

# OFW remittances up 2.8%...

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same period last year. This growth comes despite earlier forecasts by the government and international institutions that remittances from overseas workers would be flat or fall this year due to the global financial crisis. Major sources of remittances from January to August this year include the US, Canada, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, Japan, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Italy, and Germany. Tetangco reported that OFW remittances continued to underpin the resilience of the economy and has remained a stable source of foreign exchange for the country. "As recent developments point to improving global economic conditions, a more favorable outlook for remittances through end-2009 is anticipated," Tetangco said. The BSP is now looking at a four-percent growth remittances to a \$17.1 billion this year from \$16.4 billion in 2008. The BSP which was originally looking at a zero growth in the amount of remittances said the revised outlook would be supported by the steady deployment of Filipino workers abroad and the increase access to formal remittance channels through the establishment of more remittance centers and tie-ups abroad. "Providing optimism for steady flow of remittances in the months ahead are the employment agreements forged between the Philippines and host countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan and the impending major US military base expansion in Guam starting next year," Tetangco said. He also cited the recently concluded 4th Joint Labor Council Conference between the Philippines and Taiwan wherein both countries agreed to extend a memorandum of understanding on the Special Hiring Program for Taiwan beyond March 2010.

The BSP chief added that a larger share of global remittance market was captured as commercial banks continued to build up their remittance business partners worldwide. Likewise, government financial institutions also strengthened their correspondent relationships with remittance companies abroad. The BSP expects remittances to increase at a faster rate of six percent in 2010 due to the global economic recovery. Due to robust remittances, the BSP revised upwards the projected gross international reserves (GIR) to a range between \$42 billion and \$43 billion instead of \$37.5 billion and \$38.5 billion this year and to \$47 billion next year. ■

# Villar reaches out to North...

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Union, Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, Pangasinan, Sampaloc, and Tarlac. Just days after his rescue and relief operations in Pangasinan, where he visited typhoon victims at Pangasinan State University in Bayambang and was even able to do an ocular inspection of the flooded area via helicopter, Villar doubled his efforts by extending a hand to the victims in Cagayan. He understood the difficulty of their situation, and arranged his team to provide help at the province. Villar said, "The typhoon victims in central and northern Luzon are experiencing dreadful conditions since parts of their land are under water as bodies of river continue to swell due to record amounts of rainfall." Particularly in Cagayan, where the small motorized boats that lo-

cal use to travel to the mainland may not be able to pass the rough seas, and the seaworthy boats would take 16 hours of travel so the province is having difficulty in delivering the relief goods to these areas. "I knew I had to do something or else these isolated people would starve to death," he added.

As the typhoon "Ondoy" wreaked havoc on Metro Manila, it was typhoon "Pepeng" that managed to destroy central and northern Luzon; death toll has reached 375, 48 people are missing, and damage to property is estimated at P8.142 billion including P1.607 billion on infrastructure and P6.532 billion in agriculture. Total damage on agriculture from the two typhoons already hit P18 billion, with over 121,949 hectares of croplands destroyed. ■

# Nike unveils Pacquiao billboard in Hollywood

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL  
AJPress

HOLLYWOOD—It's another first for Manny Pacquiao. The pound-4-pound king became the first Filipino athlete to be featured in a major billboard in Los Angeles. Nike, a Pacquiao sponsor, has featured the Filipino boxing hero on a billboard campaign promoting its AW77 hood sweatshirt. The towering billboard located on top of the Nike Montalban Theater in Hollywood on Selma Ave. and Vine St. shows Pacquiao wearing a grey and teal blue hooded sweater with a scowl on his face. "For him to be on an actual billboard that's a big statement," said Anthony Nguyen, a passerby. "Manny Pacquiao is the man. He's the hero of the Philippines. Everyone loves him over here in America and I think it's good timing especially with the fight coming up soon." "I just twittered it because I want all my friends to see it," he added. Nike Spokesperson Rachel Buenviaje said they've received a positive response from the local Filipino community since the billboard went up last weekend. Alex Rotodo, an events promoter from San Francisco, recently visited the billboard and took photos of it. He said for Nike to put Pacquiao's face on a billboard on a major street speaks highly of the Filipinos buying power. "Here I am walking in Hollywood along the sidewalk of stars and I look up and I see Manny's billboard," said Rotodo. "He's the biggest star in the Philippines and what this billboard shows is not only is Manny like the hugest icon but shows the marketing power of the Filipino community." "They [Nike] believe in our buying power just like Gatorade and



Manny Pacquiao's billboard in Hollywood on Selma Ave. and Vine St. AJPress photo by Joseph Pimentel

the Jabawockeez," added Rotodo. Pacquiao is still training in Baguio, Philippines. Pacquiao will face Miguel Cotto of Puerto Rico at the MGM Grand on November 14 in Las Vegas. It's not known whether Pacquiao has seen the billboard but it is located only a few blocks away from the Wildcard Boxing Gym, where he trains in Los Angeles. ■

# President Obama re-establishes White House AAPI initiative

by MOMAR G. VISAYA  
AJPress

NEW YORK—President Barack Obama signed an Executive Order re-establishing a federal-wide Initiative to focus on the needs and concerns of the API communities and reaffirmed his commitment to the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities Wednesday afternoon (Oct. 14) at a ceremony in the East Room of the White House. The federal panel will work to address concerns of API communities and to work on improving their health, education and economic status.

"I proudly sign this executive order reestablishing the President's Advisory Commission and White House Initiative on Asian American and Pacific Islanders," the president during the signing ceremony. The panel, which was created during the Clinton administration, will be called the White House Advisory Commission and Intergency Working Group. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke and Education Secretary Arne Duncan will serve as co-chairmen.

"When any of our citizens are unable to fulfill their potential due to factors that have nothing

to do with their talent, character, or work ethic, then I believe there's a role for our government to play," President Obama said. During the East Room ceremony, Obama also observed Diwali, or the "Festival of Lights," a holiday celebrated across faiths in India. "I'm glad to hear this. I hope they look at the recommendations we submitted before," Vellie Dietrich-Hall, a Filipina-American Republican leader from Virginia told the Asian Journal in a phone interview right after the signing. Dietrich-Hall served as one of the commissioners of the initiative from 2005 to 2007 during former President George Bush's term.

Among the recommendations that Dietrich-Hall said was about the development of new entrepreneurs in the API community and making them more financially literate. "We all know that financial stability means empowerment and that a lot of Asian Americans are small business owners so we just wanted to give them more training and education," Dietrich-Hall added. As a college student, Naomi Tacuyan Underwood was able to see the Clinton initiative in



President Barack Obama signs Executive Order restoring the White House Advisory Commission and Intergency Working Group, Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2009, in the East Room of the White House in Washington. AP Photo by Pablo Martinez Monsivais

commitment to our community. As the former Chair of the most recent Commission, I fully support it," Pamintuan said. The Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (API-AHF) applauded President Obama for signing the executive order. "We are pleased to know that the White House AAPI Initiative has been restored with its original mission to increase the participation of Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders in federal programs," said Dr. Ho Luong Tran, president and CEO of API-AHF. "We are hopeful that more resources will be available to our communities and that this initiative will ensure a broader representation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders within our government."

The Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (API-AHF) influences policy, mobilizes communities, and strengthens programs and organizations to improve the health of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders. The initiative will work with 23 government agencies and departments to improve the health, education, and economic status of AAPI communities. ■

full swing and seeing it happen again, this time with President Obama is a special moment for her. "It was such an empowering moment," Underwood, who was present during the signing Wednesday, told the Asian Journal. Equally as excited is community leader Rudy Pamintuan, who served as commission chair during the administration of former President George W. Bush. "I'm actually very excited about the EO and the continued

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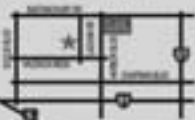
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