

MIGRANTE

sectoral party



Newsletter

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Sa muling paglathala, mas maraming batas na kontra-migrante ang dapat labanan at ibasura



Sa muling paglathala ng ating *Newsletter*, binabatbat tayo ng napakaraming isyu't banta sa ating karapatan, kagalingan, buhay at kabuhayan sa loob at labas ng ating Inang Bayan. Ito'y hamon na kinakailangang mahigpit na harapin ng ating hanay.

Sa Pilipinas, isinusulong ng gubyrerno ni Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ang pagsasabatas ng mas mataas na *Value Added Tax*, *National ID System*, *Anti-Terrorism Bill* at iba pang panukalang kontra-migrante at kontra-mamamayan.

Naglabas din ng direktiba ang *Department of Justice* para manmanan ang mga OFW na naniniwala sa Islam at binansagang mga 'kontaminado ng teroristang ideya' ang mga ito.

Mayroon ding mga panukalang batas na inihain sa Kongreso na magpapalala sa walang habas na kapabayaang ng gubyrerno sa ating mga kababayan sa ibayong dagat, lalo na sa mga nangangailangan ng kagyat na tulong mula sa ating mga embahada at konsulado sa iba't-ibang panig ng mundo. Kasama rito ang tinatalakay na pag-aamyenda ng *Labor Code*, mga *anti-terrorism bills* at ang liberalisasyon ng pagdedeploy ng mga Pilipino sa ibayong dagat. Ang mga panukalang batas na ito ay walang maitutulong sa mga istranded na OFWs sa Saudi Arabia at Jordan, ang mahigit sa limang libong nakakulong at ang libo-libong nabiktima ng *overcharging*, *illegal recruitment* at iba pang paglabag sa ating karapatan bilang mga migrante.

Sa ibayong dagat naman, patuloy ang mga marahas na *crackdown* laban sa mga migranteng *undocumented* sa Malaysia, Japan, Timog Korea, United Arab Emirates at sa Estados Unidos. Dahil sa mga batas na pinapatupad sa diwa ng gyera ng terorismo ng US, dumarami ang mga '*absconder*,' at 'potensyal na teroristang' bansag sa mga Pilipinong *undocumented*.

Kung kaya't matapos nating maibasura ang mga panukalang magpataw ng *income tax* at *airport tax* sa ating hanay, dapat agresibo pa nating labanan ang mga kontra-migrante at kontra-mamamayang patakaran sa Pilipinas at sa ibayong dagat.

Mula sa mga lugar-paggawa, tanggapan at bahay tungo sa mga lansangan sa loob at labas ng bansa, kinakailangang mapangibabawan ang lahat ng isyu't problema at maglunsad ng mga aksyon at protesta laban sa tumitinding pagpapabaya ng gubyrerno sa ating hanay. Kailangan nating puspusang ilantad at tuluyang ihiwalay ang kontra-migrante at kontra-mamamayang administrasyong Macapagal-Arroyo. ♦

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Editorial

Maghanda para sa kampanyang pagpaparehistro ng mga Pilipino sa ibayong dagat!

Mag-iisang taon na matapos ang nakaraang halalan. Patuloy nating ipinapatupad ang mga gawain bilang progresibong partido ng mga migrante at pamilya sa Pilipinas at sa ibayong dagat. Ibayong paglawak at sigla ang natamo ng mga tsapter natin sa nakaraang eleksyon at patuloy na lumalahok sa mga kampanya't pakikibakang masa matapos ang eleksyon.

Maraming isinasagawa at ipinagpapatuloy na mga kampanya hinggil sa iba't ibang isyu na kinakaharap ng ating sektor at ng sambayanang Pilipino sa iba't-ibang panig ng mundo.

Sa Pilipinas, nagpupunyagi ang ating *Executive Board* at *National Secretariat* sa aktibong *lobby work* sa Kongreso at Senado para sa iba't ibang partikular na isyu ng ating sektor.

Sa sama-samang pagkilos ng mga tsapter at organisasyon ng Migrante sa loob at labas ng Pilipinas, naipabasura natin ang mga panukalang patawan tayo ng *income tax* at *airport fees*. Patuloy ang pagdinig sa ating hinapag na mga resolusyon laban sa OWWA Medicare transfer, sa abang kalagayan ng mga istranded na OFW sa Saudi Arabia at Jordan, ang pagpatay sa dalawang kababayan natin sa Netherlands, ang mga crackdown sa Malaysia, Japan, Korea at United States, at iba pa.

Tunay na hindi lamang tuwing may eleksyon nakikita ang ating partido. Patuloy tayong nagsasagawa ng serbisyong pang-kagalingan (*welfare services*), mga pag-aaral, treyning at aktibong pagla-lobby sa mataas at mababang kapulungan ng Kongreso at sa lansangan saanman tayo sa buong mundo. Naglulunsad tayo ng mga pakikibaka at kampanyang masa para sa ating karapatan, kagalingan at kahilingan bilang mga migrante at ng ating mga pamilya. Patuloy ang ating pagmumulat, pag-oorganisa at pagpapakilos para patatagin at palawakin pa ang ating progresibong partido.

Ngunit haharapin natin ang isa pang kampanya para lubusin pa at maksimahin ang ating karapatan na bumoto sa ibayong dagat (*overseas absentee voting*). Inilabas na ng Commission on Elections (COMELEC) ang *Resolution No. 7447* o ang *General Instructions for the Resumption of Registration of Qualified Overseas Absentee Voters* noong Marso 18, 2005. Ito ang "*continuing registration*" para sa migranteng Pilipino sa buong mundo.

Para sa susunod na halalan (Mayo 14, 2007) kinakailangang magparehistro bilang *overseas absentee voters* ang lahat ng mga maaabot nating mga migrante mula Oktubre 1, 2005 hanggang Agosto 31, 2006.

Ngayon pa lamang, simulan na natin ang paghahanda para sa isang malawak na kampanya para sa pagpaparehistro ng mga kababayan natin sa lahat ng panig ng mundo.

Kailangan at kaya nating lagpasan ang ating mga nakamit noong nakaraang panahon ng pagpaparehistro. Kailangan nating palawakin pa ang bilang ng mga Pilipinong mulat sa kanilang karapatang bumoto at sa pakikilahok sa maraming usaping pang-migrante at pambayan -- may eleksyon man o wala. ♦

Kontra-OFW at mamamayan ang 12% VAT

Lumahok ang MIGRANTE Sectoral Party sa lumalawak na kampanya laban sa mga bagong buwis na isinusulong ng administrasyong Macapagal-Arroyo, lalo na sa isinalaksak na House Bill 3555 o ang 12 percent Value Added Tax.

“Ipinalusot ng mga opereytor ni Pangulong Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo sa Kongreso ang House Bill 3555 na magdadagdag ng 2 porsyento sa kasalukuyang 10% Value Added Tax o VAT sa mahabang listahan ng mga bilihin at serbisyo na siyang magdadagdag pa sa mabigat nang pasanin ng maralitang publiko sa gitna na matagal nang krisis sa ekonomya,” ani Connie Bragas-Regalado, tagapangulo ng MIGRANTE Sectoral Party.

Binanggit ng Migrante sa isang pahayag na “hindi kami naniniwala sa sinasabi ng mga Kongresista ng

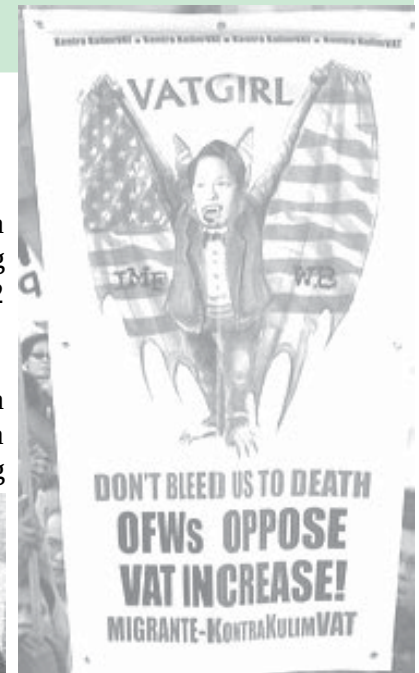


Ang malaking rali laban sa pagpasa ng VAT sa Senado noong Pebrero 16, 2005

administrasyon na “hindi matatamaan ang mga pangunahing bilihin sa pinatataas na VAT. Ang 12 % VAT sa pagmamamupaktura at pagpapakete ng asukal, kape, tinapay, mantika, sardinas, *noodles*, damit, sapatos, gamot, komunikasyon, materyales para sa konstruksyon, at iba pang produkto ay magbubunsod ng mas mataas na presyo sa mga ito. Ang malaking tipak sa anumang katiting na sweldo na nakukuha nating mga OFW sa ibayong dagat ay hindi makakahabol sa papataas na gastos para mabuhay sa Pilipinas. Ang bagong buwis na ito ay dagdag-pasanin rin sa mga OFW at kanilang pamilya.”

Ang *average cost of living* para sa isang pamilya na may anim na myembro sa National Capital Region ay P602.31 o P498.04 sa pambansang saklaw. Ang minimum na arawang sahod na itinakda ng gubyrerno (*minimum wage*), samantala, ay P250 para sa *non-agricultural workers* at P213 para sa *agricultural workers*. Ang malaking diprensya sa pagitan ng *minimum wage* at *cost of living* ay nagmumula sa P352 hanggang P389.

“Ang 12 % VAT na posibleng isasalaksak sa Senado sa loob ng Abril at ipapataw sa buong bansa ay dadamay sa lahat ng mga OFW at kanilang pamilya na pumapasan na sa malupit na *wage cuts* sa ilalim ng mga dayuhang gubyrerno at sa pangkalahatang pagpapabaya ng administrasyong Macapagal-Arroyo,” pagwakas ni Bragas-Regalado. ♦



Ang 12% VAT sa asukal, kape, tinapay, mantika, sardinas, *noodles*, damit, sapatos, gamot, komunikasyon, at iba pa ay magbubunsod ng mas mataas na presyo sa mga ito. Ang malaking tipak sa anumang katiting na sweldo na nakukuha ng mga OFW ay hindi makakahabol sa papataas na gastos para mabuhay sa Pilipinas. Dagdag-pasanin ang VAT sa mga OFW at kanilang pamilya.

Balita

I-atras ang suporta sa gyera ng US sa Iraq upang iligtas si Tarongoy!

Patuloy na nanawagan ang MIGRANTE sa Pang. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo na iligtas ang bihag na OFW sa Iraq sa pamamagitan ng pag-atras ng lahat ng suporta sa gyera sa Iraq.

Muling inihayag ng MIGRANTE Sectoral Party na “kinakailangang gawin ng guberno ang pagbawi ng lahat ng suporta nito sa gyerang agresyon ng Estados Unidos sa Iraq para mailigtas ang bisnihag na si Robert Theodore Tarongoy.”



Robert Tarongoy



Mga magulang ni Robert: Isabelita at Tomas Tarongoy.

Binihag noon pang Nobyembre 2004 si Tarongoy, kasama ang isang Amerikano, ng mga umano'y rebeldeng Iraqi mula sa Saudi Arabian Trading and Construction Corporation sa Baghdad.

Kasama sa hinihiling ng mga bumihag kay Tarongoy ang (1) pagbaklas ng 6,500 manggagawang Pilipino sa Iraq at (2) ang pagwawakas ng kooperaysong militar ng Pilipinas at Estados Unidos.

“Hindi malinaw kung ano ang ginagawa ng guberno ni Arroyo para mailigtas si Tarongoy. Maging ang 6,500 Pilipinong sibilyan na nagtatrabaho sa mga empresa't baseng militar ng US ay nagiging mga lehitimong target tuloy ng mga rebeldeng Iraqi. Kung walang pagbawi ng suporta ng guberno sa gyera ng US sa Iraq, mapapahamak pa si Tarongoy at ang mga buhay ng lahat ng OFW sa nasabing bansa,” pahayag ng MIGRANTE.

Hindi rin pinakikinggan ng Malacanang ang mismong hiling ng mga magulang ni Tarongoy noong Marso 11, 2005 na magbigay ng pampulitikang pahayag ang Pangulo sa pagbawi ng suporta nito sa pag-okupa ng US sa Iraq. ♦

Pinabayaan ng embassy kaya napugutan ang 4 na OFWs

Mariing binatikos ng Migrante Sectoral Party ang Department of Foreign Affairs “pag-amin na nagulat pa sila sa balitang napugutan ang apat na migrante sa Saudi Arabia sa salang pagpatay umano sa isang kapwa Pilipinong manggagawa.”

Binanggit lang ni Gilberto Asuque, tagapagsalita ng DFA, na “ipinaalam lang sa Philippine Embassy sa Riyadh ang pagpugot sa ulo nina Sergio Aldana, Miguel Fernandez, Wilfredo Bautista at Antonio Alviza matapos silang pugutan noong maagang bahagi ng Marso 2005.”

“Ipinapakita lang nito na walang hakbang na ginawa ang mga opisyal ng DFA at Embassy sa Riyadh para mailigtas ang buhay ng apat na OFW kahit na nakipag-ayos na ang mga pamilya nila ng *blood money* at *affidavit of forgiveness* mula sa pamilya ng pinaslang umano na Pilipino,” banggit ni Connie Bragas-Regalado, tagapangulo ng MIGRANTE Sectoral Party.

Sa ilalim ng batas ng Saudi Arabia, ang parusang kamatayan ay hindi itinutuloy kapag nagpatawad ang pamilya ng biktima sa mga akusado sa pamamagitan ng pagbigay ng *affidavit of forgiveness*. Inamin din Malacañang has na hindi nito alam na pinatawad na ng pamilya ng biktima ang apat na kapwa Pilipinong napugutan sa Saudi Arabia .

“Hindi kumilos ang guberno sa kaso ng apat na kababayan nating ito. Pinayagan lamang ng rehimeng Macapagal-Arroyo na mapugutan ang ulo nila,” ani Bragas-Regalado. ♦

**Sumali sa MIGRANTE!
Maging VOLUNTEER
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Balita

MIGRANTE Sectoral Party pormal na inilunsad sa Taiwan

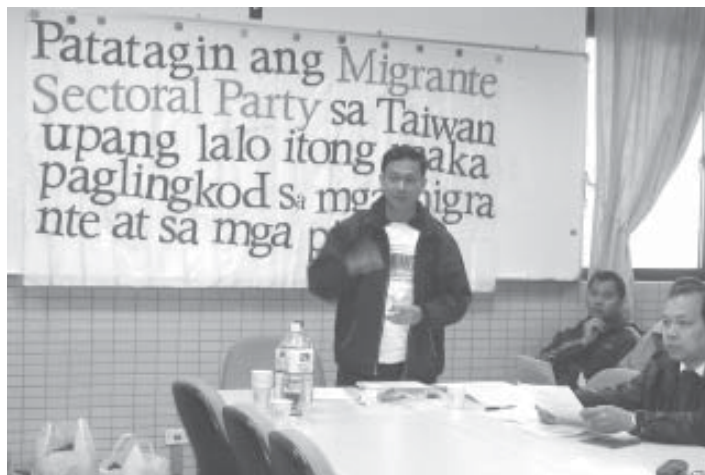
Pakikipagtulungan at mas mahusay na paglilingkod sa kapwa Pilipinong migrante sa Taiwan ang nagbunsod ng paglulunsad ng Migrante Sectoral Party-Taiwan Chapter sa kanilang matagumpay na pangkalahatang asembleya sa Taipei noong Marso 13, 2005.

“Malinaw ang itinakda naming layunin: Patatagin ang Migrante sa Taiwan para maisulong ang karapatan at kagalingan ng mga kababayang migrante,” ani Emma Lacsam, bagong halal na MSP-Taiwan Chapter Chairperson.

Inihalal din ng asembliya sina Lalaine Nava (Vice Chairperson), Gi Estrada (Secretary General), Jean Mogdingin (Deputy Secretary General), Yolly Quijano (Treasurer), at Danny Monares (Auditor). Binuo rin ang apat na komite para sa edukasyon, aktibidad, pinansya at pag-oorganisa.



ILANG opisyal at myembro ng MIGRANTE Sectoral Party Taiwan Chapter matapos ang unang General Assembly nila sa Taipeh.



SI Gi Estrada, Pangkalahatang Kalihim ng MIGRANTE Sectoral Party Taiwan Chapter sa General Assembly nila sa Taipeh.

Tatlumpu't anim na kasapi ang lumahok sa kauna-unahang pangkalahatang asembleya ng Migrante-Taiwan. Dumalo rin ang mga lokal na kinatawan ng iba't ibang lokal na non-government organizations (NGOs) tulad ng Labor Rights Association (LRA), Taiwan International Workers Association (TIWA), Taiwan Migrants Forum, at ang Chinese Federation of Labor.

Para sa mga lokal na organisasyon ng mga migranteng Pilipino, dumalo rin ang mga kinatawan ng Filipinos Married to Taiwanese Association, Genuine Ilocano Taiwan Association, Samahang Makata International, Kapulungan ng Samahang Pilipino, at ang Hsinchuang Filipino Community.

Sa matagumpay na aktibidad na ito, nagpahayag ang Migrante-Taiwan na “ang pagdalo ng iba’t-ibang organisasyon sa asembleya ng Migrante ay kasama sa mga panimulang hakbang sa pagbubuo ng kilusang migrante sa Taiwan na may mahigpit na ugnayan sa mga lokal na mga grupo.”

“Ang aking inaasam,” dagdag pa ni Lacsam, “ay maipalaganap ang Migrante Sectoral Party sa Taiwan. “Lagi kong sinasabi sa ating mga kasapi na ang pagpapatala sa membership form ay hindi sumasapat. Bilang mga kasapi, kinakailangang mulat tayo sa ating mga responsibilidad. Kailangan ang komitment. Trabaho natin na panatilihin solidong at aktibo ang ating grupo.”

Itinakda rin ng asembliya ang direksyon na tatahakin Migrante-Taiwan sa loob ng dalawang taon.

Sa kagyat, naghahanda ang Migrante-Taiwan sa pagpapakilos ng mga kababayang migrante sa Mayo 1 bilang solidarity sa mga lokal na manggagawa.

Patuloy na ipupursige ng Migrante sa Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO) na humiling sa mga awtoridad ng Taiwan na ibasura ang mga *penalty* sa mga migranteng *undocumented*; *contract substitution* at ang pagbayad ng dagdag na *placement* at *documentation fees* ng mga *re-hires*. ♦

RWAP ng MSP-Hong Kong inilunsad

HONG KONG -- Pagtitiyak para sa proteksyon at kagyat na tugon sa mga migranteng manggagawa sa buong mundo at kumilos para sa pagbibigay ng nakasasapat at angkop na serbisyo ang gobyerno.

Ito ang mga pangunahing layunin ng Rights and Welfare Assistance Program (RWAP) ng Migrante Sectoral Party sa lahat ng tsapter nito.

Dito sa Hong Kong, pormal na inilunsad ang MSP-HK-RWAP sa Leaders Kapihan na inorganisa ng United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL) noong ika-20 ng Marso sa Peak Tram, Central.

“Panahon na upang magkaroon ng komiteng tututok sa mga hinaing ng ating mga kababayang hindi agad natutugunan ang kanilang pangangailangan sa kunsulado,” ayon kay Vicky Casia-Cabantac, tagapangulo ng MSP-HK.

Kabilang sa bumubuo ng MSP-HK-RWAP sila Sol Pillas, UNIFIL vice chairperson, Goody Cadaoas, MSP coordinator, Chloebelle Dogeno, TxtPower HK spokesperson, at Cynthia Palamor, volunteer ng Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers.

Mga reklamo laban sa *Omnibus Policies* ng Overseas Workers Welfare Association (OWWA) at kapabayaang sa serbisyo ng gobyerno ang target na bigyan ng atensyon at aksyon ng komite. “Kailangang sama-sama tayong ipakita sa Gobyerno kung bakit natin hinihingi na kailangang ipawalang-bisa at ibasura ang *Omnibus Policies* ng OWWA na lumalabag sa karapatan at kagalingan ng mga OFWs at kanilang pamilya,” ayon kay Cabantac.

Ibinahagi naman nila Liberty Ambali mula sa Filipino Mission Ward Methodist Group at Mely Fernandez mula sa Mission Volunteers, ang mapait nilang karanasan sa OWWA na tumangging tumulong sa kanilang nagigipit na pamilya.

Tampok sa pulong ang kapabayaang ng konsulado sa 11 na marinong biktima ng dalawang ilegal na rekruter sa Manila. Noong una silang dumulog dito, sinabihan sila na wala silang laban sa kaso dahil wala nga silang kontratang maipakita. Mabuti pa ika’y umuwi na lang sila kaysa mag-aksaya pa ng oras sa Hong Kong.

Sa tulong ng Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers (MFMW), nakapag-extend ng visa ang mga marino sa *Immigration Department* upang sila’y makapagsampa ng kaso sa *Labour Department*. Nilubos-lubos na rin ng MFMW ang pagtulong sa paghahanap ng matitirhan at sa mga *network* na magbibigay ng suporta sa pagkain at iba pa nilang pangangailangan.

Nagpiket sa konsulado ang mga marino, kasama ang MFMW, Bethune House Migrant Women Refuge, UNIFIL, mga kasapi sa Migrante HK at iba pang mga organisasyon, upang tuligsain ang kapabayaang ng mga opisyal ng gubyerno sa mga nasa kagipitan.

Nanaig din ang kolektibong puwersa ng mga migranteng



ANG walo sa labing-isang marinong biktima ng ilegal na rekruter sa isang piket sa Konsulado sa Hong Kong.

manggagawa noong pumayag ang konsulado na magbigay ng *allowance* para sa pagkain, tirahan at pamasahang mga marino habang pinoproceso ang kanilang kaso.

Masayang-masaya ang mga marino nang manalo sila sa *Hong Kong Labour Tribunal*. Sa ngayon umuwi na sila at sa Pilipinas na hintayin ang *claims* nila sa pamamagitan ng *Wages Protection Program on Insolvency Fund* ng *Labour Department*.

Hindi nagwawakas ang kanilang kaso dito sa Hong Kong dahil maghahain din sila ng reklamo laban sa dalawang manloloko na nagpadala sa kanila. Ito ay sa tulong pa rin ng Migrante International sa Manila, ayon sa kanila.

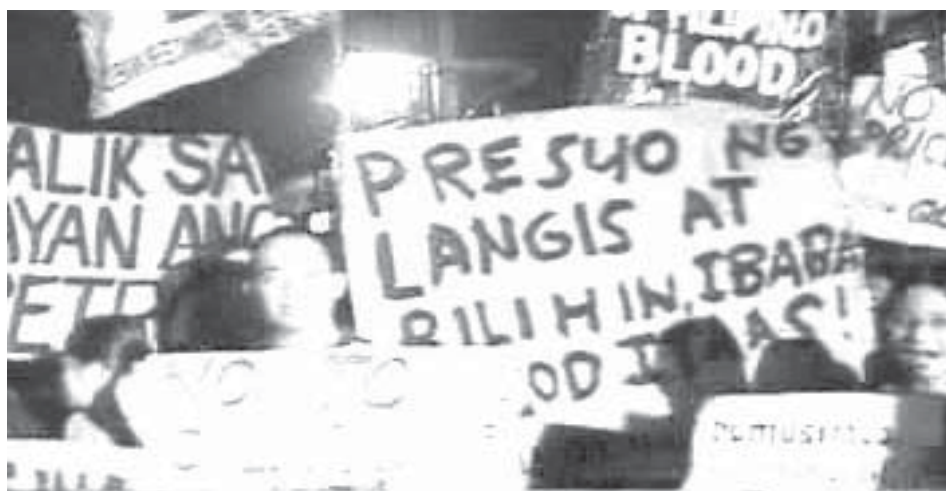
Samantala, nagsimulang mangalap ng mga reklamo ang MSP-HK-RWAP sa buong teritoryo. Ito’y bahagi ng ating programa na magsisilbing boses ng mga biktima sa mga ahensya ng gobyerno. Magbibigay din sila ng kopya sa mga kaukulang kongresista para sa maagap na imbestigasyon sa mga kaso. ♦

Dapat ibasura ang batas deregulasyon sa industriya ng langis

Binatikos ng MIGRANTE Sectoral Party ang administrasyon Macapagal-Arroyo sa “kanyang paggamit ng panlilinlang sa terminong ligal imbis na tugunan ang kahilingan ng mamamayan na agad ibasura ang batas deragulasyon sa industriya ng langis (*Oil Deregulation Law*) na sanhi ng walang ampat na pagtaas ng presyo sa produktong petrolyo na lalong nagpapahirap sa mga OFW, kanilang pamilya at sa karamihan ng populasyon ng Pilipinas.”

“Nagpahayag lang ang Malacanang na ‘repasuhin lang ang *oil deregulation law* (RA 8479).’ Hindi ito ang solusyon sa patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo ng langis. Dapat ibasura ang batas na ito at kontrolin ng gubyrerno ang presyo ng langis,” banggit ni Connie Bragas-Regalado, tagapangulo ng MIGRANTE Sectoral Party.

Matatandaan na ang unang *oil deregulation law* (RA 8180) ay ginawa upang magpalaganap umano ng “isang kumpetitibong palengke at presyuhan sa pagpapasok ng



“maliliit” na kumpanya ng langis sa bansa na monopolisado ng Pilipinas Shell, Caltex Philippines at Petron Inc.”

“Pero dahil sa malawak na protesta ng mamamayan noong 1997, pinalitan ang RA 8189 ng bagong “*Downstream Oil Deregulation Act of 1998*” (RA 8479) para sa todo-todong deregulasyon ng industriya ng langis. Tinanggal ng batas na ito ang *Oil Price Stabilization Fund* na nagbibigay dati ng subsidyo sa bawat pagtaas ng presyo ng langis at hinayaan na ang mga kumpanya ng langis na magtaas ng presyo ayon sa kanilang kagustuhan,” ani Bragas-Regalado.

Binanggit din ng Migrante ang kanilang mga hinaing sa pamahalaan para kongkretong harapin ang pagtaas ng presyo ng langis:

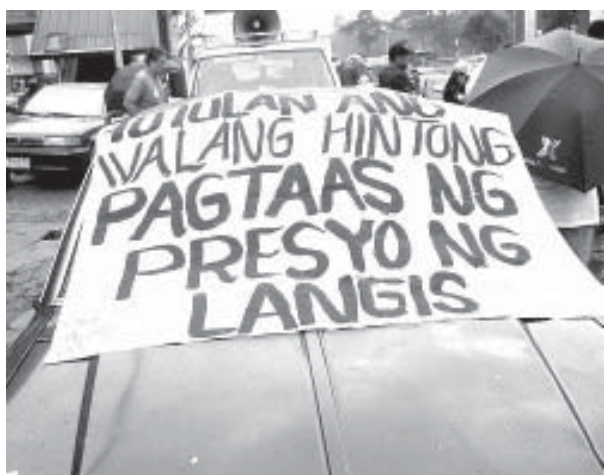
1. I-sentralisa ang pagbili ng *imported crude oil* at repinadong produktong petrolyo;

2. Kagyat na ibasura ang mga ispesipkong buwis sa mga produktong petrolyo (lalo na sa *diesel* at *liquefied petroleum gas* o LPG);

3. Ilunsad ang regular at pinakamalawak na pampublikong konsultasyon bilang rekisito bago ang anumang pagtaas ng presyo ng langis; at

4. Paglalantad ng iskema sa pagpresyo ng at *stock inventory* ng mga kumpanya ng langis sa publiko.

“Doble pasanin ng mga OFW at kanilang pamilya ang bawat pagtaas ng presyo ng langis sa Pilipinas. Kailangan na ibasura ng gubyrerno ang RA 8479 at harapin ang mga kahilingan natin para sa kapakanan ng mayorya ng mamamayang Pilipino,” wakas ni Bragas-Regalado. ♦



**I-rolbak ang presyo ng langis!
Ibasura ang Oil Deregulation Law!**

News

Foreign Affairs Committee to look into rights violations against undocumented Filipinos in Malaysia

The House Committee on Foreign Affairs has initially taken up the ongoing Malaysian crackdown on undocumented migrants as an emerging concern of the House of Representatives.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Antonio Cuenco took credence to the MIGRANTE presentation of the previous Malaysian crackdown in 2002 that told of inhumane deportation procedures and the torture of undocumented Filipinos to be deported during the said Committee's public hearing last March 15, 2005.

"The powerpoint presentation showed that any crackdown was, is, and never will be a humane procedure as what the Department of Foreign Affairs would want the public to believe. The ongoing crackdown this time may prove to be a lot worse with the news blackout in Malaysia regarding the hunt for undocumented migrants, Migrante Sectoral Party Chairperson Connie Bragas-Regalado said.

Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Jose Brillantes tried to dispute the MIGRANTE leader's statements to no avail.

"How can Usec. Brillantes dispute our data? Estimates of the Philippine government and various non-government organizations in the region place the overseas Filipino populace in Malaysia at 712,104 workers. As of December 2004, only 213,000 are considered by the Malaysian government to be legally employed, while the rest are undocumented workers (499,104)" Bragas-Regalado said.

All the jails were filled to the brim even before the crackdown that started on March 1. The Malaysian government is seeking out vacant houses and buildings to place undocumented workers it has seized from factories,

plantations, restaurants, clubs and construction sites.

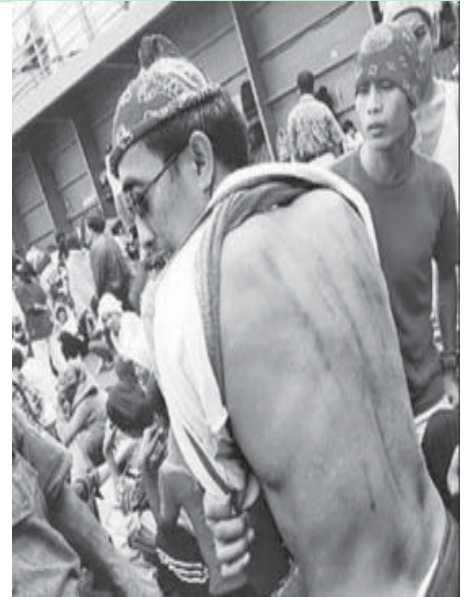
"The 560,000-strong People's Volunteer Corps (also called Relas) who were deputized to implement the crackdown will be rewarded 80 ringgits (P1,144) per undocumented migrant arrested. The Relas have not been trained in humane arrest procedures, respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Hence, the crackdown is highly open to abuse of authority and due process will not be observed," Bragas-Regalado said.

Undocumented Filipinos will be subjected to arrest, a minimum 14-day detention, caning and deportation. Those who entered as documented workers but have overstayed will not be caned. But there are no procedures on how to distinguish between undocumented workers and overstayers and those who ran away from abusive employers.

There were also media reports that those who opt for legalization of their status must pay up to 3,000 ringgits (P42,900) to the Malaysian government.

However, Rep. Cuenco demanded that Migrante provides the names of the Filipinos who were tortured or caned saying that "these are very serious allegations. You are accusing the Malaysian government of subjecting our people to torture and caning. You better provide the committee with names so that we can look deeper into this."

"We are willing to work with the Committee on Foreign Affairs to attain that end. That is why we have been urging the House to conduct an on-site fact finding mission on the detention centers in Malaysia to ascertain the conditions of our undocumented compatriots who have been caught in the crackdown," Bragas-Regalado concluded. ♦



News

Gov't now branding Muslim OFWs as terrorists!

“Baseless, highly irrational, racist and definitely anti-OFW!”

Thus declared an angry MIGRANTE Sectoral Party Chairperson Connie Bragas-Regalado on the Department of Justice order to monitor returning overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) reportedly ‘contaminated by the terrorist mentality.’

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez issued a directive on March 30 to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and Bureau of Immigration (BI) officials to monitor the entry of OFWs coming from the Middle East especially from Saudi Arabia, and even students from Islamic schools in Pakistan.

“We condemn this government witch-hunt on Muslim OFWs and scholars! Sec. Gonzalez’ claims of ‘intelligence reports revealing that some of the Muslim converts became Muslim extremists and terrorists when they returned to the Philippines’ is totally illogical and baseless. This government is again sending the wrong message to the public: that our Muslim brothers and sisters are a violent people. Now they include our Muslim Filipino compatriots who were forced to work and/or study in the Middle East due to the lack of opportunities here in the country and the government’s war against Muslim communities that have destroyed the Madrasahs and even mosques time and again since the 1970s. This is definitely anti-Muslim and anti-OFW,” Bragas-Regalado charged.

Migrante also said that “the DOJ order stinks of the United States government’s concept of Homeland Security, racial profiling and terrorist branding and witchhunting.”

“The said order has practically branded all OFWs who believe in Islam as ‘potential terrorists.’ It is a witchhunt on the very people who government always claims as the country’s ‘new economic heroes.’ This is actually a copycat tactic of the Department of Justice. They are mimicking the illogical and baseless tirades of the United States government towards Muslims and other nationalities. The DOJ order must be immediately scrapped by Malacanang,” Bragas-Regalado ended. ♦

Singapore laws are definitely anti-migrant

The MIGRANTE Sectoral Party criticized the Department of Labor and Employment of officials for deceiving the public for saying that “Singapore is good destination for overseas Filipino workers due to its new measures enacted in the city-state.”

“Labor undersecretary Manuel Imson is misleading the public in calling the new Foreign Manpower Division (FMD) of the Singaporean government as a ‘welfare protective agency for legally employed foreigners.’ But a careful examination of the Immigration Amendment Act of 2004 passed by the Singapore legislature in November 16, 2004 reveals that this new office was created to crackdown on undocumented migrant workers that include Filipina domestics who enter Singapore on tourist visas,” MIGRANTE Chairperson Connie Bragas-Regalado said.

The Department of Labor and Employment furthered that “the FMD, under the Ministry of Manpower (MoM), is tasked to protect foreign workers, improve professionalism among employment agencies and strengthen employment enforcement by conducting spot checks on employers of foreigners.”

“But Philippine labor officials ignore the fact that under this Immigration Law, the Singapore Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) and MoM have provided an online verification service wherein any Singaporean can verify the status of their tenants directly with ICA and MoM. This provision will render undocumented Filipino workers, especially those who entered Singapore on tourist visas, prone to arrest at airports, roads, seaports and be penalized with fines and jail terms. Migrant workers who enter on tourist

visas are illegal under the said law,” Bragas-Regalado said.

Among others, a levy will be exacted from migrant workers with a S\$2,500 basic monthly salary.

Also a former domestic worker in Singapore, Bragas-Regalado added that “the Singapore government’s FMD, MoM and ICA will not improve the services and protection of OFWs as the DOLE would want to project. It will only intensify the existing anti-migrant policies and exact revenues from undocumented workers in the police-state.”

Migrante also pressed Philippine labor officials to “stop praising the Singapore government for creating new anti-migrant policies. The adverse impacts of the Immigration Law amendment should be studied so that appropriate contingency measures can be taken to protect the undocumented Filipinos in the police-state.” ♦

MIGRANTE Position Papers

New Immigration Law will penalize victims of human trafficking in Japan

The Migrante Sectoral Party has called on the Philippine government to clear the air and appropriately respond to a new immigration control law that would ride roughshod on victims of human trafficking in Japan.

Law No. 73 enacted by the Japanese Diet on June 2, 2004 for the Partial Amendment of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in its 159th session is in reaction to a supposed “deterioration of public security” and to address rampant human trafficking.

When issues and laws of “public security” – a euphemism for anti-terror legislation – crop up, victims of human trafficking, undocumented migrant workers and foreign residents become targets of inhumane procedures that include warrantless arrests, jail terms, steep fines and deportation.

Technically, most of all the 304,678 Filipinos in Japan may be subjected to the harsh penalties and procedures of the new Japanese law.

Effective last December 2, 2004, the said Immigration Control aims to immediately decrease the number of the estimated 250,000 ‘illegal foreign residents’ that include at least 31,000 Filipino overstayers, 82,000 Filipino entertainers, and thousands of Filipino wives whose residency status can be revoked by the Japanese government.

Overstaying entertainers, trainees and undocumented Filipino workers (also called ‘bilogs’) who comprise the bulk of Filipinos in Japan will be criminalized by this new law. Human traffickers will go scot free and will continue to amass

The new immigration law and the crackdown on undocumented Filipinos in Japan will not address the issue of human trafficking. It will only raise revenues for the Japanese authorities by further penalizing Filipino victims of human trafficking.



The Philippine government has so far only expressed concern for the possible loss of the annual average of US\$1 billion in remittances from Filipinos in Japan. It is only seeking a 2-5 year moratorium in the implementation of the new immigration law and looking for other countries to deploy Filipina entertainers. Both the Philippine and Japanese governments are in fact perpetrators in the trafficking of Filipinas.

Seeking a moratorium on the new immigration law is only staving off an impending tsunami of further abuse and criminalization of our compatriots in Japan. Government should exact all measures to protect the

democratic rights and welfare of Filipinos in Japan who are targets of the new immigration law.

profits out of the blood and sweat of migrant workers.

Under the new immigration law, victims will meted bigger fines (for Y2 million to Y3 million) and jail terms. They shall also be deported as illegal aliens and will not be allowed to enter Japan for a longer period than before. Moreover, victims of human trafficking, have very little access to legal remedies, psychological and financial support from the Japanese government.

Finally, the Philippine government must pursue the creation of stable job alternatives and livelihood opportunities for our people, especially our women, so that they are not forced into the web of human trafficking in Japan and elsewhere in the world. ♦

MIGRANTE Position Papers

On the Plight of Stranded Filipina Workers in Jordan

The MIGRANTE Sectoral Party has taken the plight of at least fifty (50) Filipina overseas workers who ran away from abusive Jordanian employers who are stranded at the Philippine Embassy in Amman, Jordan to the halls of Congress.

These Filipina OFWs, including two pregnant women and a rape victim, have been requesting for the immediate settlement of their respective cases and repatriation assistance from the said embassy.

Reports of abused OFWs who were repatriated from Jordan by the Department of Foreign Affairs after the MIGRANTE's intervention point to officials of the Philippine embassy, namely Philippine Ambassador to Jordan Ruperto Dizon, Consul Aric Arevalo, Embassy Administrative Officer Atty. Edmundo Venturanza and Welfare Officer Evelyn Laranang as the culprits of the practice of returning distressed OFWs to their respective recruitment agencies in Jordan if they cannot pay for their deployment and repatriation expenses; with at least two of the said OFWs (Christine Bautista and Dalmacia Fornillos) to be returned on March 20 and 24, 2005 respectively to their abusive recruitment agencies.

The DFA for its part, stated in a press release dated March 1, 2005, that Ambassador Dizon is said to have met with Jordan's Border and Residency Directorate-General Mohammed Khalef Al-Jariri on the concerns of OFWs last February 2005. The dialogue supposedly focused on the processing of residency and work permits, the reporting and facilitation of speedy resolution of OFW cases in Jordan. But nothing was mentioned on the plight of at least 50 runaways at the Philippine Embassy in Jordan.

The plight of women OFWs in Jordan is made worse by Philippine embassy officials and the DFA. Despite the



presence of a P100 million Assistance to Nationals (ATN) fund that covers repatriation of distressed OFWs, the DFA continues to refuse the distressed Filipino workers' appeals for repatriation.

Worse, the DFA even continues to pass on the responsibility of repatriation to the distressed families of the abused OFWs by asking them to shoulder thousands of dollars in payment for the said expenses including penalties for overstaying. These wicked actions of officials at the embassy and the DFA violate Section 27 of the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (Republic Act No. 8042) that mandates the Priority Concerns of Philippine Foreign Service Posts under the country team approach, as enunciated under Executive Order No. 74, series of 1993, stating that "the protection of the Filipino migrant workers and the promotion of their welfare, in particular, and the protection of the dignity and fundamental rights and freedoms of the Filipino citizen abroad, in general, shall be the highest priority concerns of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and the Philippine Foreign Service Posts.

Also, Section 58 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 8042 mandates that in all cases where the workers are in need and without means,

the OWWA personnel at job site, in coordination with the DFA, shall cause the repatriation of the distressed workers.

Congress and the public were not consistently advised by the Philippine government, through Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) Memorandum Circular Nos. 29 and 33, that the deployment of domestic workers to Jordan following reports of unabated maltreatment and exploitation of our nationals was banned in 1990.

But MIGRANTE and various media outfits discovered POEA records showing that 3,600 Filipinos worked in Jordan from 1990 to 1995 and 2,928 from 1996 to 2000; indicating that the POEA still deployed domestic workers to the said country despite the ban.

To date, according to DFA stock data on OFWs, majority (about 7,000) of the 12,343 Filipinos in Jordan are either irregular or undocumented domestic workers. These include the 50 runaway domestic workers in the embassy in Jordan. The continued deployment of the POEA despite the ban that was recently lifted by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) contributed to the continued rise of abused OFW cases in Jordan.

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MIGRANTE Position Papers

The unsolved murders of Veneranda “Bebe” Pana and Divina Benebenze “Beth” Urbi *A clear case of criminal neglect towards overseas Filipinos by the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Macapagal-Arroyo Administration*

by the MIGRANTE Sectoral Party, MIGRANTE-Europe and MIGRANTE International
14 March 2005

Two Filipinas Murdered in The Netherlands

What was almost hidden from the Filipino public by the Macapagal-Arroyo government are events that have ended the lives of two of our female compatriots in Europe.

Veneranda “Bebe” Paña, a 32 year-old teacher and native of Cebu was declared missing in The Netherlands on January 19, 2001 by the Dutch government.

The Dutch police dismissed the disappearance of Bebe in 2002 as an unsolved case.

But interest in the case and extensive coverage by the Dutch media increased. After being prodded into reviving the case by a Dutch TV producer, Peter de Vries, a popular crime reporter in The Hague who was approached by members of the Filipino community, the police re-opened Bebe’s case.

Bebe’s second Dutch husband, Dr. Edwin Tenwinkel of Neunen, The Netherlands is the prime suspect in her murder.

Last January 19, 2005, the Dutch police found a body under the living room of the house of Elmer Tenwinkel, Edwin’s twin brother. A subsequent DNA test established that the body was indeed Bebe’s.

While Edwin and Elmer were both initially put under police custody, Elmer has since been released. The Pana family with the help of Filipino organizations in Holland, was able to reverse a Dutch court decision that would have granted the Tenwinkel family custody of Bebe’s

remains on March 1. As such, Bebe’s body has since been repatriated to Cebu last March 5.

After Bebe’s disappearance in 2001, Tenwinkel claimed variously that she had gone home to Cebu and that she was undergoing medication in The Netherlands and was going home to her family soon.

Tenwinkel consistently spun different lies when he came to the Philippines. He told Bebe’s family that she was in The Netherlands. While in his homeland, Tenwinkel would tell people that Bebe went home to the Philippines.

Bebe was almost cremated and buried in The Netherlands last February 17 after the Dutch Justice Ministry released her remains to Edwin’s family. The burial was stopped at the last minute after a Dutch court issued an injunction that same day. It must be noted that the Philippine Embassy only made representations for the Paña family on February 15.

The issue of Bebe’s murder became a national issue in The Netherlands. Various organizations such as Stichting Silangan, Stichting Pinay sa Holland-GABRIELA, MIGRANTE-Europe, and various communities of Filipinos and other citizens in Holland, Norway, Canada, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, Germany, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Hong Kong, Macau, Thailand and MIGRANTE International in the Philippines have pressured the Dutch authorities to release the remains of Bebe.

The campaign for justice for Bebe continues.

These supporters have even had to raise funds to help in the lobbying efforts for the case of Bebe. This is inspite of the fact that the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has been allocated funds by Congress for the purposes of legal assistance and repatriation of overseas Filipinos in distress.

But the Philippine Embassy in The Hague most likely did not inform the DFA of Bebe’s mysterious disappearance and her husband’s most likely culpability for her disappearance. The Dutch national media has given a lot of attention to Bebe since she had gone missing that makes it very unlikely that Bebe’s disappearance had not come to the attention to the Philippine Embassy in The Hague.

Clearly, the Philippine Embassy in The Hague ignored the case of Bebe for four years. It acted only after being confronted by the lobbying made by Filipino organizations and the cases (of both Bebe and Beth), have hugged prime time coverage by the Dutch media.

Another Filipino who was working as a nanny of Edwin Tenwinkel was also found dead in his home in March 4, 2002.

Divina Benebenze “Beth” Urbi, 41 year-old widow and an overseas Filipino worker from Rosario, Cavite was found dead in her room after only a few months of work. An autopsy report ruled out foul play and her body was subsequently cremated. The family had been demanding an autopsy report but has not received it to this day.

Beth was hired by Edwin Tenwinkel to care for his young son in late 2001 since Bebe was then “missing.”

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MIGRANTE Position Papers

Now that Edwin Tenwinkel is the primary suspect in the murder of Bebe and despite clues provided by the Dutch media that Edwin is also likely involved in Beth's mysterious death, what is the Philippine Embassy in The Hague doing to pursue the case of Beth?

These two cases are affronts to the dignity and well-being not only of the departed Bebe and Beth. It has not only grossly offended the bereaved families of our two compatriots. It gravely insults us as a nation and as a people.

Negligence of the DFA

In these types of cases, the Department of Foreign Affairs with its avowed "highest standards of professionalism and commitment," should work for social justice, human rights and thus, its missions abroad are the partners of Filipinos overseas in the pursuit of the national interest and in the promotion and protection of their rights and well-being.

In fact under the leadership of Secretary Alberto Romulo, the DFA claims to have a highly responsive system, which ensures effective delivery of services to overseas Filipinos.

It is further stated in its mission that the DFA is to advance the interests of the Philippines and the Filipino people in the world community.

Bearing this in mind, the mandate of the Philippine Embassy to The Hague in the Netherlands in advancing the interests of Filipinos in its area of responsibility is to vigorously pursue cases such as those of Veneranda "Bebe" Paña and Divina Benebenze "Beth" Urbi.

The DFA has bragged in its press statement dated March 8, 2005 that a total of P825,000 was spent by the Department for the services of a lawyer and other requirements for the repatriation of Bebe's remains.

But the conduct of the DFA and the post in The Hague in the ongoing cases of

Paña and Urbi in the Dutch Courts shows that Sec. Romulo and his personnel, particularly Ambassador Romeo Arguelles in The Netherlands are neglecting their duties.



The late Veneranda "Bebe" Paña

At the very least, they have violated Sections 2, 23 and 27 of the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (Republic Act No. 8042). By neglecting the cases of Bebe and Beth by the DFA and the post in The Hague violated the following Sections of the said Act:

In neglecting the said cases, failing to make timely and appropriate representations with the appropriate Dutch authorities to pursue justice for the two Filipinas, Sec. Romulo and Ambassador Arguelles violated **Section 2 (a)** of the said Act that states that "the State shall, at all times, uphold the dignity of its citizens whether in the country or overseas, in general" and **Section 23 (a)** that mandates the "Department of Foreign Affairs through its home office or foreign posts, shall take priority action or make representation with the foreign authority concerned to protect the rights of migrant workers and other overseas Filipinos and extend immediate assistance."

Romulo and Arguelles also violated **Section 27** of the same law that stipulates the Priority Concerns of Philippine Foreign Service Posts wherein the DFA and the Philippine embassies and consulates shall work for the "the protection of the dignity and fundamental rights and freedoms of the Filipino citizen abroad" as "the highest priority concerns of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and the Philippine Foreign Service Posts."

It also very absurd for the Macapagal-Arroyo administration to heap awards to Filipino immigrants who have "made it" abroad, while its Foreign Affairs portfolio states that the case of Bebe, who was a Dutch citizen at the time of her death, should be left to the mercy of the Dutch justice system.

Our Recommendations

1. The two victims' families and migrant organizations demand that justice be pursued by a responsible and responsive Philippine government.

The Philippine government must call for the immediate arrest, prosecution and appropriate conviction of Edwin and Elmer Tenwinkel that no whitewash is done by the Dutch Justice Ministry.

2. All forms of government support must be extended to the bereaved families of Veneranda Paña and Divina Benebenze Urbi in the pursuit of justice for their deaths.

3. An immediate investigation on how the Department of Foreign Affairs, under the leadership of Sec. Alberto Romulo, spends its annual budget, including the Assistance to Nationals Fund and the Emergency Repatriation Fund.

The increasing appropriations Congress allots annually to the DFA that amounted to P4.096 billion in 2003; P4.9 billion in 2004 and P5.02 billion this year.

The performance of the DFA and its post in The Netherlands reveals the criminal neglect of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration towards overseas Filipinos. It deserves a full-blown investigation by Congress. ♦

MIGRANTE Position Papers

From Executive Order 182 (s. 2003) to Executive Order 392 (s. 2004): **Completing Total Disservice to OFWs and their Families**

OWWA and it's Mandate

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) is a Philippine government agency attached to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). The agency is mandated, *first*, to provide welfare assistance to registered overseas workers and their dependents; and *second*, to ensure the viability of the Welfare Fund.

This twin mandate presents a continuing challenge for OWWA to strike the right balance in managing and safekeeping the Fund while at the same time, extending programs and services to its rightful beneficiaries – our overseas Filipino workers and their families. With the passage of the Migrant Workers and the Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (RA 8042), OWWA is expected to strengthen and expand its mantle of services for the Filipino overseas contract workers and their families.

Sad to say, the OWWA has been besieged with a series of scams threatening the Fund and the welfare assistance programs it is mandated to provide to at least 3.6 million registered overseas workers and their dependents.

The coming transfer of a sizable chunk of the trust funds held at the OWWA will happen soon with the highly immoral and questionable Executive Orders 182 (s. 2003) and 392 (s. 2004)

Anomalous Transfer of the OWWA Medicare Fund

On February 14, 2003, the President of the Republic signed Executive Order No. 182 that mandated the transfer of the Medicare Fund and the medicare functions of the OWWA to the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth). This is devoid of consultations among the migrant organizations and without the knowledge of the OWWA Board of



PhilHealth president Francisco Duque told President Macapagal-Arroyo that ***"It is respectfully requested that the Proposed Executive Order (EO 182) be approved by Her Excellency before the year ends. The proposed transfer will have a significant bearing on 2004 elections and on the President's desire to provide health insurance to 8M indigents by end of 2003."***

Executive Order 392 only amended the controversial EO 182 and fast-tracked the transfer of P530,382,446 of the OFW Medicare Fund from the OWWA to the PhilHealth.

Duque recently revealed that PhilHealth lost at least P520 million to padded or fake insurance claims. So was the anomalous transfer of more than P530 million from the OWWA aimed at keeping the glowing figures and claims of efficiency that he always boasts of in media interviews and Congressional inquiries?

Trustees as two of its members, POEA Administrator Rosalinda Baldoz and Cora Carsola, the only OFW representative in the OWWA Board, had firmly disagreed to the transfer.

Ms. Carsola was only informed of the existence of EO 182 on June 2003.

The idea of transferring the OWWA Medicare fund, which is a ***Trust Fund***, to PhilHealth came from the President and CEO of the PhilHealth itself, Dr. Francisco Duque based on his Memorandum for the President dated November 20, 2002.

Dr. Duque made mention in his Memo for the President that ***"It is respectfully requested that the Proposed Executive Order (EO) be approved by Her Excellency before the year ends. The Proposed transfer will have a significant bearing on 2004 elections and on the President's desire to provide health insurance to 8M indigents by end of 2003."***

These words reveal the real intent of the transfer of the overseas Filipino workers' Medicare fund from OWWA to PhilHealth in the context of E.O. 182. The MIGRANTE Sectoral Party, United Filipino in Hong Kong (UNIFIL), Migrante International and other migrant organizations in the country and abroad have consistently exposed and opposed this evil scheme. They view the anomalous transfer was a Malacañang political move to amass more campaign funds for Arroyo's election bid in May 2004.

In a forum held on July 6, 2003 at the Philippine Consulate in Hong Kong, PhilHealth's Dr. Duque admitted that effecting the transfer without consulting the stakeholders of the trust fund is an "oversight."

He was asked also to explain what he meant by *"The proposed transfer will*

have a significant bearing on 2004 elections...” in his November 20, 2002 Memo for the President. He replied that he “just wanted to build up the name of the President” to the 8 million indigents – which they think are possible voters.

The trio of the President’s lackeys, Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, former OWWA Administrator Virgilio Angelo, and PhilHealth CEO Francisco Duque have exerted all possible ways to cause this grave anomaly.

Despite formal petitions and protests from OFWs and their families and pending investigations at the House of Representatives, OWWA Board Resolution No. 005 (s. 2004) dated February 2, 2004 proves that the transfer of OWWA Medicare funds to PhilHealth was being railroaded by Macapagal-Arroyo stooges in the labor portfolio.

For being at the head of the devious transfer of OFW health care funds, President Macapagal-Arroyo is advancing selfish political ambitions at the expense of OFWs’ health services. The pursuit of this grave anomaly shows that President Arroyo is not concerned with the rights and welfare of OFWs. It is obvious that the President’s concern lies in the OFW funds that are not government money in the first place.

In the House of Representatives various legislators filed many Resolutions including your Resolutions requesting to recall E.O. 182 (HR No. 03), investigate the use of OWWA funds (HR Nos. 04, 28 and 33) and annul OWWA Board Resolution No. 005 (HR No. 552).

These Resolutions are supported by OFWs and their families. These efforts are being blocked by Malacanang operators in Congress.

Despite firm opposition of OFWs and their families and the Resolutions filed by the House of Representatives to recall Executive Order 182, President Macapagal-Arroyo and her allies in Congress defied the legislature’s efforts to protect the OFW Medicare fund and went ahead to issue Executive Order 392 dated December 28, 2004, entitled

“Transfer of the Medicare Functions of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration to the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation and Amending for the Purpose Executive Order 195 dated August 13, 1994.”

Executive Order 392 only amended E.O. 182 and fast-tracked the impending hideous transfer of at least P530,382,446 of the OFW Medicare Fund from the OWWA to the PhilHealth on March 1, 2005! PhilHealth Board Resolution No. 760 (s. 2005) is itself the Implementing Rules and Regulations of E.O. 182 as amended by E.O. 392.

Nature of the OWWA Medicare Fund

The Medicare Fund is a trust fund as are all funds at the OWWA. The Medicare fund is taken from the contributions of P900 from each OFW. The fund is intended for the medical needs of OFWs and their identified dependents/beneficiaries only.

We have expressed our fears that the OWWA Medicare fund will be misplaced and be diluted by the capricious and selfish acts of top-ranking corrupt officials in the labor department headed by the President of the Republic herself.

The anomalous transfer of the OWWA Medicare fund to PhilHealth and other big scams at the OWWA against OFWs deserve to be investigated and the culprits prosecuted.

The efforts by the Macapagal-Arroyo’s minions to smokescreen rampant graft and corruption in the labor department with bogus and anti-migrant programs cannot exonerate Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Patricia Sto. Tomas, Virgilio Angelo, current OWWA Administrator Marianito Roque and Francisco Duque from culpability.

Executive Orders 182 (s. 2003) and 392 (s. 2004) aim to take away what little OFWs have in OWWA Medicare. The said Orders are highly arbitrary, devoid of due process, and aim to immorally transfer a huge chunk of OFW health care funds to the detriment of OFWs and their families.

The various trust funds at the OWWA have been subject to various scams at the behest of the President herself. Executive Orders 182 and 392 are just some of the highly questionable moves to take out more funds from the OWWA, there are more scams to be uncovered.

We reiterate that the OFW Medicare Fund and all funds at the OWWA are not state funds. It is only administered by the OWWA and is not meant for the furtherance of selfish ambitions, most especially that of President Macapagal-Arroyo. ♦

On the Plight of Stranded Filipina Workers in Jordan (from page 11)

The plight of the abused OFWs in the Philippine embassy in Jordan will get worse with the continued negligence of Philippine officials in the Philippine embassy, DFA and POEA.

Hence, MIGRANTE urges the Special Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs to jointly conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, into the status of abused Filipina overseas workers stranded at the Philippine Embassy in Amman, Jordan.

Focus should also be given to the highly questionable practice of returning Filipina domestic workers to abusive employers and recruitment agencies being done by DFA and embassy officials and the possible administrative and criminal liability of the POEA for the continued sending of domestic workers to Jordan despite the government’s deployment ban on domestic and unskilled workers to Jordan from 1990 to 2005.

Finally, the said House Committees should also cause the Department of Foreign Affairs to submit a full report on how the P100 million Assistance to Nationals (ATN) fund has been disbursed through the years to determine if it has been actually used for the purpose of assisting our distressed compatriots abroad. ♦

Marunong ka lang magbilang



Marunong ka lang magbilang
sa mga sumusunod:

ang US\$8.5 bilyong remitans
kada taon

ang pondong pang-ayuda
mula sa mga Amerkano at
Hapon

ang milyon-milyon na unti-
unting ninanakaw mula sa
pondo ng OWWA

at ang mga napilitang
maghanap ng trabaho sa
labas ng bansa.

Di ka nababahala

sa dami ng nakakulong sa
ibayong dagat

sa pagsuporta mo sa gyera
ng ibang bansa

kahit sa aming
ikakapahamak

sa libo-libong ginigipit ng
mga gubyerno at pamahalaan
mo mismo

tuloy pa rin ang pagsabay mo
kay Bush sa kanyang
paghalakhak

at puro na lang 'bagong
bayani' ang sa ami'y
isinasatsat.

Huwag mong asahan, na di
ka gagantihan

sa loob at labas ng
minamahal na Inang Bayan

dahil hindi mananatiling
tahimik ang aping
mamamayan.