

# DATELINE PHILIPPINES

## Palace vows transparency in use of foreign aid

by PAOLO ROMERO  
Philstar.com

MANILA—Malacañang assured the people yesterday that fresh aid from the United Nations would be used efficiently and distribution will be transparent.

Presidential economic spokesman Gary Olivar issued the statement as the first of the two largest high-energy food shipments from the UN World Food Program (WFP) arrived in the country for victims of tropical storm "Ondoy" and typhoon "Pepeng."

"Obviously there will be enough safeguards set up both from our side as well as from the side of the UN, which I am sure as an international organization of long standing is not unfamiliar with dangers like that (aid misuse)," Olivar told a news briefing.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita earlier said the use of all foreign and local donations for relief and rehabilitation work in the aftermath of two destructive storms would be transparent and fully accounted.

He said there would be a mechanism to ensure transparency in the use of such donations.

The Commission on Audit could look into the disbursements once the relief and rehabilitation work is completed, said Ermita.

Olivar said that critics of the administration's relief and rehabilitation operations are usually the people who have not given any donation to the typhoon victims.

"I would like to add that people who already speak against the possibility of something like that (aid misuse) happening, even before it happens, are not very different from people who shout fire in a crowded theater," Olivar said.

"Very often, the adverse reaction that they (critics) create is worse than what they say they are trying to avert or prevent," he said.

Olivar said the current situation calls for all Filipinos to unite to allow the nation to recover from the calamity.

### More foreign aid pours in

Germany has provided an additional 800,000 euros (approximately P55 million) in humanitarian aid for typhoon victims.

Ambassador Christian-Ludwig Weber-Lortsch announced yesterday that the Federal Government of Germany has decided to provide additional 800,000 euros in aid to the victims of Ondoy and Pepeng.

The latest contribution brought to 1.3 million euros (roughly P90 million) the total aid of Germany to the Philippines.

Philippine Ambassador to Ireland Ariel Abadilla expressed appreciation to the Irish government, as well as to the Filipino community, for their continued efforts to support the relief and rehabilitation of affected communities in the Philippines.

He expressed gratitude to the Irish government for allocating 350,000 euros recently for the typhoon victims.

In announcing the relief assistance, Minister of State for Overseas Development Peter Power said that he is directing the Irish government's support to those agencies/organizations working closely with children, as they are the most severely affected by these types of disasters.

Various Filipino community groups and individuals have also been actively organizing fund-raising activities.

The Malaysian government has sent four plane-loads of relief goods for the victims of Ondoy and Pepeng.

The Malaysian humanitarian assistance, worth \$141,491 (or P6,821,376) consisting of rice, canned goods, instant noodles, biscuits, milk powder, blankets, adult and children's clothing, was flown to Villamor Air Force Base in Manila on four flights of C-130 aircraft. The planes arrived in pairs on Oct. 16 and 18. ■

## Only Estrada favors legalization of 'jueteng'

by CHRISTINE AVENDAÑO  
Inquirer.net

MANILA—Of five presidential aspirants who spoke Tuesday, Oct. 20, on how they intended to address poverty, only Joseph Estrada said "jueteng" should be legalized.

The ousted President said millions of families were benefiting from the illegal numbers game and that he favored legalizing it "until the time we find alternative jobs for our people."

"I am not tolerating it but I am for the legalization of jueteng," said Estrada, who was convicted of plunder in 2007 for accepting jueteng kickbacks but was quickly pardoned by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

At a leaders' forum at the Asian Institute of Management in Makati City, Estrada, Senators Richard Gordon and Francis Escudero, environment activist Nicolas Perlas and Olongapo Councilor JC de los Reyes discussed their priorities should they win as president in 2010, as well as their views on reproductive health, sex education, and whether they would go after Ms Arroyo for alleged corruption.

The three-hour forum—which was organized by the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines and the United Nations Development Program—ended with the five aspirants pledging support for the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

All 189 UN member-states have promised to stamp out poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental stability and develop a global partnership for development, by that year.

The five aspirants sealed their agreement to support the MDGs through a symbolic hand print. But De los Angeles of Ang Kapatiran political party later wrote in the hand print plaque that he supported the goals except for the "reproductive health code."

The United Nations wants governments to ensure universal access to reproductive health under the goal of improving maternal health.

The issue has become controversial in the country because of the fierce opposition posed by the Catholic Church and conservative groups to the reproductive health bill pending in Congress.

### Gambling and gov't

The five presidential aspirants were first asked about their views on poverty and questioned on their position on jueteng vis-à-vis poverty.

Estrada said he favored jueteng's use as alternative employment for the poor.

But Escudero, Perlas, Gordon and De los Reyes said jueteng and gambling in general should not be made a policy tool in eradicating poverty.

"I'm sure there are better ways more innovative and more moral other than jueteng," said Escudero of the Nationalist People's Coalition.

He also said the government should not engage in gambling

whether as an operator or regulator.

Perlas said the government should rethink its national policy on gambling and expressed opposition to the use of "gambling funds" for political purposes.

He said money from Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. was used to "buy favors from the media and co-opt the Church" during the "Hello Garci" poll fraud scandal of 2005, which put in question the legitimacy of Ms Arroyo's election as president in 2004.

De los Reyes said gambling was "counterproductive." He said that as a city councilor, he had fought any ordinance aiming to legalize gambling, including small town lottery and cockfighting.

"We should not have a double standard. Our party platform is to make any form of gambling illegal, and that we will do if elected president," he said.

### Creation of jobs

Gordon said he would go after illegal gambling and jueteng "hammer and tongs."

He said he would ensure that poverty would be addressed through the creation of jobs and other opportunities.

Perlas said that in order to address poverty through job creation, funds for agriculture should be provided.

"Poverty is the top priority of my platform," Perlas said, add-

ing that he had helped farms in 25 provinces shift to organic farming and launched a microfinance program benefiting 250,000 people.

Escudero said the next administration should first study the employment and work force situation here and abroad.

That done, "government must endeavor to match and find out market demands here or abroad," he said.

Estrada said he would continue his pro-poor programs in the field of agriculture when he was president.

De los Reyes said there was a need to bring home Filipinos working abroad by encouraging them to get into micro, small and medium enterprises.

Gordon said more jobs in tourism, agriculture and information technology should be created.

To reduce poverty, Perlas said corruption in government should be stopped; Escudero said he would fight for good governance; and Estrada and De los Reyes said peace and order should be ensured to restore confidence in government.

Gordon also said ensuring peace and order and fighting corruption were important to reduce poverty.

### Arroyo in jail?

Asked if they thought the MDGs would be achieved if purportedly corrupt officials such as Ms Arroyo would be sent to jail, this was how the five presi-

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# Padalang paki-abot? Baka hindi umabot.

"Pinadala ko na ang pang-tuition ng mga bata kay Kuya Rolly, yung bago kong kakilala. Hintayin n'yo na lang daw tawag nya."

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