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PRESS RELEASE

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Villar calls for crackdown on syndicates using Filipinos as drug mules

Sen. Manny Villar called for immediate government action against drug syndicates that lure Filipinos to work as drug mules.

“It is unfortunate that the Philippines is fast gaining a negative reputation with the spike of arrests of Filipino nationals who were used as drug couriers. A number of cases revealed that they didn't know they were carrying illegal substances,” Villar said.

Villar filed Senate Proposed Resolution No. 122 urging the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Public Order and Illegal Drugs, to look into the arrests of Filipino nationals, particularly Overseas Filipino Workers in Southeast Asia, being used as 'drug mules' by international drug syndicates.

In August 2009, two OFWs working as teachers in China moonlighting as “drug mules” were arrested upon arrival in Manila for carrying more than 800 grams of heroin.

Recent reports said that Nigerian syndicates would pay each “drug mule” \$3,000 or equivalent to more than P145,000 to smuggle illegal substance from Malaysia and the Philippines to China.

Drug rings lure OFWs, particularly women, through free travel for a week with hefty allowance and incentive worth P100,000 and they were made to believe that they are to carry sample textiles, precious stones, sensitive papers, ceramic figurines or other similar items.

Villar, vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Order and Illegal Drugs, also cited the 2009 World Drug Report where the Philippines ranked fifth in the world in methamphetamine seizures from 1998-2007.

In 2008 alone, 111 Filipinos were arrested for drug-related offenses in Chinese territories, representing a 594-percent increase from the 16 arrested in 2007. Of those arrested in 2007 and 2008, 22 are facing death sentence, 12 have gotten life, while 11 have been made to serve 15-16 years prison terms.

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