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LOCAL



**Grade the governor's
handling of pay raises
for elected officials.**

A	31%
B	2%
C	5%
D	3%
F	57%

Total Votes: 342

As of 8 p.m., Dec. 20

Pacific Sunday News

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CLEARING THE RECORD

We care about accuracy. If you would like to clear the record, call the Pacific Daily News at 479-0419.

Vatican official set to visit Guam

By Gaynor Dumat-ol Daleno

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A high-level Vatican official is visiting Guam's Catholic community next month, but whether the visit will be friendly, or investigatory, is in dispute.

"The Archdiocese of Agana is happy to welcome the pastoral visit of His Excellency, the Most Reverend Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai," the archdiocese stated Friday, in part, in a written statement to the media.

Hon is the secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Vatican office to whom some of Guam's Catholics sent letters over the past several months, seeking an investigation of the various controversies in the local archdiocese.

The Archdiocese of Agana emphasized, by underlining in Friday's media statement, that Hon's Guam trip is a "pastoral visit."

Hon's visit, according to the archdiocese, comes "in the wake of Archbishop Anthony Apuron's successful visit with Pope Francis last month in Rome."

In Rome, the pope offered his "encouragement and fraternal blessings to the people of Guam,"

according to the local archdiocese. "The purpose of this pastoral visit is to foster reconciliation and mutual understanding in the archdiocese," according to the archdiocesan statement, signed by Father Adrian Cristobal.

More than a week ago, certain members of different parishes on

Guam formed a nonprofit group called Concerned Catholics of Guam Inc., and announced the group plans to investigate the management of the local church,

its financial books, and the archdiocese's handling of a sexual molestation allegation against Apuron.

Apuron has called the allegation a "horrible calumny," but declined to respond further to the allegation on the advice of his attorney because he's planning a defamation lawsuit to defend the church.

The group's president, Greg Perez, made a statement on Dec. 9 on why Concerned Catholics was formed. "A few of us would meet occasionally to discuss these stories about the archbishop, priests who have been allegedly blamed for mismanagement of funds or alleged disobedience and then re-

moved from their parishes, the lack of transparency with the finances of the archdiocese, neglect of precious artifacts in the archdiocesan museum, among other issues," Perez said.

Tim Rohr, a Guam resident who writes a blog on Catholic issues, called Jungle Watch, believes the nature of the Vatican official's visit is investigatory. "The people who are coming — the nature of their office is investigation," Rohr said.

Some of Guam's Catholics have publicly voiced concern and sent letters to the Vatican about some of Apuron's decisions, including the firing of Monsignor James Benavente after being rector of the Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral-Basilica for two decades. The archdiocesan leadership also shut down the Cathedral-Basilica museum, which is a project led by Benavente, before the centuries-old artifacts and relics of Guam's Catholic faith could be viewed by the public. The archdiocese took out a loan to develop the museum, and also received numerous donations of labor and materials to build it.

A Guam native who lives in California, John Toves, recently accused Apuron publicly of sexual molestation. Toves has stated that a relative of his was allegedly molested by Apuron, who was a priest

during the alleged molestation some 30 years ago. The alleged victim hasn't come forward.

The alleged abuse occurred at a high school seminary on Guam where both Toves and his relative were co-seminarians and altar boys, Toves has said. Toves went to the archdiocese recently to try to meet with Apuron, in the presence of local media.

Apuron has declined to see Toves.

Hon hasn't shied from commenting on controversial issues elsewhere.

Catholic News Service reported that, two years ago, Hon called on the government in Beijing to release nine arrested Catholic bishops and priests, saying their continued detention "damages China's international image."

In 2011, Hon said Pakistan needs to show "respect for freedom of religion and of conscience, which is the hallmark of justice and peace," according to the Vatican news network online, News.va.

Hon will be accompanied to Guam by Father Tadeusz Nowak and Archbishop Martin Krebs, the Vatican's delegate to the Pacific islands. Their visit will occur Jan. 4 to 10, 2015, according to the archdiocese.

Asan-Maina residents oppose statue

By Maria Hernandez

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Many Asan-Maina residents have voiced opposition toward a statue of a Philippine revolutionist recently erected in Asan. One resident said a town hall meeting was held Wednesday where residents unanimously voted in favor of the statue's removal.

"In the first place, nobody in the village of Asan-Maina knew anything about this person," Asan resident Joe Jesus said. "They didn't even inform us on what it is. It was being erected prior to my knowledge and it was almost finished."

The statue of Philippine revolutionist Apolinario Mabini was to be unveiled near the mayor's office in Asan on Monday, but the unveiling was postponed after protests from some Asan-Maina residents. Some protesters have said they weren't informed of the project and don't feel Mabini has any connection to the village.

Asan-Maina Mayor Joana Margaret Blas on Wednesday said she plans to work with village residents to come to a decision about what will be done with the statue.

"I apologize to my residents. I'd like to work with them on that. If they oppose it, I'd have to take it out," Blas previously told the Pacific Daily News.

She also noted she was aware that residents were disturbed be-



No: Joe Jesus, left, an Asan resident all his life and an Army veteran, and Leslie San Nicolas, another Asan resident, voice their opposition to a statue being built in their neighborhood, near the Asan mayor's office, in this file photo. Pacific Sunday News

cause she did not call a town meeting to discuss the statue being erected in the village.

Jesus said a large village meeting was held Wednesday night at the mayor's office where residents showed up and unanimously voted to remove the statue.

Blas and other members of the Mayors' Council of Guam came to the meeting, Jesus said. "We all took a vote and we mentioned to them that, yes, we want the monument to be removed," he said.

He said a resident stepped up to the front of the room during the meeting and had asked whether res-

idents wanted the monument there.

"Everyone said no," Jesus said.

Filipinos consider Mabini a hero for his revolt against U.S. occupation in the Philippines more than a century ago. The Philippine Consulate General on Guam previously told the Pacific Daily News that Asan was chosen as the location of the statue because Mabini and other Filipino exiles were hosted within the village from 1901 to 1903.

The statue of Mabini remains hidden under a white cover near the community center. Mayor Blas previously told Pacific Daily News no alternate date has been set for

the unveiling.

Jesus also is rebutting the mayor's claim that he did not show up to a one-on-one meeting on Thursday to discuss the statue's removal.

Blas previously told Pacific Daily News she had scheduled a meeting on Thursday to speak to Jesus about the statue, but he did not show up.

Jesus said he was waiting near the stage outside the mayor's office 10 minutes prior to the meeting. When he did not see the mayor's car pull into the lot at 3 p.m. when the meeting was scheduled, he left at exactly 3:01 p.m.

Blas could not be reached Friday or yesterday for comment.

Robert Hofmann, Sinajana mayor and vice president of the Mayors' Council, said Blas should have gone about the situation differently. "She could have figured out a nicer way to do this. I didn't think the people of Asan would be so mad," he said.

He said Blas should have considered input from the village residents because residents might view the statue differently than intended.

"I think any time we put up any kind of monument, artwork or mural, there really has to be village input," he said. "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Sometimes things are misinterpreted and things are not seen that way. There always has to be public input."