

# Economy to grow by as much as 4 percent this year - Villegas

by TED TORRES  
Philstar.com

MANILA – A top economist has forecast Philippine economic growth to expand by as much as four percent this year and a further six percent in 2010, powered by higher remittances, consumer spending and infrastructure projects ahead of the national elections next year.

University of Asia and Pacific (UAP) senior vice president Dr. Bernardo M. Villegas said they earlier predicted gross domestic product (GDP) to grow 2.5 percent this year and four percent in 2010.

Villegas said to be able to ensure growth this year and carry that over to 2010, the country must look to increasing growth activities for domestic tourism,



Dr. Bernardo M. Villegas

medical tourism and retirement villages.

He also called for further expansion in the areas of mining and energy investments to keep the economy competitive while reducing foreign currency losses due to increased reliance on indigenous energy sources.

However, Villegas said eco-  
▶ PAGE A20

# A nation reunites for 'Icon of Democracy'

by MARIE ANGELI SYJUECO  
AJPpress

MANILA—The Filipino nation is once again united as they were back on the streets to pay their last respects to the mother of the Philippine nation.

History could tell how former President Corazon Cojuangco Aquino had united the people in a fight for democracy. And in her lifetime she had done this not just once, at the EDSA People Power Revolution, but up to her death.

She had been a symbol of democracy. A widow and a mother who took up the courage to continue what her husband, Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, had fought for. And when she became the first woman president of the Philippines, she became the mother to the entire Filipino nation.

It was raining, but this did not stop the people from flocking the streets just to witness

what is to become a part of the Philippine history. The last time this happened was at the funeral of Cory's late husband, Ninoy. And truly, Cory, now a national hero herself, deserves this tribute.

At the LRT stations, the song *Tie a Yellow Ribbon* played endlessly, paying tribute to this day. It's a song closely identified to Cory during the People Power Revolution as a protest against the Marcos regime.

Everywhere, people wore yellow shirts, some even with Cory's face printed on it and written was "We love Cory." Many others pinned yellow ribbons on their clothes, some were tied on cars, and even on the lamp post or trees on the streets.

This yellow ribbon was a symbol of waiting for a loved one. For the Filipinos, it is a symbol of waiting for freedom, for democracy and for peace.

At the Quirino station, there

were a lot of policemen but they were not there to disperse ralliers. They were one with their countrymen. From the station the people waited and looked for a place to get a better look of the late president for one last time.

As early as 11am, the crowd started to thicken. And at the nearby fastfood restaurants, people had their early lunch as they waited for Cory's funeral procession to pass by. They watched the live telecast of the mass held at the Manila Cathedral on their phones and got emotional as Lea Salonga sang *Bayan Ko*.

Supporters stood under the rain and waited patiently, barely noticing the time that slowly passed by. There were both laughter and sadness in the crowd, and it was Cory who brought these people back together.

There was even the miracle of sharing as a couple gave away burgers to the multitudes of people waiting in the streets for the procession. It was as if the Filipino people, who have been divided by their political beliefs, were once again brothers and sisters, sharing the grief of losing a mother.

Everyone was doing the "Laban" sign, from the expectators to the vehicle drivers who drove pass the Quirino Avenue, raising their arms up high. It was a gesture that everyone understood, like a language that everyone spoke.

The number of people multiplied. And as the procession entered Quirino Avenue, the rain stopped and the sun suddenly shined, as if God Himself wanted to pay His respects to the former President. People started shouting "We love Cory." This orphaned nation shouted her name continuously as the casket drove pass the crowd.

The crowd at Quirino Avenue joined the parade as it will go on passing through Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, to South Luzon Expressway, and to its final stop at the Manila Memorial Park where Cory will be once again united with Ninoy. ■

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