

Foreign experts in RP to study post-storm leptospirosis

by DONNA PAZZIBUGAN
Inquirer.net

MANILA—Foreign experts on post-disaster illnesses have arrived in the country to study the leptospirosis outbreak that hit Metro Manila, Rizal and other provinces in Luzon after Tropical Storm "Ondoy" (international codename: Ketsana) and Typhoon "Pepeng" (Parma) battered the country last September 26 and September 30, respectively.

Dr. Eric Tayag, chief epidemiologist of the Department of Health, said the foreign experts will work with local infectious disease experts to identify the strain of the bacteria leptospira and identify the animal source that killed 167 and infected 2,000 in Metro Manila alone.

Tayag told reporters at a health forum organized by the Philippine College of Physicians Tuesday that doctors from the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), consisting of experts from the Leptospirosis Center of Netherlands and the World Health Organization, are in the country.

Leptospirosis is a life-threatening infection that one could get after swallowing or wading in water contaminated with the urine of an infected animal, usually rats.

Symptoms include fever, weakness, rashes and muscle pain. If not addressed early, complications include kidney, liver or brain damage that could be fatal.

"They (experts) are here to study the prevailing strain of leptospira. This will help identify why the current leptospirosis is fierce resulting to a lot of deaths. By identifying the strain, we can also identify the animal where the strain originated from as there are strains that are specific only to certain animals," Tayag said.

He said the experts would also try to find out why so many patients are dying from the disease, the kind of complications observed, and if there are compounding diseases that aggravate leptospirosis patients.

He said the foreign experts will be in the country for three weeks and afterwards present their recommendations to the DOH.

Between October 1 up to October 26, 15 sentinel hospitals in Metro Manila have reported 2,158 admissions of leptospirosis cases of which 167 have died. The DOH reported a total of 800 leptospirosis cases for the entire 2008. ■

Comelec gives Lakas-Kampi-CMD signal as political party

by KRISTINE L. ALAVE
Inquirer.net

MANILA—It's all systems go for the Lakas-Kampi-CMD political party.

The Commission on Elections has junked the motion for reconsideration filed by Panganga Representative Jose C. De Venecia to annul the merger of Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats and the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino.

In an 11-page decision, the

Comelec en banc upheld the Second Division ruling that the existence of the merged party was legal.

"Lakas Kampi CMD is a privately organized political party, formed under the constitutional guarantee of freedom of association, which in turn bears facets of the right to privacy," the October 20 decision read.

"Wherefore, premises considered, the instant motion for reconsideration is hereby

denied. The approval of the registration and accreditation of Lakas Kampi CMD as a political party is hereby affirmed," the decision noted.

As far as the Comelec is concerned, the party can go ahead with its political plans for the 2010 national and presidential elections.

In the House of Representatives, Speaker Prospero Nograles said the decision of the Comelec was expected.

Nograles said De Venecia should not have filed it in the first place because "it had no legal leg to stand on."

"Their objective was to delay, derail and destroy the party and the ploy didn't work. It's a political reality and must be accepted," he said in a text message.

The administration party has nominated Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro as its presidential candidate next year. It will hold its national convention next month. ■

Rule allowing GMA to run questioned

by EDU PUNAY
Philstar.com

MANILA—A taxpayer has asked the Supreme Court to stop the Commission on Elections (Comelec) from implementing a resolution that would allow President Arroyo to run for Congress without resigning the presidency.

Sen. Lito Lapid invoked that resolution to be able to return to the Senate after he lost the mayoralty election in Makati to Mayor Jejomar Binay in 2007.

Petitioner Henry Giron, head of the Article 64 Movement, said the possibility of Mrs. Arroyo running for Congress was among the considerations in their petition.

Denying any political affiliation, they filed the petition on their own initiative, he added.

However, they supported Fernando Poe Jr.'s candidacy in the 2004 presidential elections, he said.

Giron said the Comelec resolution is based on a provision of Republic Act 9006, the Fair Elections Act of 2001 that repealed section 67 of the Omnibus Election Code.

The repealed provision required incumbent elected officials to resign their posts before running for another position, he added.

Giron said section 4 of Comelec Resolution No. 8678 provides that an elective official shall not be considered resigned upon the filing of his or her certificate of candidacy for the same or any other elective post.

"The above cited provision will affect not only the petitioner but also the electorates, particularly the candidates (appointive and elective) participating in the coming 2010 elections," he said.

Giron asked the SC to prohibit the Comelec from making the repealing pro-

vision of R.A. 9006 as a basis for issuing guidelines for the filing of certificates of candidacy for next year's elections.

"This provision was just inserted in R.A. 9006 in 2001 but did not undergo deliberations in the House of Representatives," he said.

"It was only raised during second reading when the bill was in the Senate already."

Giron said the law that repealed the rule on mandatory resignation of elective officials upon filing of certificates of candidacy had violated the Constitution.

It also violated the constitutional right to due process, right to information, and the equal protection clause, he added.

Giron said the new law discriminates against appointive officials, who are required to resign upon filing of their certificates of candidacy.

"Repealed Section 67 allows a defeated candidate to retain to his

old position, therefore resulting in a retroactive mandate the 1987 Constitution does not provide," he said.

Last week, election lawyer Romulo Macalintal asked the SC to stop the Comelec from implementing a resolution requiring appointive officials to resign before filing their certificates of candidacy.

Macalintal, representing Environment and Natural Resources Undersecretary Eleazar Quinto and director Gerino Tolentino, said the advance filing of COCs was only provided under the Poll Automation Law (R.A. 8436 as amended by R.A. 9369) for the purpose of printing the names of the candidates in ballots for the automated elections.

"It is respectfully submitted that the better rule is to consider such person, including the petitioners herein who will file their COCs on or before Nov. 30, 2009, to be

► PAGE A11

Why Escudero quit ...

PAGE A5 ◀

told the party of his decision when he met with NPC chairman Faustino Dy and NPC president Frisco San Juan, according to the older Escudero.

"I'm happy for him. Whatever his decisions are, I will support him," Representative Escudero said.

Senator Escudero's campaign funding woes was aggravated by the business problems being experienced by tycoon Lucio Tan, according to the NPC source.

Tan, ranked by Forbes as second richest in the Philippines in 2008 with a net worth of \$1.5 billion, was expected to give boost to Escudero's campaign kitty, being a close friend of the senator and his father. Tan has in fact tapped Representative Escudero, two-time agriculture secretary, to help him in the projects of his Tan Yan Kee Foundation.

But the source said that this big support may not come after all since several of Tan's businesses are "in bad shape."

According to the source, several of those who have pledged to support Escudero later withheld their commitment because the senator has yet to rate high in the presidential surveys. Escudero's ratings plunged further when Senator Benigno "Noy" Aquino III announced his candidacy, the source added.

Without a presidential candidate, the NPC may just coalesce with another political party, offering Legarda as their vice presidential bet, the source said.

Speaker Prospero Nograles said the "open door policy" in the Philippine political system has made the situation "so fluid."

"I have long been an advocate of the two-party system because that makes programs more important than personalities," he said.

"Let's watch the developments in the next two weeks."

Bayan Muna party list Representative Satur Ocampo said Escudero's resignation was a "major political development" in the presidential race.

"His move to bolt the NPC is a welcome move that should develop his capacity to take on many people's issues in performing his duties to the people. We challenge other 'presidentiables' to likewise take a stand on the need for genuine land reform, a P125 across the board daily wage hike, P3,000 monthly salary adjustment for government workers, the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), and ending the climate of impunity against civilian dissenters and journalists in the country," Ocampo said.

Ocampo, who heads the coalition of progressive party list groups Makabayan, has had exploratory talks with Escudero for a possible coalition. Ocampo is said to be eyeing a senatorial seat.

Tourism Secretary Joseph "Ace" Durano, one of the senatorial candidates of the NPC, said the party has yet to hear Escudero's reasons for resigning.

"It is best to leave our judgment until after he shares with the members his reason for resigning," Durano said in a text message.

Valenzuela Representative Rex Gatchalian, NPC spokesperson, said the party would issue a statement after its emergency meeting at the NPC headquarters in Quezon City Wednesday afternoon. ■

SOLVE YOUR IMMIGRATION PROBLEMS NOW!

ROBERT WEST

Serving the Filipino Community for more than 10 years

- Marriage Visas
- Fiancee Visas
- Nurses Visas
- Deportation Defense

Attorney for Famous Elorde Boxing Family.

319-5459

6235 S. Pecos Rd. Suite 110 • Across from Immigration Office

www.robertwest.net

Reach out a helping hand...

for the immediate relief efforts in the wake of Typhoon Ondoy that hit the Philippines recently.

Please donate generously. Your donations will help purchase relief supplies and ration packs for distribution to heavily damaged areas with the help of local officials and volunteers.

Guidelines:

- Donations can be received online via credit card or Paypal through www.abscbnfoundation.org or ondoyrelief.multiply.com
- Mail checks payable to: **ABS CBN Foundation - Sagip 150 Shoreline Drive Redwood City, CA 94065**
- Pledges and inquiries can be made through the toll free number **1-800-527-2820**



ABS-CBN FOUNDATION, INC.

SAGIP KAPAMILYA

PARTNER COMPANIES

LBC • Lucky Money • Goldilocks Bakeshops
MIG Cargo • Bayanihan Cargo • Seafood City
Intramuros Restaurant • Philippine News Asian Journal

BENEFIT EVENTS

- Oct. 18 - Oakland CA**
Oakland Raiders Mabuhay Fiesta
- Benefit for Sagip Kapamilya
- Oct. 18 - Seattle WA**
Fund raising at the Filipino Community in Seattle featuring Massive Monkees and Blue Scholars
- Oct. 18 - Vallejo, CA**
Brunch Fundraiser
at the Filipino Community Center
- Oct. 24 - Redwood City, CA**
"TINIG NG PINOY: Mas Malakas kay Ondoy"
- Fundraiser by ABS-CBN International employees
- Oct. 30 - Berkley CA**
Filipina Women's Network
100 Most Influential Filipinas Gala
- Nov. 13-15 - Las Vegas, NV**
Martin Nievera "For Always" Benefit Concert