

# DATELINE PHILIPPINES

## RP-US Balikatan in Bicol to focus on rehabilitation work

by JAMES MANANGHAYA  
Philstar.com

DEFENSE Secretary Gilberto Teodoro defended the conduct of this year's RP-US Balikatan military exercise in the Bicol region, saying it would focus on rehabilitation work in calamity-stricken areas and would not meddle in the anti-insurgency campaign there.

"It is a good place where we can work together for the rehabilitation of calamity-prone areas (and) calamity-stricken areas. That goes to show also that there is going to be an emphasis on voluntary assistance and disaster relief operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster response under the Philippine Defense Reform, a voluntary demon-

stration of response which is ASEAN-wide, too," he said.

Greg Banares, spokesman of the National Democratic Front in Bicol, said there is no terrorist group in the region and that there have been no major calamities there in the last two years to warrant the conduct of Balikatan.

Teodoro said calamity victims in Bicol would benefit from the humanitarian projects and that the Balikatan would have little impact on the military's internal security operations.

Meanwhile, in a press briefing in Legazpi City January 8, Maj. Llewellyn Binasoy, chief of the Research and Special Concerns Division of the Armed Forces' Civil-Military Operations, said Philippine and US forces "are now in the process of detailed planning in consultation with local stakeholders" to ensure the Balikatan's success.

Capt. Kelly Schmader, commander of the 13th Naval Construction Regiment of the US Pacific Fleet, said some 450 US military personnel would take part in Balikatan. (With Celso Amo)

## RP raises \$1.5B from int'l bond offering

by MICHELLE REMO  
Inquirer.net

MANILA - The national government sold \$1.5 billion worth of long-term bonds in the international capital market January 8, thus completing its foreign, commercial borrowing requirement for 2009 early in the year.

The Department of Finance said in a statement that the bonds, maturing on June 17, 2019, were priced at 99.158 percent to yield 8.5 percent.

Market sources said the debt offering was over-subscribed, as appetite for bonds was still significant given that other governments have yet to float their own debt instruments. Tenders for the 10-year ROPs reached P6 billion, four times the government's programmed borrowing.

Despite the oversubscription, the government opted to stick to its borrowing plan of only \$1.5 billion. "That's the program; we do not want to exceed that," National Treasurer Roberto Tan said Wednesday.

Tan said the 41 percent of the

bonds were sold in Asia, 22 percent in Europe, and 37 percent in the United States.

Observers said the Philippine government's habit of tapping the international capital market early in the year has been paying off because competition in January is not yet stiff. In the previous years, the government had likewise been completing its foreign, commercial funding requirement in January.

Tan agreed that going to the market early in the year had its benefits but stressed that the Philippine government was considering a host of other factors in making a bond float.

Experts have predicted a worsening global economic condition for 2009 as advanced economies like the United States and those in the Eurozone are seen to continue suffering from a recession. But market players said it was wise for the Philippine government to tap the international bond market early when it was still relatively calm compared to how it could turn out when news about contracting economies in 2009 finally break.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the sale of the \$1.5 billion bonds early in the year would help government better manage its expenditure program for 2009.

"The transaction fulfills the government's expected external funding requirements for 2009 and represents an important success for the Philippines. The strong interest we received from domestic and global investors was key to the completion of the deal," Teves said in the statement.

Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank and Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corp. (HSBC) served as joint lead managers and book runners for the bond sale.

Proceeds of the sale would help fund government programs and projects that could not be accommodated by tax collection and non-tax revenues internally generated by the state. The government expects a budget deficit of P102 billion for this year.

Revenue generated from the bond sale will also help government settle its maturing obligations for this year. ■

## Pinoys abroad remember home with food

HOW do Filipinos abroad remember home? With food, of course. They reminisce about food from their childhood, they cook the food they grew up with, and they write about home, longing, their dreams of coming back and the realities of being away.

"My clan's response to the many milestones that life offers is food," writes one. "A baby is born. Let's eat. Premarital sex gets someone pregnant. Let's eat. A bright niece graduates with honors. Let's eat. A relative passes away. Let's eat. Whatever the situation and whatever emotion it evokes, the response has always been visceral and very comforting in its constancy."

The book *A Taste of Home: Pinoy Expts and Food Memories*, edited by Ed Maranan and his daughter Len Maranan-Goldstein, is a collection of 46 essays written by Filipino expatriates reminiscing about family recipes, Philippine native delicacies, food rituals, favorite watering holes and memorable eating places. Published by Anvil, the book contains anecdotes and reflections on family histories, hometown tales and the social milieu during the authors' years of living in the Philippines. The contributors have been working abroad for several years as consultants, journalists, businessmen, academics, creative writers, IT experts, and NGO workers, among other professions. They are based in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Kenya, Japan, Australia, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

Writes another: "When asked what dish from my childhood I feel most nostalgic about, I say utan. The Cebuano word *utan* translates literally as *gulang* in Tagalog, vegetables in English. This dish is eaten in most areas of the Visayas and Mindanao. But *utan* in the context of my childhood and viewed from my life as an expatriate in a northern clime is more than just the dish itself. It is also the embodiment of everything I associated with that care-free period of my life."

*A Taste of Home* was launched recently at the Philippine Embassy in London. Present were Ambassador and Mrs. Edgardo B. Espiritu and embassy staff, members of the Filipino community and media, and some of the UK-based contributors.

Well-known authors include Linda Ty-Casper, Marla Yotoko Chorenge, Jojo Abinales, Luisa Igloria, Ichi Batacan, Greg Macabenta, Cecilia Brainard Manguerra, Nadine Sarreal, Reme Grefalda, Clinton Palanca, John Labella, Connie Maraan, and Philippine STAR columnist Mel Tobias.

Ed Maranan worked in London for 15 years as foreign information officer of the Philippine Embassy. He is a prize-winning poet, playwright, fictionist and essayist. In 2008, he received the NCCA Writer's Prize for the English Essay, a National Book Award from the National Book Development Board and the Ma-

nila Critics Circle for his collection, *Passage: Poems 1983-2006*, and the Gawad Pambansang Alagad ni Balagtas for Poetry in English and Filipino. He joined the Carlos Palanca Hall of Fame in 2000.

Len Maranan-Goldstein, who designed the book's cover, is a former instructor at UP Baguio, and is now based in Washington, USA. She works as capital campaign manager of the Northern Maritime Center & Wooden Boat Foundation. She finished her MA in communication at the University of Hawaii, and took courses at the London School of Economics and the Kensington College of Art.

Some more excerpts from *A Taste of Home*:

"I carry with me a taste of home, a memory of food that sustains my bones and sinews — recipes that provide a compass to guide me through this strange city I live in, along with a hundred names for vegetables and fruit and poultry that will always be from Bicol, in Bicol, no matter where I find myself in the world.

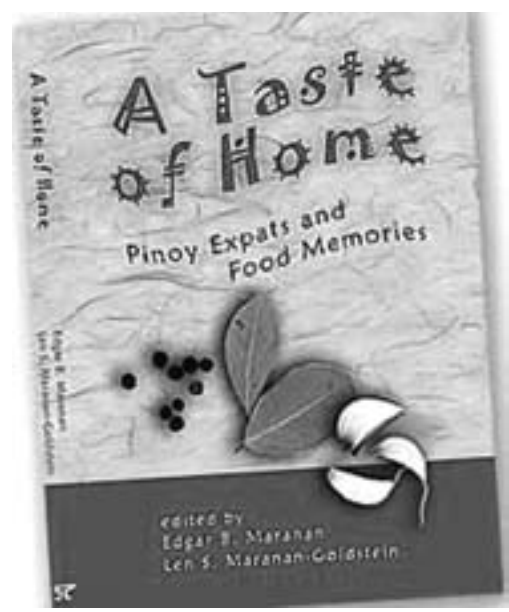
"Some great military leader once said an army marches on its stomach, and that may be one reason why the dictatorship was overthrown: food. At Veritas, people showed their support for the station and its work with generous contributions of food. One well-known group of restaurants would send over literally hundreds of individual servings of their house specialty: a grilled, glossy brown hunk of juicy chicken served with a perfect little dome of luridly orange rice.

"I remember a friend's mother being specially pleased to learn my mother also like boiled eggplant made into a side dish with garlic, pepper and squash to go with *pochero*. I try to make it in Saxonville, and come close but it's not the same. It's never the same. Nothing is as good as the meals I had when I was a child.

"On weekends we were treated to *sinangag* and *longganisa*, hot chocolate, a tall glass of *taho* (soybean jelly with caramel syrup) and occasionally fried danggit, the smell of which woke up the entire house, including the dog.

"Nowhere is the need to recollect flavor more intense than in another country, especially one that confounds because of its simultaneous familiarity and strangeness. My current obsession with *Pinoy* cooking seems determined entirely by the hope of returning to the Philippines five or six years from now. It tames what might easily be burned up in frustration and homesickness.

"There was a little inn by the bus depot in Baguio City where they served *tsokolata batirol*. And I would sit there in the lobby af-



ter the long bus ride, with journal and pen, feeling all Jack Kerouac as a light rain painted the mountains in mist, and sipping my *tsokolata*.

"Rice in its various shapes, colors, textures, and temperatures created consistency and security in my early life... (it) was the predictable feature of our diet, no matter the season of the year. The recipe changed, but it was always there.

"Linguistic translation yields: It's all right. Thank you, I've eaten. But culturally decoded it means: I have not eaten; ask me again, be persistent and I'll finally relent because I'm actually starving and would like nothing less than to gorge myself on all the food displayed on your table, the entire contents of your fridge, and even this yappy Mynah bird (in garlic sauce on a slow fire).

"My father had a love for food and cooking that was infectious. He would proudly display his ingredients for the day and handle them thoughtfully; fresh bamboo shoots he chanced upon, *saluyot* he had planted and harvested in the vacant lot next to our house, *lapu-lapu* offered at a good price by a *suki*. He would be excited about a menu that he had carefully considered days in advance. He sang and danced in front of the stove...

"Living abroad also exposed us to some culinary curiosities among our fellow Filipinos. Filipinos may be the only Asians who are fond of *carne norte* — canned corned beef — and the only people on earth, besides the Pacific Islanders, who consume prodigious amounts of Spam. This, we presume, is the result of the World War II Liberation experience, when American GIs gave these canned goods to a grateful and hungry Filipino nation.

"I had to go through a gauntlet when I asked for my girlfriend's hand in marriage. I had to survive Bicol express. Having married into a Bicolano family, I began to claim bragging rights as far as spicy dishes were concerned. On one trip to Seoul, my hosts laid out seven types of *kimchi* before me, each one progressively hotter than the previous one. I tried all seven and asked aloud if they had Number Eight. They were appropriately impressed." (Philstar.com)

## Harbor Lofts celebrates new year with pottery barn giveaway

ANAHEIM, CA. - Downtown Anaheim's dynamic Harbor Lofts has started off the New Year with style. Purchase a loft by February 15 and receive a \$7,500 Pottery Barn gift certificate. In addition, today's all-time historic low interest rates make buying a new loft here even more attractive. With Harbor Lofts offering more for your money, you simply can't afford to miss out on this unique, once-in-a-lifetime buying opportunity.

"There's never been a smarter time to buy as interest rates, low starting price and special incentives are very attractive," states Marilyn Costner, sales representative. "Buyers are encouraged to come in, ask about our down payment assistance programs, and learn how buying a loft is possible. With so many options offered, Harbor Lofts is especially appealing to first-time buyers."

Start the New Year with gusto and check out Harbor Lofts before time - and selection - runs out. As Anaheim's best-priced loft community, Harbor Lofts is the real deal. There's nothing else that compares to Harbor Lofts' great overall value.

Setting the urban trend as downtown Anaheim's first mixed-use community, Harbor Lofts has it all. The lofts feature one, two and three-bedrooms that range from approximately 1,035 to 2,452 sq.ft. Two-story live/work townhomes, with ground floor office space and upstairs living, measure approximately 1,600 sq.ft. Every loft showcases open, flexible interiors with nearly 10' high ceilings, large dual-glazed windows, and concrete flooring.

Upscale kitchens come with stainless steel Whirlpool® appliances plus sleek cabinetry and granite countertops in both kitchen and baths. Harbor Lofts' amenities include a residents-only entry, a workout area, a swimming pool plus Jacuzzi-style spa, a barbecue area, and gated, covered parking.

Optimally located on Center Street Promenade next to Anaheim Ice, Harbor Lofts features ap-



proximately 14,000 sq.ft. of ground floor retail space. Residents can simply walk downstairs and take advantage many conveniences. There is a Sprint store and Amore Café, featuring a corner bakery-style menu, is expected to open the end of January. There are other services, necessities and activities within walking distance. A Starbucks is nearby plus banks, a CVS Pharmacy, a Subway, and a Vons. A post office, a community center, a library, a gym, and a weekly farmers market are also near Harbor Lofts.

As more and more people seek the convenience and energy of downtown living, Harbor Lofts is best address to enjoy Anaheim's exciting new, sought-after cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Harbor Lofts is built by the acclaimed urban renewal team of Lee Homes and CIM Group. They are considered the groundbreakers of downtown LA's dynamic renaissance with their innovative and desirable loft communities throughout the area.

Two bedroom lofts are priced from \$319,000. Three bedroom lofts are priced from \$419,000, and 2-story live/work townhomes with up to 1,700 sq ft are priced from \$439,000.

Visit the four furnished models and sales office to learn how you can afford to move in today. Harbor Lofts is located at 435 W. Center Street, #205. Open daily from 10 am to 5 pm. Call (714) 535-2181. harborlofts.com (Advertising Supplement)

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