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Roberto Arradaza (right) receiving his certificate from Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca. AJPress Photo by Rene Villaroman

Fil-Am graduates from Deputy Sheriff Academy, Class # 377

SANTA CLARITA - Roberto Arradaza, 31, a native of Baybay, Leyte, and former termite inspector, is one of 36 recruits that belonged to Sheriff Academy Class number 377. On Thursday, July 23, Arradaza and 36 other recruits received their deputy certificates from Sheriff Lee Baca during graduation ceremonies held at College of the Canyons.

"This is really my dream job. I really want to be a peace officer since I was young," Arradaza told *Asian Journal* minutes after he and his classmates posed for a group picture, following the graduation ceremonies. He looked sharp in his teal green uniform with a gleaming deputy sheriff's badge

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'My term ends in 2010' - GMA

by PAOLO ROMERO
 Philstar.com

MANILA - President Arroyo came out swinging on July 27 at her critics in her last State of the Nation Address (SONA), defending her style of governance and vowing to continue to "fight" for the welfare of ordinary Filipinos and the economy up to the last day of her term in June 2010.

"At the end of this speech I shall step down from this stage, but not from the presidency. My term does not end until next year. Until then, I will fight for the ordinary Filipino. The nation comes first. There is much to do as head of state - to the very last day," Pres. Arroyo said.

and sporting a hairstyle similar to what she had when she was sworn into office in 2001, Pres. Arroyo started her SONA with a prayer for the cancer-stricken former President Corazon Aquino, whom she later cited in her speech.

She said under her administration, the economy grew

Wearing a magenta *terno*

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FACING THE NATION. The image of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is projected on a large screen during her State of the Nation Address at the House of Representatives in suburban Quezon City, north of Manila, on Monday July 27. Arroyo, faced with a prospect of civil unrest unless she steps down next year, vowed Monday not to seek a fresh term as she defended her record during turbulent 8 1/2-years in office. AP Photo by Aaron Favila

Schwarzenegger signs \$85B budget with more welfare cuts

by JUDY LIN
 Associated Press

SACRAMENTO - Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger made additional cuts to child welfare programs, medical care for the poor and AIDS prevention efforts Tuesday as he signed an \$85 billion compromise spending plan that he called "the good, the bad and the ugly."

Schwarzenegger used his line-item veto authority to save an additional \$656 million that will let the state restore a reserve fund he says is needed for tough times.

The vetoes include \$80 million from child welfare programs; \$61 million in county funding to administer Medi-Cal, California's version of Medicaid; \$52 million from AIDS prevention and treatment; \$50 million to Healthy Families, the low-cost health insurance program for poor children; and \$6.2 million more from state parks.

"Those are ugly cuts and I'm the only one that is really responsible for those cuts because the Legislature left, they didn't want

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House Dems struggle on health care

by ERICA WERNER
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON - Top House Democrats sought to minimize the impact of a near-certain missed deadline for health care legislation on Tuesday as the leadership struggled to ease the concerns of rank-and-file critics.

"I'm disappointed of course because I really hoped that we could have gotten a bill out of here by the end of this month," said Rep. Charles Rangel, D-NY, and chairman of one of the three committees at work on the measure.

"The issue is critical. Whether we do

it at the end of July or not, I don't think that's critical except the perception in terms that the Congress didn't respond to the request of the president."

President Barack Obama had asked Congress to advance legislation through both houses by the time lawmakers leave on a monthlong summer vacation, a plea that now appears unlikely to be met.

Obama has worked intensively to reassure the public about his health care proposals at a time when Republicans have stepped up their criticism and polls suggest a leveling in public support. He arranged an early afternoon town hall-style meeting at the headquarters of AARP, the

huge advocacy group for seniors.

Among the problems facing Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the House leadership is a rebellious group of conservative and moderate Democrats demanding changes in legislation as the price for voting it out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

The fiscally conservative Blue Dogs were at odds with the leadership over setting rates for the payments to doctors and other health care providers under a proposed government-run health plan that would compete with private insurance. The House bill models the pay-

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Villar: 2010 polls to push through

by CHRISTINA MENDEZ
 Philstar.com

MANILA - Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. said on July 28 he believed that elections will push through in 2010.

"I still believe that it's more than 50 percent (sure) that elections will push through. It's not easy to simply postpone the elections because we (candidates) are already in a campaign mode," Villar told The STAR.

"It has become more difficult now to stop the elections because everybody is campaigning already, including the local candidates. As we move closer to November, the locals, senatoriables and even the presidential candidates would have already campaigned a lot, making any attempt to stop it no longer feasible," Villar said.

He expressed confidence that President Arroyo would step down

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Cory's health worsens

by AUREA CALICA
 Philstar.com

MANILA - Former President Corazon Aquino's son Sen. Benigno Aquino III disclosed that his mother's condition deteriorated on July 28 due to fluctuating blood pressure.

Aquino said for several weeks there had been no major change in the condition of his mother until the afternoon of July 28.

"The doctors said the condition changed from stable to guarded. Her blood pressure fluctuated, meaning (her condition) worsened. When it's stable

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Discuss lower remittance fees with Obama - TUCP

MANILA - President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo should push for reduced American bank remittance charges when she meets United States President Barack Obama in Washington on July 30, the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) said Sunday.

"Instead of begging for more US development aid, the (Philippine) government should push for lower money transfer charges, which would essentially allow more remittances from migrant Filipino work-

ers to flow into the (Philippine) economy," said TUCP secretary-general and former Senator Ernesto Herrera in a statement.

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and their families here could save up to \$1.1 billion or P52.8 billion annually if current money transfer fees that average 13.5 percent per transaction are cut in half, according to Herrera, former chairman of the Senate committee on labor, employment, and human resources development.

Herrera singled out the second largest US bank, Wells Fargo & Co., which collects \$20 for every bank-to-bank remittance to the Philippines.

"Assuming a Filipino worker in California sends money home at least once a month, at \$20 for every transfer, over 12 months he or she would have spent a total of \$240 (or P11,520 at \$1:P48) in remittance charges alone. This is already equivalent to a whole month's pay for a

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