

## Police, mall execs discuss security for Christmas

by DJ YAP  
Inquirer.net

THE chief of the Eastern Police District (EPD) met with security officers of malls in Mandaluyong City last Nov. 4 to coordinate peacekeeping efforts during the Christmas season, especially in the busy Ortigas commercial district.

EPD director Chief Supt. Benjardi Mantele said he was able to talk to the security managers, officers and personnel of SM Megamall, Shangri-La Plaza Mall and Star Mall, among others.

ficers of EPD headquarters and the Mandaluyong police for proper coordination," he said.

"This way, the security guards will be familiar with our police officials and they will know who to coordinate with in case there's a major incident," Mantele said.

The official said he expected a "10 to 20 percent rise" in criminal incidents at the peak of the Christmas shopping rush in the next few weeks.

"We expect an increase in crimes against property, but not so drastic because we're doing our jobs properly to limit these

criminal activities," Mantele said.

To do this, he said police visibility would have to be doubled during the holiday season to monitor the big crowds in shopping centers around the Ortigas district.

He added that the EPD would give the mall officers a lecture on crime prevention and emergency response today.

"We will show and teach them what to look for when conducting their routine bag inspection, and what to do and who to call when they find anything suspicious," Mantele said. ■

## Palace disputes report on declining English proficiency

by PAOLO ROMERO  
Philstar.com

THE Palace disputed last Nov. 3 the findings of a group, which was accredited to administer English proficiency tests that the skill of Filipinos on the language is deteriorating.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Lorelei Fajardo was commenting on the report from the IDP Education Pty. Ltd. Philippines that showed the average score of Filipinos who took the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) last year was a poor 6.69 where 7.0 is the passing score.

Fajardo told a news briefing that based on the National Achievement Tests administered in 2007 and 2008, there was "significant improvement" in English in identified low performing schools.

She said 79 percent or 1,453 of the identified 1,898 low performing elementary schools increased achievement levels in English from low mastery to average mastery.

Fajardo added that 82 percent or 215 of the 265 low performing high schools also registered improvement in achievement levels in English from low mastery

to average mastery, citing data from the Department of Education.

She said the overall results of the Test of English Proficiency for Teachers in the low performing schools in English showed that a majority of the elementary and secondary teachers are on the average proficiency or 51 percent in elementary and 67 percent in secondary level.

Officials said the government is earmarking P1.1 billion to train nearly 400,000 teachers to improve their Math, Science and English skills.

Fajardo said there are other projects to improve the English proficiency of teachers and students in public schools, like the "Project Turning Around," "Every Child A Reader Program," and the National English Proficiency Program.

According to Andrew King, country director of IDP Education Pty. Ltd. Philippines the overall average score was disappointing because many of the Filipino IELTS takers were supposedly "educated."

IDP Education Philippines is a group accredited by the Australian government to administer IELTS to Filipinos seeking to

work, migrate, or pursue higher education in Australia.

"These are professionals with college degrees and are managers in their jobs here who seek to migrate to Australia," he said.

King said the Philippines did not even enjoy the top place in its English proficiency in Asia or even the Southeast Asian region since it was held by Malaysia.

**Decline of English in prime-time TV shows cited**

The apparent deteriorating quality of teachers teaching English, error-riddled English textbooks and the decreasing English content in public prime-time television were seen as the cause of the declining level of English proficiency in the Philippines.

King warned the people that the government should address these causes if the country seeks to retain its image as foremost supplier of workers skilled in speaking the English language.

King, whose group is accredited by the Australian government to administer the IELTS in the Philippines and other countries all over the world, said that a continuous decline in Filipinos' English proficiency could

## Officers cleared in coup try walk free

by MARLON RAMOS  
Inquirer.net

ELEVEN military officers cleared of involvement in a failed attempt to oust President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in February 2006 were freed last Nov. 3 and will be able to rejoin their units, officials said last Nov. 3.

The officers, ranging in rank from first lieutenant to colonel, were freed after a military court acquitted them last month, saying that it had not seen enough evidence that they were part of the failed power grab. They had spent more than three years in detention.

Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson Lt. Col. Romeo Brawner said they would be turned over to their respective major services "as free men".

The delay in releasing the 11 was attributed to procedural requirements and the need for medical examinations after a lengthy detention.

affected the growth of the call center industry which is providing employment to hundreds of thousands of workers and the chances of Filipinos getting work in other countries.

"As many countries are demanding higher English scores (in the IELTS), Filipinos may not be able to meet the English requirement and this will have human and economic consequences for the country," King said in the national English conference held at Malcolm Hall at UP Diliman organized by the Centre for International Education (CIE) last week.

King said that IDP's researchers who had looked into the results of the IELTS given to Filipinos in 2008 attributed it to poor quality of English instruction as well as the "resources" or textbooks on English teaching.

A check they made on how

AFP Chief of staff Gen. Victor Ibrado met with the 11 before they were freed, saying: "I would just like to see them and have some chit-chat."

Brawner said Ibrado considered the freed soldiers "like his sons" as many of them were with the Scout Rangers regiment which he headed as the Southern Command commander.

The 11 officers, who included Capt. Ruben Guinolbay, hailed as "the hero" of the Lamitan siege in 2001, were part of a group that barricaded themselves at the Fort Bonifacio Army camp on Feb. 26, 2006, to protest the sacking of the then head of the Marines, Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda.

They were among 28 Marines and Army Scout Rangers accused of leading and participating in what the government said was a broader plot to overthrow Ms Arroyo, who has been the target

of at least three alleged coup plots by rogue soldiers during her eight years in office.

Miranda is among 17 defendants still on trial.

As he stepped out of his detention cell in Camp Capinpin, Tanay, Rizal, Guinolbay said he had mixed feelings about leaving the military prison.

"I cannot really be happy and celebrate knowing that I left my comrades and friends in prison," he said in a phone interview.

"But with our release, I hope we can help the cause of those still inside," he said.

Aside from Guinolbay, also released last Nov. 3 were Marine Col. Januario Caringal, Maj. Francisco Fernandez, Lt. Col. Nestor Flordeliza, Lt. Col. Edmundo Malabanjot, Capt. Frederick Sales, Capt. Allan Aurino, and 1st Lieutenants Ervin Divinagracia, Jacan Cordero, Sando Sereno and Richiemel Caballes. ■

Department of Education.

The decreasing content of English shows on primetime television had also aggravated the poor quality of English teachers and textbooks.

"Filipinos are exposed to less and less English as programs in the local language now dominate television," King said.

King, in his presentation at the national English conference, revealed that the Philippines was just second to Malaysia in proficiency in listening, speaking, writing and conversing in English.

According to King, Malaysians had an average overall score of 6.71, leading among countries in Asia in overall English proficiency.

The Philippines was second to Malaysia with 6.69; third was Indonesia with 5.99; fourth was India with 5.79; and Thailand fifth with 5.71. ■

## Read to your kids but don't talk like Kris

READ to your kids, but be sure not to sound like show biz personality Kris Aquino when she's talking *colegiala* talk (or a mix of Filipino and English).

Organizers and participants of the First Philippine Summit on Early Childhood Education yesterday called on parents to "read aloud" to children, even when they are still in the womb, to help improve their literacy later in life.

But the call was made with a

warning against mixing up languages or dialects.

Answering questions from reporters, educator Carolina Gustilo de Ocampo said Aquino, the youngest sister of leading presidential aspirant Sen. Benigno "Noy" Aquino III, should set an example to Filipino children and avoid mixing Filipino and English when talking.

"That one is really very bad because she's a Lit (Literature) major. She reads very well.

She's very intelligent," De Ocampo told reporters after a media briefing at the Shangri-La Hotel Makati.

"She should be a good model for language because she's excellent in both English and Tagalog. She should not mix it. She has so much power. Everybody looks up to her. Everybody finds her wonderful, so [she should] use that opportunity to be good in both languages," De Ocampo said.

American literacy specialist Laura Benson, a professor at the University of Colorado and a speaker at the summit, said it was important not to mix up languages.

She said Harvard University studies had shown that the language used at home "primes, prompts [and] patterns our children's thinking."

**Community language**

The important thing is to talk to children in "the language of your community," said De Ocampo, an Ilonggo from Ba-

colod City.

She added: "If one parent is really good in that language, then speak in that one."

"Speak in the language of your home, not Taglish, Pam-pangueñoish, or Ilonggoish. The most important thing is for the parent to be very clear. She cannot mix it."

De Ocampo observed that at home, parents often inadvertently switched from one language to another even in just one sentence:

"We end up using two languag-

es like 'Eat now or else *hindi ka tataba* (you won't gain weight),' or 'Come here now. Sit down now. *Dalian mo* (Hurry up).'

"I'm embarrassed that I'm very bad in Tagalog, but I'm trying my very best."

**Moms are important**

Morrison said the Philippines should give more importance to early childhood learning, adding that the United States had not done a good job on this and was now having problems with adolescent literacy. (Inquirer.net)



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