

Role of a diplomat

Written by Editor-in-chief
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BY the nature of their jobs, diplomats are the face of the nations they represent.

Thus, those who serve in the foreign service are the best and the brightest of their kind.

Assistance to nationals is the rationale for every consulate and embassy in their respective jurisdictions.

As a rule, Filipino diplomatic officials and their staff have proven equal to their task of serving their constituents.

Recently, some diplomats have served beyond the call of duty, especially in the Middle East, where upheavals have rocked the region.

In Libya and in Japan, the two Philippine ambassadors have stayed in their posts at great risk to their personal safety in order to safeguard the interest of overseas Filipinos in their jurisdictions.

But there are rewards and pitfalls that go with the job.

Some consulates and embassies walk a tightrope in dealing with a fractious community like, for instance, in New York where organizations have bloomed like Mao Zedong's thousand flowers.

The apparent umbrella organization, called PIDCI, acronym for the Philippine Independence Day Council, Inc., is mired in controversy every time it holds its annual election for president and members of the board of directors.

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The vicious disputes have resulted in unnecessary litigation which often end without clear victors because the courts usually desist from hearing the case and directing the parties to resolve membership issues among themselves.

Among the perennial problems are allegations of padding the membership roster, accrediting fly-by-night organizations formed for election purposes alone and lack of accounting of funds raised from benefit affairs.

All this is done or undone for the singular activity of holding competing annual Independence Day parades.

The heroes who died for freedom and unity must be rolling in their graves.

At any rate, we welcome the new Consul General to New York, Ambassador Mario L. de Leon, Jr., and wish him luck during his watch.

Since he is no stranger to this place, having served here as a consul in 1993 to 1997, he should know the idiosyncrasy and peccadillo of the community as a whole.

But it's not all that bad.

There's still room for fun, goodwill and camaraderie.

The consulate can lead the way.