

EDITOR'S NOTE

The affordability and continued availability of rice and water, the traffic situation and public safety on our roads, along with the increasing numbers and problems of our overseas Filipino workers as these are affected by the ever changing policies (or lack of them) and pronouncements of our government — these are the issues uppermost on our minds — as well as the topics covered by the papers in this issue.

We are at the door of a new millennium; yet the problems of the old continue to pursue us, assuming new urgency with the realization that resources are finite and that Maslow might have been right after all about the pre-eminence of basic needs.

The lead article of Alejandrino, Liongson, Flor and Gomez highlights the value of water as both an economic value and good. They make the case that the dangerous combination of fast growing populations together with the complexity and voracity of development needs threatens access to and use of this most basic of our needs to make increasingly urgent the need for a new and broader perspective as well as increased government regulation of it.

Along with water, rice is life for Filipinos. Clarete's paper proposes a way by which rice prices may be stabilized and rationalized in anticipation of 2005, when the country will have to honor its obligation under the WTO Agreement on Agriculture.

The condition of our roads and our safety while on them is the focus of Sigua's discussion. Official statistics on a better-than-other-countries record of road safety — which he critiques for an overly narrow definition of fatality — aside, he identifies the major sources of road accidents and proposes various policies, programs and plans to address the issue of road safety.

Finally, Tigno's paper on the country's overseas employment program from Marcos to Ramos documents the uneven and reactive policies which various administrations have developed to deal with this growing social phenomenon. From its origins as a limited and temporary solution to the job market situation in the country during the time of Marcos, the paper shows how overseas employment has taken on a life of its own while government has had to grope for a framework and develop the appropriate long-term policies for its management. And as with the other articles in this issue, it makes clear the need for government to act decisively and proactively on the issue.

Taken together, these four substantial articles provide food for thought and motivation enough for immediate public policy.



