

The Philippine government must undertake long-delayed and neglected earthquake-education and building inspection-and-retrofitting programs in view of the Haitian and other recent earthquake-caused disasters.

The injuries and probable deaths of Filipino peacekeepers in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and Filipino missionaries – as personified by a survivor, Filipino Archbishop Bernardito Auza, the Papal Nuncio in Haiti – should make it easier to persuade the national-and-local political leaders and the business sector of the Philippines

to remember the lessons from the quake-ravaged Haiti

. Perhaps lame-duck Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo can spearhead as part of her legacy a rapid “Earthquake Education and Preparedness Program” (E2P2) with the urgency of a Filipino version of “The Manhattan Project.”

As done in California and other states and by the federal government in the United States, the Philippine government must undertake a crash “E2P2” and the inspection of all buildings and infrastructures, so to make the edifices and people survive big tremors. Doing the suggested “E2P2” will minimize damage and destruction when and if a strong earthquake hits the homeland. The national and local governments of the Philippines

must tap native and Overseas-Filipino research scientists, educators, and the civil service to bridge the many gaps between earthquake research, emergency management, and the general public – before it is too late.

## **RP Must Undertake Earthquake-Education and Retrofitting Programs In View of Recent Quake-caused Dis**

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

Thursday, 14 January 2010 15:33 - Last Updated Wednesday, 16 October 2013 18:31

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The entire Philippine archipelago is located in the so-called "Pacific Ring of Fire," which is a region that surrounds the Earth's Pacific Ocean and is known for its volcanoes and earthquake activity.

Please see also this video, which has been posted in several e-newsgroups,

<http://edition.cnn.com/video/data/2.0/video/tech/2010/04/21/coren.manila.unprepared.quake.cnn.html>

There have been many deaths and many-more injuries caused by earthquakes in the Philippines

**Revisiting the 1968 "Ruby Tower" Tragedy**

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Thursday, 14 January 2010 15:33 - Last Updated Wednesday, 16 October 2013 18:31

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The most-infamous of all is the so-called “Ruby Tower” tragedy during the August 2, 1968, earthquake that hit

Manila

. Two-hundred and sixty people, mainly Filipinos of Chinese descent, died during the collapse of the 6-story

Ruby

Tower

that was then located near the corner of Teodora Alonso and Doroteo Jose streets in Sta. Cruz, Manila

. The entire building, save for a portion of the first-and-second floors at its northern end, was destroyed. Allegations of poor design and shoddy construction, as well as the use of low-quality building materials, were said to be the real reasons for the tragedy, even if the earthquake was the proximate cause. But nothing came out of the government investigations.

This writer experienced a strong earthquake on July 2, 1954, that caused injuries, deaths and damages in what is now Sorsogon City. The front and belfry of the Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Cathedral in the capitol town of Sorsogon Province came tumbling down and pinned several individuals, who did not survive the accident. Also more-than 80% of the buildings and many homes in the capitol town of Sorsogon were damaged or destroyed.

Haiti and many underdeveloped and developing countries—the Philippines most-probably included—lack usually strict building regulations. And often government officials tasked to impose and oversee the regulations, if any, look the other way in exchange for bribes and other perks offered by the builders. In short, poor building-and-infrastructure standards are compounded by lax regulators and exploding urban populations. It is doubtful if even the newly-constructed highway overpasses, flyovers and public buildings and private edifices in the Philippines

have kept pace with state-of-the-art earthquake engineering and design, including seismic

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reinforcements that are mandated for new construction in California

Old buildings, including Spanish-built churches, in the Philippines have not been retrofitted to make them less-vulnerable to earthquakes. The government spends hundreds of billions of pesos for pork barrel and almost nothing for retrofitting of public buildings and infrastructures, so as to make them less vulnerable to earthquakes. Perhaps it is time for the Filipino presidential candidates to include in their respective economic platforms and programs of government the need to do urgently the “E2P2.” # # #

**Editor’s Note:** To read more about the Philippine 157-man headquarters company with the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and a 139-man unit with the UN Mission, please click on this hyperlink,

[RP Track Record in Fielding UN Peacekeepers a Good Argument for Proposed All-Muslim Peacekeepers from Mindanao](#)

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