

## IBM signs up new partner schools in RP

by ALEXANDER VILLAFANIA  
*Inquirer.net*

MANILA –IBM has signed up seven local universities in an online network that allows partner-schools access to educational resources and become part of its global network for open source software development. These new partner schools are Angeles University Foundation, Jose Rizal University, University of San Jose-Recoletos, the University of Batangas, Silliman University, University of Cebu, and University of Cebu-Banilad. University of the Philippines Diliman and Asia Pacific College were the first local partner schools under IBM Academic Initiative.

Under this initiative, partner schools gain access to some of IBM's educational resources for free, as well as network of schools in other countries where they can build other partnerships. They can also be part of a global network of open source development.

James Velasquez, IBM Philippines Country General Manager, said the program aims to address skills shortages in the IT industry. In particular, this initiative hopes to encourage students to innovate using open standards.

He stressed that industries in the Philippines are also in need of IT workers, especially those with industry-specific skills.

"IBM customers, business partners and the local IT industry are always in need of skilled, productive people. For a growth market such as the Philippines, work opportunities are much needed especially by new graduates who find it hard to get jobs," he said. (*Inquirer.net*)

## Discussions underway for 1st Asean-US Summit

by PIA LEE-BRAGO  
*Philstar.com*

MANILA – Initial discussions are underway for the first ASEAN-US Summit that the Philippines will host sometime this year, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said on August 21.

The Philippines will host the Special ASEAN-US Directors General Meeting and the Special ASEAN-US Senior Officials Meeting in Manila during the latter part of 2009.

The Philippines assumed the role of country coordinator for ASEAN-US Dialogue relations last July, following the practice of rotation.

The DFA earlier issued a clarification in view of reports that US President Barack Obama designated the Philippines as coordinator between his country and the regional inter-government organization.

In his remarks, President Obama said: "I am looking forward to my travels to Southeast Asia, and the Philippines will be the coordinating country in the US relationship with ASEAN, the primary organization – strategic organization for Southeast Asian countries."

DFA spokesperson Eduardo Malaya said Obama's remarks were just an acknowledgment of the Philippines' current role as country coordinator rather than a designation.

The Philippines took over the three-year rotating responsibility from Singapore during the 42nd ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting held in Phuket, Thailand last July 22.

As country coordinator, the Philippines will be the conduit for the ASEAN member states in its interaction with the US.

The Philippines' three-year action program as country coordinator will be discussed during the meetings in Manila.

During the Post Ministerial Conference with the US in Phuket, the US acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia of 1976, a key regional agreement on peaceful coexistence and mutual cooperation.

Countries that acceded to the TAC should adhere to the principle of non-aggression and non-interference in the domestic affairs of each member.

The TAC, a regional code of conduct, is encouraging peaceful resolution of regional conflicts.

A senior DFA official, who asked not to be named, said the Philippines expects and will receive suggestions from member countries on how to enhance relations with the US, increase economic and business dialogue, discussions on regional and security issues and cooperation in various activities. ■

## 'Bankrupt...'

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against the impact of the global financial crisis.

He said the next president should tap all revenue sources, including cigarettes and liquor or the so-called sin products, as well as telecommunications services.

"But the government must first conserve resources by collapsing agencies that are not needed and saving on expenses. We cannot impose more taxes without resorting to honest-to-goodness austerity measures," he stressed.

He pointed out that there are a lot of items in the annual budget where tens if not hundreds of billions in savings could be realized.

He suggested that the next administration, in formulating the budget, should start from scratch.

"We have to start from zero, decide which agencies and personnel to keep, how much to spend. The next president must have the political will to do that and collect taxes from everyone, including big business. He must not be hamstrung by political debts," he said.

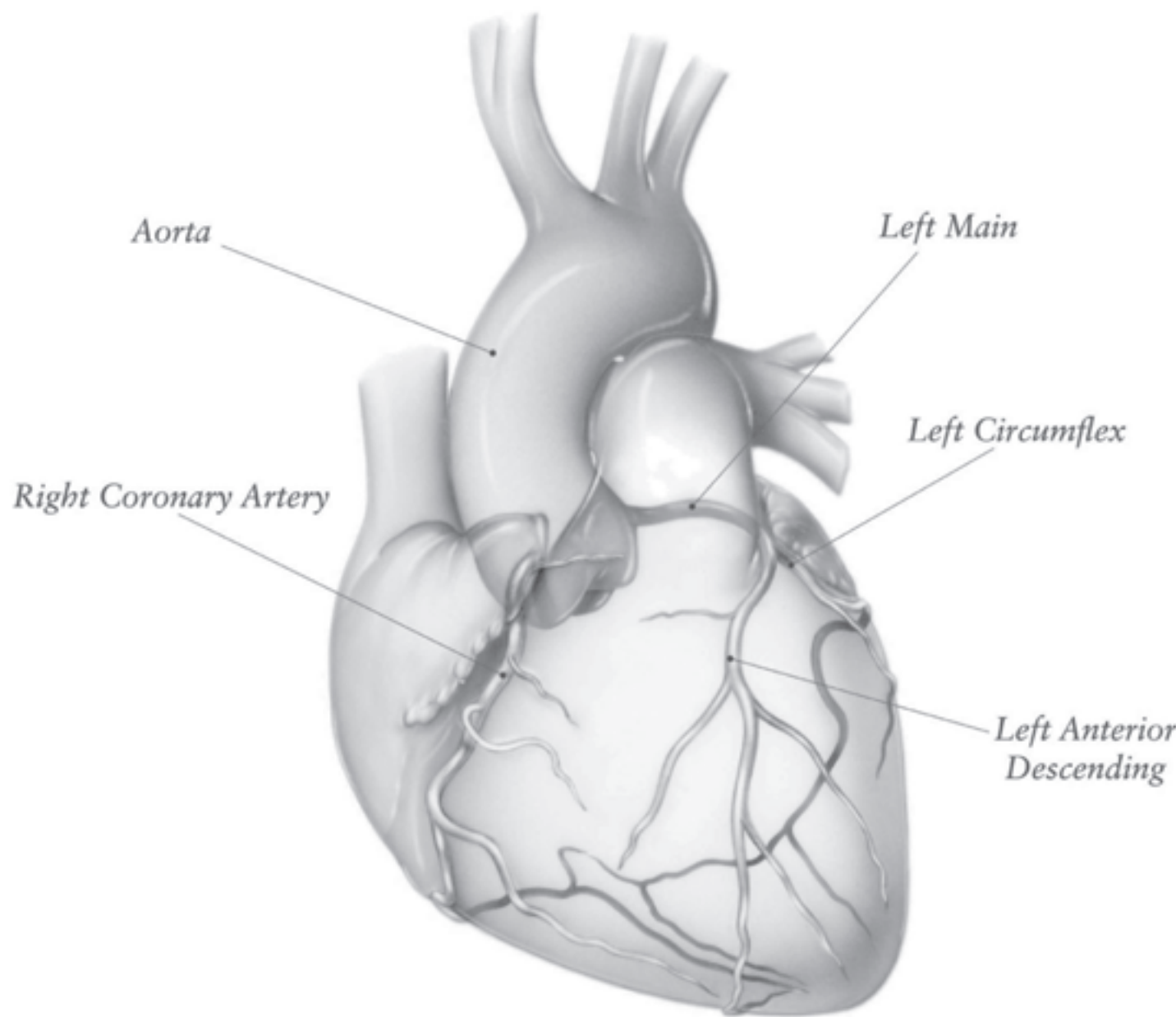
There are at least two tax measures pending in the House of Representatives that aim to narrow this year's budget deficit, which is projected to reach an unprecedented level of P300 billion.

These are the increase in sin taxes and the metering of mobile phone services, including the imposition of a five-centavo tax on text messages.

Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez, proponent of the measures, has accused Speaker Prospero Nograles of sitting on his proposals. ■

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