

# UN chief assures RP of international help

UNITED Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has assured the Philippine government of international humanitarian assistance in the wake of the widespread and massive devastation caused by typhoon Ondoy over the weekend, the Department of Foreign Affairs said last Sept. 29.

The UN chief gave his assurance to Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo during a meeting at the UN headquarters in New York Sept. 28 (Sept. 29 morning in Manila) when President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's appeal for international aid was conveyed.

Romulo met with Ban and Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes at the UN Headquarters shortly after the President issued her appeal through Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro Jr., chairman of the National Disaster Coordinating Council, the DFA said in a statement.

In responding to Manila's re-

quest for assistance, the secretary general said the United Nations is considering issuing a flash appeal for emergency assistance from both member states and non-government organizations.

"We are heartened by the assurances given by the Secretary General and the Undersecretary General that the United Nations will take positive action on our request for assistance," Romulo said.

The UN chief also expressed his sympathy and condolences to the Philippine government and to the families of the more than 250 people who perished in the floods that also displaced more than 500,000 people in Metro Manila and 25 other provinces.

In an earlier meeting with Romulo, Holmes, who also heads the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (Ocha), said his agency is ready to coordinate international humanitarian assistance and is looking into the

possibility of utilizing the Central Emergency Response Fund—a humanitarian fund established by the UN to enable more timely and reliable humanitarian assistance to those affected by natural disasters and armed conflicts.

Holmes told Romulo that Ocha personnel are assisting in relief operations in Manila and that additional personnel based in Bangkok are on their way to the Philippines to assess the situation and give recommendations on the kind of assistance that is required.

In anticipation of another weather disturbance that is approaching the country, the NDCC chairman said the Philippines is in need of emergency supplies, generators, food, and drinking water.

The United Nations also coordinated international assistance for the Philippines when typhoons Milenyo, Reming, and Senyang devastated the Bicol Region in 2007. ■

# OWWA, POLOs to activate OFWs, families links

LABOR Secretary Marianito Roque last Sept. 29 ordered the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs) to activate communication teams that would establish links between overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and their families in calamity-stricken areas.

This is in addition to the ongoing OWWA Operations Center's

24/7 communications operations, in tandem with those of the POLOs in more than 30 strategic locations worldwide, which accommodate the calls of OFWs to their families and loved ones at home, and vice versa.

Roque said the communication teams will be deployed to the designated evacuation centers with communications equipment for this effort.

"Through such communication lines facilitated by the OWWA and the POLOs, the worries and concerns of OFWs about their families and loved ones back in the Philippines would be assuaged," he said.

Roque emphasized that the centers would begin to facilitate free communication links and facilitate responses to any OFW families as necessary. (*Inquirer.net*)

# Marikina needs 6 months, P1B to recover—solon

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fore we can return to normal," Teodoro told the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* over the phone. "Our rebuilding before we could get back to normal is six to 12 months."

A lot of money will be needed as well, he added.

"This is a rough estimate. We need at least a billion to reconstruct utilities. Even the public structures, the health centers, were submerged. Even the schools," he said.

The whole ground floor of Marikina's city hall was submerged in flood, he noted. The city's rescue operations center, which was known for its quick action in emergencies, was unable to respond to all the cries for help, since its personnel and equipment were affected by the rising waters, he added.

According to Teodoro, there were no more residents left on rooftops in Marikina on Monday, but the city's people still need a lot of help.

Officials have set up a command post at Sta. Clara church for donations. He said people have been asking for food and medicine, including paracetamol and anti-tetanus shots. Many children are sick, and residents have gashes on their arms and feet from wading or swimming through the flood barefoot, according to the congressmen.

Government buildings and even some privately owned ones have also been turned into evacuation centers. ■

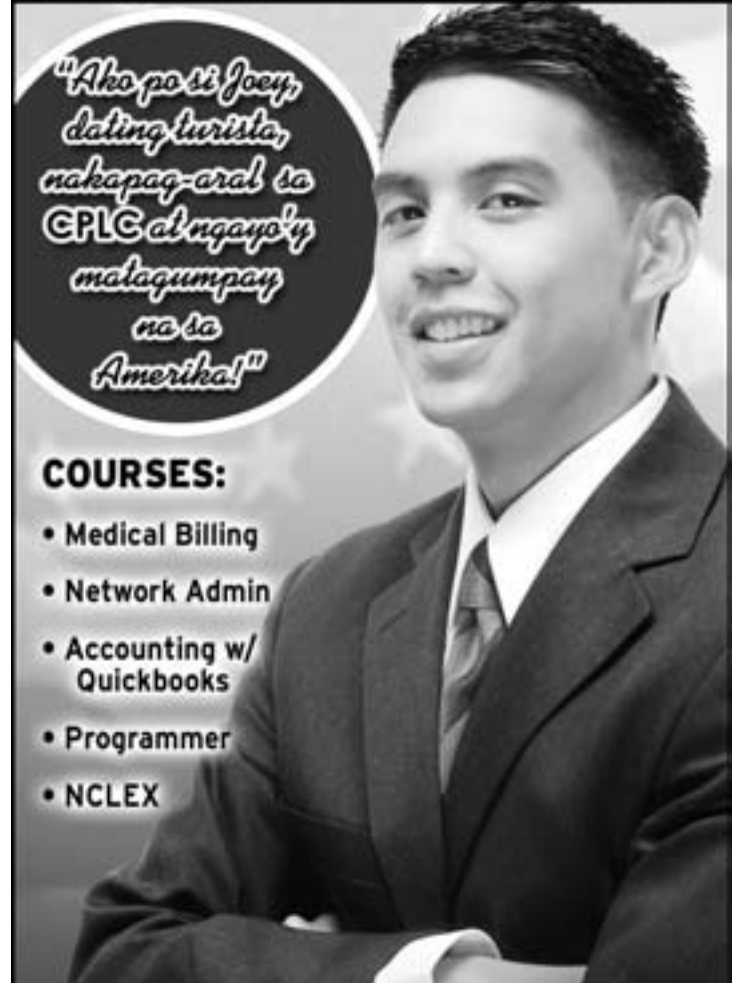
# Pinoys in Middle East start relief drive for typhoon victims

FILIPINO workers in the Middle East began a donation program for the victims of the floods caused by typhoon Ondoy in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

Migrante-Middle East mobilized its members and officers to start collecting donations, relief goods and clothings from compatriots for the relief operation.

Migrante-Mideast regional coordinator John Leonard Monterona said the group's chapters would coordinate this effort with different Filipino communities and Filipino organizations in the region and would ask assistance from Philippine diplomatic offi-

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