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The News UpFront: (TOP STORY) as of Saturday, June 12, 2010

The intermittent rains prove no hindrance to the enthusiasm of hundreds of Filipinos who feasted on music, dance and food to commemorate the day the Philippines severed ties with Spain and declared independence 112 years ago on Saturday. Celebrations started last week in the Toronto suburbs of Brampton and Mississauga and will culminate on Sunday in Toronto's main city square in downtown. Many proud Filipinos walk the streets in distinctly Philippine tricolor-inspired shirts and dresses.

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Hundreds Brave Rain, Celebrate Philippine Independence Day in Toronto with Music, Dance and Food

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By Romeo P. Marquez

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TORONTO -- Filipinos braved the intermittent rains on Saturday (June 12, 2010) and feasted on music, dance and food in one of the biggest celebrations of Philippine independence day in Canada's largest city.

The rains came on and off, on and off – not an unusual weather phenomenon during spring here – but that did not stop the observance of the homeland's 112th year of freedom from its colonial ruler Spain.

Filipinos Celebrate Philippine Independence in Toronto, Canada - MabuhayRadio

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Philippine Consul-General Minerva Falcon found it a perfect metaphor for those who braved the downpour and stayed on for the event held at the Nathan Phillips Square fronting Toronto city hall in downtown.

"It shows our resilience," she said as she formally opened the third freedom day commemorative ceremony in the past two weekends in the greater Toronto area where majority of Filipinos work and live.

"I am very pleased to be here," she declared. Coming from a largely agricultural country like the Philippines, she said, "the rains are very welcome" development.

A choir serenaded the crowd with a medley of Philippine songs. A dance group from Folklorico Canada charmed the audience with folk dances, drawing more people, including non-Filipinos, while the drizzle came to a halt, even temporarily.

Towards the late afternoon, a succession of Filipino bands either rocked and rolled and rapped in both English and Tagalog, easily making them the favorites of the young.

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The event, billed as "Pistahan sa Toronto", is one way to show the Filipino culture, according to Rey Tolentino, executive vice president of Filipino Centre Toronto, the main sponsor.

"We are all volunteers. Just by being ourselves like this Pistahan, we share with Canadians the best of our culture," Tolentino said.

"FCT represents the Filipino community. We also try to represent the needs, goals and hopes of our community here," he added.

The faithful also defied the drizzle, holding umbrellas or wearing raincoats and jackets just to hear the mass celebrated by a Filipino Catholic priest at noon.

As music and dance were in abundance, so was food, which was made available by several Filipino restaurants. Some people complained about the food prices. But the all-time Filipino festival favorite – lechon (roasted pig) – were handed out free in small plastic bags.

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While the older folks wore traditional *barong*, teens proudly wrapped themselves in the Philippine tricolor – printed in shirts and dresses and – and sold for at least \$20 apiece.

A group of about 50 naked bikers, non-Filipinos all, circled the square for less than five minutes, a little too short for the Independence-Day enthusiasts to notice.

Security guards promptly drove the protesters off but not before passersby had a field day taking videos and photographs of the bikers in their glorious state of undress.

A couple interviewed by the *Philippine Village Voice* said the naked bike run was part of a world-wide movement to encourage the use of bikes and protest against oil dependency.

The festival is slated to continue on Sunday in the same venue.

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