

THE raging upheavals in the Arab world imperil our overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), whose dollar remittance is a major driver of the Philippine economy.

A record \$18.76 billion was sent home last year alone, exceeding the eight-percent growth set by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) and other monetary authorities.

A portion of this remittance comes from OFWs deployed in Egypt and Tunisia where protests led to the resignation of two longtime dictators.

Also engulfed in flames are Bahrain, Iran, Sudan, Yemen, Morocco and now Libya, where another military dictator who has ruled the African nation for 40 years, Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, is under siege.

But unlike his counterparts in Egypt and Tunisia, Qaddafi is fighting back with deadly force aided by mercenaries from other African nations.

If the Libyan hothead commits genocide in the process, that would not be a surprise under his repressive regime.

For now, the Philippine Government, through its embassies and consulates in the region, is working on a priority evacuation of OFWs, especially those in dangerous areas.

Generally, the situation is under control but it might change any moment, at which time we hope the government has a contingency plan in place.

During the first Iraq war, the Department of Foreign Affairs was caught napping and had to scramble to bring home thousands of OFWs in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other affected areas.

All of these uprisings bore an imprint of the first peaceful revolt known the world over as EDSA 1 which toppled the Marcos regime in February 1986.

The Philippines this week observed the 25th anniversary of that classic people power uprising.

But did that revolution change the lives of Filipinos for the better?

A dissenting voice was registered by the former president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

"I'm not too keen on celebrating EDSA's 25th anniversary since the country remains wracked with the same problems," said Nueva Ecija Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi.

Will the euphoria over a newly democratic and free Egypt, for instance, last longer than overnight?

Or will the hope and change that bloomed at Tahrir Square come true?