

BY LORELA U. SANDOVAL



ENDING BALIKBAYAN boxes to relatives in the Philippines has been a lifelong tradition for Filipinos abroad and a tangible reminder of their love to families and friends back home. It is, however, fraught with problems and risks – ranging from late delivery and damage to the shipment to pilferage and missing or lost cargo.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has received many complaints regarding *balikbayan* boxes over the years. Based on data provided by Eduardo Quizon of the Philippine Shippers' Bureau of DTI, the countries with the highest number of *balikbayan* boxes sent to the Philippines are the Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Hong Kong,

How to Safeguard Your Balikbayan Box Shipment



Deal only with duly accredited sea freight forwarders.

To lessen cases of Filipinos getting victimized and curb the malfeasance of some freight forwarders, the DTI regularly holds roadshows and information drives abroad to educate overseas Filipinos on how to protect their shipments.

Kuwait, Qatar, Taiwan, Singapore, Italy, United Kingdom (UK), and Korea.

Latest data from DTI show that the countries with the highest number of cases or complaints were UAE (174 cases) USA (170), KSA (112), Kuwait (46), Singapore (25), UK (21), and Hong Kong (10).

Dubai in UAE has the highest number of recorded cases at 167, prompting the DTI to label it a "hotspot". In the USA, Chicago is tops at 52, while in KSA, it was Riyadh at 51.

The DTI recorded 73 complaints in 2010, 212 in 2011, 168 in 2012, 173 in 2013, and 45 as of June 2014.

What does the agency do to address complaints involving *balikbayan* boxes?

In an interview with *Planet Philippines*, Quizon explains that the agency follows a standard operating procedure when dealing with the complaints.

"When we receive complaints, we subject them to mediation, but first we need a formal written complaint supported by bill of lading, packing list, waybill, or invoices to validate their complaint,"