



Philippines-China CHRONICLE

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PGMA reports on gains made by her administration



President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her third State of the Nation Address (SONA) on 28 July 2003 before the joint session of Congress at the Batasang

Pambansa said that for the past year, her government delivered in great part its commitments to the Filipino people.

President Arroyo reviewed her first State of the Nation Address which focused on jobs, food on every table, homes and education. She said that "government must possess the capacity to execute good policy and deliver basic services through strong and responsive institutions staffed by a competent and dedicated bureaucracy." Following the theme of her second State of the Nation Address last year, the President reminded the people that "government must be the arm of a strong republic."

The President said that a day after overcoming, without bloodshed or damage to property, an ill-conceived mutiny carried out by misguided military officers, the country, by now, should be at peace. She said that Filipinos cannot stay divided with so much to be done together.

President Arroyo vowed to pursue further political, economic and social reforms and expressed confidence that the nation would overcome all difficulties.

Among the more significant results in the delivery of commitments of her administration to the Filipinos, the President identified the following:

1. advances in combating terrorism and towards a negotiated peace with the National Democratic Front (NDF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF);
2. seizure of P8 billion of illegal drugs and closure of several shabu laboratories in 5 weeks since the launch of the campaign against illegal drugs;
3. school houses in 600 barangays, distance learning education and tv education, increased emphasis in the English language, science and math;
4. provision of housing for 100,000 poor families and 200,000 families with meager incomes;
5. devotion of 500,000 hectares of land to agrarian reform;
6. creation of 750,000 new jobs in the countryside;
7. health insurance coverage for 7 million poor people.

In addition, the President declared that there will be no moratorium on the death penalty for all drug lords. She asked Congress to allocate P8 billion for victims of human rights violations during martial law.

The President announced that the economy grew by 4.4 percent last year and 5.5 percent in the first quarter of this year. Foreign investments rose 26 percent in the first quarter compared to the same period last year.

President Arroyo closed by paying tribute to Filipino "global workers" in the Philippines and abroad.

Philippine Foreign Secretary meets Chinese Leaders

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople visited Beijing from 20 to 23 August 2003 at the invitation of his counterpart, Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing. Secretary Ople was accompanied by Undersecretary Sonia Brady, Assistant Secretary Alicia Ramos, and other officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

During his visit, Secretary Ople met separately with the Chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee Wu Bangguo, Premier of the State Council Wen Jiabao, Foreign Minister Li, and Minister Wang Jiarui of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee's International Department.

In his talks with the Chinese leaders, Secretary Ople obtained favorable concessions for the modernization and rehabilitation of the north railway system connecting Metropolitan Manila with the central Luzon province of Bulacan. An agreement in this regard is expected to be signed by the two sides during the visit to Manila by NPC Standing Committee Chairman Wu.

Secretary Ople proposed the creation of an annual security dialogue forum for officials from the defense ministries of the two countries. This proposal was accepted by China. For trade matters, Secretary Ople projected that bilateral trade will reach US\$10 billion by 2005. His projection was shared by China, with the Chinese leaders noting that bilateral trade is expected to reach US\$8 billion by the end of this year. This positive development in bilateral trade will be further boosted by consensus reached by the two sides during the visit to explore joint exploration of oil and gas resources in the South China Sea as another step forward in confidence-building.

Philippines and China to strengthen cooperation against narcotics

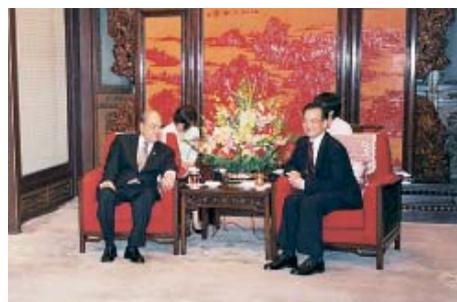


Secretary Jose Lina, Jr. (4th from left), and State Councilor and Public Security Minister Zhou Yongkang (4th from right), together with Ambassador Villa, pose with Filipino and Chinese officials involved in the campaign against illegal drugs.

The Chairman of the Dangerous Drugs Board of the Philippines, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., headed a delegation which visited Beijing from 3 to 7 August 2003 to strengthen partnership with China in combating the spread of narcotics and other illegal drugs. The Chairman of the National Narcotics Control Commission of China, State Councilor and Public Security Minister Zhou Yongkang, received Secretary Lina and his delegation at



Secretary Blas F. Ople with NPC Standing Committee Chairman Wu Bangguo.



With Premier Wen Jiabao.



With Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing. Also in photo are Ambassador Villa (left) and Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right).

Zhongnanhai on 6 August 2003. The two ministers agreed to institutionalize the coordination of their respective anti-narcotics bureaus in stopping the cross-border trade of narcotics and other illegal drugs and precursor chemicals.

As a step forward in their coordination efforts, an experts group headed by the chief of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), Undersecretary Anselmo Avenido, Jr., finalized the operational documents with Director-General Yang Feng Rui of China's Bureau of Narcotics Control.

The two sides adopted closer intelligence-sharing mechanisms and designated focal points in each other's capital that would respond promptly to requests for cross-border coordination. An experts group from the Chinese Bureau of Narcotics Control is expected to visit the Philippines before the end of the year in preparation for an intensive operation against cross-border syndicates trading in narcotics and other illegal drugs between the Philippines and China.

The other members of Secretary Lina's delegation included Police Senior Superintendent Ager Ontog, Jr., and DILG's Mr. Noel Puyat.

DIPLOMATIC NOTES

Tourism Secretary Gordon participates in ASEAN + 3 Special Tourism Ministers Meeting

Meeting declares tourism in region back to normal

Philippine Tourism Secretary Richard J. Gordon visited Beijing on 8-9 August 2003 to participate in the ASEAN + 3 Special Tourism Ministers Meeting hosted by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA).

After an exchange of views on how to revitalize tourism in the region following the effective control of SARS, the tourism leaders of ASEAN, China, Japan and Korea declared that tourism in the region has returned to normal and that the safety and well-being of tourists in the region will be ensured.

The ministers noted that tourism promotes economic development, friendship and peace in the world. However, it is an industry that is easily disturbed by political turmoil, terrorist activities, economic crises, natural disasters and public health crises such as SARS. Hence, effective international cooperation, coordination and information exchange are important in promoting and maintaining the vitality of tourism in the region.

The ministers expressed optimism that the impact



Secretary Gordon shaking hands with Chinese Vice Premier Wu Yi at the Opening Ceremony of the ASEAN + 3 Special Tourism Ministers Meeting in Beijing on 9 August 2003. Looking on is CNTA Chairman He Guangwei and Malaysian Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Dato' Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir.

of SARS on tourism will be temporary and that the region will remain one of the most attractive tourism destinations in the world.

At the meeting, the ministers also issued a statement condemning the 5 August bombing of a hotel in Jakarta as "a heinous and ruthless crime against humanity and ... against all religions."

While in Beijing, Secretary Gordon and the other ASEAN + 3 tourism ministers called on Chinese Vice Premier Wu Yi, who delivered the opening statement at the Meeting.

CNTA Vice Chairman Sun Gang also hosted Secretary Gordon to a welcome dinner.

An interview with CCTV-9's *Dialogue* Program, anchored by noted Chinese journalist Yang Rui, also took place at the Diaoyutai State Guest House. The interview, aired over CCTV-9 on 24 August 2003, allowed Secretary Ople to continue his pitch to attract more Chinese investments and tourists to the Philippines. Secretary Ople reiterated his affirmation of the Philippines' stability and the strength of the country's democratic institutions amidst perceived threats of continued military unrest and terrorism plaguing the Philippines as portrayed in the international media.

A press conference held at the Philippine Embassy was participated in by leading local and international media services in Beijing. Secretary Ople expounded on the importance of finding a diplomatic solution to the Korean nuclear crisis and expressed his support to the efforts by China in convincing the concerned countries to participate in multilateral discussions to thresh out their respective differences.

During the same press conference at the Embassy, Secretary Ople briefed the media practitioners on the latest development in the peace process involving the Philippine Government and the MILF in southern Philippines.

Ambassador Villa says "Zai Jian!"



Ambassador Josue L. Villa, completing a 3-year tour of duty as Philippine envoy to the People's Republic of China and concurrently to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Mongolia, made a series of

farewell calls on the leaders of these countries.

On 23-26 August 2003, he called on H.E. Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly and H.E. Foreign Minister Paek Nam Sun. He also met with Mr. Ma Chol Su,

Director General of DPRK Foreign Ministry's Asian Department and Mr. Song Sok Han, Vice Chairman of the Korea-Philippines Friendship Society.

On 31 August 2003, Ambassador Villa was received by H.E. Li Zhaoxing, Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China. Ambassador Villa also called on H.E. Cai Wu, Vice Minister of the Communist Party of China. A farewell dinner will be hosted by the Minister of Foreign Affairs before Ambassador Villa departs on 20 September 2003.

In Ulaanbaatar, Ambassador Villa called on H.E. Natsagiin Bagabandi, President of Mongolia, on 4 September 2003. This was followed by his call on H.E. Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun, Foreign Minister of Mongolia.

ASEAN-China Symposium on Economic and Social Impact of SARS

The ASEAN-China Symposium on the Economic and Social Impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) was held from 15 to 16 July 2003 at the Beijing Hotel. Ambassador Villa led the following members of the Philippine delegation: Dr. Mari Rose De Los Reyes, Medical Specialist III of the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) of the Department of Health and Embassy Second Secretary Ms. Bernadette Therese C. Fernandez.

Organized by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, the Symposium successfully met its objectives for countries in ASEAN and China (including Hong Kong SAR and Macao SAR) to exchange information and experiences on the economic and social impact of SARS in their respective countries. The role of international cooperation was deemed important in addressing issues related to the containment and prevention of SARS. Delegates reiterated the need for Asian countries to collaborate further on lessons learned from the SARS experience and prepare counter-measures for its possible re-emergence. ASEAN and China agreed that there is a need to rise above the challenges of the impact of SARS on economies and societies.

The Symposium was held in Beijing pursuant to initiatives and commitment put forward at the ASEAN-China Leaders' Special Meeting on SARS in Bangkok on 29 April 2003. Delegates from ASEAN and China shared country information on how the SARS crisis was contained, how it affected their respective economies and the social situation.

ASEAN Ambassadors meet with CPAFFC President

The ASEAN Committee, Beijing (ACB) hosted a dinner in honor of H.E. Mr. Chen Haosu, President of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC), on 11 July 2003 at the Kerry Center Hotel.

Mr. Chen expressed appreciation for the deepening friendship and cooperation between the peoples of ASEAN and China, and the expanding people-to-people exchanges between the two sides.

Philippines attend ASEAN-China workshop against transnational crime

A Philippine delegation headed by Interior and Local Government Undersecretary Wencilito Andanar participated in the ASEAN-China Workshop on Law Enforcement Cooperation Against Transnational Crime organized by the Chinese Ministry of Public Security (MPS). The workshop took place in Beijing from 25 to 27 August 2003 and was supported by the ASEAN-China Development Fund.

Undersecretary Andanar co-chaired the workshop with MPS Deputy Director-General Guo Baoshan. The other members of the Philippine delegation were Philippine National Police Director for Operations Enrique Galang, Jr. and Planning Director Benedict Michael Fokno from the Philippine Center on Transnational Crime (PCTC).

The workshop participants agreed to strengthen exchanges in intelligence information and personnel expertise. The participants also agreed to share their experiences in fighting criminal syndicates in their joint efforts to neutralize transnational crime in the region.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

LEGAL CORNER

Miguel met Sandra in Manila when they were both working in the housekeeping department of Sikat International Hotel. Although they were both single, Miguel and Sandra opted to live together without the benefit of either a civil or religious marriage but introduced each other as "husband and wife." During their cohabitation, Sandra gave birth to two children. After cohabiting for 15 years, Miguel and Sandra drifted apart as Sandra rose up the hotel administration hierarchy to become Assistant Director for Housekeeping. Miguel's position stagnated at the level of Chief Butler. In search of better pay, Miguel applied for a position at a Beijing-based hotel where he was accepted as Assistant Manager for Housekeeping. Miguel and Sandra parted ways cordially, with Miguel promising to continue supporting the education of his two children with Sandra. The two also entered into an agreement stipulating that their "separation as husband and wife" is made through their mutual consent.

In Beijing, Miguel met a fellow Filipino employee at the hotel, Luisa, and the two decided to get married at the Philippine Embassy. When they applied for a marriage permit, Miguel disclosed in his application form that he was "separated" but presented the agreement he signed with Sandra as proof that he was no longer attached to anybody. The consular officer requested Miguel to present a Certification from the National Statistics Office that he is free to marry. The National Statistics Office issued a certification that it does not have any record of marriage entered into by Miguel. The consular officer is confused whether he should issue the marriage permit. Can Miguel enter into a valid marriage with Luisa? What happens to the earlier cohabitation of Miguel and Sandra?

A Yes, Miguel can enter into a valid marriage with Luisa since he remains a bachelor, notwithstanding his cohabitation with Sandra. The agreement entered into between Miguel and Sandra is not pertinent to the issue of Miguel's marriage to Luisa. The agreement even erroneously referred to Miguel and Sandra as "husband and wife." Miguel should correctly indicate in his civil status that he is "single" and not "separated."

The cohabitation of Miguel and Sandra is known as a common-law relationship. While this relationship does not create a valid marriage between the two persons, the law provides for rules to govern the conduct of their property relationship and parental authority over their children. The property relationship between Miguel and Sandra is not in dispute in this case. Neither is Miguel's relationship with his children with Sandra subject to any controversy. Without any evidence disputing the legal capacity of Miguel and Luisa to enter into a contract of marriage, the consular officer can issue the marriage permit which would pave the way for the civil marriage of Miguel and Luisa before the consul of the Philippine Embassy.

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Contributions and comments are welcome.

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PROFILE

Aileen S. Mendiola
Vice Consul
Philippine Consulate General, Shanghai



(This is the 14th of a series of features on Philippine diplomats currently serving in China.)

Vice Consul Aileen Mendiola arrived in Shanghai in April 2002 to open the Philippine Consulate General in Shanghai.

Aileen is an alumnus of the University of the Philippines where she received a Bachelor's Degree in History and a Master's Degree on Asian Studies. She is also a proud alumnus of the Beijing Language and Culture University and Beijing University where she studied Chinese language and International Relations.

Vice Consul Mendiola joined the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1993. Her previous appointments prior to Shanghai were as China Specialist (1993 - 1996) and then as Assistant Director of the North Asia Division of the Office of Asian and Pacific Affairs (1998-2002). In 1997-1998, she was assigned as Attaché at the Philippine Embassy in Singapore, doing work related to political, economic and cultural affairs.

Vice Consul Mendiola was also assigned to the Office of the Presidential Assistant on Foreign Affairs in 1995 as Director. In 2001, she was detailed to the APEC Business Advisory Council International Secretariat (ABAC).

Prior to joining the Department of Foreign Affairs, Vice Consul Mendiola taught Political Science and History at the University of the Philippines and the St. Scholastica's College.

Philippine foreign service posts in
China adopt Machine Readable
Ready Visas

On 15 July 2003, the Embassy of the Philippines, as well as the Philippine Consulates General in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Xiamen, Guangzhou and Shanghai began issuing the sticker-type Machine-Readable Ready Visa (MRRV).

The new sticker-type visas are aimed at safeguarding the integrity of Philippine visas against fraud, tampering, forgery and other forms of irregularities. The adoption of the MRRV is also in consonance with international standards, and in conformity with the specifications of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

The MRRV is an interim arrangement prior to the full implementation of the Machine Readable Visa or MRV.

Prior to the adoption of the MRRV, representatives of Philippine foreign service posts attended a briefing on the MRRV in the Philippine Consulate General in Hong Kong on 20 June 2003. Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Estrella Berenguel made a presentation on the MRRV, noting the security features of the new sticker type visas.

Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
MANILANOTICE OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTION
TO ALL FILIPINO CITIZENS

Notice is hereby given that under Republic Act No. 9189, otherwise known as "The Overseas Absentee Voting Act of 2003", all citizens of the Philippines abroad, not otherwise disqualified by law, at least eighteen (18) years of age on the day of the election, and who are registered overseas absentee voters with approved application to vote in absentia, may vote for President, Vice-President, Senators and Party-List Representatives.

All qualified Filipino citizens not registered as voters under Republic Act No. 8189, otherwise known as "The Voters Registration Act of 1996" (the system of continuing registration), shall file an application for registration while those who are already registered under the said Act shall file an application for certification.

For purposes of the May 10, 2004 elections, the filing of applications shall be from August 1, 2003 to September 30, 2003 at the Philippine Embassy located at #23 Xiu Shui Bei Jie, Jianguomenwai, Beijing.

The voting period will be from April 11, 2004 to May 10, 2004, except for the duly qualified Filipino seafarers who may vote from March 12, 2004 to May 10, 2004.

For details, please contact Consul General Ruth Morales Prado or Vice Consul Elizabeth Te at telephone number (86) (10) 6532-1872 or visit the following website: www.philembassy-china.org.

Department of Foreign Affairs (Manila):
www.dfa.gov.ph
Hotline: (632) 833-0914/833-0696
Commission on Elections
www.comelec.gov.ph

Update: Overseas Absentee Voting
(OAV)

In preparation for the national elections to be held on 10 May 2004, the Embassy begun receiving applications for registration for the first-ever Overseas Absentee Voting on 1 August 2003.

A briefing was conducted at the Embassy on 2 August 2003.

As of 26 August 2003, a total of 116 Filipinos of the expected 200 potential voters in Beijing have registered for the coming elections.

Prior to the start of registration, Minister and Consul General Ruth Morales Prado attended the training program conducted by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on 17 July 2003 in Manila on the use of data capturing machines.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople called on the DFA to perform its duties under the Overseas Absentee Voting Law "in the most impartial and professional manner." He added, "We cannot and must not allow partisan considerations to cloud the integrity and credibility of the Department of Foreign Affairs as an institution."



Minister and Consul General Ruth Morales Prado during the briefing for the Filipino Community on the Overseas Absentee Voting Law held at the Embassy on 02 August 2003.

2nd Consular Consultations Among Foreign Service Posts in China held

The Heads of the Philippine Embassy in Beijing and the Philippine Consulates General in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Xiamen, Guangzhou, and Shanghai met in the Philippine Embassy in Beijing on 18-19 August 2003 for the 2nd Consular Consultations among Foreign Service Posts in China.

Ambassador Josue Villa, together with Consuls General Jesus Yabes, Victoria Bataclan, Erlinda Gavino, and Corazon Yap-Bahjin agreed to exert more efforts to encourage overseas Filipinos to apply for registration or certification, which would enable them to vote for President, Vice President, Senators and Party-List Representatives at elections to be held in 2004. They agreed to continue posting updated information on their respective websites about overseas absentee voting, distribute the Primers on the Overseas Absentee Voting Act of 2004, more extensively use radio, television, print media (particularly in Hong Kong which has more than 100,000 potential voters), and texting networks.

RP-China trade hits US\$3.76 billion in first half 2003

RP-China trade figure to hit US\$10 billion by 2005?

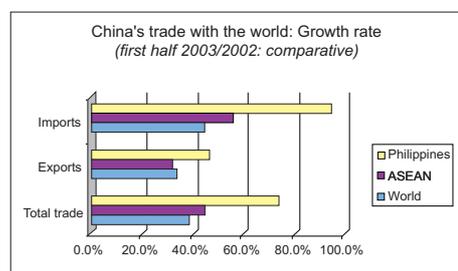
RP-China trade in the first half of the year hit US\$3.76 billion, representing a growth rate of 74.5 percent year-on-year.

According to statistics released by the General Administration of Customs of China (GAC), Philippine exports to China amounted to US\$2.43 billion while imports from China reached US\$1.32 billion, representing year-on-year increases of 95.6 and 45.6 percent, respectively. The Philippines posted a trade surplus of US\$1.11 billion.

Based on GAC figures, RP-China trade is growing at a much faster rate than China's trade with either ASEAN as a whole or with the world as a whole. RP-China bilateral trade has been growing at an average rate of 26.56 percent in the past five years (1998-2003). If the same growth rate is maintained in the next two years, bilateral trade could easily exceed US\$10 billion by 2005.

This optimistic trend in the expansion of bilateral trade and commercial exchanges was noted by Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople during his visit to Beijing on 20-23 August 2003. "There is a surge of interest in both sides to take advantage of trade complementation resources now that China has embraced free market reforms. This is to the interest of both countries," he said.

Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, who met Secretary Ople during the visit, also said that in spite of a clear trend that bilateral trade will favor the Philippines, China is determined to exert every effort to strengthen the trade relations between the two countries.



The Heads of Foreign Service Posts in China also agreed to undertake more public relations efforts to counter negative perceptions about the Philippines. They agreed to continue establishing sister-city relationships with local Chinese governments to promote friendship and goodwill between Filipinos and the Chinese.

They recognized the importance of holding the Consular Consultations and agreed to hold this annually. The objectives of the Consular Consultations are to: (1) ensure coordination and harmonization of programs and operations among Foreign Service Posts in China, (2) jointly address issues of common concern to the Posts, (3) share experiences in dealing with various aspects of consular work, (4) adopt common approaches in the implementation of guidelines and directives from the Department of Foreign Affairs, and (5) consider measures and ways of enhancing Posts' effectiveness in the pursuit of trade, investment and tourism promotion activities.



Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople and his delegation are joined by Ambassador Villa and other officials from Philippine Foreign Service posts in China.

Embassy joins post-SARS Beijing tourism symposium



Philippine Embassy Minister and Consul General Ruth Morales Prado and Beijing Municipal Tourism Administration (BMTA) Director Yu Changjiang holding a copy of the Beijing Consensus issued after the two-day symposium on "Revitalizing the Tourism Economy in Asia" hosted by the BMTA. The Consensus lists tasks that the participants resolve to undertake to revive tourism in the region.

Soon after the World Health Organization lifted its SARS-advisory on Beijing, the Beijing Municipal Tourism Administration (BMTA) organized on 9-10 July 2003 a symposium entitled "Revitalizing the Tourism Economy in Asia" which included participants from Hong Kong, Macao and seven capitals of Asia.

The Philippine delegation was headed by the Embassy's Minister and Consul General Ruth Morales Prado, who delivered a statement that presented options on how the region could work together to revitalize tourism following the effective control of SARS.

She mentioned that the Philippines was fortunate not to have an uncontrolled local SARS outbreak, but, its tourism industry was still adversely affected by SARS. Cooperative efforts are thus needed to revitalize tourism in the region.

In her statement, Consul General Prado also emphasized the importance to the tourism industry of providing and exchanging timely information on public safety and security issues. She also proposed joint promotion and marketing activities among different tourism authorities to promote tourism in the region-e.g., promotion of intra-regional multi-destination packages, joint tourism road shows and fairs.

More Chinese journalists visit Philippines



Travel journalists from *City Tourism Magazine* and *Traveler Magazine* visited the Philippines in July and August to experience Visit

Philippines Year 2003 (VPY2003).

Journalists from *City Tourism* visited Manila, Cebu and Bohol. The journalists from *Traveler* magazine focused on Philippine volcanoes. Their visit included treks to Taal, Pinatubo and Mayon Volcanoes.

The Embassy, in coordination with the Philippine Department of Tourism (DOT), has been inviting Chinese journalists to visit the Philippines as part of its program to promote the Philippines as a destination for Chinese tourists.

The SARS outbreak in China effectively put a halt to visits by Chinese tourists to the Philippines in the second quarter of the year. However, with the effective control of SARS in China and the early July lifting by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) of its ban on outbound travel, Chinese tourists, especially from Guangdong, have started to travel again to the Philippines.

As part of its activities for VPY2003, DOT has lined up a number of packages, aptly titled "WOW packages" to attract tourists to the Philippines. Information is available at <http://www.tourism.gov.ph>.

Classroom, Galing sa Mamamayang Pilipino Abroad

On 27 June 2003, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) paving the way for the establishment of an estimated 10,000 public school classrooms through sponsorships of overseas Filipino workers was signed among the Departments of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Labor and Employment (DOLE), Education (DepEd) and the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (FFCCCII).

The program, called "*Classroom, Galing sa Mamamayang Pilipino Abroad*," aims to encourage Filipino communities overseas to sponsor the establishment of public school classrooms in the Philippines. The DepEd shall identify areas where classrooms are to be established. The DFA, through the Philippine Embassies and Consulates, and DOLE, through its Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs), shall conduct information dissemination activities on the project. DOLE's Kabayanihan Program will manage the project overall. FFCCCII, which has established more than 5,000 classrooms all over the Philippines, shall facilitate the construction of the classrooms.

At the signing of the MOA, Secretary of Foreign Affairs Blas F. Ople said:

"The objectives of this program are: 1) to encourage social responsibility among Filipinos abroad to contribute to nation-building on more concrete and tangible terms; and 2) to bring together the efforts and resources of government, the private sector and overseas Filipinos in a strategic partnership aimed at promoting better facilities for education."

For more information, please visit: <http://www.cgma.dole.gov.ph>.