How sensible is imposing a total log ban?
The military is staying in control, but some of them...
Illegal logging in Mindanao: A human and ecological disaster

By Bong D. Fabe

In Gingoog City, some 122 kilometers east of Cagayan de Oro City and 74 kilometers west of Butuan City, lumad children of the Higaonon tribe as young as nine years old, are employed to haul logs for a paltry pay. These children are being used by wood traders and loggers—legal or illegal—because they are cheaper than carabaos. Thus, they are called “carabao children.” They are paid a measly P20 per log hauled.

In its January 30, 2010 report and February 4, 2010 consolidated report, the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) in Gingoog City confirmed the veracity of the existence of these carabao children in barangays Eureka and Kalipay. These children even skip classes just so they could haul logs for pay, said Higaonon tribal youth leader Emmanuel Ansihagan.

Gingoog City Social Welfare Officer Napoleon Austria Jr. admitted the existence of these “carabao children.” He also said he had asked the NCIP, DSWD, local government unit of Gingoog, non-government organizations and other concerned agencies to form a multi-agency body to investigate this as this is a clear violation of the laws on labor and child abuse. But until the government addresses this issue, these Higaonon kids called “carabao children” will be a bane to the city of Gingoog, which originally came from the word “Hingoog,” which in Manobo means “Goodluck.”

Gingoog City literally means the “City of Good Luck.”

Long before President Benigno Aquino’s pronouncement of implementing a total log ban, Misamis Oriental Vice-Governor Norris Babiera had proposed imposing a log ban in the province, a proposal that was met with widespread support from several local and national lawmakers, the Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro, NGOs and environmentalists.

In Cagayan de Oro City, Rep. Rufus Rodriguez has authored House Bill 5887 imposing a total log ban in the city and declaring it a logging-free zone. This bill was passed by the Lower House during the 13th Congress but did not muster in the Senate. It was refiled by Rodriguez in the 14th Congress recently.
Mindanao, or more specifically, the situation of Mindanao, the second largest island in the Philippines. Although Mindanao is blessed with an expansive territory, bountiful natural resources and a vast potential for human capital, Mindanawons (Muslims, Lumads and Christians) have yet to reap its bounty. Close to half of its population (44%) live below the poverty line.

Most pundits attribute this margin-

alization of Mindanao to Manila’s bias against it, especially in the sharing of the national income and policy-making powers and processes. Thus, most Filipino history and experience, business and politics, are shaped and viewed from Manila’s perspective and Manila’s gain. These and more aggravate the situation of Mindanao and effectively disempower majority of Mindanawons, especially the Lumads.

Overlapping functions of government

in the long haul ultimately undermine the laws that protect and advance the rights of the lumads. Thus, when former President Gloria Arroyo issued Executive Order 726 on May 23, 2008 placing the NCIP as an attached agency of the DENR, many non-government organizations fighting for the rights of the lumads cried foul, saying it is an affront to NCIP’s autonomy and full implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA). One of the provisions of the IPRA states that the NCIP shall be under the Office or the President. Arroyo’s EO 726 was not the first time that showed her refusal to directly oversee the NCIP, passing it like hot potato to other government agencies as an attached agency, rather than taking full responsibility in the protection and advancement of the lumads’ rights.

On September 27, 2004, Arroyo transferred NCIP from the Office of the President to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) is now an Attached Agency of the DENR, an agency, which is also pushing for the full recognition and protection of the lumads’ rights, the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center-Kaamuna sa Kalikasan Friends of the Earth Philippines (LRC-KzK-FoE Phils.) said that this is a cause for alarm because “under this organizational structure are states that NCIP is subject or title over land, not the natural resources. The Constitution says that natural resources are owned by the State. Thus, “the transfer of NCIP just reinforces the State’s claim on natural resources within the ancestral domains. Making NCIP under DENR is synonymous to putting IPs under the watch of a government agency supportive of mining industries,” AFREM Executive Director Mary Luz Ferranil explained.

Ferranil also said that “when NCIP was still under the DAR, it is an expression of the concept of ancestral domains as part of agrarian reform.” With the attachment, “DENR has a say in matters of NCIP. The implementation of IPRA and other policies which affects IPs can easily be manipulated and controlled by DENR,” she added.

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Importance of FPIC

Before any industry can enter or develop an area claimed or titled by indigenous peoples, the industry has to first get the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of the IPs (Lumads) because the FPIC process will ensure the active participation of IPs in the decision making process and that IP rights, customs, traditions and practices will be respected. Moreover, this process will ensure a just and equitable partnership between the company and the IPs in relation to environmental management and the development and utilization of natural resources within IP ancestral domains should FPIC be granted.

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indigenous peoples (IPs) to be determined in accordance with the Indigenous Peoples Act of 1997. In its jurisdiction, Babiera is also a parish priest whom he informed about the existence of illegal logging within his ancestral domain.

"More than calling that justice be given and the destructive practice is ended, the immediate cancellation of STC’s IFMA. If that happens, then his death is not in vain because it will at last make the technical language that he so lovefully agiseon ko tulahubang ko (I am my brothers’ keeper)," she said.

CHR-10 Director, lawyer Jeanne Ivy Abrina, said her office has already docketed Tay Berting’s murder and that she has already requested the CHR en banc in Manila to conduct an exhaustive and impartial investigation into the death of other Higaonon people who were killed defending their ancestral land and the natural resource wealth.

"Their deaths deserved more than just an entry in the police blotter. Their killings merit a full-blown investigation," she stressed.

Ledesma also condemned Tay Berting’s murder.

"The Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro considers this inhumane act, and calls on the police and other government authorities to confer justice to the family, relatives and colleagues of Tay Berting," he said.

Responding to Ledesma and others’ call for justice, Ms. Baliya of the Human Rights-X (CHR-10) launched an investigation into the incident. Their findings prompted the team to recommend the immediate stoppage of STC’s hauling activities and total clearing of saplings and other vegetation within its concession. The team also recommended that MIHITRICO should explain why their IFMA should not be cancelled or suspended.

Logging, mining are magnets of conflict

But environmentalists, particularly those who have been monitoring the team’s findings because until now, the DENR has failed to answer the heart of their complaint that the company did not operate without a permit, because the IFMA was issued without an application. STC has not even filed an application before the MIHITRICO.

"Instead of encouraging extractive activities in Claveria, the company's practice is the removal of trees outside and far from the IFMA (land) and from a legal standpoint. STC also cut old-growth trees like lauan and other species in Claveria," Rebuta said. Worst, STC also cut-old growth trees like Italian elm instead of only second-growth trees.

"Logging and mining are proof that our government lacks the creativity to develop our natural resources for the common good," said Cagayan de Oro Congressman Ariel C. Hernandez, former executive director of the peace and development non-government organization Balyag Misamis Oriental (BAMO) in his statement. "Trees are a resource that counts Claveria as one of its areas of operations."

Hernandez, who once sits as congressman representing the party-list group Avante in the 14th Congress, pointed out that mining and logging are "the graver of a dilemma for the community" because they are "magnets of conflict."

"If the national government does not act, it can only be the的角色 of the DENR in addressing climate change..."

LGCs can implement log ban

However, even without Congress’s concurrence, local government units (LGUs) can impose a ban as stated in the Climate Change Act of 2009 (RA 9729), which originated from the role of the LGUs in addressing climate change.

"The LGUs shall be the frontline agencies in the formulation, planning and implementation of climate change action plans that are consistent with the provisions of the Local Government Code and the National Climate Change Action Plan," Section 14 of RA 9729 states.

The President’s pronouncement follows the LGUs to protect the environment, LGUs are mandated to protect their constituents by protecting the environment and ecosystem.

Article 11 of the 1986 Constitution states that “the State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful economy in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature.”

Also, the Local Government Code of 1991 (RA 7166) also authorizes LGUs to exercise powers over their territories and jurisdiction.

Sec. 16 of the 1991 LGT states that “... local government units shall ensure and protect the environment and natural resources, and implement policies and programs for the protection and promotion of health and safety, enhance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology.”

"It is incumbent upon the LGUs to help protect the environment, especially forests because there are no forests or trees are cut on rotation of global warming and climate change..."
By Brian Clowes, PhD

The purpose of my tenth mission to the Philippines was to speak at Human Life International’s 17th Asia-Pacific Congress, and to help our Regional Coordinator, Linya Aniceto, assist the Church hierarchy and large Catholic lay groups in organizing and synchronizing their efforts.

The pre-Congress training sessions kicked off with an opening Mass celebrated by a dozen priests. We had pro-life representatives from Laos, India, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Taiwan, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, Uzbekistan and, of course, the Philippines. The three-day pre-Congress was designed to train pro-life leaders from each of the countries in the basics of the anti-life assaults, and to awaken and inform them as to the many directions they may come from. We also hosted a meeting of more than 150 high-level pro-life leaders, including bishops, senators, congressmen and judges, as well as large numbers of businessmen, doctors and lawyers.

The worst fear of the population controllers is a vocal Church working hand-in-hand with large and active lay groups. The head of the Knights of Columbus of the Philippines was at the meeting, and he said that the combined strength of 300,000 fourth-degree Knights will be marshaled against the RH Bill. They will be joined by the powerful Couples for Christ group, El Shaddai, and the Focolare, among others. Between them, these groups represent millions of Filipinos.

The 17th Asia-Pacific Congress officially began on November 6. Among the many bishops staying through the entire conference were Ricardo Cardinal Vidal, recently retired from the post of Archbishop of Cebu City; Archbishop Jose S. Palma, his successor; Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales, Archbishop of Manila; Archbishop Tomash Peta, President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Kazakhstan; Archbishop Francesco Panfilo, President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands; Archbishop Paciano Aniceto, Director of the Episcopal Commission on Family and Life; and Bishop Nereo P. Odchimar, President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

The two and a half days of talks stretched from early Saturday to noon on Monday. We had eleven different talks, and the open forum discussions were extensive. As usual, the most important work happened behind the scenes with meetings and networking.

One of our speakers was Congressman Rollo Golez, the author of House Bill 13, which would protect all human life from fertilization. He presented me with a thick pile of papers proving statistically that the main causes of high maternal mortality in the provinces of the Philippines is not the lack of "safe" abortion, but a lack of attended childbirth. But the population controllers do not care about this; all they want is fewer childbirth. But the population controllers do not care about this; all they want is fewer children.

Cardinal Rosales encouraged all of us during his homily at the closing Mass of the Congress, emphasizing that prayer and action are both needed in the world today. We also outlined our plans for the next Congress, which will be held in Kazakhstan in September of 2011.

This was definitely the most productive trip we have had to the Philippines. More than 500 people attended the Congress, and there were more high-ranking Church officials there than at any other HLI conference we have ever held. We also helped achieve more strategic goals than at any other conference, the most important being the organization of the pro-life leaders of the entire nation to fight the Reproductive Health Bill.

To lose the Philippines to the culture of death would not only be a devastating blow to the morale of pro-lifers all over the world, it would open the floodgates to funds pouring in to devastate Filipino families. So we are appealing to all of our friends to support our efforts in the Philippines with generous donations. Please also pray fervently for the future of the Philippines. If the RH Bill passes, there will be abortion mills all over the country within three years, and the soul of this most Catholic nation will quickly wither and die. The West will have occupied the Philippines yet again, but this time the occupation would be in the form of anti-life resources and structures that would destroy what is so beautiful and unique about this great country: its faithful and joyful families, and indeed, its future.

Join us—don’t let it happen!
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Hanoi, 7 million people drink contaminated water

HANOI, Jan. 24, 2011—Arsenic, manganese, selenium, barium and other toxic substances were discovered in drinking water wells of the Red River Delta, which also supplies Hanoi.

A study published last week in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, shows that 65% of the wells are polluted. To the point that the newspaper has suggested the government should find other water sources or improve anti-pollution facilities.

The study considers that the continuous pumping of water from deep aquifers, for over a century, has caused naturally occurring arsenic in groundwater above the area of the Red River Delta is one of the world’s most populous, with about 1,100 persons per square kilometre. The problems of water are available in the area and about 11 million people have no access to public drinking water, but some people and other resources such as private wells. At least 7 million people are at risk of arsenic poisoning. Manganese pollutes about 44% of the wells, affecting the drinking water of 5 million people.

Arsenic can cause vomiting, sudden abdominal illnesses, dysentery with blood and is connected with various cancers of the skin, kidneys, lungs. Water with more than 10 micrograms of arsenic per liter is considered unhealthy, but the substance is widespread in the waters of many countries, including China, India, Thailand and Bangladesh, but even in the US. For years, experts fear that the deep aquifer to seep downward. From 2005 to 2007 512 private wells were reviewed and have shown that arsenic poisoning in about 27% of the wells, a million people use drinking water with concentrations of 5 times the limit set by the World Health Organization.

The researcher Michael Berg, head agronomist − and put aside new farming techniques. “The area of the Red River Delta is one of the world’s most populous, with about 1,100 persons per square kilometre. The problems of water are available in the area and about 11 million people have no access to public drinking water, but some people and other resources such as private wells. At least 7 million people are at risk of arsenic poisoning. Manganese pollutes about 44% of the wells, affecting the drinking water of 5 million people.

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Java provincial capital, where wealth is concentrated and people are more attentive to the quality of products and to health problems.

The project sponsored by the Church in Indonesia was launched last week in Ngrambre Mojonejo, two sub-districts of the parish of St. Joseph, in the regency of Ngawi (East Java). The program involves a group of farmers dubbed Mulyo Tani, and the choice fell on the area because there were “plenty of available land.” The local priests have enthusiastically joined the initiative, so much so that they celebrated Mass in the fields as a “spiritual tool” that may be of assistance to farmers and crops.

Fr. Agus Pr, parish priest of Mojonejo invites Catholic farmers to abandon chemical fertilizers, “toxic” and “fatal” for every living creature. The local response has been very positive, that of many farmers to “renew enthusiasm in starting this new type of cultivation,” said Antonius Nurindo.

The project coordinator, graduated from Catholic University of Atmajaya Yogya, has a dream: to raise the incomes of farmers with new farming techniques. “The workers of the land are encouraged to produce fertilizer from using natural materials such as agronomist – and put aside any kind of pesticide.”

The first part of the project promoted by the Indonesian bishops will take at least six months. (AsiaNews)
How sensible is imposing a total log ban?

Aquino II has every reason to be concerned. Only about 15 percent of the country’s original forest cover remains. The Philippines has the thinnest forest cover in Southeast Asia.

By Charles Avila

The Multi-Billion Bitter Harvest

It is good to be quite clear at the outset: not only illegal but also legal logging was responsible for the massive deforestation of the Philippines. How did this come about?

A few people may remember what the American Empire did in 1913; it passed the so-called Underwood-Simmons Tariff Act, putting the so-called “tariff hikes” that raised the so-called “tariff walls” that raised the price of finished products, but lowered the price of raw materials.

For the first time, the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources was established to officially make the Philippines an agricultural export crop. The consequence was massive deforestation quite colonially legal and fatal.

Thus, at the start of the American invasion, original forests occupied 70% of our country’s land area. By 1946, when the Americans turned over the government to Filipino hands, forests occupied only 15% of the Philippines. And since then...
In the first decade after independence, the lucrative nature of logging, both legal and illegal, was netting up to P100,000,000 per hectare at first cutting – quite a hefty sum in those years. Two decades later, from 1972-1992, according to a former minister of Defense, was one big logger was hardly disputed.

Environmental Degradation

What kind of trees were we talking about here? We refer to those that could make: the dipterocarp. In the first decade after Aquino I, that was supposed to be a 25-year plan to reforest a quarter of a million hectares of forest. After two decades of the destruction of the forests in a rather vicious circle of commercialization and depletion – ensuring full exhaustion of the natural forest and incredible degradation of the environment.

In these decades just before Aquino I, the Philippines was the worst-deforested in the Asia Pacific region. Imagine losing more than 300,000 hectares of forest a year! That was happening here, caused both by commercial logging and population growth and, also, by the permanent conversion of logged over areas to agricultural lands. This would mercilessly decrease to 100,000 hectares in the 1990’s but who would doubt that that line still insane.

The line that goes logging by the small farmer is usually illegal but not immoral while that by the rich capitalist is illegal but well-connected to government officials, the military, and, as almost as the communists in the neo-colonial economy, constantly shrinking the country’s forests to 21% of the country’s total land area. How the loot was divided during these years used to be a popular topic for discussion. It was settled doctrine, however, that no logging company could exist and survive if it had no ties with government officials, politicians, the military, and, as almost as the communists. The truth of the matter was drawn up with the consent of government officials, politicians, the military, and, as almost as the communists rebels as well. The truth of the matter was drawn up with the consent of government officials, politicians, the military, and, as almost as the communists. The truth of the matter was drawn up with the consent of government officials, politicians, the military, and, as almost as the communists.
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Aurora-Quezon 2004, to name

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- How strong is PNoy?

- The national

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Commercial logging interests. We

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affairs to God? 
Pope Benedict is nowa-
days talking a lot about a new

evangelization that should be

carried out by all the members

of the Church. What are we do-

ing for a post-secondary course.

This young person should be

sent by the family to the Farm

Business Institute.

Farm Business Institute:

farmers-to-be. It shall

establish technodemo-

tests and modern progressive farm

dual training involves comple-

menting classroom work with

actual on-the-job training in

related industries.

For the OFW returnees

selves, the training will be

offered by the following

component centers of the MFI

Farm Business Institute:

The Farmers Training

Center: This center provides

non-formal education that will

include short-term, or season-

long course training programs

and extension work to enhance

the productivity of small farm-

ers or farmers-to-be. It shall

also establish techno-demo

farms in coordination with

Empowering, page 22

IMPACT - February 2011

Volume 45 • Number 2

21

20
A Press Statement on Population and Poverty

After almost 38 years of population control from the massive machinery of the bureaucracy, the unfortunate plight of poor families and their difficulties in providing for their basic needs continues to hound the country. Even the Church and private initiatives of its laity attempt to narrow the gap between “the haves” and “the have nots,” many Filipinos continue to suffer. The government has been claiming that this continuing poverty is caused by our robust population growth. The Church cannot accept this postulate, proceeding as it does from a flawed view of the human person as merely “a mouth to feed”. Everyone knows how our young and educated population has provided the primary force behind the robust performance of the Philippine economy. This makes us the envy of more developed countries that have contracepted and aborted themselves into the demographic winter.

It is his rational nature that makes every person capable of work, of aspiration to improve his lot. He uses this gift to transform his aspirations into reality. The wholesome upbringing and educational opportunities from generous parents provide the environment that allows him to grow and flourish in his human development to become a productive citizen. Good governance, just structures, a level playing field, solid family ties, wholesome upbringing, quality education, opportunities provide the social mobility to allow the children of the poor to get out of poverty and move to the ranks of the middle class.

The Church is not unmindful of certain realities. For instance, many families continue to be deprived from the right to earn a just living wage that will provide beyond the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, the wherewithal to send their children to school. This is a grave social imbalance for no one of food, clothing and shelter, the wherewithal to send their children to school.

The Church also desires to point out that though contracepting the present generation is committing the resources of this contracepted generation. This is precisely the problem faced worldwide by countries that have contracepted and aborted their next generation labor force. From an advantaged position they will face an uncertain economic future in the old age with very few children sharing the heavier burden of health and medical care when they become elderly.

A government that pursues the short-sighted policy of contracepting the present generation is committing the resources of a future government to provide for the social security requirements of this contracepted generation. This is precisely the problem faced worldwide by countries that have contracepted and aborted their next generation labor force. From an advantaged position they will face an uncertain economic future in the old age with very few children sharing the heavier burden of health and medical care when they become elderly.

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The Church is not unmindful of certain realities. For instance, many families continue to be deprived from the right to earn a just living wage that will provide beyond the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, the wherewithal to send their children to school. This is a grave social imbalance for no one...
Choosing Life, Rejecting the RH Bill
A Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines

Our Filipino Brothers and Sisters:

The State recognizes the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights (Art. II, Section 11). The State recognizes the equality of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic, indivisible social institution. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception (Art. II, Section 12).

Background
We are by citing the Philippine Constitution. We do so because we intend to write you on the basis of the fundamental ideals and aspirations of the Filipino people and not on the basis of specifically Catholic religious teachings. We are at a crossroads as a nation. Before us are several versions of a proposed bill, the Reproductive Health (RH) bill or sanitized as the Responsible Parenthood bill. This proposed bill in all its versions calls us to make a moral choice: to choose life or to choose death. At the outset we thank the government for affording us an opportunity to express our views in friendly dialogue. Sadly our dialogue has simply revealed how far apart our respective positions are. Therefore, instead of building false hopes, we wish at the present time to draw up clearly what we believe to be the right course and what we stand for.

Moral Choices at the Crossroads—at EDSA I and II

Twenty five years ago in 1986 we Catholics in the Philippines made a prophetic moral judgment on political leadership. With this prophetic declaration we believe that we somehow had a significant role in the downfall of Marcial Dimaandal, or Responsible Parenthood bill. This proposed bill in all its versions calls us to make a moral choice: to choose life or to choose death. At the outset we thank the government for affording us an opportunity to express our views in friendly dialogue. Sadly our dialogue has simply revealed how far apart our respective positions are. Therefore, instead of building false hopes, we wish at the present time to draw up clearly what we believe to be the right course and what we stand for.

We begin by citing the Philippine Constitution (Art. II, Section 12). The Constitution endows a human being. Placing artificial obstacles to prevent human life from being formed or born. The very name “contraceptive” certainly does not. It does not protect the woman’s health. Advocates contend that the RH bill will prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. This goes against the grain of many available scientific data. In some countries where condom use is prevalent, HIV/AIDS continues to spread. Condoms provide a false security that strongly entices individuals towards increased sexual activity, increasing likewise the incidence of HIV/AIDS. “Safe sex” to prevent HIV/AIDS is false propaganda.

Advocates moreover say that the RH bill will prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. This goes against the grain of many available scientific data. In some countries where condom use is prevalent, HIV/AIDS continues to spread. Condoms provide a false security that strongly entices individuals towards increased sexual activity, increasing likewise the incidence of HIV/AIDS. “Safe sex” to prevent HIV/AIDS is false propaganda.

Advocates also say that the RH bill is necessary to stop overpopulation and to escape from poverty. Our own government statistical office has concluded that there is no overpopulation in the Philippines but only the over-concentration of population in a number of urban centers. Despite other findings to the contrary, we must also consider the findings of a significant group of renowned economic scholars, including economic Nobel laureates, who have found no direct correlation between population and poverty. In fact, many Filipino scholars have concluded that population is not the cause of our poverty. The causes of our poverty are: flawed philosophies of development, misguided economic policies, greed, corruption, social inequities, lack of access to education, poor economic and social services, poor infrastructures, etc. World organizations estimate that in our country more than P400 billion pesos are lost yearly to corruption. The conclusion is unavoidable: for our country to escape from poverty, we have to address the real causes of poverty and not population.

In the light of the above, we express our clear objections:

1. We object to the non-consideration of moral principles, the bedrock of law, in legislative discussions of bills that are intended for the good of individuals and for the common good.

2. We are against the anti-life, anti-natal and contraceptive mentality that is reflected in media and in some proposed legislative bills.

3. We object strongly to efforts at railroading the passage of the RH bill.

4. We denounce the over-all trajectory of the RH bill towards population control.

5. We denounce the use of public funds for contraceptives and sterilization.

6. We echo the challenge we prophetically uttered 25 years ago at EDSA I and II.

7. We call for the establishment of more hospitals and clinics in the rural areas, the opening of new names to EDSA, the removal of obstacles to prevent human life from the moment of conception to its natural termination.

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For the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines,

+NEREO P. ODCHIMAR, D.D.
Bishop of Taganday
President, CBCP
January 30, 2011
Volume 45 • Number 2

No to ‘wang-wang,’ yes to ‘jueteng’

There is something not only quite strange but also very wrong when someone proclaiming himself as the incarnation of honesty and integrity, wants no “Wang-Wang” in the streets in Metro-Manila, yet allows “Jueteng” to thrive in many parts of the country. The tabooed sound merely inconveniences some motorists every now and then. But the illegal numbers’ game continuously exploits the poor millions of the population, and incessantly corrupts a big number of local officials plus their PNP counterparts.

No to “Wang-Wang!” It is hard to wake up in the morning to be in time for a given occasion. It is taxing to arrive on time to presence a public event. Arriving late is thus readily justified because “Wang-Wang” is not used. It has to be conceded that this scheme is not only convenient but also ingenious.

Yes to “Jueteng”! Why? It is downright illegal, yet on and on it goes, all the days of the week, all the weeks of the year. Money is consistently taken precisely from those who have less in life. And the money infallibly goes to the back and deep pockets of those precisely tasked to stop the illegal activity.

The previous administration said something and did exactly the opposite as far as “Jueteng” is concerned. It even had a special law enacted supposedly to stop the illegal numbers game. Among the many and impressive penalties supposedly for imposition against the violators is not only cash but also imprisonment. And the law was dead the moment it was signed.

The present administration is coddling a special ire against the previous one precisely on account of corruption. There is even the now famous attempt to put up a special Commission with a special task to place behind bars those who have less in life. And the money infallibly goes to the big and deep pockets of those precisely tasked to stop the illegal activity.

The more significant lessons that can be learned from the criminal with impunity in the country are the following: Let everyone take care of himself, herself or of the whole family. But just the same, when a crime has been committed, let no one demand—much less expect—the criminals themselves. How sad, to think that “Justice delayed is justice denied”. This is not to say that the said reaction among the Filipinos and some members of the Legislative Department is not pursuant to psychological or emotional factors. Yet, it remains unreasonable. In this country, crime does pay particularly in no less than three counts.

First, there is the Legislative Department itself that has been making more and more laws in the course of time, changing these in the course of time, if not actually abolishing them also in the course of time. It would not be an easy task to know or to keep track what and how many laws the said Department has enacted, derogated or abrogated in the past several decades and counting.

Second, there is the Executive Department that nonchalantly fails to have the many laws duly imposed and accordingly observed. It has many agencies and offices precisely founded and funded for the citizens in general, to comply with the laws of the land. The sad and open truth however is that in many instances, the supposed law enforcers are the lawbreakers themselves. This is not to mention that some members of anti-crime units become the criminals themselves. How sad, but how true.

Third, there is the Judicial Department that is by and large dysfunctional. Plunderers get a big share of the plundered money. Mass murderers get big protection from the law. Cases wait so long for their eventual resolution in perfect contradiction to the saying that “Justice delayed is justice denied”. This is that the local and national prisons are filled up with poor and/or ignorant people. The wealthy and powerful stay with or go back to their luxurious life in luxurious villages enjoying luxurious living. Death penalty with a continuous legal inquiry:  "Matuwid na daan." "Kung walang corrupt, walang malasang." Come on, get real!
A farmer got so old that he couldn't work the fields anymore. So he would spend the day just sitting on the porch. His son, still working the farm, would look up from time to time and see his father sitting there. “He's of no use anymore,” the son thought to himself, “he doesn't do anything!”

One day the son got so frustrated by this, that he built a wood coffin, dragged it over to the porch, and told his father to get in. Without saying anything, the father climbed inside.

After closing the lid, the son dragged the coffin to the edge of the farm where there was a high cliff. As he approached the drop, he heard a light tapping on the lid from inside the coffin, then a “pull”. He quickly tore away her own paper. On looking at his paper, she was embarrassed about her frustration. The husband took a long look at the wife and he too started looking up because she had a lot to write. After fifteen minutes of writing, they look at each other and exchange the papers and discuss.

High voltage

Samantha was helping her Dad fix the lamp in her bedroom.

"Now," Dad instructed her, "you always have to be very careful when you're working with electricity, Sam."

He uncrowed the light assembly from the base of the lamp, then slipped off the cardboard piece that covered the wires and placed his screwdriver in one of the screws that held the wires in place. "Yeeww!" Samantha immediately saw a spark. "Daddy, are you all right?" she asked.

Dad shook his hand up and down in the air. "Yeah, Sam, I'm fine," Dad said. "We're going to begin dating, and you're going to start thinking about getting married, and so on. When you do, I want you to remember that shock I just got. I want you to understand that sexual intimacy is a lot like electricity, it's powerful, Sam and it can be a wonderful thing if you respect it and use it the way God intended. But it can hurt you too. As long as sex is kept between husbands and wife, it's even more dangerous and harmful than electricity is.

"OK, Dad," Sam said, with a twinkle in her eye. "I'll remember that. I don't want to get burned... like you did!"

I love you, honey.

They have been married for a long time. As usual they have their ups and downs. One day they had a big fight over his long working hours and things were falling apart. He was disappointed and she was angry. After one week of silent treatment from his wife, he approached her with papers and pencils. He suggested that birth of them sit down on the dining table and write down on paper what they have met the Enneagram for the first time. It may also serve readers who have met the Enneagram before and simply wish to refresh their understanding of this precious source of ancient—yet ever—new wisdom. Exploring the Enneagram path is a wonderful, life-long journey. Enjoy the discoveries that await you!

Can Faith and Money Mix? Handling your Finances with a Faith Perspective

Theresa S. Kastner, MM

THIS book is an effort to share the fruit of the author's twenty years conducting Enneagram workshops in Taiwan. Her practical experience teaching Enneagram in an Asian context shaped the content. While facilitating workshops the author and co-workers have discovered that the Enneagram does not create cultural clash. No participant has ever commented that “this is fine for Westerners, but not for us”. Such cultural compatibility may reflect the Enneagram's Eastern origins. Moreover, in Taiwan the Enneagram has proven equally helpful to male and female participants of all types. This personality system does not seem to have a gender bias. The book can prove a useful guide to those exploring the Enneagram for the first time. It may also serve readers who have met the Enneagram before and simply wish to refresh their understanding of this precious source of ancient—yet ever—new wisdom. Exploring the Enneagram path is a wonderful, life-long journey. Enjoy the discoveries that await you!
Sindh faces severe hunger, malnutrition

PAKISTAN. As the effect of last year’s floods hamper food production and distribution, Pakistan’s southern province of Sindh now faces hunger with aid groups fearing thousands could die. The local gov’t said up to 23 percent of the population is malnourished. The rates are higher than the 15 percent emergency threshold set by the WHO.

Thai govt denies coup claims

THAILAND. Amid intensifying street protests ahead of the country’s elections, the Thai govt denied opposition claims that it faces military coup. Deputy PM Suthep Thaugsuban rejected the rumor by anti-gov’t ‘Red Shirts’, that the army was poised to intervene in politics. Army spokesman Col. Sunsem Kaewkumner added any such plans.

5TH case of bird flu detected

JAPAN. A fifth case of bird flu has been detected by local health authorities in an outbreak that led to more than 600,000 chickens culled in at least five Japanese prefectures. The outbreak also spurred authorities to impose a ban on the transportation of millions of chickens. Land is also being sought to bury chickens culled after outbreaks of the virus in major poultry farming areas. Gov’t detains Australian people smuggler

INDONESIA. An alleged Australian smuggler has been detained here on immigration violations, and who is thought to be responsible for the shipwreck at Christmas Island. Haydar Khani, police said, was questioned in 2009, when he was spotted escorting group of people from Middle East on a remote Indonesian island. He was, however, freed because, back then, he had valid visa.

US ends India defense restrictions

INDIA. The Obama administration has taken several major Indian organizations off a blacklist, including the removal of restrictions of its Research and Development organizations, which develop weapons after more than a decade of sanctions. The US is also supporting moves to find her while running for his dear life.

The Tourist is the kind of movie you may want to see twice to get right, yet two viewings won’t guarantee you certainty that you indeed have it right. Credit that to the implausible plot and the great acting especially of Depp and Jolie that will have the viewer believing the story is real. A twist towards the end might make you come to your own conclusions, but not quite so. Hold it, put your thinking mechanism to rest, just enjoy the suspenseful stuff. Take the train ride for free; explore the side streets and have a splash on the canals of Venice in a boat with an elegant Jolie at the wheel; check in at the plush Daniels (and note how Americans are an amusement on that part of the globe); dare to chase the bare-footed Depp traipsing the rooftops in his pajamas—after all, The Tourist is technically super, from the cinematography to costumes. (Yes, drool over la Jolie’s gowns which she displays to best advantage as she saith through life as though the world’s admiration is her birth right. It might as well be). It’s an entertaining remake of a 2005 French movie, Anthony Zimmer, with romantic twists added by the new writers Florian Henckel von Donnersmark and Christian McKay. If at the end you feel you’ve been had, blame the clever direction of Donnersmark, who won the Oscar and universal fame for his first feature film The Lives of Others. The Tourist is but his second; imagine what the next would be.

The theme, the war among thugs and fraudsters killing and getting killed over money may be serious, but because of its light treatment it might not be worthwhile to discuss the morality, immorality or amorality the movie displays. Suffice it to say that stealing is bad, even if it’s stealing from a bad man; killing is bad, even if you’re killing your own enemy. And what of the returning of the stolen money? Is that good? Reality check: why would a thief do that? It happens in The Tourist. Nobody says it’s a true story. (Terence R. Tanay, OCSN)

Property shortage looms in China

CHINA. One of the biggest developers has warned that China is facing long-term property supply shortage. Vincent Lo, of Shui On Group said there is not enough land on which to build in China and there is so much money in the market that a third of buyers pay cash.

1 dead, 100 injured in clashes

BANGLADESH. Clashes between police and protestors seeking wage hike here have killed one person and nearly 100 others were wounded. Police said they fired bullets and tear gas to break up the crowd of pharmacists and local company workers who blocked a major highway and damaged vehicles 16 kilometers east of capital Dhaka.

Activist prison sentence condemned

VIETNAM. Amnesty International condemned the 8-year prison sentence handed down to Vu Duc Ho, that the army was poised to intervene in politics. Army spokesman Col. Sunsem Kaewkumner added any such plans.

‘Stop deporting Somalis to Mogadishu’

SAUDI ARABIA. The govt of Saudi Arabia should stop deporting Somalis to war-torn Mogadishu. Human Rights Watch said. “Deporting anyone to a war zone like Mogadishu is inhumane, but returning children is beyond comprehension,” said Rona Peligal, Africa director at HRW. “The Saudi authorities should immediately stop these deportations and ensure that Somalis in Saudi Arabia are not returned to their country.”

Military court extends jail term of activist

ISRAEL. The military appeal court’s ruling to extend the prison sentence of Abdullah Abu Rahma, a Palestinian activist who was supposed to be released last Nov. 18, is facing condemnation from Amnesty International. Rahma had his sentence extended from 12 to 16 months by the court at Ofer in the West Bank on Jan. 11, after the prosecution argued that his initial sentence was too lenient.

HRW urges Iran to rescind execution of student

IRAN. The Iranian judiciary should immediately rescind the execution order for a Kurdish student convicted after an unfair trial. Human Rights Watch said. Iranian authorities earlier said that Habibollah Latifi’s execution would be put on hold pending further judicial review of his case. HRW is concerned about Latifi’s well-being, and calls on the authorities to ensure his safety while judicial review of his case is pending.