

First Pinay to get Russian state award honored in Manila

MANILA -- Russian Honorary Consul Armi Lopez-Garcia was hailed anew in Manila for recently receiving the Russian Order of Friendship from no less than President Vladimir Putin.

At a reception hosted by Russian Ambassador to Manila Igor Khovaev in Makati City on Wednesday night, the envoy congratulated Lopez-Garcia and praised her works in the past decade as a "highly efficient Russian honorary consul" covering Cebu, Aklan, and Bohol.

"For us, she is our very close friend and sister," Khovaev told reporters during the reception.

He added that the award is significant because Lopez-Garcia is the first Filipina to receive the high-level state award of Russia in the Kremlin.

"It's a clear message to all the Filipinos that Russia is a friendly country," he said.

Lopez-Garcia is the Honorary Consul of Russia based in Cebu as well as the founding chair of the Philippine-Russian Business Assembly.

Garcia was award-

ed the Order of Friendship for her "outstanding contributions to strengthening friendship and cooperation" between the Russian and Filipino people during Russia's National Unity Day on November 4. The decoration was conferred by Putin.

As the first Filipina to receive this, Garcia joins other prominent personalities who were bestowed with the same award such as Singapore's first Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew, former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, and Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

For Lopez-Garcia, her "excitement" since she got the award early November has not worn off yet.

"It was given to me at the point where the relationship between our countries is at its peak and the relationship between President Rodrigo Duterte and President Vladimir Putin is very, very good. I think this is a signal that we have to move forward," she said in an interview.

Before her appointment in 2007, she is al-

ready involved in bridging friendship between the two nationalities and has in fact initiated a sisterhood agreement between Cebu and Vladivostok in the past.

Back then, the consul said a lot of people would often ask her, "why Russia?" -- people who apparently base their perception about the Russian people through movies that portrayed the latter as villains.

"A lot of them were asking and wondering 'Why Russia?' And my answer would always be 'Why not?' Before my appointment, I had already been helping them in cultural events since 1996," she said.

She described that Russians are "really warm people and very educated"

"It dawned on me that I had to do something because the Russians are really warm people and very educated. Their values are similar with ours," she added.

Moving forward, Lopez-Garcia said she wanted to further promote understanding among Filipinos about friendship these foreign nationals offer. (PNA)

Grab provides first aid training, equipment to HPG cops

MANILA -- To support effective enforcement of road safety and security in major thoroughfares in Metro Manila, ride-hailing firm Grab Philippines provided first aid training and equipment to the Philippine National Police-Highway Patrol Group (PNP-HPG).

PNP-HPG acting director, Brig. Gen. Dionardo Carlos said Grab Philippines president Brian Cu has provided first aid kits and conducted a series of first aid training to 100 HPG personnel in order to equip them with the proper knowledge and skills to handle any accidents and emergen-

cies that could come up while manning the streets.

Cu said the programs were launched in order for them to make Metro Manila roads safer for motorists as well as for the riding public.

"With these initiatives through our enduring partnership with the PNP-HPG, we aim to use our technology and partnership for good to keep our thoroughfares safe, less vulnerable, and accident-free this holidays," Cu said in a turnover ceremony held at Camp Crame in Quezon City.

With these training programs, Cu ex-

pressed confidence that the police force, especially the HPG will be well-equipped to address any untoward incidents on the road this holiday season.

The company also provided equipment for HPG personnel such as high-quality car jumpers for them to be able to troubleshoot motor vehicle engine problems and quickly rectify automotive issues which usually cause traffic jams.

Grab's partnership with the PNP-HPG is part of its Safer Everyday campaign which aims to ensure safe riding experience for the users of its app. (PNA)



SILANG RESIDENTS RECEIVE FREE HEALTHCARE SERVICES : More than 300 Silang residents were catered during the conduct of the provincial government's medical and dental mission on November 12, 2019 in Barangay Biga 2 in the municipality of Silang. Volunteer doctors and dentists from the General Emilio Aguinaldo Memorial Hospital rendered free medical consultation to 331 patients and tooth extraction to 36 locals with the assistance of trained medical personnel from the Office of the Governor-Extension and Barangay Health Workers. Punong Barangay Josie Revilla received additional medicines and vitamins for her constituents in a simple turn-over ceremony. The outreach event was made possible through the initiative of 5th District Board Member Ivey Jayne Reyes Morello.--PICAD

GCF grant crucial in boosting disaster resiliency: Legarda

MANILA -- Deputy Speaker and Antique Rep. Loren Legarda on Thursday welcomed the "timely" approval of a USD10 million grant by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to the Philippines for the establishment of a multi-hazard, impact-based forecasting and early warning system, saying it is crucial in building disaster-resilient people and communities.

"The Philippines needs to effectively reduce disaster risk as its effects have become more complex. The approval of the grant is very timely, not only as we commemorate this month the onslaught of Typhoon Yolanda six years ago, but also because of the increasing frequency and uncertainty of extreme hazard events that we have faced these past months and years," she said in a statement.

"The GCF's approval of this project is crucial in enabling the government and our communities to become more resilient as we look back at the lessons learned in the past and translate these lessons into action," Legarda said.

The multi-hazard, impact-based forecasting, and early warning systems and services (MH-IBF-EWS) project aims to strengthen and ensure the delivery of actionable and timely early warnings to communities and "last mile" end-users at risk of impending natural hazards.

Legarda, who is part of the GCF Board as an alternate member, said multi-hazard early warning systems inform the people of the potential impacts of impending natural hazards, the risks on their lives and livelihoods, and the action they

should take.

She said such systems are important, citing the case of Typhoon Yolanda which brought massive devastation to the country and to the lives of thousands of Filipinos.

In a book titled "Y It Happened" that was led by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), accounts from survivors of Yolanda said although they were warned about a possible storm surge, they did not know what it could bring and did not imagine the severity of its impact several kilometers inland.

Based on an assessment released by the German Aid Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), 94 percent of the casualties during the onslaught of the typhoon in Tacloban, Palo and Tanauan was caused by the unexpected storm surge.

"Knowing local risks for hazards and having an established early-warning system will not only help ensure early action at the household and community, but will also mitigate the effects of disasters to poor people and the working middle class, businesses, schools, government offices, trade industry and stock market, farmers, and fisherfolks," Legarda said.

"The road towards resilience may be tough, but this fund now provides an opportunity to transform our traditional early warning systems and services towards a more proactive and inclusive climate risk management tool for saving lives and resources," she said. (PNA)

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