

Nathalie ended her tour of duty in Athens, Greece on 25 November 2009 to be cross posted to the Philippine Embassy in Singapore. During her four years of being an ATN and Consular Assistant she had extended help and assistance to our kababayans. She was also tasked to handle visa applicants.

Nathalie has been in the foreign service for 11 years. She is a graduate of Broadcast Communication at the University of the Philippines (UP). Born on 15 December 1976 in Quezon City, Nathalie is married to Carlo Jollette Fajardo, and they have a son, Raistlin Jacob. ■

Madame Getsy Tiglao... (Continued from page 1)

ganization with chapters all over the world.

She is the first Filipino to be picked as Honorary President of the Club.

Mrs. Tiglao is a veteran journalist and former editor-in-chief of the Philippine Daily Inquirer-GMA 7 news website Inq7.net. She has been a member of the WIC since 2006 and is an active participant of its Ethnic Cooking Circles and other activities.

WIC-Athens was founded over 30 years ago, and it believes in fostering friendship and mutual understanding among women of different nationalities, and aims to contribute to the cultural development of women in general.

The incoming President for 2010 of WIC is Olga Roupas from Greece; Vice President Siu Ling Versluys from HongKong-China; Treasurer Pepita Wahren from Finland; Hospitality Officer Mariola Ipsilant from Poland; Programme Officer Leopoldine Theophanopoulos from Germany; Membership Officer Sharon Chelmis from New Zealand; Corresponding Secretary Liz Moffat from the United Kingdom; Recording Secretary Charu Batra from India; Activities Officers Loukia Nicola-Tsigos from Cyprus and Evie Makris from USA; Publications Officer Maria Freitas from Brazil; Auditors Mary-Lou Theodore from USA and Charlotte Scarpidis from USA; and Alternative Auditors Penny Smith from Ireland and Denise Nairn from the UK. ■

Mandatory PAG-IBIG ... (Continued from page 8)

employee and employer contribution, if any,

shall earn dividends which shall be distributed annually and credited to the member's TAV. All dividend earnings shall be TAX FREE.

A member who transfers to another employer or who become self-employed carries with him his/her TAV member may avail of the Fund's various housing loan, short term loan and other benefit programs, provided that he/she satisfies the eligibility criteria set by the Fund

A member who becomes a member of the Fund after the affectivity of RA 9679 shall **HAVE THE OPTION TO WITHDRAW his/her TAV after the 15th year of CONTINUOUS MEMBERSHIP** provided that said member has no outstanding housing loan with the Fund at the time of withdrawal.

This option shall not prejudice his/her continuing membership with the Fund.

In the event of the member's death, the legal beneficiaries shall also be entitled to the additional death benefit grant, the amount of which shall depend on the member's TAV and membership status at the point of death.

The benefits prescribed under RA 9679 shall not be diminished and the government of the Republic of the Philippines guarantees the payment of the employee and employer contributions as well as the corresponding dividends when they are due. ■

LABOR PAGE

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Remains of Aegean Wind Filipino workers arrive in RP

The remains of six Filipino sailors killed in a fire in a Greek-owned ship 25 December 2009 arrived in Manila at 6:45 p.m. 2 January 2010 via a chartered Boeing DC 8 flight which flew from Venezuela to Athens, and after unloading the remains of the three Greek sailors killed, went on to Manila, after however an eight-hour delay in Dubai because of unfavorable weather. The respective families of the Filipino seafarers patiently waited for many hours at the airport to receive the remains. ■



MANDATORY PAG-IBIG MEMBERSHIP TO ALL OFWS UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9679 STARTING JANUARY 2010

Salient Features of RA 9679:

Membership is mandatory to all Filipinos employed by foreign-based employers, whether they are deployed here or abroad or a combination thereof (*immigrants/former Filipinos may become members on a voluntary basis but shall also be covered by the pertinent membership guidelines*)

Membership applicant should NOT be more than 60 years old;

An OFW shall contribute an equivalent to 2% of his/her monthly compensations (based at P5,000) or P100 per month. Said employee may opt to pay the employer counterpart (additional P100 for a total of P200). A member may contribute more than what is required herein;

Membership with the Fund shall be for a period of twenty (20) years commencing from the first day of the month to which the initial contribution payment applies, provided that said member shall have contributed the corresponding 240 monthly membership contributions;

Member may also withdraw the total accumulated savings upon the occurrence of any of the following:

- Compulsory retired with the Fund at age 65
- Retirement
- Permanent departure from the Philippines
- Permanent/total disability
- Other causes as may be provided by the Board of Trustees

Benefits of Fund Membership

A member's Total Accumulated Value (TAV) shall consist of the member's accumulated contributions, the employer counterpart, if any, and the dividend earnings credited to his/her account;

The member's contributions inclusive of the

(Continued on page 7)

Facts on the Aetea Sierra case

For the Filipino community's information, follows are the facts regarding the plight of the Aetea Sierra's Filipino crew. At the outset of this episode, the embassy and its labor office had pursued the path to immediate repatriation:

1. As soon as the Embassy was informed of the Aetea Sierra's plight, on 30 September 2009, it dispatched a letter to POEA the following day requesting plane tickets for the crew under the Migrant Workers Act;
2. Crewmembers were informed of the letter and requested to just wait for the tickets per assurance from the Phil. Manning Agent;
3. While waiting for the tickets, there was constant communication with them; questions like if they have enough food and other basic needs; informed us that such items are being provided by the ship owner;
4. We offered to shelter them in the FWRC in the meantime if their condition would prompt them to do so;
5. 2nd Week of October, Engr. Hantic, one of the crewmen, sent a text message that they would not leave the ship until their salaries-in-arrears are not paid;
6. On October 26, 2009, POLO team headed by the LABATT together with Atty. Pavlakis, a lawyer who has had a good track record in handling cases of Filipino seamen, went to the ship and talked with the crew, eleven of whom had already engaged the services of an ITF lawyer to pursue the case;
7. Engr. Hantic however declined the services of the ITF lawyer, so the Embassy offered to him the services of Atty. Pavlakis, who had been successful in handling many cases of Filipino seamen; and,
8. During that time, the seafarers were informed that their salaries and other money claims can be filed in the Philippines as their manning agent is liable under Philippine labor law.

The Embassy and the Labor Office exerted every effort to keep the lines of communication with the crew open, and were assured that they were getting the necessary provisions on the ship.

Greek port authorities are quite strict in

monitoring the quality of food and water delivered to ship crewmen by Greek companies engaged in such business. The Philippine Overseas Labor Office had been closely monitoring the provision of food and other necessities for the crew. The Philippine Embassy also sent Filipino food and beverages to the crew. The International Transport Federation has a big office in Piraeus

The Philippine Embassy's Consul General Constancio Vingno and the POLO were in regular cell phone communication throughout the entire episode with Jose Cardenas, the highest ranking Filipino officer, and with other crewmen to determine what the crew needed. Labor attaché Eduvala had earlier talked to the entire crew to explain to them their options. ■

Aetea Sierra to be auctioned 17 February 2010 to pay sailors' salaries

In its order of 21 December, the Court of First Instance of Piraeus directed the immediate payment of 132,963.32 Euros (about \$190,000) to the 12 seamen, representing their unpaid salaries up to 9 November 2009. In addition, another 195,000 Euros were to be paid to them later, to represent estimated salaries starting 10 November 2009 up to the day the seamen leave the ship as well as compensation for the physical discomfort and mental distress the ship-owners have caused the seamen in the episode.

The lowest award, including the later payments, amounted to 22,256 Euros, in the case of one officer, while the highest award totaled 41,711 Euros.

To the benefit of the seamen, the court based its award on prevailing Greek standards and not on the contracts signed by the seamen. The court's award consequently represented **six times** the salaries of the sailors according to their contracts.

The Filipino crewmembers are now waiting for the arrival of their replacements so that they could return to the Philippines and reunite their families. Meanwhile, their wages will accrue, based on the favorable Greek standards, until they are fully paid, that is, while they stay in Greece. Eleven of them have already completed their contracts.

The *Aetea Sierra* was impounded in the Piraeus Port in September near Athens when a case was filed against its owners by the ship charterers for its alleged failure to unload the cargo at the agreed port (not in Greece). ■