

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT MAGAZINE

LEAGUE

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2018

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**League of Municipalities
National President
Mayor Fe "Bubut" Brondial**
takes the lead in
promoting rural
development and
empowering the
indigenous people

IN FOCUS:
UNDERSTANDING
THE PROS AND CONS
OF FEDERALISM

**CEBU: FROM OLDEST CITY
TO BUSINESS
AND LEISURE HUB**

**PAMPANGA
MISSION
MEGALOPOLIS**

Forge Ahead

INSIDE:

REP. ROBERT ACE BARBERS | MAYOR JOSEPH ASCUTIA | MAYOR JOSEPH ASCUTIA
ATTY. CHRISTIAN MONSOD | ASEC JONATHAN MALAYA | JOSE MARIA CONCEPCION III



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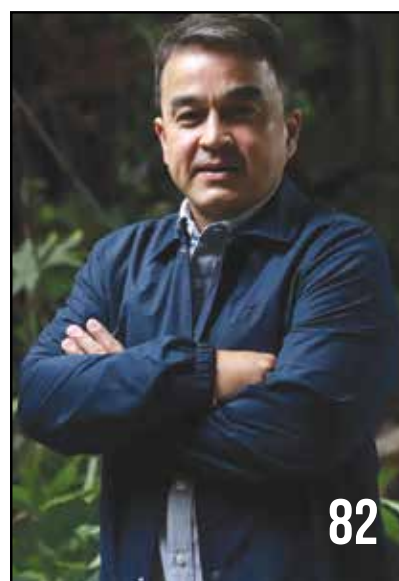
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Discover Plenty at Marco Paulo

Whether on a leisure vacation with family, food trip with friends, or business meeting with colleagues, this place has it all.

Near the bustling city center of Cauayan, stands a triple-threat establishment operating since 2014 founded and owned by local Isabeleños, the Ong family. Marco Paulo Hotel and Restobar, named after one of the sons, operates as a hotel, restaurant, and event center.

Discover Delicious

Marco Paulo began as a shabu-shabu restaurant—the first of its kind in Isabela. Open daily from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M., the Marco Paulo Cafe & Restaurant serves Asian and international cuisine. They are well-known for their healthy shabu-shabu and regular shabu-shabu selections, an appetizing set sure to fill anyone up. Some of the Marco Paulo signature dishes feature baked salmon in marinara and mozzarella al forno, grilled ostrich steak in red wine reduction sauce, sizzling crocodile sisig, Hong Kong style roasted chicken, and crispy pata. Cap off your meal with cakes available on display, paired with any of the hot drinks, milkshakes, and smoothies on the menu. Satisfy incessant cravings as you discover delicious.

Discover Comfort

Marco Paulo Hotel is situated at the back of the lot housed in a pristine two-storey modern structure. Open since March 2017, the hotel has 13 cozy rooms complete with a small kitchenette, living room, work station, and outdoor area. Choose from the VIP Room, Premium Family, Superior King, Standard Quadruple, and Standard Triple accommodations equipped with Wi-Fi and a

fully-stocked mini-bar. Each room presents a bright and homey atmosphere that is sure to comfort anyone while away from home. Lay back and rest easy as you discover comfort.

Discover Elegance

Marco Paulo offers their Emily Banquet Hall for all social events. Named after the matriarch of the family, the spacious hall is capable of holding up to a maximum of 500 people and a minimum of 50 people. Available for weddings, birthdays, baptisms, and other special occasions, the place has an in-house stylist to decorate and beautify the interiors specific to a client's preferred theme. The event hall can also cater to business needs as a venue for conventions, seminars, and workshops. Celebrate without worries as you discover elegance.

With a fully-trained staff, Marco Paulo Hotel and Restobar is definitely a complete package in itself. There is a convenience store beside the lobby and a gas station nearby. It is also a short drive away from the Isabela State University, SM City Cauayan, Cauayan City Airport, and the main poblacion of Cauayan. Other nearby tourist attractions includes the D'Spot Rail Park, Our Lady of the Pillar Parish Church, and Hacienda de San Luis. Marco Paulo Hotel and Restobar is located along Governor F. N. Dy Boulevard, San Fermin, Cauayan City, Isabela. You may visit their page at <http://www.facebook.com/Marcopaulohotelandrestobar> or contact the hotel at (078) 652-5181.

The formula for growth and development varies from one municipality, city, or province to another. It would depend on factors such as natural resources, population, geography, cultural, social and political concerns, etc.

In this issue, we share with you the progress in the province of Pampanga, the city of Cebu, and the municipalities of Labo, Camarines Norte and Socorro, Oriental Mindoro, and how they are achieving their development goals and addressing challenges.

Pampanga, known as the country's Culinary Capital, is gearing up to become a "supercity" with its Megalopolis Development Plan (page 54). Cebu has primed itself to become one of the country's enviable business and leisure hubs (page 58). Labo, Camarines Norte has strengthened its tax collection efforts, allowing it to carry out more infrastructure projects and provide more services to its people (page 64). Socorro, Oriental Mindoro has preserved the beauty of its natural resources, while promoting its agri-industrial and tourism potential (page 48).

In this issue, we also tackled highly relevant topics.

- Jonathan Malaya, Assistant Secretary for Communication and Public Affairs at the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and Christian Monsod, one of the members of the 1986 Philippine Constitutional Commission, enlightened us about the pros and cons of federalism (pages 72 and 78).
- Proponents of Republic Act (R.A.) No. 11032, or the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018, explained how the law hopes to effect reforms in the way we do business in the country (page 30).
- In a related feature, Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion, stressed the importance of fostering an entrepreneurial culture among Filipinos to help boost our economy (page 32).
- Rep. Robert Ace Barbers, chairman of the House Committee on Dangerous Drugs in the Lower House, shared his commitment to the national campaign to rid society of illegal drugs (page 82).

Finally, we are pleased to feature the National President of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP), Mayor Fe "Bubut" Brondial, and got to know more about the organization and its efforts to address the concerns of the municipalities in the country (page 42).

Tell us what inspired you this issue and what you'd like to see in our pages. Email us at editorial@leaguemag.com.ph.

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Lakambini Bautista

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BACOLOD PLACES 2ND IN TOP PHILIPPINE MODEL CITY

Bacolod City finished second to Davao City at the Philippine Model Cities and Municipalities 2018 Awards. The awarding ceremonies were held at Conrad Manila Hotel in Pasay City last June 19. Mayor Evelio Leonardia, Vice Mayor El Cid Familiaran, and City Administrator John Orola were present to accept the first runner-up plaque from *The Manila Times* president and chief executive officer Dante “Klink” Ang II and Chief Operating Officer Bianca Mercado. Atty. Lea Roque, principal and head of the Tax Advisory and Compliance of P & A Grant Thornton, was the chairman of the board of judges. Laoag City was declared the second runner-up. Bacolod was also declared the “Most Business-Friendly City,” owing to the booming investments and developments in the city.

In 2017, Bacolod was proclaimed the grand winner as the Top Model City. While beaten by Davao, this nevertheless shows the consistency of Bacolod in being one of the “most livable urban centers” in the country.



ILOILO CITY PASSES ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ORDINANCE

The Sangguniang Panlungsod (SP) of Iloilo City unanimously approved an Anti-Discrimination ordinance, which makes unlawful any form of discrimination based on sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, color, descent, ethnic origin, and religious beliefs. Discrimination is defined as refusing employment, refusing or failing admission to education institutions, refusing goods and services, refusing accommodation, subjecting to ridicule or insult, refusing entry to places open to the general public by reason of a person’s sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, color, descent, ethnic origin, and religious beliefs. It also penalizes said act, ranging from admonition and fine to imprisonment.

The said ordinance also creates an Anti-Discrimination Board, who will initiate the filing of cases against violators. The board is to be chaired by the city mayor with the City Council Chairman on Women and Family Relations as the vice chairman. The author of the ordinance, Councilor Liezl Joy Zulueta-Salar, also heads the SP Committee on Women and Family Relations. Iloilo City is not the first to adopt the Anti-Discrimination Ordinance. Cebu, Quezon City, Davao, Baguio, and Mandaluyong City have already passed their respective anti-discrimination ordinances.



P4.37B IRRIGATION PROJECT UNDERWAY IN REGION 2

The Chico River Pump Irrigation Project held its groundbreaking ceremony last June 8 in Pinukupuk, Kalinga as part of the “Build, Build, Build” program under the current administration. National Irrigation Administration (NIA) Chief Ricardo Visaya, Cagayan Governor Manuel Mamba, and Kalinga Gov. Jocel Baac were present. The P4.37 billion project is the first infrastructure project to be funded by a soft loan from the China Exim Bank with Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez signing the loan in behalf of the Philippines. The irrigation project is set to be completed within three years by the China CAMC Engineering Company, Ltd. Chinese Embassy Commercial Counsellor Jin Yuan also attended the groundbreaking ceremony. President Rodrigo Duterte and Chinese President Xi Jinping were present during the formal signing of the contract in Hainan, China last April 2018.

The project stands to benefit the provinces of Cagayan and Kalinga, the top producers of rice in the Philippines, by providing water to around 7,530 existing rice farms and 8,700 hectares of new irrigable areas. Rice production is expected to increase from 31,281 metric tons to 55,719 metric tons in Cagayan, while the 173,292 metric tons in Kalinga is also projected to increase, thanks to the irrigation project.

US NAVY 7TH FLEET PERFORMS IN PUERTO PRINCESA

The US Navy 7th Fleet band featuring eight members conducted a musical outreach in Puerto Princesa last June 7 to 8. The Far East Edition (FEE), a spinoff of the band, had a public show at the People’s Amphitheater in Mendoza Park and at the SM City Puerto Princesa premier hall. They performed a cover of the OPM hit “Hinahanap-hanap Kita.” They also conducted free musical workshops at the Palawan National School, the Palawan State University, and the San Jose National High School, capped by the band’s performances at the end.

The US 7th Fleet was established in 1943, and thus, the band was formed. Known for their pop-rock, soul, jazz, rhythm and blues styles, the band has played in Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore as part of their Indo-Pacific tour. Together with the US 7th Fleet flagship, the USS Blue Ridge, the band is currently stationed in Yokosuka, Japan.



The Carmen Hotel

Comfort, Flexibility, Taste

The Carmen Hotel - Downtown Naga's Boutique Hotel - opened its doors in September 2016 and has since proven itself as a worthy addition to Naga City’s myriad hotels and dining destinations.

Modern and contemporary architecture

The Carmen features extensive exterior cladding designed to embody the ebb and flow of The Naga River. Its tall and wide lobby draws the eyes with its clean and modern lines, and its floor-to-ceiling glass walls let in an abundance of natural light.

Location, location, location

The Carmen is located on Peñafrancia Avenue in Downtown Naga. It is a short walk from the hotel to downtown shops, restaurants, and tourist spots like Plaza Quince Martires, Naga Metropolitan Cathedral, and San Francisco Church. It is also a short jeepney or tricycle ride away from bustling Magsaysay or the malls of CBD II.

But The Carmen's strategic location is never more felt than during the month-long Peñafrancia Festival. The Traslacion passes through Peñafrancia Avenue right in front of the hotel, while the Fluvial Procession is held on the Naga River, which borders The Carmen at the back.

Flexible meetings and events arrangements

The Carmen is one-of-a-kind when it comes to meetings, functions and events. Its flexible meetings and events arrangements mean clients can rent just the venue and bring in food using any one of the hotel's accredited caterers - or they can get their food from the The Carmen’s restaurant.

International-standard amenities

The Carmen’s international-standard amenities ensure that guests would love staying in just as much as they would enjoy going out. It has a mini-gym and a swimming pool; in fact, The Carmen is the only hotel in the Naga Downtown area (i.e. Centro) with a swimming pool. Modern and minimalist interiors, plush and soft bedding, and individually-controlled air-conditioning make The Carmen’s guest rooms an ideal place for rest and relaxation. Rooms are also outfitted with all the conveniences guests expect in a hotel of this caliber - hot and cold shower, toiletries and grooming necessities, a mini-refrigerator, an electronic safe, an iron and ironing board, extra pillows, a hair dryer, slippers, and coffee- and tea-making facilities.

For your dining pleasure

And hotel guests need not go far for great food. The Carmen’s flagship restaurant, Babà Social Dining, is fast rising as one of Naga’s favorite dining destinations. It is known for its hearty, daily breakfast buffet. A must-try for breakfast is Babà Social Dining’s very own version of Naga’s favorite noodle dish, Kinalas. Take it from Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, who raves about it in this Facebook post.

Also a must-try are Babà Social Dining’s international cuisine buffet (available every Sunday dinner), its 4-course Cuisine Naga special (available daily except Sunday dinner), and other notable à la carte offerings such as Crispy Pata Kare, Open-Face Chicken Cordon Blue, and Bulasing.



THE
Carmen
DOWNTOWN NAGA'S BOUTIQUE HOTEL

BABÀ
Social Dining



ARMM OPENS BANGSAMORO VILLAGES EXPO

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) opened their tribal villages expo on June 18 at the compound of the Office of the Regional Governor in Cotabato City. ARMM Governor Mujiv Hataman attended the event as part of the 29th founding anniversary of the region. The aim of the exhibit is to promote the rich history, culture, and traditions of the Bangsamoro people, while also showing the unity of the Bangsamoro.

There are five mock villages corresponding to the five ARMM provinces with assigned chieftains for each. Each village showcases well-known landmarks, traditional artifacts, livelihood products, and heritage items. Maguindanao presents a replica of the *Tulugan* or the House of the Sultan with ARMM Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Kahal Kedtal serving as the chieftain. In the Tawi-Tawi village, island paradise is the theme. ARMM Agrarian Reform Secretary Dayang Carlsum Jumaide is the assigned chief. ARMM Education Secretary Rasol Mitmug is Lanao del Sur Chieftain, which village carries the “Sarimanok Rising” tagline. The Plaza Cabili stands in the mock village despite its destruction in the battle of Marawi last year. The Basilan tribal village, led by ARMM Executive Secretary Laisa Masuhud Alamia, highlights the Yakan cloth called *tennun*. The largest exhibit is the Sulu village with a life-size replica of the Astanah Darul Jambangan or royal palace of the Sultanate of Sulu ARMM. Public Works and Highways Secretary Don Mustapha Loong is its assigned chieftain. The village expo is open to the public until the end of December.

BORONGAN ICT COUNCIL TO BOOST JOB ECOSYSTEM

The City of Borongan in Eastern Samar recently created the Borongan Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Council in an effort to embrace innovation and advancement in the region. This will accordingly boost the jobs opportunities in the growing city. Atty. Jocelle Batapa-Sigue, the Vice President of the National ICT Confederation of the Philippines (NICP), visited Borongan for the possibilities of an ICT park. She also explained how ICT helped develop the city of Bacolod by having programs such as Animation and Game Development, Contact Centers and BPO, Global In-House Centers, Health Information Management, and Information Technology and Software Development.

Sangguniang Panlungsod Member Estanislao Quelitano has promised support from the local government, while owner of Reliance CATV Rolando Olog also pledged to support the Borongan ICT council. The DICT-Borongon Field Office under Engr. Dante Rosales also plans to meet with the council.



INAGURATION OF WORLD-CLASS MCIA

The new terminal at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA) in Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu was inaugurated last June 7. The MCIA is one of the busiest airports in the Philippines with 25 international and 30 domestic destinations, and 26 partner airline carriers. It is also the second largest airport in the country. Operations commenced on July 1 with the new terminal catering to international flights, while the existing Terminal 1 will be for domestic flights. The P17.5-billion facility is one of the projects under the “Build, Build, Build” infrastructure program of the present administration.

President Rodrigo Duterte led the inauguration alongside Department of Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade. Presidential Assistant for the Visayas Michael Dino, Special Assistant to the President Bong Go, Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romula-Puyat, GMR-Megawide Cebu Airport Corporation (GMCAC) President Manuel Ferrer, and GMCAC Board Chairman Srinivas Bommidala were also present.

CALAMBA BUHAYANI FESTIVAL HONORS NATIONAL HERO RIZAL

In honor of Dr. Jose P. Rizal, the City of Calamba, Laguna celebrated its 5th Buhayani Festival. An

amalgamation of the Tagalog words *buhay* and *bayani*, the weeklong festivities highlighted the heroism and patriotism of Rizal through his life, views, idealism, and works. Kicking off on the 120th Philippine Independence Day at the city hall lobby on June 12, 2018, the festival concluded on Rizal’s 157th birth anniversary on June 19, which was also declared a special non-working holiday in Calamba City based on Proclamation No. 471 issued by Malacañang Palace. There was a Buhayani Job Fair, a “Malikhaing Rizal: Artists’ Backpack” art workshop, a Buhayani Football Club tournament, and a streetdance competition.

The city has proposed a bid to designate the National Hero’s birthplace as the home of the fallen and living heroes. Two Calambeños were awarded the “Gawad Buhayani.” First, it was awarded to Corporal Jaffee O. Amisola of the Philippine Army for his heroism in the Liberation of Marawi last year, and posthumously to the late Capt. Geronimo Aclan of the Philippine Army Air Corps for his patriotism during World War II.



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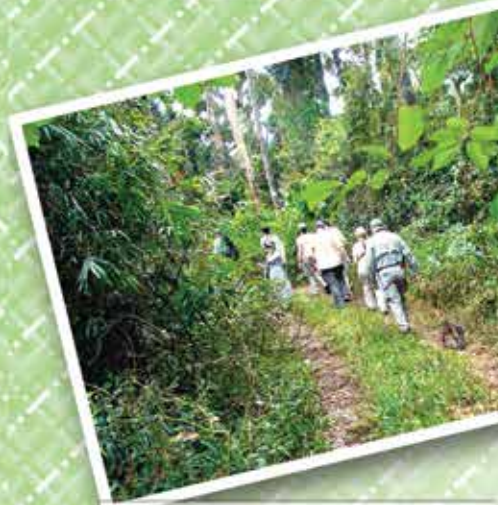
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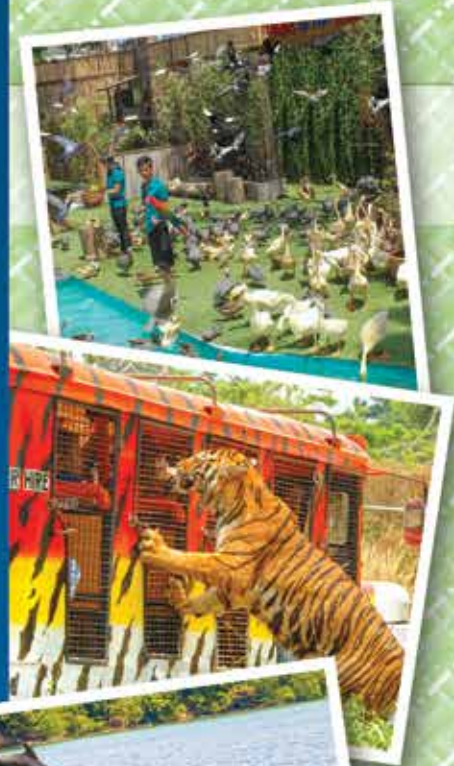
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AUGUST FESTIVALS

PANGAOG FESTIVAL

August 1 - 7
Samal Island, Davao
A thanksgiving festival for a bountiful harvest, highlighting the culture of the Sama, the indigenous people of Samal, as shown in the indigenous sports, and other culture-based competitions.



PANGASINAN BAMBOO FESTIVAL

August 12
Calasiao and Sta. Barbara, Pangasinan
A festival showcasing bamboo products and includes bamboo planting and film exhibitions.

MERCEDES FISHTIVAL

August 6-11
Mercedes, Camarines Norte
This is a thanksgiving festival by local fisherfolk for blessings received during seafaring and fish-farming.



MARANG FESTIVAL

August 5
Basco, Batanes
Locals celebrate the bountiful harvest of the fruit called marang.

PALU-PALO FESTIVAL

August 4-5
Basco, Batanes
This is highlighted by a cultural presentation showing the life and times of the Ivatans.



PASAKA FESTIVAL

August 14
Tanuan, Leyte
Pasaka, the native word for Assumption, is a street spectacle in honor of Our Lady of Assumption.



LUBI-LUBI FESTIVAL

August 15
Calubian, Leyte
A dance festival extolling the many uses of the coconut in homage to Our Lady of Fatima and St. Roque.

KALIBONGAN FESTIVAL

August 17 - 18
Kidapawan, Cotabato
A gathering of Mindanao ethnolinguistic groups like the Bagobos and Manobos. This is highlighted by a horse fight and a Manobo wedding.



KADAYAWAN SA DABAW FESTIVAL

3rd week of August
Davao City
Dabawenos celebrate the annual Kadayawan—a colorful occasion that lasts for five days—as a thanksgiving festival and a tribute to its indigenous peoples. *Kadayawan* is a native expression in Dabawnon tongue, which means “anything excellent that brings great fortune” which



comes from the word *dayaw* (good), describing a thing that is valuable and superior.

GIGANTES

August 19
Lucban, Quezon
In the town of Lucban, Quezon, townsfolk trot out their beloved *gigantes* or giants. Measuring about 14 feet tall, the giants come in pairs, the *mag-asawa* or couple, a giant man dressed in the peasant's *camisa de chino* or undershirt, and his wife clad in the native *patadyong* and *kimona*, a loose skirt topped with a flimsy blouse. Made from paper mache, the giants are borne on shoulders by those who have made a *panata* (oath), promised in return for a favor received. This festivity is shared by Lucban with the town of Angono, Rizal, which holds it in November.

BUYOGAN FESTIVAL

August 19
Abuyog, Leyte
Buyogan focuses on the bee locally known as *buyog* from which the town's name originated.



BANKATON

August 20
Lavezares, Northern Samar
An annual boat racing contest celebrating the Feast of Nuestra Señora de Salvacion, the town's patroness.

KAGAYHAAN FESTIVAL

August 26-28
Cagayan de Oro City
This festival is highlighted by street dancing participated in by contingents from schools and civic organizations.

TERTIARY GENERAL EDUCATION TITLES



SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Bernardo N. Caslib, Jr.
Myra Oruga
Greg Tabios Pawilen
Janice Patria J. Serafica
Eden Joy Pastor Alata



JOSE RIZAL, SOCIAL REFORMER AND PATRIOT

Dr. Augusto V. de Viana
Helena M. F. Cabrera
Janet C. Atutubo
Emelita P. Samala
Myrna M. de Vera



READINGS IN THE PHILIPPINE HISTORY

John Candelaria &
Veronica C. Alporha



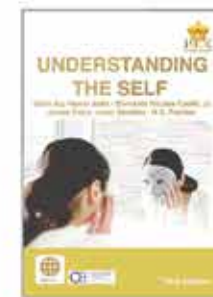
ART APPRECIATION

Bernardo Nicolas Caslib, Jr.
Thea Garing
Jezreel Anne Casaul



FOUNDATION OF MORAL EVALUATION (ETHICS)

Mark Joseph Calano
Oscar Bulaoang, Jr.
Albert M. Lagliva
Michael Ner E. Mariano
Jesus Deogracias Principe



UNDERSTANDING THE SELF

Janice Patria J. Serafica
Bernardo N. Caslib, Jr.
Greg Tabios Pawilen
Eden Joy Pastor Alata



COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIETY

Marikit Tara Alto Uychocho &
Maria Lorena Santos



THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Prince Kennex R. Aldama



MATHEMATICS IN THE MODERN WORLD

Richard Aufmann
Joanne Lockwood
Richard Nation
Daniel Clegg
Susanna S. Epp



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SEPTEMBER FESTIVALS

AURORA FESTIVAL

Last Sunday of August to first week of September
Tanjay, Negros Oriental
The festival features evening novenas participated in by more than 40 clans, which culminate in an evening procession at the Tanjay River.

HIN-AY FESTIVAL

September 1-29
Irosin, Sorsogon
This features a cultural show, trade fair, and a street dance depicting the archangels' victory over the "black" angels.



BICOL FOOD FESTIVAL

September 1-30
Naga City
This is a festival of Bicol cuisine: *pinangat* and *laing*, Bicol Express, *inolokan* or *tilmak*, *pecadillo* and *cocido*.

SARAKIKI FESTIVAL

September 1-8
Calbayog City, Northern Samar
The festival features street dancers dressed as cocks, swaying to the beat of ancient Samareño instruments.



T'BOLI TRIBAL FESTIVAL

3rd week
South Cotabato
This is a gathering of the major ethnolinguistic groups in the province, together with representatives from Davao.



PEÑAFRANCIA FESTIVAL

3rd Sunday of September
Naga City, Camarines Sur
This is a religious festival honoring Nuestra Señora de Peñafrancia, the patroness of the Bicol River.



DALIT FESTIVAL

September 25
Tangub City, Misamis Occidental
This celebrates local rituals, dances, and the local's way of life.

LINAPET FOOD SHARING FESTIVAL

September 30
Gueday, Besao, Mountain Province
This is a festival with a delightful pre-planting feast at its core where natives share their food with everyone.

DJANGGO FESTIVAL

September 28-29
Nassiping, Gattaran, Cagayan
This commemorates centuries-old religious and cultural tradition based on the life of St. Michael.



BANIGAN-KAWAYAN FESTIVAL

September 29
Basey, Samar
This celebrates the *banig* and the *kawayan* crafts industry flourishing in Basey.

Source: <https://www.tpb.gov.ph/marketing-and-promotions/tpb-calendar-of-promotions-and-marketing-activities/calendar-of-philippine-festivals-and-monthly-observances-theme/>



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What are the *barangay's* efforts to help the out of school youth (OSY) and address the concerns about *tambays*?

INTERVIEWS BY SHIMICO DIANNE NAKAMURA



There is no specific law that *tambays* violate. We are keeping an eye more on residents who violate the city ordinance such as those who are caught shirtless on the streets. President Duterte already talked about this in one press conference where he said that bystanders should be apprehended. Alcohol consumption along the streets is also strictly prohibited and whoever violates this must also be arrested.

Our *barangay* is conducting various programs to lessen the number of bystanders in the area. We partnered with TESDA to offer trainings to our residents so they can learn new skills during their free time. TESDA hosts the trainings while we refer residents who want to be trained. We also organize basketball leagues every summer and the best thing is that we have a school beside our *barangay* hall that offers different subjects for free. We are encouraging everyone in the *barangay* to attend this school but sadly, some are still financially incapable.

Brgy Capt. Ricky Batimana Licad
BARANGAY UNANG SIGAW,
BALINTAWAK QUEZON CITY

A concerted effort is needed to pull together the OSY and *tambays* in our *barangay*. But with the help of our constituents and the whole *barangay*, we have the full support of everyone. We are encouraging them to join activities such as sports (basketball league) and livelihood programs. We also have the basic training on baking and *basahan*-making. And now that the rainy season is upon us and Malolos being generally flood-prone, we let our OSY and *tambays* be involved in helping out flood victims, making it a bit easier for them by providing whatever help the *barangay* can offer.

Brgy Capt. Francisco "Francis" Dela Cruz
BARANGAY LOOK 2ND, CITY OF MALOLOS, BULACAN



Our *barangay* previously held a summer league which includes basketball and volleyball. Aside from that, we also have ongoing livelihood programs where we offer trainings on welding, dressmaking, and carpentry. In every program, we assign one official to accompany and encourage the residents to join. For the arrested loiterers who are also drug abusers, they are sent to the Community Based Rehabilitation Center. If we catch some bystanders during our area monitoring, regardless of the time they were caught loitering, they are only counseled instead of being immediately arrested.



Brgy Capt. Leondro "Anding" Cabasbas, BARANGAY SAN ROQUE, ANTIPOLLO CITY



We conducted an urban gardening workshop where we plant vegetables on private vacant lots. We involved the *tambays* and OSY here in our *barangay*. We also have *interpurok* basketball competition every summer for the young ones. We also plan to have a fun run to fight the 3D's (Depression, Drugs and

Diabetes) this coming October, for free. With these programs, we think that will help our *tambays* in our *barangay*.

Majel Co, KAGAWAD, BARANGAY SAN DIONISIO, PARAÑAQUE CITY

We exert effort and plan programs for our OSY and *tambays*. We want to make sure that the OSY will participate in our *Kabataang Entreprenyur*, a trade and livelihood program. We conduct several livelihood trainings such as: rag-making, dishwashing soap-making, wellness/massage, accessories and jewelry-making, and cosmetology, among others. With these trainings, the attention of the OSY will be diverted to productivity for their community. It will keep them busy and change their directions to not be involved in drugs or any illegal activities. Other trainings such as cellphone repair will also be offered to the *tambays*. Even if they are jobless, they can still be effective in their community and be role models to their spouses and children.

Segundo "Ding" Antenor
KAGAWAD, BARANGAY VASRA, QUEZON CITY



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Taking the high road

DOTr dispatches over 200 modern passenger jeepneys



In line with its efforts to provide safe, comfortable, efficient, and environment-friendly public transport, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) conducted the Dispatch of Modern Public Transport Vehicles: Pasada Tungo sa Maunlad na Bansa, last July 20 at the Quirino Grandstand in Ermita, Manila.

Over 200 modern public utility jeepney (PUJ) units were dispatched to operators with franchises validated by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB).

The modern jeepney conforms to the existing environmental and product standards set by the Bureau of Standards. It has side doors instead of rear doors, and a higher ceiling that allows for standing passengers, which translates to a higher carrying capacity. Emergency exits are mandated and some units will have provisions for differently-abled passengers, coupled with WiFi, GPS, CCTVs, dash camera, speed limiter, and automatic fare collection system.

In compliance with the Clean Air Act of 1999, the modern jeepney will either have a Euro-4 compliant emission system or an electric-powered motor that will generate less pollution or none at all.

Class 1, 2, and 3 jeepneys will be available for dispatch. Class 1 will have 9 to 22 passenger capacity, including the driver; Class 2 will carry 22 passengers and will allow for standing passengers to augment the driver's income; Class 3 will likewise have 22 passengers and above plus driver, but will be all seated.

DOTr Secretary Arthur P. Tugade, who led the modern jeepney dispatch with Undersecretary for Road, Tim Orbos, and LTFRB Chairman, Martin Delgra III, said the modernization of jeepneys is long overdue. He likewise mentioned that there are financing schemes available to operators and drivers to help them pay for the cost of the modern jeepneys. Undersecretary Tim Orbos explained that the financing rates are affordable with a "5-6-7-

80,000" formula, which stands for easy down payment, very low interest rates, payable in seven years, and P80,000 government subsidy.

The DOTr plans to replace all public utility vehicles (PUV) aged 15 years or older under its PUV Modernization Program (PUVMP).

The PUVMP was first launched in Tacloban City, Leyte, in January this year, where it initially deployed 45 solar-powered jeepneys. In June, 15 out of 35 modern PUJ units of the Senate Employees Transport Service Cooperative were rolled out and offered the route from StarCity/CCP to PICC, GSIS/Senate to MOA to PITX and back. Just recently, two transport cooperatives launched their PUV Modernization Program-compliant jeepneys to ply new routes along Taguig and Pateros. The Taguig Transport Service Coop PUVs are plying the Bagumbayan (Taguig) to Pasig route via San Joaquin, while the Pateros-Fort Boni Transport Coop PUVs' route is from Gate 3 of Fort Bonifacio to Guadalupe Market (ABC). ■

GOOD



GOVERNANCE



Highlights of President Duterte's Third State of the Nation Address

The war against illegal drugs is far from over... it will be as relentless and chilling, if you will, as on the day it began. If you think that I can be dissuaded from continuing this fight because of demonstrations, your protests, which I find, by the way, misdirected, then you got it all wrong. Your concern is human rights, mine is human lives.

I thank Congress for the swift passage of the Ease of Doing Business [Act], which is a significant fight against corruption and improving service delivery.

I have friends and political supporters whom I appointed to public office and then dismissed or caused to resign. I value friendship, make no mistake about it. But it has its limits.... It pains me to end — the loss of friendships. And that is why I appeal to you to help me in my cause so that our friendship will endure.

Despite all that has been said [for] or against the Bangsamoro Organic Law by all sectoral groups, I make this solemn commitment that this administration will never deny our Muslim brothers and sisters the basic legal tools to chart their own destiny within the Constitutional framework of our country... Give me 48 hours to sign it and ratify the law.

We shall continue to assert and pursue an independent foreign policy... Our improved relationship with China, however, does not mean that we will waver in our commitment to defend our interests in the West Philippine Sea. This is why we engage China through bilateral and multilateral platforms such as the ASEAN-China and the Philippines-China Bilateral Consultation Mechanism.

This is why we strongly condemn the deaths and abuses experienced by Filipino migrant workers in the hands of their foreign employers... It is my vow to make sure that your well-being remains our foremost foreign policy concern.

Much as I would like to do the impossible, that power [to end contractualization] is not vested upon me by the Constitution... That is why I add mine to their voices in asking Congress to pass legislation ending the practice of contractualization once and for all.

My administration remains firm in its resolve to ensure that the country's telecommunications services are reliable, inexpensive and secure... We shall, therefore, lower interconnection rates between all industry players. Not only to lessen the cost to the consumers as it will also lower the costs [for the] incoming player to access existing networks, [thereby creating] a market environment that is more conducive to competition.

We intend to restore its [Boracay] environmental integrity, alongside measures to alleviate those whose livelihood were momentarily affected. Environmental protection and ensuring the health of our people cannot be overemphasized; thus, our actions in Boracay mark the beginning of a new national effort.

I... urge the Senate to urgently pass the National Land Use Act to put in place a national land use policy that will address our competing land requirements for food, housing, businesses, and environmental conservation. We need to do this now.

...we, in the Cabinet, have approved for immediate endorsement to Congress the passage of a law creating the "Department of Disaster Management," an inter-agency crafted and a high-priority measure aimed at genuinely strengthening our country's capacity for [resilience] to natural disasters.

To the mining industry, I say this once again and maybe for the last time, do not destroy the environment or compromise our resources; repair what you have mismanaged.

I applaud Congress for the timely passage of the TRAIN law. You have made funds available to build better roads and bridges, and improve health and education, and strengthen our safety and security... TRAIN is already helping poor families and senior citizens cope up with rising prices.

We are currently institutionalizing the unified implementation of the "No Balance Billing Policy" through which the government and our private healthcare providers can work out a system that will provide an order of charging of medical expenses. To this end, I urge the speedy passage of the Universal Health Care Bill.

I have no illusions of occupying this office one day longer than what the Constitution under which I was elected permits; or under whatever Constitution there might be. I therefore consider it a distinct honor and privilege to have received earlier from the Consultative Committee that I created, the draft Federal Constitution that will truly embody the ideals and aspirations of all the Filipino people.

UNDERSTANDING CHINA'S BELT and ROAD INITIATIVE

Where do the “Build, Build, Build” and Duterte’s China Policy meet?
Prof. Herman Joseph S. Kraft breaks it down for us

In late 2013, Chinese leader Xi Jinping announced the launch of the “One Belt, One Road” Initiative (OBOR), an ambitious program designed to connect Europe, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific through infrastructure projects powered by Chinese capital, technology, and management. The cost was estimated at a staggering US\$4-8 trillion, involving construction work in more than 60 countries comprising up to 60% of the world’s population, and up to 40% of the world’s GDP. In 2017, the whole undertaking was renamed the “Belt and Road” Initiative (BRI). Its scope initially covered countries along the historic “Silk Road” route between China and Europe, and those along a maritime passageway between China through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean to Africa. At the time when the OBOR was renamed into the BRI, its geographic scope was extended to the South Pacific. China has claimed that the purpose behind the BRI goes beyond merely seeking an advantage for China’s economy and Chinese business, emphasizing that as an undertaking it seeks to ensure mutual prosperity in an environment of economic harmony and cooperation.

Since its inception, a number of infrastructure projects lay the foundations of what Xi Jinping had described as the “biggest market in the world with unparalleled potential.” An understanding to cooperate on the construction of a railway across Europe and Asia was reached with Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2014. US\$46 billion is being invested by China on multiple energy and infrastructure projects along a designated China-Pakistan Economic

Corridor connecting Gwadar Port in Pakistan to Kashgar in China. Pakistan has been one of the strongest supporters of the BRI, and, strategically, has become one of China’s most important strategic partners. In Kazakhstan, trade in goods is projected to be facilitated by a new transit railway along the route of the ancient silk road. The maritime component of the BRI is projected to involve a number of littoral states along the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. At the inception of the BRI, China was able to get the commitment of the Maldives towards enhancing marine, economic, and security cooperation.

The vagueness of the understanding with the Maldives is characteristic of the design of the BRI. China has always emphasized

that the projects would be agreed upon by China and by its partners, but for the most part would be based on what its partners indicate as projects that best respond to what they need. The opportunities provided by the BRI are being explored enthusiastically by the Duterte administration in pursuit of its own agenda in the Philippines.

The Duterte administration has embraced the BRI with a lot of gusto. China has been identified as a key component, in the words of the

There is still much suspicion among Filipinos about China and involving them in a massive program that could put the country in hock for a long time to come is not an easy prospect to accept.

President himself an “important ingredient” in his own massive infrastructure development program for the Philippines. Referred to as the “Build, Build, Build” (BBB) program, this is a US\$180 billion commitment to rehabilitating the infrastructure of the Philippines in those areas where it exists, and building it where it does not. It is the foundation of the Duterte administration’s economic development program.

The growth spurt in recent years of the Philippine economy creates the impression that the country has turned the corner as far as sustained economic growth is concerned.



ILLUSTRATION BY LUCIANO SARDEA
RAMIREZ

China has always emphasized that the projects . . . for the most part would be based on what its partners indicate as projects that best respond to what they need.



On May 12, 2017 trilateral meeting the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras met state Grid Corporation of China Chairman Shu Yinbiao in Beijing and CEO Euroasia Interconnector Nasos Ktorides and had discussions on the jointly promoting of the Belt and Road Initiative and the strengthening of power and energy cooperation.

The sustainability of high growth rates in the country's economy always hits a snag or is more often than not limited by the low level of infrastructural development of the country. The sustained economic growth of the years under the Arroyo and the Aquino administrations are hitting that infrastructural ceiling as indicated by daily traffic jams that make commuting in Metro Manila the brunt of some form of gallows humor among residents—it is an unbearable and yet fixed reality of daily life in the metropolis. Breakdowns in the light rail system, seasonal flooding, high power costs, poor telecommunication service, and lack of access to high speed internet are systemic impediments to pushing economic growth beyond the rates achieved under Arroyo and Aquino. Even then, the concentration of whatever infra development in Metro Manila does not help in decentralizing wealth creation. Outside of Metro Manila, only the provinces around the National Capital Region have been growing at sustained rates—an indication of the dependence of their growth to their proximity to Metro

Manila. The lack of attention given to infrastructure across the country creates a glass ceiling for the country's economic growth, which can only be addressed by massive influx of capital and more than generous helpings of political will.

This is precisely what the Duterte administration's BBB Program seeks to respond to. The Department of Finance has identified 75 flagship projects that are the key components of BBB. These include airports, railways, rapid bus transits, roads and bridges, seaports, energy facilities, and flood control facilities. The projection is that these will contribute to the sustainability of economic development by bringing down production costs, bringing up rural incomes, attracting investments to regions outside Metro Manila, increasing the efficiency of the movement of goods and people, and, most importantly, creating more jobs. It is an undertaking that should have been done incrementally over different Presidential administrations—but always kicked down the road for the next administration to worry about. Consequently, if the Philippines is to be a major player in what is being

projected to be the Pacific Century, what should have been a continuing task distributed over time now needs to be done on a massive scale within a much shorter time horizon. At an estimated US\$180 billion, however, the cost invites questions about how this whole undertaking will be financed.

An envisioned Comprehensive Tax Reform Program (CTRP) is supposed to be a major factor in this undertaking. With the passage of the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) in 2018, the first part of the CTRP is now in place. Nonetheless, the sheer size of the BBB program means that other sources of capital must be tapped. This is where the “pivot to China” comes in.

One of the most important developments in Philippine foreign policy under the Duterte administration is the cozying up to China that has been a hallmark of the Duterte presidency. In an interview in April 2018, President Duterte put context to this policy by saying that China is a “very important ingredient [in the BBB]” even going as far as to personalize

the relationship and say that “I need China more than anybody else at this time.” The signing of a number of economic cooperation agreements between the Philippines and China lays the formal foundations of the relationship. China has offered more than US\$7 billion in infrastructure investments to the Philippines, stating that it fully supports the development trajectory taken by the Duterte administration. Together with Japan, China is seen as the principal contributor to the success of the BBB.

As it is, a number of projects have been

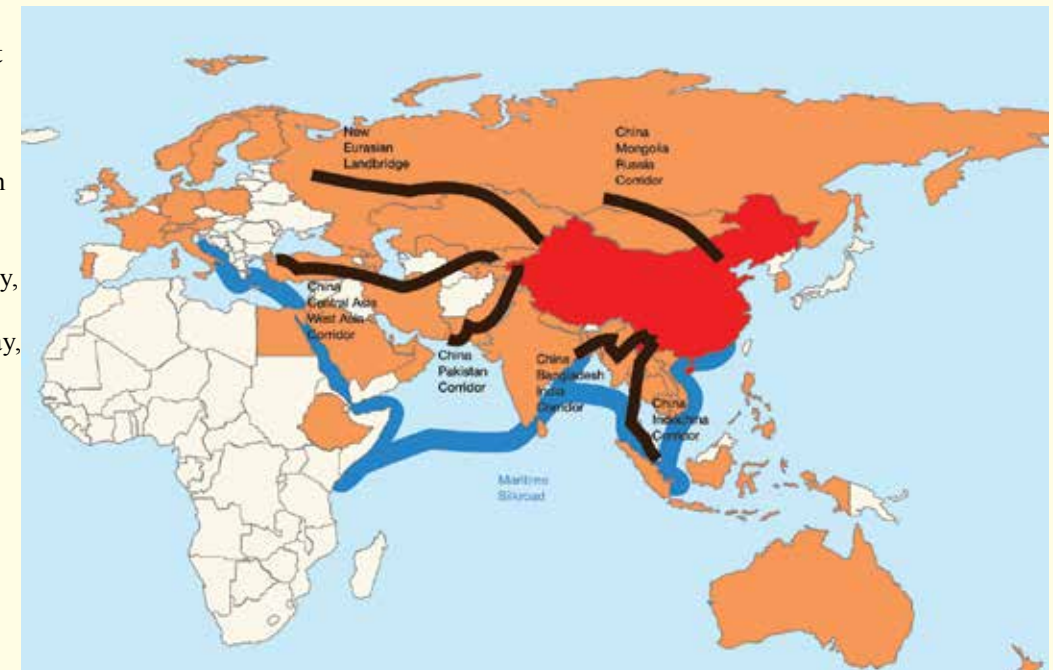
reported as being earmarked as part of the economic cooperation with China. There have already been discussions over studies for the Davao expressway, and bridges that will connect Panay, Guimaras, and Negros Islands. In Luzon, loan applications have been submitted for infrastructure priority projects that include the US\$53.6 million Chico River Pump Irrigation

Project in Cagayan and Kalinga provinces, the US\$374 million New Centennial Water Source-Kaliwa Dam Project in Quezon province, and the US\$3.01 billion south line of the North-South Railway.

How do all these connect with the BRI? Simply put, not yet. But all these are exploratory in terms of how the Philippines and China can cooperate on projects that contribute to Philippine economic development, and, more

significantly, building goodwill for China among Filipinos. There is still much suspicion among Filipinos about China and involving them in a massive program that could put the country in hock for a long time to come is not an easy prospect to accept. In this context, the Philippines has been slow about its eventual participation in the BRI. NEDA Director-General Ernesto Pernia has pointed out that there is some difficulty envisioning how the Philippines would benefit from the BRI given that it is a geographic outlier to the main routes taken by the land and maritime roads. He noted, however, that there

market where (without necessarily getting into the issue of creating a single market) trade goods and services flow with a minimum of impediment. As Pernia noted, the BRI fund is at conceptual stage. Clearly, even the operationalization of its participation in the BRI is at an exploratory stage for the Philippines. Nonetheless, the potential benefit to the Philippines is there, and for the Duterte administration and its ambitious BBB program, participating in the BRI is a dangerous gambit that needs to be tried to increase their chances of success.■



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cb/One-belt-one-road.svg

is a BRI fund that can be accessed by the Philippines. How this can be utilized in the Philippines, however, requires further exploration in terms of what projects would make sense within the scope of the objectives of the BRI. Beijing also has to sign on to whatever these projects are. There has to be a sense that the projects in the Philippines make a direct contribution to the intended purpose of the BRI to interconnect national economies into one massive

CHINA IN RED, THE MEMBERS OF THE ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK IN ORANGE. THE 6 PROPOSED CORRIDORS ([HTTPS://WWW.MERICS.ORG/EN/MERICS-ANALYSIS/INFOGRAPHICCHINA-MAPPING/CHINA-MAPPING/](https://www.merics.org/en/merics-analysis/infographicchina-mapping/china-mapping/) AND [HTTP://WWW.CBBC.ORG/CBBC/MEDIA/CBBC_MEDIA/ONE-BELT-ONE-ROAD-MAIN-BODY.PDF](http://www.cbcc.org/cbbc/media/cbbc_media/one-belt-one-road-main-body.pdf)) IN BLACK.

The writer is currently a Taiwan Fellow at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at National Sun Yat-sen University in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. He is an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City.



DTI Secretary Ramon M. Lopez

Shifting From Neutral to Drive

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) greases up the gears of doing business with a recently enacted law and a lofty goal for 2020

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MANUEL GENEROSO

In the latest Ease of Doing Business (EODB) Survey Report, as of December 2017, the Philippines currently ranks 113 among 190 nations, a decline from the previous ranking of 99. The survey, which is conducted by the World Bank, compares countries on how conducive the local rules and regulations are to business opportunities and economic growth.

There are four classifications—Very Easy, Easy, Medium, and Below Average—with the Philippines falling under the third classification. EODB is based on the following key indicators: (1) Starting a business, (2) dealing with construction permits, (3) getting electricity, (4) registering property, (5) getting credit, (6) protecting investors, (7) paying taxes, (8) trading across

borders, (9) enforcing contracts, and (10) resolving insolvency. In particular, the rankings are tested on the procedures, time, and cost of the above-mentioned indicators.

To compare, the current world ranking of the US in the EODB is 6, United Kingdom is 7, Australia is 14, and Germany is 20. In Asia, South Korea is ranked 4, Japan is 34, and China is 78. In Southeast Asia, the Philippines has been overtaken by most of its neighbors, ranking 7 out of

10. Singapore ranks a high 2 in the index—beaten only by New Zealand, with Hong Kong close at 5. Malaysia ranks 24; Thailand, 26; Brunei, 56; Vietnam, 68; and Indonesia, 72. Only Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar are behind the Philippines at 135, 141, and 171, respectively.

“Our goal is to be number one, but our first stop is to reach the top 20% of the competitiveness ranking by 2020,” Undersecretary Rowel S. Barba said during his welcome remarks at the 6th Ease of Doing Business Summit at the Philippine International Convention Center last June 13.

At the summit, which had the theme “Shifting Gears: Destination 20-2020,” Usec Barba reminded everyone that all stakeholders—employees from different government agencies to those in the private sector—has a role to play. “Let me remind everyone that we are in a race, and as we always say, the competition never sleeps.”

Guillermo Luz of the National Competitiveness Council explained that economies compete for investments, trade or goods, service or jobs, tourists, and the local people. “Every year, we are working against tougher competition, higher standards. The bar always rises,” he declared.

THE ONSET OF EXTENSIVE REPAIRS

DTI Secretary Ramon M. Lopez, on his EODB Report to the People, said shifting gears also signifies a shifting of mindsets. He discussed the streamlining of government processes through E.A.S.E., (E for efficient or effective means, A for automated or accessible anywhere, S for seamless due to the interconnectivity and coordination among agencies, and E for economical or less costly). “We will have efficient or streamlined, and fast government services that are automated, and can be accessed electronically anytime,

“We will have efficient or streamlined, and fast government services that are automated, and can be accessed electronically anytime, anywhere, making it convenient.” —DTI Secretary Ramon M. Lopez on streamlining of government processes through E.A.S.E.

anywhere, making it convenient,” he announced.

Lopez mentioned the 19 EODB reforms and two data correction requests concerning seven out of the 10 key indicators of the World Bank EODB Index. These reforms include the Company Registration System implemented by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the creation of a Business One-Stop Shop (BOSS) for business and building permits by Quezon City, Single Window Transaction by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), implementation of Customer eXperience Engine by MERALCO, implementation of the Land Titling Computerization Project by the Land Registration Authority (LRA), and deployment of electronic case management system through the eCourts project, among others. The reforms have resulted in the reduction of procedural steps and processing times. However, Lopez lamented whether the reforms are known to the public, and thus, felt by the stakeholders. To achieve the goal of improving the EODB ranking by 2020, the reforms must be executed by December 2018 and felt by the respondents by May 2019, in time for the 2020 DB Survey Report.

The recent enactment of Republic Act (R.A.) No. 11032, or the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018, is a game-changer, according to Lopez. It amends the longstanding R.A. No. 9485 or the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007, expanding its coverage and prescribing stricter measures, while adding new provisions. R.A. 11032 serves to cut bureaucratic red tape by expediting applications for permits and licenses making it easier to put up or renew businesses. It also aims to eliminate corruption by mandating a zero-contact policy during the application process.

Senator Aquilino Pimentel III, in his keynote address as Chairman of Senate Committee on Trade, Commerce, and Entrepreneurship, said the law answers Priority 3 of President Duterte’s 10-Point Socio-Economic Agenda in increasing competitiveness and the ease of doing business. “The DTI is correct. R.A. 11032 can be a game-changer, but how much of a game-changer it is will depend on everyone here today. This landmark law should be implemented 100% and there should be no excuses,” Pimentel challenged.

REVVING THE ENGINE FORWARD

With the passage of R.A. 11032, the DTI seeks to implement Project One with the help of New



Guest speaker Cito Beltran



Seated: Sen. Miguel Zubiri, Sen. Pimentel, DTI Secretary Ramon M. Lopez

Zealand’s Creative HQ. Aimed at streamlining business registration in the country, Project One uses “Design Sprints” methods developed by Google Venture to find business solutions. Under this project, there will be a database of LGU registration processes; a mechanism for Philippine Business Number or a single, unique identifier to track applications; and a prototype for online registration application from beginning to end. “We are ready to initiate online application, One Form, One Number, One Portal for business registration, and we could realize this by putting technology to work. We do not just automate the process but transform the way government is doing business,” Lopez said in a statement.

The DTI also has plans to amend the outdated Corporation Code to address two EODB indicators—Starting a Business and Protecting Minority Investors; enact the Secured Transactions Bill, seeking to improve the ways on Getting Credit; and, develop a Unified Employee Enrolment Portal as an online reporting system for employees of newly registered businesses.

Reforms have already been under way, backed further by a new law. The goal is set, plans have been made, and the wheels are turning—all geared towards progress. As Undersecretary Barba enjoined everyone, “Let us together step on the gas and speed away towards our destination of being number 1.”



Embracing the Entrepreneurial Culture

BY NICOLE V. BEATO

When you talk about entrepreneurship, it would be hard not to mention the man who wholeheartedly advocates for embracing an entrepreneurial culture in our country. This is none other than Mr. Jose Maria “Joey” A. Concepcion III.

Joey Concepcion is the President and CEO of RFM Corporation, Presidential Adviser for Entrepreneurship, Go Negosyo Founder, and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN BAC) Philippines Chairman. With this long list of titles, Concepcion has represented both the public and private sectors in helping those who need it most.

SMALL BEGINNINGS, HUGE IMPACT

Back in 2005, former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo appointed Concepcion as the Presidential Adviser for Entrepreneurship. This led to the foundation of Go Negosyo, the advocacy arm of the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship (PCE) in addressing poverty by promoting entrepreneurship. Concepcion believes that by fostering an entrepreneurial culture, it would enable Filipinos to succeed and boost the economy.

“Filipinos were never destined for poverty,” Concepcion has always reiterated in his speeches.

Providing an enabling environment for aspiring business owners would encourage more Filipinos to try and become small entrepreneurs so that, in turn, they would not resort to migration or become unemployed.

Through Go Negosyo, Concepcion has been actively supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the Philippines. By pioneering different programs and projects and by promoting them through various platforms, he was able to spread his advocacy across the nation.

His programs in Go Negosyo have been launched nationwide for more than 10 years. One of his initiatives was the Filipina Entrepreneurs Summit, an annual gathering of the most prominent Filipinas in the business industry. On its 10th year, the likes of Tessie Sy-Coson (SM Investments Corp.), Dr. Vicki Belo (Belo Medical Group), Lizzie Zobel de Ayala (Teach for the Philippines), Natividad Cheng (Uratex), and Anne Curtis Smith-Heusaff (BLK Cosmetics) joined the summit to share their stories as catalysts of change and economic progress. Concepcion has also recognized other priority sectors by launching summits and business seminars focused on the digital economy and the youth.

In addition, Concepcion shares his thoughts and opinions about the business industry through his weekly column in *The Philippine Star*. He also shows how Go Negosyo has been empowering MSMEs in “Go Negosyo sa Radyo” and “SME Go!,” two weekly programs broadcast over the airwaves through radio and television, respectively.

BUILDING BETTER ALLIANCES IN ENABLING MSMEs

When President Rodrigo Duterte assumed his position as the leader of the country in 2016, Concepcion once again took up the position as the Adviser for Entrepreneurship. He was able to continue and strengthen Go Negosyo’s initiatives through partnerships with the government and other large corporations.

“With this appointment, we will strive more in helping Filipinos. With Secretary Ramon Lopez, who was with me for 11 years as my Executive Director in Go Negosyo and is now the current Trade Secretary, I know that this will increase the synergy between government and private sector for MSME development,” Concepcion says.

Since its foundation, Go Negosyo has been launching programs that would help MSMEs scale up. Concepcion has always anchored his programs on the 3Ms of entrepreneurship—money,

market, and mentorship. These three elements go hand-in-hand when it comes to helping the underserved and unserved sectors of the society.

Through the Kapatid Mentor Micro Enterprise (KMME) Program, aspiring entrepreneurs are given a 10-week training with modules on entrepreneurial mind-setting and values formation, marketing, financial management, and so on. It is a joint initiative with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), where successful entrepreneurs guide and mentor MSMEs.

With the success of the KMME Program, it has branched out into another initiative of Go Negosyo, the Kapatid Agri Mentor ME Program (KAMMP). It has been launched in partnership with the Department of Agriculture. Mentees will get to learn from successful entrepreneurs, helping them scale up their agribusinesses.



President Rodrigo Duterte is joined by Joey Concepcion and family



Mentor Me On Wheels provides the opportunity for entrepreneurs to seek advice and guidance from mentors.

After the devastating Marawi siege, Concepcion, together with Go Negosyo Adviser on Agripreneurship Ginggay Hontiveros-Malvar, launched the Kapatid for Marawi to assist the internally displaced farmers in Mindanao. With partnerships from the government and private corporations, Go Negosyo has been able to help the communities get back on track by promoting agriculture as their source of additional income.

The KMME and KAMMP

programs have been launched in different provinces across the country and aim to reach every part of the region.

REACHING THE UNREACHABLE

As his programs such as the KMME and KAMMP rolled out nationwide, Concepcion tried to break the barriers when it comes to reaching the unreachable. This 2018, he has brought two additions to the numerous programs in Go Negosyo.

In May this year, he introduced Mentor Me on Wheels (MMOW) to the public. Joining him were some of the top government officials and his partners in private organizations including DTI Secretary Ramon Lopez, Senator Miguel Zubiri, Johnlu Koa (The French Baker), Josiah Go (Mansmith and Fielders, Inc.), Feliciano Torres (Yazaki-Torres Manufacturing Inc.), Ma. Alegria Limjoco (Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry), and Corazon Ong (CDO Foodsphere Inc.), as well as other successful

entrepreneurs.

MMOW was launched to bring mentorship to the attendees. Concepcion had led the sessions in Metro Manila and CALABARZON, personally giving business advice to small entrepreneurs. He was also able to connect his mentees with the key players in the industry.

“With mentorship, Filipinos have a better chance to succeed. We are all here to mentor all aspiring entrepreneurs who want to achieve prosperity in their business,” Concepcion shares.

Aside from this, Concepcion and Secretary Lopez officially presented the Mentor Me Mobile Application to the public at the National MSME Summit 2018. Through this application, mentees can now have access to mentorship at their most convenient time and location. The application offers a public *negosyo* forum where they can directly discuss their concerns about their businesses. It also provides supplemental knowledge through the articles

written by Go Negosyo, as well as the mentors themselves.

“Secretary Ramon Lopez and I, for the past 12 years, have been pursuing the vision of equalizing and giving every struggling entrepreneur out there a chance to succeed. We want micro and small entrepreneurs to move up from survival mode to sustainable business. And through the power of mentorship, definitely, all is possible,” Concepcion asserts.

The latest project from Go Negosyo will bridge the gap between aspiring entrepreneurs who cannot personally go to the programs and summits. This only affirms how passionate Concepcion is when it comes to mentorship. Having been mentored as a kid, he wants everyone to experience how it honed him to become the man he is today. That he takes this point seriously is clearly noticeable when he earnestly helps small entrepreneurs every time he personally participates in his programs.

BRINGING MENTORSHIP WORLDWIDE

In 2017, Concepcion became the Chairman for the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (BAC). As serendipity would have it, this position was previously filled by his father, Jose S. Concepcion Jr. Through the years, the Concepcion family has been of service to the Filipino people as private and public officials.

Concepcion launched the first ever Prosperity for All Summit in 2017. With the summit, he aims to create an enabling environment for MSMEs to prosper in an inclusive economy. Top business leaders from ASEAN, including Thailand Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Ret.), Cambodia Minister of Commerce Pan Sorasak, Dr. Robert Yap (Singapore), George Barcelon (Philippines), Teresita Sy-Coson (Philippines), Arin Jira (Thailand), Moe Kyaw (Myanmar), Tan Sri Dato’ Dr. Mohd Munir Bin Abdul (Malaysia), and Dr. Doan Duy Khuong (Vietnam) participated in supporting the Concepcion-led summit. He also recognized the importance of the farmers and agripreneurship by conceptualizing the ASEAN Agriculture Summit.

As the ASEAN BAC Philippines Chairman,



Concepcion has pushed for his advocacy to reach other parts of the world. He has also pioneered efforts at bringing mentorship within and across the ASEAN region.

He led the official launch of the ASEAN Mentorship for Entrepreneurs Network (AMEN) in November 2017. This aims to create a pool of mentors composed of entrepreneurs, business practitioners, and academicians. The said

network brings a continuous exchange of ideas between thought leaders on the digital economy, agripreneurship, and trade and industry.

After the successful launch in the Philippines and the ASEAN member states, Concepcion envisioned to bring mentorship to the ASEAN dialogue partners.

“We are taking baby steps in learning,” Concepcion remarks. “We are now trying to bring more participation by enjoining others in what we are doing in the hopes that each country will replicate. With this, we are creating a rich pool of mentors across the region and other nearby economies.”

This year, he has established the ASEAN network in Australia and South Korea. He is also set to introduce AMEN to every part of the globe.

Concepcion is unstoppable. He will continue to work hard to realize his vision of an entrepreneurial Philippines. By providing MSMEs with the right avenues to navigate the digital economy, Joey Concepcion ceaselessly strives to make everyone be part of the inclusive growth for a better Philippines. ■

Top: ASEAN Mentorship for Entrepreneurs Network (AMEN), launched in November 2017, aims to create a pool of mentors composed of entrepreneurs, business practitioners, and academicians; left Concepcion and DTI Secretary Ramon Lopez are working together to fulfill President Duterte’s mandate to create synergy between the government and private sector to empower MSMEs.



Pinoy Pride

Go Lokal! celebrates creativity of our local talent with newest collection of handmade goods



Go Lokal!, an initiative of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), recently rolled out its newest collections done in collaboration with local crafters and designers.

The project was launched in 2017 with the objective of helping micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) penetrate the lucrative consumer market. “It’s difficult for MSMEs to enter the mainstream market (malls), as they have to pay a listing fee of P2-P3 million, or rent space (which is beyond their means). But with Go Lokal!, in cooperation with many of the retailers here in the country, DTI does its share in helping MSMEs gain free access to the mainstream market,” shares Trade and Industry Secretary Ramon M. Lopez.

Go Lokal! offers an amazing opportunity to MSMEs, bringing local goods and linking entrepreneurs direct to consumers through a wider platform such as pop-up fairs, as well as long-term partnerships with government agencies and retail hubs. Recently, DTI was proud to share that Go Lokal!’s exclusive line of handmade souvenirs is now available at the DTI Store and Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, in addition to the more than 50 Go Lokal! stores across the country.

For this season, Go Lokal! introduced its latest collection, which was done in collaboration with 16 crafters and designers



Trade and Industry Secretary
Ramon M. Lopez

from the Common Room, a known arts and crafts collective in Quezon City, and Team Manila. Inspired by the unique humor and wit of the Pinoy, the souvenir line includes fishball plush toys by Pop Junk Love, embroidered travelers’ patches by Fandom Feels, Philippine landmarks tattoos by Tattooic, Manila Traffic Survivor button pins by Ella Lama, and accessories with Philippine garden flowers by Life After Breakfast.

Not your typical souvenirs, these pieces are eye-catching and creative, and undoubtedly Pinoy.

In another partnership, Go Lokal! teamed up with Team Manila, a graphic design studio, for special edition t-shirts, which speak of the country’s weaving heritage. Titled Habi Hiraya (Weave Vision), the collection pays homage to the indigenous Filipino tribes by featuring a combination of intricately woven patterns from the Bagobo and Tinguian tribes, and leaf motifs called Uwes. Translated in Memphis design style with a modern Team Manila twist, a play of these elements was used to create a dynamic souvenir collection.

Go Lokal! products are available at Kultura Makati, Rustan’s Makati, Robinson’s Place in Malate, Glorietta 2 of Ayala Malls, City Malls nationwide, Duty Free Philippines Fiesta Mall, and Enchanted Kingdom. Go Lokal! is also available online at: <http://golokal.marketa.ph/> and <https://www.shopinas.com/go-lokal> and website at golokal.dti.gov.ph



Beauty that defies odds

An entrepreneur shows how private corporations can help and inspire single mothers and women

Aiza Diuco, founder and CEO of beauty and wellness company “Age Defying Solutions,” has long recognized the crucial role that women play in society. Women, especially in the Philippines, have been acknowledged as the heart of the family, the nurturer, the encourager, the inspiration. But with so many Filipinas going through hard times and trials, they can easily lose hope and sink into desperation.

Seeing how life’s difficulties have become stumbling blocks, Duico established The Glupa Women’s Club in March 2018. A club by “women for women,” it is a venue where “women can help each other rise by sharing their skills and know-how, by mentoring, and volunteering their time to ensure that every woman is given a chance to have a better future.”

The Glupa Women’s Club focuses on the needs of single mothers, whom Duico believes to be the most neglected sector in the country. “They face challenges,” she explains. “They need to take on the roles of both mother and father. They have to take care of the kids and provide for them – mentally, emotionally, financially, etc.” Duico can truly identify with this situation, as being a single mom herself, she had experienced the loneliness and the helplessness. She also went through the struggles of juggling motherhood and entrepreneurship. She adds, “So now that I’ve been able to find success in business, I want other women to see and know *na kaya din nilang tumayo* (they can do it themselves).”

Initially, the club was simply one facet of her company’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts. But because of how it could potentially impact the lives of women in the city, she expanded its reach and scope. Partnering with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and local government units (LGUs) to host seminars and workshops, the club launched sessions about discovering one’s self, personality development, confidence building, communication skills enhancement, and even practical tips for personal grooming.

Duico continues, “I started with these because I discovered that many single moms are victims of



abandonment and abuse, and the lingering effects of these issues have to be addressed. You feel broken, your confidence eroded. No one wants to be a single mom. I’m sure all of them dreamed of having the perfect, complete family, but it’s not possible. So, I wanted to address the emotional issues first and hosted the first personality development seminar at Green Sun for them early this year.”

After dealing with these issues, Duico is now laying down the foundation for entrepreneurial skills through training programs involving modules that will help the women earn their keep. Some of these livelihood training programs are soap-making and baking, businesses that they can do at home, so that they can be with their family while providing for them.

“We started these training programs in Marikina because that’s my home, that’s where I grew up and where my business and plant are located. I want to give back to the community that has been very supportive to me and my company. Charity starts at home *di ba?*” Duico remarks. “I partnered with the local government of Marikina and reached out to the head of DTI and TESDA in the city.



Duico works tirelessly in not only building her beauty empire, but also in helping other single moms and women.

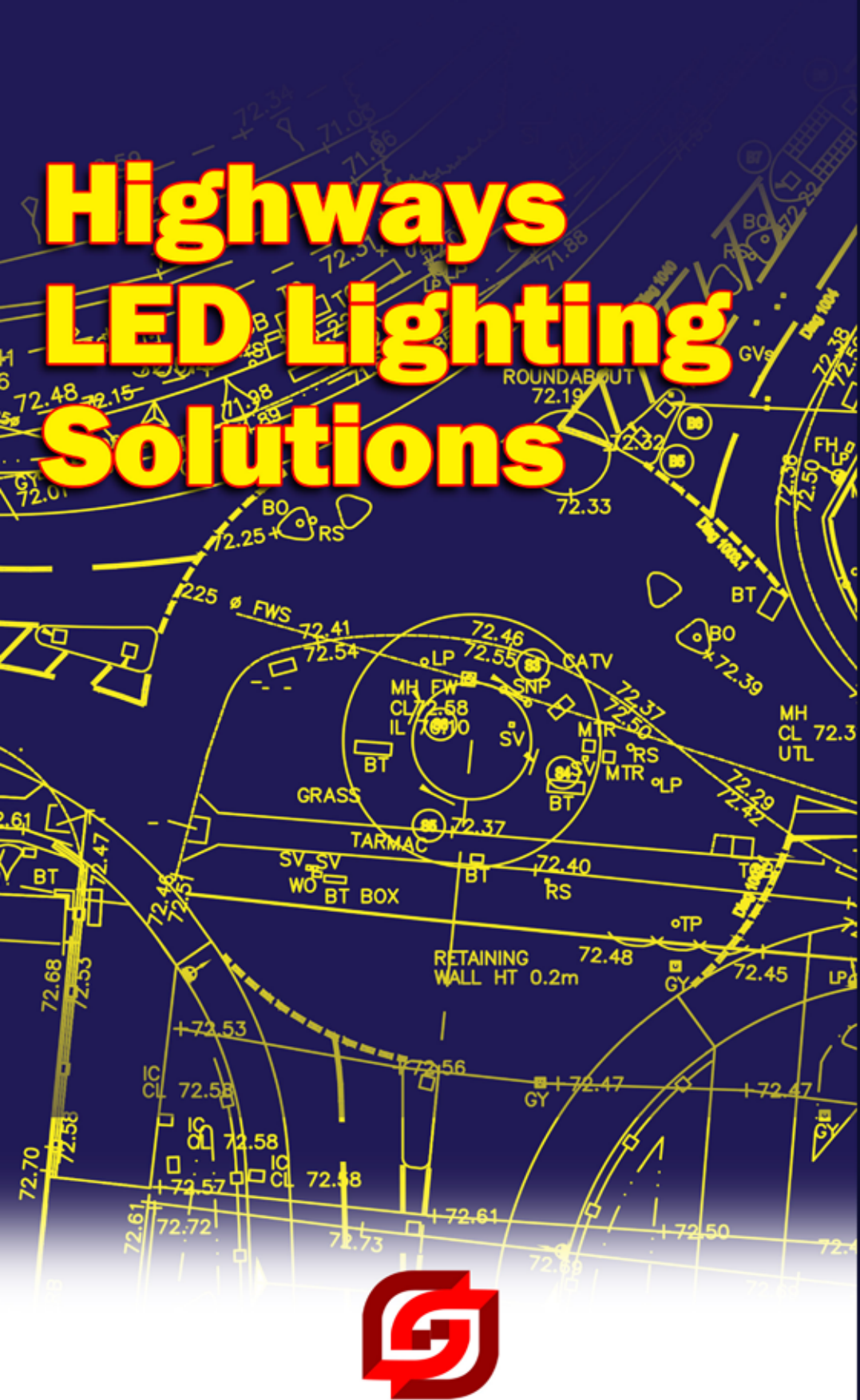
Soon, we will be hosting a class for 100 single moms, focusing on entrepreneurship. Marikina has a list of single moms who are registered so that helps us greatly in contacting them.”

But Duico’s efforts at helping women do not stop there. From Marikina, she has had initial talks with the local governments of Quezon City and Cainta to expand the program to these cities, too. Likewise, as part of the club’s “Elevating Womanity campaign,” she has given talks to students of the Philippine Science High School regarding gender sensitivity and gender discrimination, an advocacy which she champions in line with enabling women.

On a larger scale, Duico emphasizes, “The Glupa Women’s Club aims to empower and bring women together. My vision is to have different chapters in different regions across the country, serving women even in the far-flung areas. I also want to go global, especially helping OFWs who are single moms. They dream of returning to the country, but for economic reasons, they can’t. So we want to provide them with the skills and opportunities for them to succeed here as well.”

For more information and details about joining the club, check out Glupa Women’s Club on Facebook and Instagram. 📱



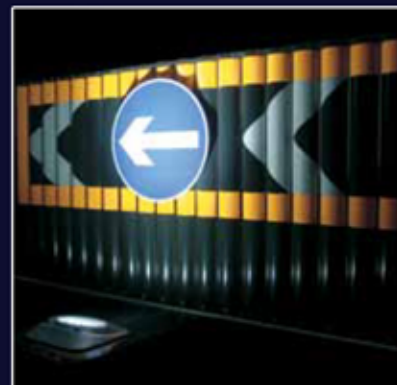


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FEATURES

WOMAN UP!

Mayor Fe “Bubut” Brondial scales new heights as the lady chief of the Municipality of Socorro, Oriental Mindoro and as National President of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines

BY LAKAMBINI BAUTISTA
PHOTOS BY ROMEO PERALTA, JR.
HAIR & MAKEUP BY JESSE LLOYD HABLA RAMOS

It takes a certain kind of person to lead other leaders. Some would probably wonder why a lady from a humble countryside in Mindoro was elected to become National President of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP). Perhaps it’s because of her long, impressive record as a public servant. Or perhaps because of her strong alliance with the president. It turns out, both are true.

“Proud *ako kasi pinagkatiwalaan ako ng mga mayors*. (I’m proud because the mayors have given me their trust),” says Socorro, Oriental Mindoro Mayor Maria Fe “Bubut” Villar Brondial, who was sworn in last October 2016. She was elected unopposed by 66 out of the country’s 82 LMP Chapter Presidents, who were present at the event.

66

As LMP’s National President, I take the lead in raising the concerns of the mayors of the different municipalities, making sure that these are known to our president, the Senate, and the Congress.

According to Felix Catarata, the LMP Secretariat, “The mayors believe that a National President must be able to speak to the President of the Republic in order to articulate the concerns of the mayors.” President Rodrigo Duterte has also expressed his wishes for Mayor Bubut to lead LMP. “The LMP, although independent and not a government agency, almost always abides by the wishes of the President. It has been the tradition, and Mayor Bubut’s case was no exemption,” says Catarata.

In addition, Mayor Bubut “is a consultative and consensual leader. Her ability to get the consensus of the mayors on issues, and her capacity to listen to their concerns are qualities that endear her to the mayors,” Catarata explains.

LMP TAKES THE LEAD

According to its vision statement, LMP was created “to provide the municipalities, through the mayors, with relevant and adaptive best practices, linkages with pertinent international and local organizations, capacity development, research, and advocacy services.”

On the occasion of Socorro’s 55th founding anniversary, Mayor Bubut had the opportunity to share with her constituents what’s keeping her busy. “*Bilang LMP National President, tayong siyang nangunguna upang mabigyan ng pansin ng ating presidente, President Rodrigo Duterte, ng Senado, at maging ng Kamara, ang mga hinaing ng mga alkalde ng iba’t ibang munisipyo ng ating bansa*. (As LMP’s National President, I take





Socorro's Municipal Hall

the lead in raising the concerns of the mayors of the different municipalities, making sure that these are known to our president, the Senate, and the Congress).”

She also shared with the Socorreños some of their past activities in LMP. These include holding general assemblies and cluster conferences, where issues like federalism, agriculture, climate change, Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA), and peace and order were tackled; providing assistance to the *bakwits* of Marawi; facilitating a dialogue with the policemen and mayors of Cagayan de Oro to discuss the safety and security of other mayors; and forging partnerships with the Chinese General Hospital and Philippine College of Surgeons in order to provide medical services for the different municipalities.



Larcy Villar, who has been her private secretary and close aide for many years now, attests to Mayor Bubut's compassion to help the underprivileged.



Vice Mayor Roy de Claro

“We’d like to develop our own Singapore here in Oriental Mindoro. We’re planning to put solar lamps and ornamental plants along the national highway.”
—Vice Mayor Roy de Claro



In a meeting with President Duterte, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Eduardo M. Año and Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, brought up two pressing issues: security and safety of the mayors, and federalism. “LMP believes genuine autonomy can only be had if the country adopts a federal system of government,” Catarata points out.

FROM MUSE TO MAYOR

Mayor Bubut may come across as unassuming but she is no stranger to the field of politics. For one, she comes from a family of politicians—the current governor and congressman, Alfonso Umali Jr. and Reynaldo V. Umali of Mindoro Oriental, are her first cousins. “*Siguro nasa dugo na namin ang pulitika. Ang pangarap ko lang sana ay mag-muse sa barangay e, pero pinalad na maging*





I want to provide the people of Socorro with all that they need—clean water, farm-to-market roads, to get their produce to the markets faster, and sources of livelihood.

mayor (Politics runs in our blood. I only wanted to become a *barangay* muse, but I got lucky and was voted to become mayor),” she jokes, her proud Batangueño accent evident.

At 28, she became mayor of Socorro, the first government seat she has decided to take on. “My brother was then *barangay* captain. So it was easy for me to say yes [to run as mayor]. I didn’t realize I could win,” she quips. She has served three consecutive terms as mayor of Socorro (1998-2007), and was again re-elected in 2016, proving that she is well loved by the people.

Larcy Villar, who has been her private secretary and close aide for many years now, attests to her endearing qualities. “*Napakabait niya at down-to-earth. Hindi sya humihindi sa lahat ng nahingi ng tulong sa kanya. Kung wala siya sa kanyang opisina at ako ang naiiwan, ang bilin niya sa akin: ‘Wag mong pauwiin ang mga tao’ng luhaan, kahit paano bibigyan mo’* (She’s kind-hearted and down to earth. She doesn’t turn down those who ask for her help. If she’s not in her office, she would tell me to still give and to not let them go home brokenhearted.)”

Mayor Bubut, who was born and raised in Mindoro, is a woman of the people. We have witnessed it ourselves when we visited Socorro during the town’s Pakapya Agtike Festival—she was personally entertaining the guests and talking to the townsfolk. “*Malapit siya sa mga tao. Maski mga Mangyan hinahalikan niya. Lahat kinakausap.* (She is close to the Socorreños. She would kiss even the Mangyans. She talks to everyone),” says Villar, who is also her first cousin.

But then again, beneath her gentle and charming personality is a driven and strong leader, says Villar. She’s the type who would never let the day go by without resolving a problem. Vice Mayor Roy de Claro affirms, “She’s not strict, she’s understanding and considerate like a mother. But when she needs to be strict, she can make people follow her orders.”

MORE PLANS AHEAD

On her fourth term as mayor, Mayor Bubut wants to continue her projects and make way for a beautifully progressive and tourist-friendly municipality. “I want to provide the people of Socorro with all that they need—clean water, farm-to-market roads to get their produce to the markets faster, and sources of livelihood,” she says.

She is looking forward to building a boardwalk in Naujan Lake, to help boost tourism and provide jobs for the people of Socorro.

In support of the farmers, the local government provides seeds and fertilizer. “Like Davao, we have durian, rambutan, lanzones. We’ve got the best bananas here!” she says with pride.

Vice Mayor de Claro says they are now focusing on infrastructure development and beautification. “We’d like to develop our own Singapore here in Oriental Mindoro. We’re planning to put solar lamps and ornamental plants along the national highway,” he shares.

The municipality is currently building four regional evacuation centers, and will soon erect a two-story building that will become Socorro Community College. “Our goal is for the school to operate by SY 2019-2020,” she says.

In the health department, we were told that Socorro now has two doctors to the barrio.



The local government has also increased its allotment for free medicines. “We have a birthing clinic and an ambulance,” adds the vice mayor.

The indigenous people are not left behind, as Mayor Bubut has provided them with trainings on food processing and the like. She likewise helps by promoting their products (tribal weaves) outside Mindoro.

The 2017 Seal of Good Governance Award bestowed by the DILG on Socorro symbolizes the municipality’s journey towards good local governance. Thus, it is Mayor Bubut’s earnest goal to uphold the standards of transparency, integrity, and service delivery. ■



Mayor Bubut celebrates the Pakapya Agtike festival with the townfolks

RIDING OUT THE STORM

Recovering from past tragedies, the Municipality of Socorro in Oriental Mindoro is moving forward, fueled by stronger faith in its government and its people

BY LAKAMBINI BAUTISTA
PHOTOS BY ROMEO PERALTA, JR. &
TOURISM OFFICE OF SOCORRO, MINDORO

The Municipality of Socorro has the most poetic view of Naujan lake from among the four municipalities surrounding this body of water.

Last June 22, on the day of its 55th founding anniversary, the Municipality of Socorro in Oriental Mindoro shone brightly in vibrant colors to signal the start of its month-long festivities. Not minding the scorching heat of the midday sun, the townsfolk gathered at the open space of Fortuna National High School to witness the annual *Pakapya Agtike* Festival. Elementary and high school students donned the most colorful costumes, as they danced to the rhythmic sound of drums.

Cheerfully watching from the makeshift stage with other local officials, parents, and teachers was the town's proud mayor, Fe "Bubut" Brondial, clad in a black top and *ramit*, a handwoven cloth woven by the Mangyan. She was so happy with the efforts that everyone had devoted into the festival that she gave a cash prize of P100,000 and pledged to build two two-story buildings to the winning public schools (one for elementary, one for secondary).

The celebration is, after all, not all frills. The performances, in fact, are so meaningful as these depict Socorreños' life stories—both triumphs and tragedies.



RISING FROM THE ASHES

On March 19, 2015, a massive fire devoured the one-hectare Socorro Public Market, damaging all its 15 buildings and 291 market stalls. Then in December 15, 2015, typhoon Nona devastated the whole province, affecting 87% of the barangays in Oriental Mindoro, including Socorro. The following year, typhoon Nina ravaged the province. Both storms inflicted enormous damage to the town’s agriculture—crops, livestock, and fisheries.

An agricultural land with a total land area of 19,535.43 hectares, Socorro is considered as a food basket of the province of Oriental Mindoro. Its crops include rice, peanut, vegetables, root crops, and coconut. Citrus products like camalansi, dalandan, and pomelo are abundant, as well as fruits like mango, banana, lanzones, and rambutan.

“Our vegetable crops were damaged, and our fruit trees were knocked down during those storms,” remembers Engineer Manuel Perez Delika, the town’s municipal planning and development coordinator. But he is happy to note that Socorro has been recovering well.

According to data from the office of the Municipal Planning and Development Office, rice production for 2017 has totaled to 22,382.75 metric tons, which generated

an annual gross value of Php348 million. In terms of fruit crop/permanent crop, coconut has the highest hectareage with 2,262.57 hectares planted and a production of 7,640.58 metric tons. Although banana ranked second with 2,145.9 hectares, it has the highest volume of production with 18,853.98 metric tons. This is attributed to the frequency of the harvest cycle. Production of other fruit tree species has become unpredictable due to seasonality and climate change.

“*Ang unang nakabawi ay ang saging* (Bananas are the first to recover). In terms of quality control, our bananas now rank second to Davao. Ours are grown organically, we don’t use fertilizers,” notes Engr. Delika. (Check out our story on Mikko Banana Crackers, one of the municipality’s homegrown enterprises, on page xx.)

Socorro’s root crops stood strong amidst the calamities, so its *camote* (sweet potato) and *ube* (purple yam) continue to find their way to the markets in Manila. Farmers in Socorro are hoping typhoons would spare them so that their rambutan, durian, lanzones, and mangosteen can once more yield more fruits.

As for the public market, some of its merchants are still stationed in the peripheral roads, but Engr. Delika said they are hoping everything goes back to normal by December.

TAPPING TOURISM POTENTIALS

Socorro is not only blessed with rich agricultural lands; five of its barangays also have a total of 11.3-km coastline access to Naujan Lake, the fifth largest lake in the country. The lake is picturesquely seen from barangay Happy Valley and the adjoining barangays Pasi I, Pasi II, Batong Dalig, Mabuhay II, and Lapog. It is for this reason that the lake is considered the biggest tourist potential of the municipality.

Inspired by Singapore’s boardwalks, the local government of Socorro also has a plan to build one at the Naujan Lake National Park, where people can walk and ride their bikes along the bicycle lane; this way, more people can appreciate its beauty. “Naujan Lake is part of the East Asian-Austrasian Flyway for migratory birds, so it’s perfect for birdwatching. The birds come here around October and leave in February,” Engr. Delika informs us.

Aside from birdwatching, they also plan to offer activities such as kayaking, dragon boating, and conventional fishing—bottom line is, their tourist attractions have to preserve the natural beauty of the lake. The park, covering 21,655 hectares, was proclaimed a Protected Area in 1968 by virtue of Proc. No. 335.

Petra’s Garden Resort



“The infrastructure design of the proposed boardwalk is being finalized by the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise and Zone Authority (TIEZA). The president promised that he will visit us here, [and we hope it happens soon],” he quips. They are hoping their P250M budget proposal will get approved. “Mayor [Bubut Brondial] wants to start the first phase of development before her first term ends in 2019,” he adds.

NURTURING NATURE

Socorro’s tourism focal person, Rodel Cruzado, admits that their town’s tourism development efforts have yet to work full-blast, but they have already been accommodating seasonal excursionists, which peak during Holy Week and Christmas.

Fortuna Tropical Upland Resort, for instance, offers a wide array of eco-tourism attractions—from its pristine waters to its hidden waterfalls

with a long hanging bridge. It provides thrilling adventures such as river trekking, kayaking, canyoneering, nature tripping, and fishing.

Accommodations are offered via the privately owned lodging located at the town proper, namely the Casa del Rio in Pula River, City of Hearts in Taguican, Petra’s Garden in Zone II, Poblacion, and Kaffe de Oro Hotel and Restaurant.

The indigenous groups (Mangyan) are now equipped with knowledge on sanitation so they can properly accommodate visiting tourists. When Cruzado was still a member of the Sangguniang Bayan, one of the ordinances they had passed was prohibiting the encroachment of non-indigenous people into the declared indigenous areas. Engr. Delika also adds that the indigenous peoples are now provided with toilets and solar power.

Much has changed over the past five decades since Socorro became a town. But one thing is for sure, the administration of Mayor Bubut and the Socorreños have been conscientiously fulfilling their mission statement, which is “to develop and sustain the agri-industrial and tourism potential of the Municipality of Socorro, to build and establish infrastructures while promoting environmental protection, healthy lifestyle, and empowerment of its people.” From the looks of it, Socorro is on its way there.■

An artist’s rendition of the proposed construction of boardwalk and bicycle lane from Pasi I to Sto. Domingo.



The Socorreños have been fulfilling their mission statement - “to develop and sustain the agri-industrial and tourism potential of the Municipality of Socorro, to build and establish infrastructures while promoting environmental protection, healthy lifestyle, and empowerment of its people.”



Casa del Rio, an adventure theme resort located in Barangay Fortuna provides a panoramic view of Pula river and their famous hanging bridge.



MISSION MEGALOPOLIS

From being the country's culinary capital, Pampanga is now cultivating its maximum potential via the Megalopolis Development Plan



Mention the word “Pampanga” and these are the images that usually come up—*sisig*, *morcon*, *menudo*, *caldereta*, *estofado*, *embotido*, *asado*, *lengua*, *lechon*, *chicharon*, *afritada*, *bringhi* (*paella*), *taba ng talangka* (crab fat), *tocino*, and *longganisa*.

No surprise that food is top of mind. After all, Pampanga is considered to be the country's culinary capital. As a province blessed with good arable soil, access to waterways, an abundance of game, and generations of cooks trained in both local and western cuisine, Pampanga boasts of both the familiar and the unusual. Take for example, the selections at Matam Ih restaurant. *Matam-Ih*, which means “delicious” in an Aeta dialect, serves authentic Kapampangan favorites like *kare-kare*, *bekugan babi* (pork *binagoongan*), *buro* (fried hito, mustasa leaves, and fermented rice and freshwater fish or shrimp), and *adobong babi* (pork adobo). But those who want to try something more exotic can bite into *pritong adobong camarú* (fried mole crickets) and *betute tugak* (fried stuffed native frog).

GO-TO DESTINATIONS

After stuffing their tummies with all those goodies, visitors to Pampanga can walk off the heaviness by visiting some of the province's top destinations.

Take it cool and slow at the Clark Museum. Featured here are exhibits showcasing “the Filipino spirit of bravery, industry, and ingenuity of a nation's sovereign will, running through a narrative across four galleries.” The newly-



renovated museum also highlights a collection of artifacts, replicas, dioramas, old photographs, murals, and interactive displays related to the history of Clark, Pampanga.

Pick up the pace at Puning Hot Spring, a wellness and spa facility “that was developed to match the surrounding landscape.” Inspired by Aeta culture, visitors to Puning can explore an Aeta village and interact with the Aetas who live nearby.

Next up could be Pradera Verde, which is best suited for the more sporty ones who also have a sense of adventure. Located in Lubao, Pampanga, its main attractions are golf, wakeboarding, and hot air balloon rides.

Now, what trip is complete without our all-time favorite activity? What else but shopping! Pampanga offers lots of opportunities to shop, what with plenty of malls and retail outlets like the ubiquitous SM malls in Clark, Angeles; San Fernando; and Telabastagan in MacArthur Highway; the Marquee Mall in Angeles; Robinsons Starmills in San Fernando; and the Nepo Mall in Angeles.

But beyond all these attractions, Pampanga is revving up for more growth and development.



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THE MASTER PLAN

In 2016, former President now Second District Representative Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Governor Lilia Pineda, along with the private sector led by the Pampanga Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc. commissioned renowned urban planner Architect Felino “Jun” Palafox, Jr. to formulate a plan that will realize the maximum potential of Pampanga. Called the Pampanga Megalopolis Development Plan, the project foresees Pampanga to be a major urban growth center by 2020.

The plan is ambitious in its comprehensive scope. First of all, the Pampanga Megalopolis plan will sort the towns and cities of Pampanga into clusters, with particular areas becoming research, technology, and training centers for agriculture,

aquaculture food processing, airport logistics hub, central business district, economic zone, government center, and eco-tourism. These clusters have been specifically classified into four building blocks: the airport-driven aerotropolis (Angeles City, Mabalacat City, City of San Fernando, and Mexico town); the agriculture-driven agropolis (Lubao, Guagua, Sta. Rita, San Luis, San Simon, Sto. Tomas, and Magalang towns); the water-driven aquapolis (Sasmuan, Minalin, Macabebe, Masantol, and Lubao towns); and the ecology-driven ecopolis cluster (Arayat, Candaba, Floridablanca, and Porac towns).

With each cluster highlighting its own features, strengths, and advantages, the goal is to encourage tourism activity in the areas, as well as possible migration into the communities.

Second, the Megalopolis plan hopes to improve transportation and road infrastructure in the province. The Megalopolis is within the so-called Golden Triangle, which includes Subic, Clark, and San Fernando City, and they are within the transportation corridors. Several projects have already been identified, like the Sasmuan-Masantol viaduct, Arayat-Magalang road, Angeles-Porac-Floridablanca road, Lubao Bypass road, Masantol-Macabebe-Apalit-San Simon-San Luis-Arayat road, Angeles Bypass road, and the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway quarry road.

There are also plans to decongest traffic along MacArthur Highway and improve mass transportation service via a bus rapid transport, which includes a feeder loop system; intermodal stations have also been recommended.

Third, the Megalopolis plan includes a development framework strategy that packages Pampanga’s immense diversity to advance its tourism sector. This includes creating a unique brand for the province, which will enhance its market potentials leading to easy-attraction of tourists and investors, as well.

Fourth, to address the needs of a province that is prone to flooding, a disaster resilience and flood control project program will also be created to minimize the risks of natural hazards, which would protect the province’s industries and economic interests, as well as the health, well-being, and quality of life of Kapampangans. Structural and

non-structural projects, along with proper solid waste management programs, were recommended to ensure that such natural hazards cannot cause serious disruption on the province’s growth and development.

Fifth, an integrated water resources and supply planning was also included in the Pampanga Megalopolis plan. The development of water retaining ponds and reservoirs was proposed to maximize the significant surface water supply of the province. Local governments are also urged to establish water treatment plants to be able to supply clean and potable water that may be used for domestic and industrial purposes.

Lastly, the prominent Pampanga Growth Triangle is expected to serve as an imperative channel to jumpstart the proposed programs and projects under the Megalopolis plan.

Bounded by major thoroughfares namely Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway, North Luzon Expressway, Jose Abad Santos Avenue and MacArthur Highway, the Growth Triangle will also be a point of convergence for the three big and developing cities of San Fernando, Mabalacat, and Angeles. The Growth Triangle also identified Priority Investment Areas

characterized as poblacions, which will serve as a junction for major government and community establishments.

With a budget of at least P20 billion to realize all proposed programs and projects, the Megalopolis Plan not only aims to usher Pampanga into a new period of progress, but also inspire other regions to envision brighter futures founded on their potentials. ■



CEBU: FOR BUSINESS AND LEISURE

Foreign and local businesses alike are taking a second look at the Queen City of the South as a good location to set up trade and commerce

BY RHODA OSALVO

PHOTOS BY MEL CORTEZ
AND BERNARD SUPETLAN

Cebu has a lot going for itself lately. Next to Boracay, it remains the choice of international tourists for leisure. And why not? What with the Duterte administration's big-ticket infrastructure projects lined up for the island province—two major bridges, an expressway, Mactan International airport's expansion, and the bus or train system. With these developments, expect a transformation in this part of Visayas. Surely, for business or for leisure, all things point to Cebu as the place to be.

A TOURIST DESTINATION

With Boracay, temporarily closing its doors for tourists, many are diverting their vacations to Cebu and for good reason. The island province is rich in natural and man-made wonders—a true feast for the senses. Its main island and its smaller isles are surrounded by fine and white sand and clear blue waters.

The Magellan's Cross is housed in the capital as a reminder of the island's historical significance. It dates back to 1521 when Ferdinand Magellan arrived the Philippines, naming it after Spain's King Philip II, and baptizing natives into the Catholic faith. Many old churches are found in Cebu, the oldest of which is the Basilica del Sto. Niño in Metro Cebu.

In 2021, the country will celebrate Filipinas *Quincentenario*—the Catholic Church's 500th anniversary in the Philippines. Cebu is already gearing up for this momentous event to commemorate Magellan's landing. Speaking at the Asia CEO Forum in June, Cebu City Mayor Tommy Osmeña revealed that Cebu will be the main venue where the King of Spain and the Pope are invited to attend. Millions of local and international tourists are expected to witness this celebration.

The island province offers a diverse host of activities from the religious (like the *Sinulog*, a street dance festival in honor of Sto. Niño) to the adventurous (like walking on top of a building in the metropolis and the unique opportunity of swimming with whale sharks or "butanding" in Oslob).

Mayor Tommy Osmeña joked, "I want to invite you to Sinulog, the biggest festivity in the country but we can no longer accommodate you. We're always full. We're fully booked six months in advance." It's true. Millions—foreigners and locals alike—gather to participate in the annual colorful magnificence of a festival that commemorates the time when Catholicism was introduced to Cebuanos and eventually spread to the rest of the archipelago.

When it comes to attracting tourists, the country certainly has a lot to learn from Cebu. Aside from its central location, what makes the island attractive to tourists? Mayor Osmeña

said, "Visayas has several islands and that sells. It's important to know your customers. Know what they like. The Japanese, for example, are not into our culture. They come here for sightseeing and to take selfies. It's the Australians and Europeans who seek culture and history. They like to buy local artworks to take back home with them."

Dishing out his most important tourism advice, Mayor Osmeña said: "Take care of the locals and the foreigners will follow. Tourists come to discover a local experience. People are not after the place, they want to mix with the crowd—eat what they eat, do what they do." And one can't help but agree as Sinulog comes to mind.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

At the same forum, Cindy Tan Jarabata, CEO and President of Tajara Leisure and Hospitality Group, confirmed through her presentation how people nowadays mix business and leisure during travels, thus the birth of the word *bleisure*,



Capitanillo Islet



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9a/Sinulog_2014_14.JPG

wherein executives or employees schedule their family trips before or after a conference or work assignment in a certain place.

Jarabata said that many prefer Cebu as a business address because of its tropical feel and the idea of hitting the beach after office hours. Definitely a good and inspiring mental image, especially for those sick and tired of the corporate setting. What makes this more inviting is the news of several mega infrastructure projects underway for the island province.

Take care of the locals and the foreigners will follow. Tourists come to discover a local experience. People are not after the place, they want to mix with the crowd – eat what they eat, do what they do.



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/53/Sinulog_2014_10.JPG

BIG TICKET INFRASTRUCTURE

Many of the projects under the Duterte administration's Build, Build, Build program will be implemented in this part of Visayas. These are the Metro Cebu Expressway linking Danao City and Naga City, the Mactan-Cebu International Airport's Terminal 2, the Cebu International Container Port (CICP), and the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or the Light Railway Transit (LRT)—all to address mobility, ease of travel of people, and delivery of goods in the area.

The new Terminal 2—the first resort-themed gateway to the world which has wood panel designs showcasing local artistry and craftsmanship—opened on June 7. The renowned Cebuano furniture maker Kenneth Cobonpue and Filipino designer Budji Layug were behind the

terminal's timber arches and wave-like roof. President Rodrigo Duterte himself led the inauguration rites.

Like any Cebuano, Cebu City Mayor Tommy Osmeña beams with pride when referring to the new airport, saying, "It's the best airport in the world for me. It's got great design. No other airport has wood panels and that resort-like feel." With more daily flights to different key cities starting last July, Cebu is expected to attract more tourists and businessmen.

The BRT, though approved by NEDA for implementation, is on hold pending DOTr's review. In the previous month's Asia CEO Forum, Transport Chief Arthur Tugade admitted his objection to giving dedicated lanes to BRT given Cebu City's narrow roads. His team is reviewing a possible train system and the use of cable car. In his speech, the President hinted on a possible monorail or an LRT instead.

The new international container port project worth P9.2 billion is meant to increase the container yard capacity of Cebu International Port with additional 20-foot equivalent unit (TEU).

In a matter of years, expect these infrastructure projects to transform the landscape of Cebu. With better mobility in the area, it will surely attract more businesses which translate to progress and prosperity for the people. This, in turn, encourages more investments to come in and so the cycle of success continues. Speaking of investments, the mayor confirmed that one of the Filipino business conglomerates, JG Summit, will be building a huge convention center in the city. Based on news reports, JG Summit is eyeing the construction of a resort and casino in the South Road Properties, Cebu's reclaimed area. PAGCOR Chairman Andrea Domingo confirmed early this year that Universal Hotels and Resorts Incorporated, JG Summit's affiliate, has been issued a license to operate the casino which is slated to open in 2022.

INVESTOR-FRIENDLY TAG

Because of its infrastructure, residential projects, high level of urbanization, stable internet connection, and ample supply of skilled graduates, the Queen City has attracted IT-BPO companies to open shop there for several years now. Its chief executive said, "There are now 120,000 call center employees in the city because Cebuanos speak better English (than Manileños)."

The city remains one of 2017 Tholons Top Outsourcing Destinations; ranked 12th, with Metro Manila being fourth. It is noted though that both cities slipped from eighth and second in the previous year, respectively. For Cebu, the decline is blamed

on heavy traffic in the area and slow internet connection, among others. Tholons is a London-based consulting firm that performs the annual survey.

Even before Dutertenomics, Cebu City has been enjoying the bulk of new businesses in the country and not just from the BPO sector. Claire Cabalda, Cebu City's head of the Business Permit and Licensing Office, revealed that as of June of this year, the city has accepted the registration of 3,357 new business ventures. Last year, 6,549 companies started operations, 4,837 in 2016, and 5,107 in 2015. These numbers show steady growth in the flow of investments in the city.

Pitching to business owners and decision makers, Mayor Osmeña made the following points clear to his audience. First, it is a good time to invest in hotels in Cebu and anywhere in the country. Second, they have made it easy for businessmen to open shop. The mayor said, "We, in Cebu, are equipped to help investors start their businesses. We have

staff dedicated to help you." The city has a dedicated lane for new applicants. Third, get into a market niche. He added, "There are certain niches that are not yet addressed. Just come to us and I'll tell you." And gave away his mobile number, which is also listed on his Facebook page.

In the latest available World Bank study dated 2011, Cebu City was ranked seventh among



Cebu City Mayor Tommy Osmeña



DUTERTE ADMINISTRATION'S INFRA PROJECTS FOR CEBU

5.5-km Cebu-Negros Link Bridge
24.5 km Cebu-Bohol Bridge
73.75-km Metro Cebu Expressway that will connect Danao City up north to Naga City down south
Mactan-Cebu International Airport Terminal 2
Cebu International Container Port



Oslob Whale Shark. Photo by Jerome King



Badian Island Resort

the top Philippine 25 cities when it comes to ease of starting business. It is notable that back then, a new business applicant had to go through 15 steps and can start operation only within 31 days.

Now under Osmeña's term, the procedure is finished in eight steps and business can start as soon as tax payment certificate is issued (Step 5) as this serves as temporary permit. Inspections and compliance to regulatory requirements will follow before issuance of final business permit. One of the speakers at the CEO event, Cindy Tan Jarabata, expressed satisfaction in doing business in the southern city compared to other LGUs in the country.

Based on the World Bank study in 2017, a new applicant can start business in the Philippines after 28 days. In New Zealand, one can operate in a day; and in Singapore, three days. No wonder New Zealand and Singapore rank first and second among the 190 countries surveyed while the Philippines is in the 113th spot.

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS ACT

In the latest World Bank study on Ease of Doing Business, the Philippines slipped several notches from its former 99th rank, prompting the government to find ways to enhance its business competitiveness. Its solution: RA 11032 or the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Act of 2018 signed by President Rodrigo Duterte this May. It's an amendment to the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 meant to address the perennial red tape in the government.

The business community from different parts of the

Claire Cabalda, Cebu City's head of the Business Permit and Licensing Office, revealed that as of June of this year, the city has accepted the registration of 3,357 new business ventures. Last year, 6,549 companies started operations, 4,837 in 2016, and 5,107 in 2015.



Marcelo Fernan Bridge

country including those in Cebu agreed that it is a positive development. But while there are business leaders who are hopeful that this law will solve the bureaucratic red tape that has been hounding government agencies, some are not convinced saying the law has no teeth to ensure its implementation. In the south, it seems unlikely that the Queen City will not execute the mandate of automation and limiting signatories on licenses and permits, among others, when it has already designed faster processes in securing a business application to encourage more businesses in. But as with new developments, only time can tell if such will be the case. ■

Steps in Securing a Business Permit for New Applicants in Cebu City

1. Register business name in DTI or SEC, as the case maybe
2. Secure Barangay Clearance
3. Fill-up Application Form
4. Assessment and Pay
5. Issuance of Tax Payment Certificate
This serves as temporary permit, hence business owners can start their operations. Inspection and compliance with other regulatory requirements to follow.
6. Wait for the inspection of the Joint Inspection Team (JIT)
7. Comply with all the regulatory requirements such as:
 - * Joint Inspection Team Report
 - * CCENRO Certificate
 - * Sanitary Permit
 - * Contract of Lease (if renting); Tax Declaration (if owned)
 - * Fire Safety Inspection Certificate
 - * Community Tax Certificate of the business and its employees
 - * Occupational Permit of Employees
 - * Other requirements as may be required by the Joint Inspection Team and/or Verifier depending on the nature of the business.
8. Issuance of Final Business Permit

Humble does it

Labo, Camarines Norte Mayor Joseph Villaverde Ascutia shares his inspiring journey of rising above poverty and building an orderly and progressive municipality

BY JOYCE REYES-AGUILA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RENJIE TOLENTINO

I told myself that if I did not contribute towards an orderly society, I did not have any right to complain, especially when I get older.



Born last in a brood of 10 children to farmer Maximino Ascutia and housewife Anita Lagatuz-Villaverde, Mayor Joseph Villaverde Ascutia confesses to have grown up experiencing the hardships of poverty. The decision was made early on that three of the kids would be sent to school by the rest who would work to make it happen—including a brother who was employed as a security guard and a sister who sewed at a factory.

In Manila, five of the siblings pitched in to pay for an apartment in Kamuning, Quezon City. Again, the goal was to support the three scholars—who eventually all graduated from college. One is now a plant pathologist at the University of the Philippines. Another is a mechanical engineer. The other family scholar completed his Electrical Engineering studies, and is now on his second term as mayor of Labo, Camarines Norte.

“We believed that we had to do something to change our lives,” says Mayor Ascutia. “If we did not do all of that, maybe we would still be poor until now. I told myself I did not want to be remain poor. I committed to finishing school because it was the only key for me to able to change my life. I did just that and finished elementary and high school in Bicol where I grew up.”





By 2017, we generated P30 million—more than double the income when I started. We accomplished this simply by focusing on collecting income that is really due the local government. I expect that this year, we will be able to collect P35 million in total. Before my current term ends, I hope we can generate P50 million for the municipality.



PASSION TO SERVE

The Far Eastern University alumnus then embarked on a seven-year stretch as a sales engineer. Along the way, he learned the tricks of the trade—establishing a network as he met clients. He eventually opened his own company in 1992 with P400,000 in capital from his business commissions and sales from his first car.

Presently, Mayor Ascutia has three businesses. One is a trading company that imports industrial equipment from countries like Germany, Switzerland, and the US, and locally distributes these to multinational companies that include Unilever, San Miguel Corporation, and Universal Robina Corporation. With the help of his daughter, he also runs a construction firm, and a freight and forwarding company.

Business travels caused him to wonder why his country could not be as beautiful as the places he visited. “For more than 10 years of traveling to places like Germany, Singapore, and Switzerland, I kept asking myself this,” shares the mayor to *LEAGUE* Magazine. “I told myself that if I do not contribute towards an orderly society, I do not have any right to complain, especially when I get older. What gave me the right to complain if I did not do anything to better society?”

“So out of the comfort of my life here in Metro Manila, I went back to my hometown. I was probably out of my mind,” he shares with a laugh. “I first ran for mayor in 2010 and lost. I tried again in 2013 and won. And I ran again three years later and got reelected.”

His new post meant being away from his Manila-based wife Alicia, a pediatrician, and their two children, Ina, and Justine. Ascutia had less time to run his business, but the political newbie did not mind. “I do this for the love of my country, because of my passion to serve,” he explains. “I believe I have a comfortable life already. I do not need millions of pesos. As much as we need money, I feel it’s just trimmings. You will not be able to bring your money with you when you die.”

BUSINESS SENSE

As a candidate, the businessman ran against traditional politicians. “I’d ask people: Why not try someone who has experience running a business, and has been successful at it?” he shares. “I did not have any experience as a councilor or vice mayor. It frustrated me in the beginning to adjust to the process.”

The MBA degree holder from the Ateneo de Manila University applied his experience in business operations to run a municipality plagued with high poverty incidence, and challenged geographically by its difficult mountainous features. His administration has since focused on infrastructure to allow access to faraway communities and support his farm-to-market programs. To complement these efforts, Ascutia then introduced planting cacao as an intercrop to the local agricultural industry that previously mainly relied on coconut, copra, and rice.

The engineer-turned-politician also built a central transportation terminal to establish order in Labo. “Our municipality was disorderly,” he looks back. “There was no traffic system in place; transport groups and vehicles would park anywhere they wanted. It did not reflect favorably on city management if the system was like that. With the central station, we removed these transport groups from the streets. It has also generated income for the municipality.” The transportation hub has also benefited Labo’s ecotourism, which attracts tourists through its waterfalls, caves, rivers, and mountains.

Ascutia’s business sense has resulted in a significant income spike for his municipality. When he assumed office in 2013, Labo’s local income was only P14 million. “By 2017, we generated P30 million—more than double the income when I started,” he shares. “We accomplished this simply by focusing on collecting income that is really due the local government. I expect that this year, we will be able to collect P35 million in total. Before my current term ends, I hope we can generate P50 million for the municipality.”

STRONG POLITICAL WILL

Collecting money to benefit his constituents requires very strong political will from the mayor. Unlike traditional politicians who looked the other way when it came to tax evaders to favor their political plans, Ascutia compelled them to pay their dues diligently. “How will we be able to provide services to the people if we do not have money?” he asks. “It is unfair. They have beautiful houses and yet they do not pay taxes to the municipality.” He also imposed that rental fees due his office be paid on time.



Mayor Ascutia introduced planting cacao as an intercrop to the local agricultural industry that previously mainly relied on coconut, copra, and rice.



Mayor Ascutia’s business sense has resulted in a significant income spike for his municipality.



As a result, Labo is able to increase its budget for local disaster risk management, development funds, health projects, and have funds readily available for its employees' pay. And inspired by this experience, his administration prioritized building school infrastructure for secondary education.

"If every family had a child who can complete school, that is the beginning of change for them," he says. "If that graduate will have good employment, he or she will be able to help out compared to those who have nothing at all. This is what education can do." To date, Labo has opened three high schools. Students no longer have to quit school because they do not have money for transportation to go to schools in faraway places. "I personally saw students walk long distances of around five kilometers to go to school." If the school is in their community, at least they will be able to finish high school."

When given a pat on the back for all these, Ascucia says he is merely doing his job. "I cannot say what my accomplishments are," he explains. "I do not know if I really did accomplish things or not. I cannot quantify what I did. If people think that there is a difference, thank you."

He plans to run for a third term as mayor, despite inquiries if he plans to become a congressman or even governor. Ascucia believes he still has many things to do in his role, including creating greater order and instilling discipline. "I believe that if there is discipline, progress won't be far away. If people will see that their leaders are doing the right things, they will follow. The leader should be the example."

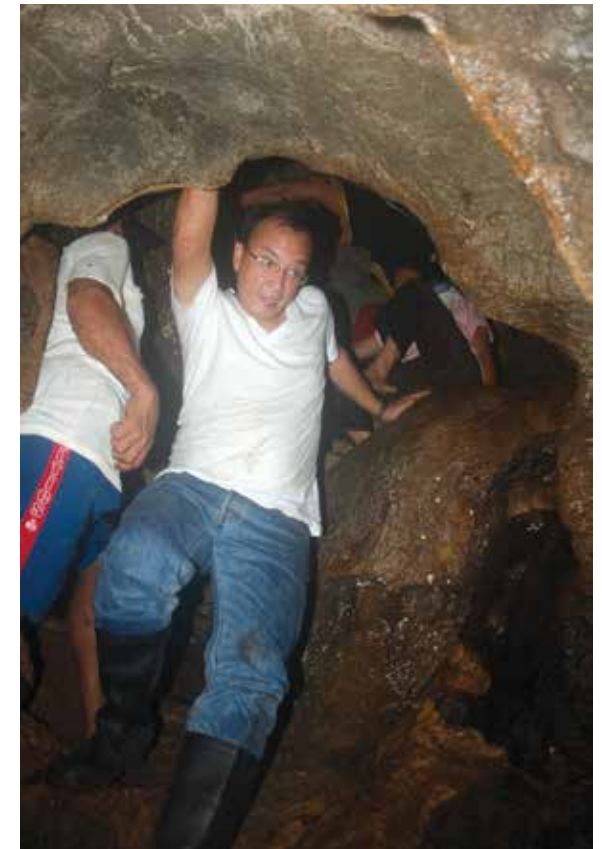
The mayor remains firmly against illegal logging. "I am not like some traditional politicians

who will look the other way. I had them arrested. We should instill in the minds of people that it is not allowed. Of course, I cannot police the entire 65,000 hectares. But they know there really is no blessing from the municipal mayor when it comes to cutting down trees illegally."

Ascucia does not believe in touting his projects. "The people will see that," he maintains. "If they think I did well, they will vote for me again. If they see otherwise, they will not vote for me. I am more than willing to accept their decision. I believe we should have strong government institutions for this country to be better and progressive. If these institutions are susceptible to influence and other wrongdoings, how will we make this country a better place to live in? I hope that during my lifetime I can see my country as a progressive country comparable to other industrialized countries where there is a system where laws are followed.

"What you see is what you get. If you do not like me, I will stop and then I will concentrate on my business. All my headaches will disappear. I am a comedian always making people laugh," he posits.

We say he always has an inspiring journey to refer to during his next campaign, one of great determination and perseverance that he has so effectively matched with compassion for the people. "There are many chief executives with the same story," he responds. The important narrative, he says, is about how "we were able to help a lot of people and we made life better for them. Life is not a matter of how happy we are but how happy others are because of us." ■



Labo, Camarines Norte attracts tourists through its waterfalls, caves, rivers, and mountains.



Mayor Ascucia remains firmly against illegal logging.



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The Imponderables of Philippine Democracy

Christian Monsod, one of the members of the 1986 Philippine Constitutional Commission, sits down with LEAGUE Magazine to discuss the 1987 Constitution and the controversial charter change towards federalism

INTERVIEW BY MAIELLE MONTAYRE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL SORIANO

1 How difficult was changing the constitution in 1986? How would you describe the environment that gave birth to the new charter of the country?

It wasn't difficult. Most of us knew how EDSA happened and what was expected of EDSA, especially by the poor. That's why the emphasis of the Constitution was on social justice and human rights. I don't think there was any disagreement among us even though we came from the full range of different economic, social, and political persuasions. President Aquino wanted very much to have a fair representation of all sentiments, sectors, and so on. We had, for example, four oppositionists out of the original 48. If you look at the list and bio-data of the persons [involved], it was really quite a good mix.

At the time, we were very celebratory. There was no anger. Because we just came out from a historic and glorious occasion, we were all full of hope that there would be no backsliding among our politicians.

2 What were the main points that the 48-member Constitutional Commission (ConCom) discussed and debated on?

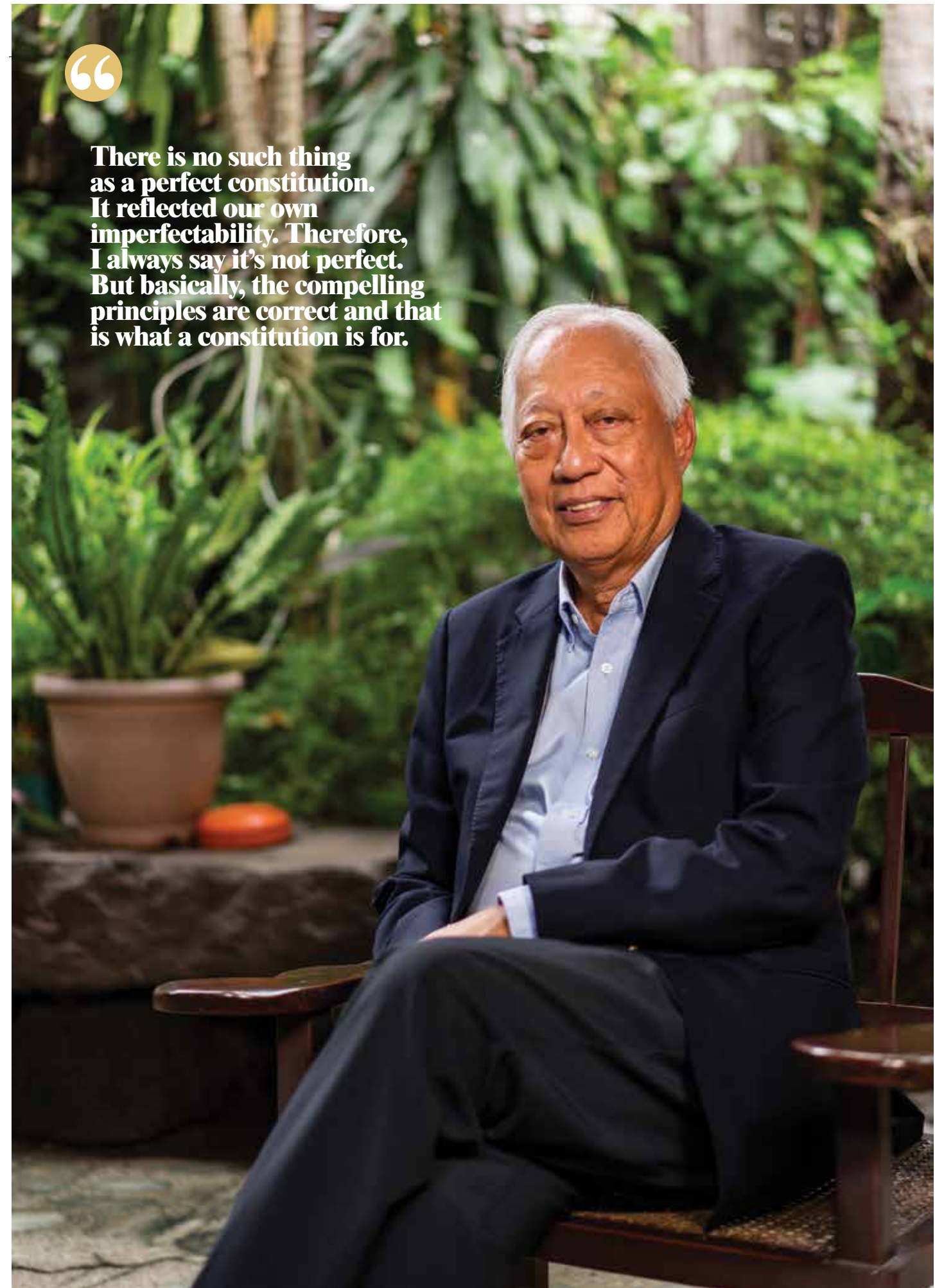
I have been asked often if we wrote the Constitution in anger, because of the anti-authoritarianism provisions, because our main theme was social justice and human rights. The

two other main themes were never again any kind of authoritarianism or dictatorship, and second, never again the dominance of our economy by foreign powers. These are all reflected in the present Constitution.

It took about three to four months and we were devoted full-time. What's significant is that all our deliberations were open to the public. Anybody could come, make their suggestions, present their proposals, and watch the deliberations. As far as we were concerned, we wanted to be very transparent and purposive in our approach; purposive in the sense that it must contain the new central themes I mentioned—social justice, never again authoritarianism, never again foreign domination of our economy. I don't think people know that under the 1935 Constitution, there were amendments to that Constitution. The primary one was giving Americans parity rights on our land, natural resources, public utilities, and so on. We could not even change our exchange rate. Now, what we were saying to ourselves [during the 1986 ConCom] was, this Constitution is going to be the first Constitution that has not been imposed on us by any colonial power or by a dictatorship. So in a sense, it was really a Constitution when we were truly independent—an independent democratic country. We were speaking to the world for the first time as that kind of a country. It was more exhilaration and joyful; there was no anger. The anger is today.



There is no such thing as a perfect constitution. It reflected our own imperfectability. Therefore, I always say it's not perfect. But basically, the compelling principles are correct and that is what a constitution is for.





3 How was the party-list system developed? What did it seek to address?

I was one of the sponsors of the proposal for a party-list system. The idea was to make sure that people who could not win in district elections [would be represented] so it was really the introduction of a proportional representation in the House of Representatives. That's why, for us, it was an innovation in the Constitution; it has never been tried. So we said, let's educate the people in this manner: for the first three elections after the passage of the 1987 Constitution, there would be certain sectors that must be filled either by selection or election.

4 Looking at the party-list system today, do you think the vision of the ConCom was achieved? In an interview, you said there is a strong party system in the Constitution but it is not in place today. What should be done to make it stronger today?

Mostly, yes. We understood that it was very difficult for the mainstream to accept both right or left, or extreme positions. In a way, we're a conservative country so we realized that. But we believed that everybody should be heard and that the people who somehow are on the fringes or out

of the mainstream political system should be heard. I think that has been done. The quality of the debate has been improved by the presence of groups that are on the fringes of the political system.

However, it was mangled by the COMELEC after me—not during my time because it had not started yet—and also by the Supreme Court. It took three decisions of the Supreme Court to get it right. Even then, there were all kinds of limitations that were contradictory. It was a misinterpretation of the Constitution. All they had to do was to read the record of proceedings of the 1986 ConCon. Finally, on the decision where they got most of it, Justice Antonio Carpio went at length to discuss the record of the proceedings.

5 The section on political dynasties of the 1987 Constitution was never operationalized through an enabling law. What do you think made it difficult for Congress to do this?

During the deliberations, my initial position was, I had reservations about it. I echoed what President Rodrigo Duterte is saying now—does this not exclude people who would otherwise be qualified to serve? And so, the deliberations became acrimonious or very tense; one of the

few times there was tension in the air. So we went into a caucus of the whole, which we only did once or twice in the whole deliberations. During the caucus, my friends, my peers at the ConCom posed the question to me: which side of this issue will exclude more people? That really struck me because it would exclude more people if you don't have an anti-dynasty law. But we said that it should be provided by law and people keep on attacking that, saying we did not do that and therefore, others should not be blamed. My counterargument is, it's been there for 30 years. You slept on that for 30 years. But the reason why we had it that way and did not cast in stone the degree of the relationship was that we believed we would improve in our political maturity over time. While at the beginning we can prohibit, ultimately, we may not even need it. So we put it there that it was up to Congress to decide and adjust to changing circumstances of political maturity. But they did not do the job.

6 In retrospect, are there flaws in the 1987 Constitution?

There is no such thing as a perfect constitution. It reflected our own imperfectability. Therefore, I always say it's not perfect. But basically, the compelling principles are correct and that is what a constitution is for. Remember the history of a constitution is it is a pact or agreement between the rulers and the people. So, essentially, a constitution is a constitution of limitations on the power of the state and the freedom of the people. Those freedoms are not only supposed to be enjoyed by the people against the state; they're also the rights that must be protected by the state when other actors who are non-state—in other words, other organizations or people—are violating the [very same] rights. That is essentially the idea of a constitution so we enacted it that way. So, our 1987 Constitution was not meant to be perfect because it is impossible to write one.

But let me say this, in the experience of countries when you have a functioning democracy, you should stay with what you have whether it's unitary or federal and be neutral. If there are flaws—manifest flaws, not any flaw like 'oops, they forgot this word' or 'we want to say it our way, instead of that way'—when there is a manifest flaw, there must be a manifest specific solution. But the second point is that, in the literature on the institutional design of a constitution, there is no established superiority of federalism over unitarianism, or vice versa. Because there is no established superiority, when you want to change a constitution for manifest flaws, you refine and reform rather than do an overhaul. That's basic in constitution making.

The problem is people are mistaking the cause of underdevelopment, the cause of persistent mass poverty and inequality, ascribing it to the Constitution when actually the solutions are in the Constitution.



7 What are your thoughts on federalism? Are there benefits to it?

As far as I know, the claimed benefits are empowering the people down the line, particularly in the outlying areas; more accountability, because you're bringing power closer to the people; and better results and outcome in government policies. But if we want full autonomy, it's already in the 1987 Constitution. It's already mandated in the Constitution. The problem is people are mistaking the cause of underdevelopment, the cause of persistent mass poverty and inequality, ascribing it to the Constitution when actually the solutions are in the Constitution. It's the people in government from Cory Aquino to today, who are not fully implementing that Constitution. Instead, they want to change it. But in implementing the new constitution they are on a slippery slope to authoritarianism.

8 What are your thoughts on the current push for charter change under the Duterte administration?

It's unnecessary because all you need to do is fully implement the mandate of local autonomy that is in the Constitution. For example, this Bangsamoro Basic Law might even become a model. Let's find out how if it works. Because the kind of autonomy that should be given to Bangsamoro is as close as you can get to a federal system. See if it works and then consider if it can be given to the regions that want the same thing. I don't know if all the regions want to be federal states, especially the poor regions. Also, because a federal system assumes that the federated state can stand on its own, it may take five, six, seven or 10 years before a region is considered qualified to stand on its own as a federated state. Do they know that the transition government will be even more centralized than today?

The data seems to be that only three regions can stand on their own out of the seventeen. What happens to the other regions? They become



dependent. If you were one of the three regions, and you are asked to contribute, subsidize, or underwrite the 14 others, maybe for a while you will say yes. But eventually, after a couple of years, you will say, wait a minute, our surplus was generated by our people; why are we going to give it away and not give it to our people who need it? That is a recipe for chaos. The solution seems to be we'll take care of the chaos because from 2019 to 2022, we have a dictatorship if you read the transitory provisions. But this is a constitutional consultative committee that at the same time admits that it takes more than three years to fully implement. So what's going to happen to the half-baked federated states?

The consultative commission, in effect, is saying let's change the structure now and afterwards, we will enact the legislation necessary to implement it, including the anti-dynasty. They are saying, trust us and we will do this. My question is, why don't you do the legislation now and let's see if it works? Instead, they want to change the structure first. The transitory provision even says that the nature of a democratic representative state also applies to a federated structure so that you can have amendments or revisions of the constitution but you cannot revise

the democratic representative and federal set-up. In other words, we're stuck forever with federalism—an untried political experiment. We have to trust them that if we give them the power and resources—these political dynasties that control these regions—we have to trust that they will enact the legislation to fully implement all of this decentralization, creation of a fully-functioning party system, and so on. I don't trust them. They haven't done it. So my challenge to them is, why don't you enact today an anti-dynasty law and make it apply to the 2019 elections. That's proof of your sincerity.

Assuming the President is sincere about helping the poor, number one, he's old. Suppose he dies, who will succeed? Who will take advantage of a constitution that facilitates, provides, or supports a dictatorial form of government during the transition period? So we are tailoring our constitution to a person who has a tendency to rule or govern by fear or force, who's very vindictive. At the same time, even if his heart is with the poor, supposing he dies, who is his anointed? They amended the transitory provisions three times to accede to the wishes of the President. The new version has conflicting provisions [regarding the term of the incumbents, and the election of a transition president and vice-president six months after the plebiscite.] There is no prohibition on President Duterte running as a transition president. To me, if you'll stay anyway up to 2022, why the need for all that contortion in the process? If you think about it, that sort of detour is to make sure that Robredo is not in the picture. If the President keeps his word that he will step down when the plebiscite approves a new constitution, guess who will succeed? [Marcos.] The transition president will be a dictator for three years; he can change anybody in the entire government bureaucracy. He will formulate the transition plan that should have been done by the consultative committee for not only the federal government but for each federated state, and all other agencies of government. All central powers [in one.] Who has a chance to win the 2022 election except his chosen successor? Under the new constitution, you have two terms of four years each. That's eight years of totalitarianism, which is what we're facing. Those are the imponderables of our future.

9 Have you read the draft charter? What do you think of it?

If you read the draft constitution of the consultative committee, it is more an act of faith than a product of reason and thinking. It assumes at every step of the way the best expectations will

be realized. That is not our history. Remember that this President will solve the everyday insecurities of our people in three to six months; drugs, criminality, traffic, delivery of public services, and corruption. Ask around. Is corruption still there? It's still there. The President is well-meaning but he's a poor manager of people. How many has he changed of his people? He says they're corrupt but he reappoints them.

Just to give an example on human rights. There's a change from 'full respect for human rights' to 'respect for persons.' We are signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) since 1948. There is now an international understanding of what human rights are. Your shift to 'persons,' which they say is only a word or two to make it better, is not making it better because people will say, why the shift? What are the implications of 'persons' versus 'human rights' in general when the UDHR is there? If I read correctly, Chief Justice Reynato Puno said there are three generations of rights—civil and political, socio-economic, and environment. He said, and I don't know if this is correct, that the 1987 Constitution only has the first generation. That is absolutely wrong. Because the center theme of our Constitution is social justice and human rights, and if you read Article XII of the Constitution, the social justice principles are there as well. There is a principle on the environment [in Article II]. They say, we have expanded it but it has already been expanded by law and jurisprudence. So what you are doing is just constitutionalizing the laws that have been passed pursuant to that compelling principle and the jurisprudence, and you call that necessary to overhaul the Constitution? It's just an excuse to put in your personal views into the Constitution. They have no sense of restraint. And that's my quarrel.

Most of all, if you read the experience of countries, they are aware that shifting to federalism is a very complex and prolonged change. Now, with pitfalls you may fail. The literature on charter change is that it tends to strengthen the existing power system in the country. For federalism, you need the political dynasties to implement it. You have to go to them and say you have to implement, at the same time that you are planning their demise because you also say that you must have a fully functioning political party system that will replace the political dynasties. If you were a political dynasty, what would you do? You will hijack that movement. I will take the power and the resources that go with it but I will not allow myself to be replaced by a political party system that excludes us. What does that mean that when you shift to

federal system, you will entrench the existing political dynasties? You will not achieve the kind of empowerment you want at the bottom because we already have a multi-level political system down to the barangay. What is federalism for? You are only creating a new layer of government way above the barangays, between the president and the provinces. The poor won't be in that layer of government. That layer will probably only be monopolized by the existing power system, which are the political dynasties.

The survey shows that 74% of our people know nothing or very little about the 1987 Constitution, much more about what federalism is about. We should make sure that the people do not vote in a vacuum.



10 What could the current efforts to change the constitution learn from the experience of the 1986 constitutional convention?

What I regret that they did not do was they did not do the consultations first on the ground that they were being rushed. You do not rush something like constitutional change. The deliberations were not made public and so far, there have been no record of the proceedings so that the people who want to comment or criticize [on the issues] have a background on what is there.

My suggestion is, the civil society, the academe, and so on, should make an earnest effort to educate the people on what the 1987 Constitution is all about. Because the survey shows that 74% of our people know nothing or very little about the 1987 Constitution, much more about what federalism is about. We should make sure that the people do not vote in a vacuum. The government is using its facilities and resources to propagandize the change rather than to educate. So it's up to us, civil society, academe, the church, to educate the people as much as we can and say, what is in the 1987 Constitution, what the changes are, and what the effects are so that they will vote intelligently.



Federalism: Light at the End of the Tunnel

Jonathan Malaya, Assistant Secretary for Communication and Public Affairs at the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), explains why federalism is the key to the country's future

BY MARIDOL RANO-BISMARCK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROMEO PERALTA, JR.

1 What is the DILG's role in this administration's campaign for federalism?

We are the lead agency in federalism. We were tasked by the President during his first SONA two years ago. We were mentioned as part of his platform as President. His platform was anti-drugs, anti-corruption, anti-criminality, and shift to a federal form of government. He wants to make federalism as his most lasting legacy to the Filipino people. There is no agency equipped to help in the transition to a federal system than the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). Federalism is about empowering local governments. It's about transferring more funds and authority to the regions. And that is the task and mandate of DILG. We are assisted by the Office of the President and by the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO). [We are composed of] three entities.

2 How would you describe the charter change model proposed by this administration through PDP LABAN?

When you say administration, there are actually two. The first one is the PDP Laban model. Prior to the ConCom (Consultative Committee). This is the timeline. When the President won, there wasn't any draft federal model yet. So PDP-Laban, as the party of the President, immediately convened what is called as the Federalism Study Group. The Federalism Study Group was convened by the PDP-Laban Federalism Institute. I was the first executive director of the PDP-Laban Federalism Institute. The study group was composed of eminent political scientists, public administration experts, and lawyers. It was a non-politician team. It represented a cross-section of society. We consulted then Senate President Koko Pimentel and then House Speaker Pantaleon

Alvarez. The task of the study group was to prepare a draft model. We were able to do that. This is the first-ever model of federalism for the country. This was produced by the party through the PDP-Laban Federalism Institute. We submitted this to the President for his consideration. It came back with the President's endorsement. The (PDP Laban) model proposed a semi-presidential system for the Philippines. It's a president and prime minister. If you remember the President's first SONA, the President spoke about a French system. This is the product of that. After the book was produced last year, the President convened the ConCom to review the 1987 Constitution. It's chaired by former Chief Justice Reynato Puno. The Puno Commission just finished its draft. The President mentioned it in his SONA. He thanked former Chief Justice Puno, former Sen. Nene Pimentel, and the 23 members of the commission. The commission recommended a presidential federal model. So there are two models now—semi-presidential federal and a presidential-federal. Both are federal. A federal system can exist under a presidential, semi-presidential or a parliamentary form of government.

3 How different are the models of federalism proposed in the House of Representatives? How will these be married?

That is being proposed, not by the House, but a sub-committee in the House. *Wala na yon*. The semi-presidential federal and presidential-federal models can be combined, but at the end of the day, a decision has to be made by whatever body is going to be tasked by Congress to propose amendments. If you remember, there are three ways of amending the constitution. It's either through a constituent assembly (con-ass), which is two Houses—Congress, a constitutional convention (con-con), where people vote for delegates, and people's initiative. But since amendments, I think it's either a con-ass or a con-con. People's initiative is small.

4 What are the disadvantages of the 1987 Constitution and the current unitary system?

The 1987 Constitution continued the unitary set-up which we have had since the Spaniards came to the Philippines. When we became a colony of Spain, we essentially became a unitary state. It's logical to have a unitary state during the colonial period because the object of a colonizer is to control the inhabitants in the entire territory. So it's required or needed to have a unitary system. Unfortunately, when we became a separate republic, and we became independent, the unitary tradition was carried over. So our 1935 Constitution, our 1973 Constitution, and our 1987 Constitution are all

Federalism is about empowering local governments. It's about transferring more funds and authority to the regions.



unitary constitutions. And unitary constitutions centralize power. Nothing significant happens in the provinces if not approved by Malacañang or the departments of agencies that form part of the national government. In theory, there is nothing wrong with that. But the problem is in practice. Because of limited funds, the unitary system is biased in certain areas for practical reasons. Because of its proximity to the center, Regions 4A, which is Calabarzon, Regions 3 and NCR (National Capital Region), are the favored. If you look at the Gross Domestic Product, practically 63 to 64 percent is produced by these provinces. They have the preference. Philippine development is unequal and uneven precisely because of the bias of the center towards certain areas. We haven't amended the 1987 Constitution for the past 30 years. We have to amend it to adjust to certain realities. We have given the 1987 Constitution enough time to prove itself. Some of the provisions of the 1987 Constitution are good. It allowed us to transition from an authoritarian dictatorship under (former president Ferdinand) Marcos to a democratic regime. We need to update it, we need to adjust it to allow the Philippines greater leeway in a competitive, globalized environment.

5 Charter change is expensive. How does the government intend to fund the shift to federalism?

There will be extra expenses, but it will not be too much. What I'm saying is we are just redistributing the pie. We're not adding to the pie. If under the unitary system, a big bulk of the money is spent in the National Capital Region, we want to spread that money elsewhere. We are going to re-apportion or re-cut the pie, so more regions benefit from the economic growth we are having because we are one of the fastest-growing economies in this part of the world, at 6.8 percent [GDP growth rate]. If you ask the common people, do they feel this? Why don't they feel it? Precisely because the unitary system is biased towards Metro Manila. People from the provinces keep on flocking to Metro Manila, because there are no opportunities in their provinces. Federalism



seeks to allow the provinces to grow and create their own job opportunities, their own investments so they can partake of the economic progress we are seeing. I'm not [going to] say there will be no additional expense. There will be, because the basic features of federalism is the creation of regional governments. Right now, we don't have regional governments. What we have are regional offices of national government agencies. For example, DILG. We have our regional office. But these are not politically autonomous units. They are arms or extensions of the national government. For example, if Bicol (I come from Bicol) wants to progress economically, Bicol will say, "We need a seaport here. We need an airport here. We need better roads here." It will need the support of the national government in terms of authority and funds to make that happen. Unfortunately, it doesn't always gets approved by the national government because there will always be some argument that, "Cagayan de Oro needs it more," or "Bacolod needs it more." Or some politician is owed some favor, and the Secretary will say, "*Ibigay na natin yan sa...*" What happens to the thrust of the Bicol region to build the necessary infrastructure for them to bring in investors? The political unit on the regional level can make that decision without Malacañang's approval. If taxes [are] paid by the people of Bicol, a chunk is given to their regional government; and to the local governments, they can decide on their own. That is, in principle, what we want to happen under federalism.

6 Is the public warming up to the idea of Charter Change? How is the information campaign going?

We are slowly getting there. Awareness has increased. Before, awareness was very low. The survey, unfortunately, shows [that] a lot of people don't understand it yet, which is not surprising, because the model was just finished. The model only came out two weeks ago. It would be difficult to convince people about a certain product if the product is not yet clear. It's like selling mangoes. The mango is not yet ripe. How can you sell it *kung hindi mo pa natitikman*? The ConCom has finished its draft. It has submitted it to the President. It has been submitted to Congress, to the Lower House and the Upper House. Now the real debate happens. That's the info campaign. We just began the massive information campaign last month. That's why we can hear federalism left and right. It's being discussed over radio, television, in the *barangay*, because we have already started the information campaign. We've been working with the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) for them to utilize mass media for the information campaign.

7 Criticisms of Charter Change are usually focused on No-Elections and term extension for the president. How would you respond to that?

It's very clear in the ConCom draft that the President's term will end in 2022. It would be difficult to debate with someone who does not even discuss the ConCom draft. The prohibition on the President being able to run again is enshrined in the draft of the ConCom itself. No problem there. Number 2, the President himself has said, he's already 70-something. He wants to step down as soon as a federal republic is inaugurated. On the question of no elections (no-el). This was the position of Speaker Alvarez. He said that to transition to a federal system, Congress needs more time. Therefore, to him, the acceptable arrangement was for the deferment of the terms of the existing congressmen by one year, so they can discuss Charter Change. Unfortunately, Speaker Alvarez has been replaced by Speaker GMA (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo). Speaker GMA stated categorically that she does not support a no-elections scenario. Therefore, all talk of no-el is moot and academic.

8 Another criticism to Charter Change is that it could further empower political dynasties. How could this be addressed?

One of the ingredients for federalism to succeed is a clear-cut, self-executing anti-dynasty commission in the new constitution. Therefore,

in the ConCom draft and the PDP-Laban model, both models state that for federalism to succeed, there must be political and electoral reforms. What are those? An anti-political dynasty provision that is self-executing. What we mean by self-executing is that the definition of what a political dynasty is, is defined in the constitution itself. The 1987 Constitution also has an anti-dynasty provision. But it said there that "political dynasties are prohibited as may be defined by law." *Pag sinabing* "as may be defined by law," Congress must pass a law defining what a political dynasty is. It's been 30 years since the 1987 Constitution was approved by the people. And yet, Congress has failed to pass an anti-political dynasty law. Our proposal is we should define in the new federal constitution what is meant by a political dynasty so there is no more need for Congress to pass a law. It will be the people, in a plebiscite, who will define what a political dynasty is. The position of the drafters and of PDP-Laban is that political dynasties are not good for the Philippines. *Meron lang kaming pagkakaiba sa* ConCom because ConCom is so strict that even succession is prohibited. What is meant by succession? When the mayor is done with three terms, *sa asawa naman*. For me, what we should prohibit *ay yung pagsabay-sabay ang* family. But if I'm the mayor, and I've had three terms, and my child is good, why prohibit him from running, when it's the people who will say if he or she will be in government or not? Let's give the people the right to decide if my child or my spouse can take over my position. The law will not prohibit that. That's my problem with the ConCom draft. That's why we allowed succession in the PDP-Laban draft.

9 How will Charter Change solve the gross disparity of incomes and wealth among the regions?

The unitary system is favoring certain regions. Everyone is left behind. By spreading the wealth, you allow other regions to catch up. Federalism doesn't say all are equal. It won't happen. But you give them a fighting chance to catch up.

10 The Senate seems lukewarm to the idea of Charter Change, and they say it is not in their agenda. How do you intend to go around this roadblock?

We're a free country. The challenge to proponents of federalism is to create greater public awareness because if the people support it, senators have no choice but to listen. We just have to work harder on the charter change campaign, and hopefully, the Senate will listen. The fundamental issues of federalism are clear.

May mga agam-agam lang because they say it's for GMA. GMA will become the prime minister. But these are all speculations. If at present, the Senate will not be able to support this change, there's time. President Duterte's term doesn't end until 2022. So we will just keep on working, until we are able to get a significant majority from Congress, both the Upper House and the Lower House to support the shift to a federal system of government. It's better that the Senate is opposing (charter change) because it means they're studying it. They're debating on it. So whatever the result is, they won't say it was because things were rushed. I think that if we explain well [to the senators] what we want to happen, they will listen, especially if there is public support for the shift. ■



Some of the provisions of the 1987 Constitution are good. It allowed us to transition from an authoritarian dictatorship under (former president Ferdinand) Marcos to a democratic regime. We need to update it, we need to adjust it to allow the Philippines greater leeway in a competitive, globalized environment.





The Equalizer

Rep. Robert Ace Barbers talks about the nation's fight against illegal drugs and what he is doing to help boost Surigao del Norte's economy.

BY JOYCE REYES-AGUILA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RENJIE TOLENTINO

As chairman of the House Committee on Dangerous Drugs of the Lower House, Robert Ace Barbers plays a pivotal role in the national campaign to rid society of illegal drugs. The representative of the second district of Surigao del Norte is covering all bases.

In this capacity, he has held symposia in support of the policy in three northern regions, but believes he has barely scratched the surface. His elective term is soon ending and Barbers is concerned there will not be enough time to do rounds in schools of Visayas and Mindanao.

He is all business when it comes to combatting illegal drugs. Last June, Barbers led the Philippine delegation to the Association of Southeast Nation (ASEAN) in Singapore, where delegates from member-parliaments of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)-Advisory Council on Dangerous Drugs (AIPACODD) committed to realizing a drug-free region through the Resolution on Securing a Drug-Free ASEAN Community for Future Generations. All 10-member countries supported a collective effort for a “secure, stable, and drug-free environment.”

STARTING AT THE BARANGAY LEVEL

Early in the year, the solon focused on would-be elected *barangay* officials and called on them to formulate anti-illegal drug action plans for their respective areas. “The Constitution provides that the basic unit of government is the *barangay*,” the former governor of Surigao del Norte tells *League Magazine*. “That’s where the delivery of public service starts and ends. They know the community, the constituency, so they are able to supposedly deliver (service) down from the national government to the local government to the *barangay* government... We cannot deny that the role of the *barangay* is very important. We cannot just depend the issues of criminality, peace and order, and public service on the mayor or governor of a place. (The efforts will not be enough).”

It is key that all elected *barangay* officials—from the *barangay* captain down to the *kagawads* (councilors)—participate and cooperate with the Philippine Drug



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Our Maunlad na Republika Galit sa Droga symposium held in Pangasinan.

Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and the Philippine National Police (PNP). In order for this war against drugs to succeed, he believes a wider support system has to be involved.

“Even if you have 101,000 President Rodrigo Dutertes at the helm of this government, if he does not get the support of his community — which would be in this case, the *barangay* officials — then I think (the anti-drug campaign will) be doomed,” he stresses.

Barbers, who also represented his district at the House of Representatives from 1998 to 2007, believes that encouraging action at the *barangay* level will also filter officials who may be involved in drugs. “If I’m not mistaken, the president said around 40 percent (of *barangay* officials are suspected to be involved in drugs). So, if there are 42,000 or 45,000 *barangay* officials...we have a big problem.

“That’s why the best thing to do is to involve them,” he continues. “If they do not become active in the fight against criminality and drugs, then we may presume that they are probably involved because they are lax about the campaign. That’s when the PNP or the PDEA should start looking at a particular angle.

“If they are not involved in drugs, they are either incompetent or being bribed by the drug

lords or the users or pushers so they will not get caught. A lot of these things should be looked into. It is not an ordinary war. In fact, the most difficult war the administration has proclaimed is the war against drugs. Beating the ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham, a known global terror group) and (rebels in) Marawi, or the NPA (New People’s Army) is easier,” Barbers says.

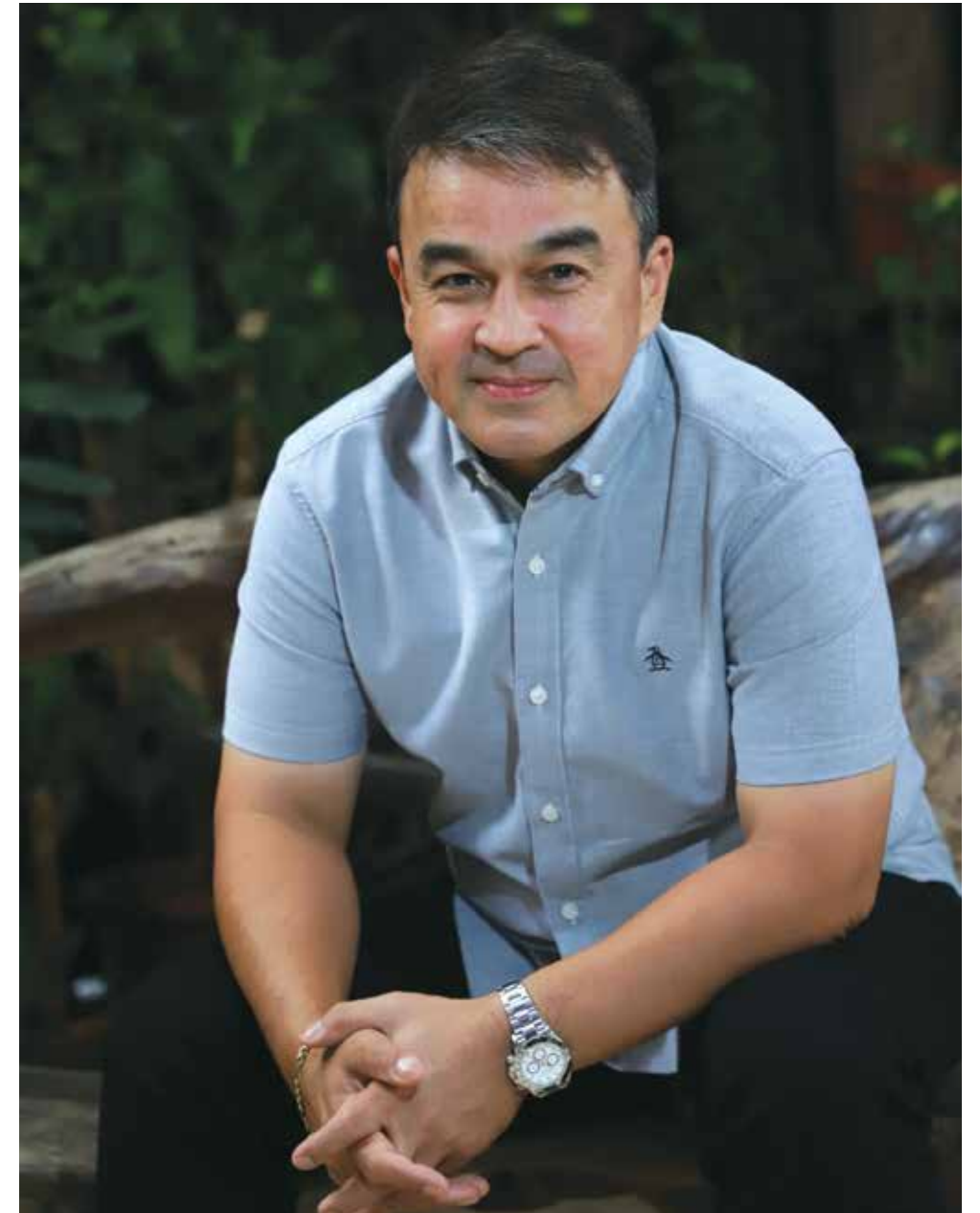
Without brown-nosing, the solon is all praises for President Duterte and his anti-drugs campaign. “We have a president who is bold enough to tell us the real picture of



the country,” he explains. “Corruption is prevalent both in the bureaucracy and in other institutions of the government. Drugs is prevalent as well. In fact, we are going towards (becoming) a narco state which is quite dangerous. Imagine... what will happen to our country, to our youth? It’s frightening.

“Prior to President Duterte’s assumption to office, were you aware of the magnitude of drug problem in the country? I wasn’t. Though I am an anti-drug advocate because my father (the late Robert Barbers, a former senator and Secretary of Interior and Local Government) and I authored the Comprehensive Drugs Bill of 2002, we had no idea (of the gravity of the situation because information about it should come) from the authorities. And I doubt if the public was informed of the magnitude of this problem. If not for the president, we would not have been informed as to the real scenario, real picture of these issues on drugs.”

Cultural heritage must always be protected by any government. I strongly believe that if we know our culture, our origins, we know where we are going. The more government can give protection to them, the better.



Barbers adds that the campaign has provided sufficient funds to the PDEA and PNP to upgrade much needed ammunition to be better equipped to fight the artillery of the drug lords. He further sees the need to recruit more agents for both organizations to continue to drive the campaign.

ON HIS DISTRICT

Another important hat Ace Barbers wears is as representative to the Lower House of Surigao del Norte, a province in the northeastern part of the island of Mindanao. In this locale, mining is a major economic activity. He is working with many parties to form a strategic

plan to support the industry which can include the creation of a special economic zone.

“This would encourage local businessmen or investors in the steel manufacturing industry or other industries related or relevant to the mining industry (to do business in our province),” he says. “I’m still waiting for some proposals. In the meantime, I am preparing the district by getting sufficient funds to develop more roads, bridges, and give the people and investors access to a lot of areas.” He is also including his district’s agricultural and fishing sectors in his plans.

“Surigao del Norte is facing the Pacific Ocean,” he explains. “Along its coastline, there



Surigao del Norte is facing the Pacific Ocean. Along its coastline, there are a lot of fisherfolk, and that's what I am giving priority to at the moment. We're giving them a little subsidy. We provide them with bancas, nets, and other fishing gear that could help them (with their livelihood).

are a lot of fisherfolk, and that's what I am giving priority to at the moment. We're giving them a little subsidy. We provide them with boats, nets, and other fishing gear that could help them (with their livelihood)."

Another important consideration for the solon is the protection of the province's indigenous folk, the Manobo and the Mamanwa. At present, the population of these tribes are less than 5,000 and Barbers wants to ensure that their welfare is prioritized vis-à-vis development plans.

"Cultural heritage must always be protected by any government," he says. "I strongly believe that if we know our culture, our origins, we know where we are going. The more government can give protection to them, the better."

Related to protecting its people is taking care of the province's natural environment, which Barbers considers as a "sensitive issue" when discussed alongside mining. "The question is always how you can mix mining with the protection of the environment," he says. "That's a very touchy issue to the point that skeptics will say that you're pulling rhetoric because you cannot protect the environment if you have allowed mining to operate."

"In the case of Surigao del Norte, the big mining companies are actually responsible ones. I have not seen a mining company that destroyed the environment. There are pictures that were shown by media in the past that shows siltation in the ocean or soil erosion. But that's normal. Even without mining, there is natural erosion. (Mining activities could have made these

appear faster) but not all of it should be blamed on the mining," the solon points out. He adds that government agencies responsible for policing any abuse to the environment should also be blamed, in part, for any abuse that has led to the destruction of natural resources.

IN HIS CARDS

Barbers plans to run for reelection "or consider other positions" once his current term ends. "If given the choice, I'll probably run for *barangay* captain (so I can monitor) mining activities," he adds in jest. The Political Science major (minor in Economics) alumnus of the De La Salle University comes from a clan of public servants. This made politics a natural choice for him, he says.

"My parents, my grandparents, my relatives already exposed me to public service," he recalls. "Maybe that was my starting point. I have always been fascinated with a happy home, *magulo* (busy), with lots of people, and a kitchen preparing meals for guests."



He reveals he will be supportive if any of his four sons also decide to enter politics. Already, all are active in school government activities. "But no one has actually signified their intentions. I am very supportive; maybe their mother wouldn't be as supportive," he says, laughing.

"If one of them asks if they could be an action star or stunt man, why not? Whatever they want to do, as long as it makes them happy and makes them better persons. If it's politics, they have to listen to me. They should undergo OJT (on-the-job-training) because I also did that under my parents. They exposed me and eventually, when they probably felt that I was ready, they asked me to run."

"I'm a people person," says the master's degree holder in Public Administration and Governance at the University of the Philippines. "What drew me to politics is the fact that I was exposed to people from different walks of life. I'm quite fascinated

with that. When we were young, we all look the same to each other. There were no differences or semblance that the other one is better than the other. But when I was exposed to a lot of situations and different kinds of people, I realized (we were) not all equal.

"The equalizer should be the government, and I feel I should be in government because if I can play the role of an equalizer, at least I have done my service to my country," he continues, and quotes the Boy Scout oath of serving God, one's country, and one's family.

"I may be remiss in my obligation if I will not perform any of those three. Duty to family is a given. Who doesn't want to be of service to his or her family? Second, duty to the country. Little things like protecting the environment, cleaning your surroundings—those are little things that if you add them all up, are already considered service. But if you have the capacity to step up further, then you go to public service; most importantly, service to God." ■



HADJI BUTU ABDUL BAGUI



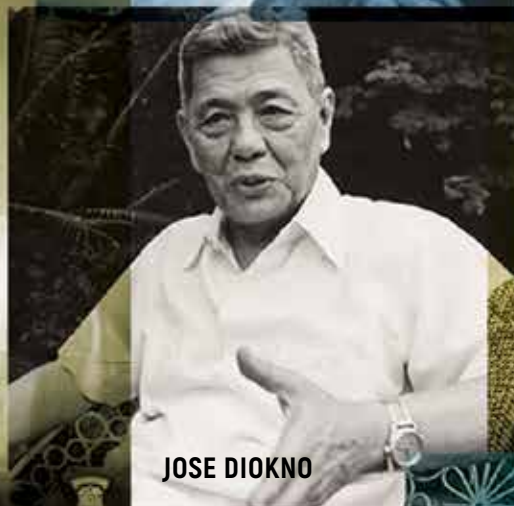
CLARO M. RECTO



GERONIMA T. PECSON



LORENZO TAÑADA



JOSE DIOKNO



BENIGNO AQUINO



RAUL ROCO



JUAN FLAVIER

When the Greats Walked the Hallowed Senate Halls

Let us look back at some distinguished former senators whom the current ones would want to emulate

BY JOHN LEE CANDELARIA

The Senate of the Philippines has become an interesting mix of the country's elite and showbiz circles in recent years—popular athletes, political dynasties, businessmen, comedy and action stars, and celebrities. But there was a time when voters elected men and women whose virtuous credentials and vast experience were considerable.

We can always rely on the wisdom and experience of the past to serve as models for how we can move forward to the future. So we chose some former Filipino senators who may serve as inspirations not just to our current senators, but also to those aspiring to become one, since the 2019 mid-term elections are just around the corner.

HADJI BUTU ABDUL BAGUI

First on this list is a senator not elected, but rather appointed. In 1915, Hadji Butu Abdul Bagui was chosen by the Americans to represent the 12th senatorial district (Mindanao and Sulu). At that time, senators represented senatorial districts, and were not elected at large. This is why we have 24 senators, although now, all of them are elected by a popular national vote.

Hailing from Jolo, Sulu, Hadji Butu was the first Muslim to occupy a seat in the Senate. He was also a

religious leader, achieving the highest ecclesiastical position in Islam. His pieces of legislation were centered on the creation of several schools such as the Philippine Military Academy, and he is best remembered for his fiery love for country best exemplified in his crusade for independence from the American colonial regime.

CLARO M. RECTO

Claro M. Recto is considered as "the finest mind of his generation." He was a Renaissance man: a "miracle lawyer," diplomat, poet and

playwright, among others. Many compare him with Rizal and Mabini, foremost thinkers and heroes of the revolution. His nationalism was so strong that he was the subject of assassination plots by the Americans that may have caused his sudden heart attack in 1960.

The 1935 Constitution of the Philippines, said to be the best Philippine charter ever written, was penned mainly by Recto. He was a firebrand for his time, arguing against the Catholic Church concerning the teaching of religion in schools, the separation of church and state, and the teaching of Rizal's life and works, at a time when Filipinos were very conservative and religious. He was ahead of his time, and his radical ideas may have cost him the presidency when he waned against Carlos P. Garcia in 1957.

GERONIMA T. PECSON

The first woman to enter the Senate halls was the silent but capable Geronima Pecson, a well-known suffragette who fought hard for the right of women to vote. She holds both bachelor's and master's degrees from the

University of the Philippines and was known for her social work endeavors.

Her silence was a statement: “I would project my work than myself.” She chaired important Senate committees such as education, health, and public welfare, and was instrumental in the passage of the Free and Compulsory Education Act of 1953.

There is no shortage of great Filipinos whom we may turn to for next year’s elections. All we need to do is keep a watchful eye to ensure that those we elect are those with competence, credibility, and a good track record.

LORENZO TAÑADA

Lorenzo Tañada was the longest serving senator—24 years, or almost a quarter of a century—and he surely made good use of his time there. He obtained his bachelor’s degree from U.P. and was a *pensionado* sent to the US to study (in Harvard, no less), but he remained a staunch fighter of US imperialism in the Philippines. He even led the Anti-Bases Coalition that fought for the expulsion of the US military in the country.

But more than anything, he will be remembered as “the old man of the parliament of the streets,” leading rallies and demonstrations against the dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the 1980s.

JOSE DIOKNO

Jose Diokno was a lawyer without a law degree—his studies was interrupted by World War II but he was allowed by the Supreme Court to take the bar examinations, which he topped with a score of 95.3% (and tied with his fellow senator, Jovito Salonga).

Diokno is well-known for his fight against Martial Law. He was one of the first opposition members imprisoned in 1972. When he was freed in 1974, he formed with Tañada and Joker Arroyo, the Free Legal Assistance Group to help his fellow victims.

After the toppling of the dictatorship, he was named founding chair of the Commission on Human Rights.

BENIGNO AQUINO

Say what you want about his politics today, but no one can deny how influential Ninoy was, and the role he played in the movement that led to the People Power Revolution of 1986.

Ninoy started from being a local politician who rose to fame easily, coming from a family well-entrenched in Philippine politics. This resulted in a rather meteoric rise in ranks: He was mayor at 22, vice governor at 27, and senator at 34—a record that stands to this day. He was a darling of the media, and was known for his scathing criticism of Marcos and his cronies.

His assassination in 1983 fueled the outpouring of protest and discontent: more than two million people lined the streets in procession during his funeral. Later on, he became the inspiration for the movement that removed Marcos from power and made his wife, Corazon Aquino, president.

The airport where he died was renamed Ninoy Aquino International Airport, and August 21 is an annual public holiday in the country.

RAUL ROCO

Known for his colorful floral shirts (at least before Atienza stole it), Raul Roco was a well-loved senator and education champion. During his tenure

as senator from 1987 to 1992, he was consistently first place in over-all performance of the Senate. His laws that were passed extolled his advocacies for education and women.

He was also known for his stint as Secretary of Education, the department most well-known for rampant corruption in the early 2000s. His radical reforms in the department earned praise from a lot of people, and his popularity rocketed, making him a frontrunner in the 2004 Presidential elections, which he eventually lost.

JUAN FLAVIER

Ask anyone which senator in recent history was most iconic and well-loved, and pretty sure Juan Flavies name would come up first. Known as the poorest (and probably the shortest) senator, his story of success is nothing short of inspiring. Born from semi-literate parents from Tondo, he worked hard and studied to become a doctor, serving as a “doctor to the barrio” for 30 years after.

He was appointed Secretary of Health by former President Fidel Ramos, where he started the health campaigns “Oplan Alis Disease,” “Stop TB,” “Yosi Kadiri,” “Mag-Iodized Salt Tayo!” and “Let’s DOH It,” all of which remain iconic to this day.

Indeed, there is no shortage of great Filipinos whom we may turn to as inspiration or models for next year’s elections. All we need to do is keep a watchful eye and an open mind to ensure that those we elect in what used to be the “hallowed” halls of the senate are those with competence, credibility, and track record. Only then can we be sure that the difficult work of legislation is handled by those fit to do it, like those mentioned above. ■

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Remembering a Political Hero

Our departed Senator Edgardo J. Angara in the words of some of the country's most influential government figures...



The late Senator Edgardo J. Angara was an educator, lawyer, banker, farmer, a true *probinsyano* hailing from Baler, Aurora. His political career began when he was elected as a delegate from Quezon to the 1971 Constitutional Convention. Afterwards, he continued his illustrious political career as a senator, where he helped the passage of many landmark laws on education, social services, agriculture, science and technology, arts and culture, and good governance. His efforts resulted in the creation of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Free High School Act, the Government Assistant to Students and Teachers in Private Education, the Senior Citizens Act, and the National Health Insurance Act. He worked tirelessly in public service, seeking to uplift the lives and grant countless opportunities to the poor, marginalized, and oppressed. Prior to his death, President Rodrigo R. Duterte appointed him as Special Envoy to the European Union. Angara

passed away last May 13, 2018, and is survived by his wife Gloria Manalang, son Senator Sonny Angara, and three daughters. He was 83 years old.

“Alam kong maasahan ko ang kanyang katapatan, talino, at galing, at maging ang kanyang hangarin na maiangat ang mga Pilipino mula sa kahirapan. Salamat Ed...I admire Ed for many things. Pero higit pa diyan, noon at ngayon tinuturing kong napakalaking karangalan na nakilala ko siya at naging kaibigan...Salamat sa paglilingkod at pagmamahal sa bayan. (I knew I could rely on his honesty, intelligence, and excellence, and even his desire to lift Filipinos from poverty. Thanks, Ed. But more than that, then and now I consider it a great honor to have known him and to be his friend. Thank you for the service and love for country). You will be missed.”

– **Manila Mayor and former President Joseph Estrada**

“Edgardo Angara was a giant among legal luminaries and a skillful public servant. He wore many hats and he

wore them well. The impact of his principled work is larger than life — on the old and the young, students, farmers, economy, and education.”

– **Pampanga Representative and former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo**

“It is said that power generally overwhelms the better instincts of man. Not the Ed Angara I knew. Despite the enormous powers that he had access to or that he enjoyed especially during the early Martial Law years, he remained a person with balanced human perspectives...Aside from the enumerable things that Ed has done for his friends, acquaintances and supporters, his whole-hearted dedication to the cause of education emerges as his unique contribution to the welfare of our people.”

– **Former Senate President Aquilino ‘Nene’ Pimentel Jr.**

“Senator Ed Angara’s achievements should inspire us in our works. We should all look up to him as a paragon of what a senator of our Republic should be. Senator Edgardo J. Angara’s life on Earth was never idle. With a

definitive sense of purpose, this man served his mission to the end, wasting no time. We will miss him but we will continue to be inspired by him.”

– **Former Senate President Aquilino ‘Koko’ Pimentel III**

“Ed was a statesman, embracing public service as a badge of honor. A visionary, he worked tirelessly so that national interest reigned paramount over parochial concerns. No one can doubt his sincerity in the causes he had espoused; but one cannot resist the urge to smile or even laugh when he shows his wit...For sure, he will be missed. His sudden departure leaves a gaping hole in his beloved Aurora, where his towering presence had served as a powerful inspiration to the young to pursue excellence as a way of life. On the national stage, his absence will be felt long after his body is laid to rest. The passing of Ed marks the end of an era. But his legacy lives on. Ed, yours is a life well-lived. Thank you for your untiring service to our country. Rest now in peace.”

– **Senator Loren Legarda**

“He always said, ‘Migs, the quality of the legislation that you will sponsor and pass will be the one that defines you.’ And to this day, I religiously practice his mantra of hard work, dedication, and having laser focus when it comes to the passing of landmark legislation...All I can say, Tito Ed, is it has been an honor to have worked beside you and be mentored by you in the Senate. I am what I am here today because of what you taught me and the impact you have created in my life.”

– **Senate Majority Floor Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri**

“His legacy is also his acronym: SEJA, which stands for ‘Senate dedicated to Education, Justice, and Arts.’”

– **Senator President Vicente Sotto III**

“He thought well. He had vision. A man could see things far ahead and saw a vision of a life better than what was there.”

– **Senator Richard Gordon**

“To the Angara family, Filipinos grieve because we have lost a humble and dedicated statesman, a great teacher, my teacher, and a visionary. Uncle Ed

to me will live on through the work we do.”

– **Taguig Representative Pia Cayetano**

“Lumikha po ng mga dambuhalang alon sa ating kasaysayan si dating Senate President Edgardo J. Angara o EDJA—mga along bumago at nagpayabong sa ating edukasyon, sining, agham at teknolohiya, governance, pamumuhunan, health, at agrikultura. (Former Senate President Edgardo J. Angara, or EJA, created a giant wave in history — waves that changed and developed education, culture, science and technology, governance, investment, health, and agriculture.)

– **Senator Joel Villanueva**

“Sen. Ed will always be remembered as a trailblazer in education reform. The visionary laws he championed during his 23 years as senator revolutionized our education system by opening up exciting new learning opportunities for millions of underprivileged Filipinos whose right to education had long been neglected.”

– **Senator Sherwin Gatchalian**

“We were not only fraternity brothers, we also worked together from ACCRA to the Senate and shared countless milestones...It was Ed who invited me to join ACCRA. He convinced me that since ACCRA was a new firm then, it would offer bigger opportunities for me...As Ed promised, working in ACCRA was indeed an excellent career move. Our friendship transcended political colors and affiliations, even if sometimes, we found ourselves opposing each other and sitting in opposite political fences. Once he even tried to depose me as Senate President. But, the friendship remained.”

– **Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon**

“At a time when winner-take-all seems to be the norm, he conceded when he was wrong and sought consensus to break stalemates, for he believed that progress was a product of give-and-take. He knew when to stand ground and when to seek common ground...

There is another fact of the man worth remembering and emulating, and that is to respect divergence in beliefs, value the contribution of the opposition, and harness contrarian views in improving policy.”

– **Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto**

“I am deeply saddened by EJA’s passing. He guided me through my political journey. *Ang dami niyang advice sa akin* (He gave me plenty of advice) from the time I was vice mayor until I became mayor of Quezon City. He was such a wise man who never seemed to mind sharing his knowledge.”

– **Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista**

“I am saddened to hear that Senator Ed Angara, a statesman and a good friend, has passed away. Ed was a great patriot and a true friend of the EU.”

– **European Union Ambassador Franz Jessen**

“Kahit minumura po kayo, mahal po kayo. Kami din po—he was our biggest critic but he was also our greatest supporter. Ganoon po ang karinyo ng aking tatay. Alam ‘nyo po ‘yun. Kulang po ang oras ngayong araw para pag-usapan ang lahat ng kanyang nailathalang batas, ikuwento ang lahat ng kuwento at banggitin ang lahat ng parangal na natanggap ng aking ama. History and the history writers will take care of that. What we request is that all of you here remember our father fondly as a reformer, as an institution builder, as a builder of dreams, an enabler of dreams, and an enabler of people. My father is human like everyone else. And if he hurt any of you here, humihingi po kami ng paumanhin. As I said, he had a quick temper. It was never personal to him. It was always borne out of a strong will to get things done. Very impatient po ang aking father. A man who loved his country and its people. A man who helped build a better nation for our children and future generations of Filipinos. To all of you, we thank you for sharing his life, his work, his dreams and aspirations for our country. Salamat po nang lubos.”

– **Senator Juan Edgardo Angara** | ■



Fruits of Hard Work

A story of how bananas raised a family and built a community

BY LAKAMBINI BAUTISTA
PHOTOS BY ROMEO PERALTA JR.

Ask the people of Socorro, Oriental Mindoro about what the best *pasalubong* you can buy there, and chances are they will tell you to get Mikko Banana Crackers, which has a store located along Nautical Highway in Barangay Catiningan.

You can buy banana chips everywhere—yes. But theirs are so far the best banana chips this writer has ever tasted. No wonder, the Socorreños are so proud of the man behind it—not Mikko, but Benjamin Esclanda. The brand is named after their eldest son, Mikko.

Esclanda, who was awarded as Outstanding Entrepreneur on the occasion of Socorro's 55th Founding Anniversary, started the business 25 years ago. He got the idea from a banana chips store, the owners of which used to buy sugar and oil from his grocery store in Pinamalayan. Since bananas are abundant in their area, he decided to try the business.

Like many entrepreneurs, he also started small. “*Ako lang ang gumagawa, ako lang din ang naglalako* (I was the only one making the banana chips, and I’m also the one selling them),” he says. However, their kids were young and sickly then, so Esclanda could not save money for a larger business capital. Business was on and off.

It was only 10 years ago when he decided to engage in the business continuously. From the P5,000 that he borrowed from a *bumbay* (money lender), he bought cooking tools and ingredients. Eventually, his business grew, allowing him to rent a place that would become his store. With the money he saved, he was able to build his current factory/store along Nautical Highway.

Now, he has more than 70 workers (mostly residents of Socorro), but he and his wife are

still hands-on when it comes to running the business. Aside from the regular sweet banana crackers, they now offer them in other flavors—cheese, garlic, barbecue, and onion. He is proud to note that their products have reached Metro Manila and the Visayas. Their saba bananas come from Socorro and Pinamalayan.

Meanwhile, their store has also become a one-stop shop where other small entrepreneurs from Socorro can showcase their products.

Twenty-five years since he started the business, Esclanda is now reaping the fruits of his labor. He and his wife were able to send their three children to school—one is now working in Korea, the other works as a fashion designer in Socorro, and their youngest is now in Grade 11. They are able to enjoy a simple yet convenient life.

But to Esclanda, happiness comes from being able to help the people in their community, and being a source of inspiration to Socorreños. Among the fruits he has reaped, this is actually the sweetest. ■



New Heights and Unmanned Skies

Find out why local governments units (LGUs) and government agencies are now investing in drones

BY MAIELLE MORTAYRE

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) are becoming popular today owing to the vast technological and commercial benefits they have. UAVs, also called remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), or more commonly known as drones, are pilotless aircraft with ground-based controller. These can fly up to 400 feet, carry seven kilograms, and go distances of five to seven kilometers. These can be used for emergency medical response, remote surveillance, agriculture management, package delivery, aerial photography, landscape 3D mapping, and data collection.

Since the early 1900s, UAVs have already been developed from bomb-filled balloons to pilotless aerial torpedoes to unmanned aerial combat vehicles. Previously, UAVs served military tactics for reconnaissance, logistics, combat, and decoy purposes. Today, drones are commercially available due to popular demand. Whether for commercial, non-commercial, or recreational use, hobbyists or licensed operators are subject to restrictions as drone usage can endanger public safety and affect the right to privacy.

In the Philippines, the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) has published amendments to the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) regarding RPAS and non-type certificated aircraft i.e. an aircraft without a type certificate issued by any country.



Photo by Sorasak on Unsplash



Photo by Ian Baldwin on Unsplash

P500,000, apart from other civil and criminal charges.

DRONE TECHNOLOGY IN PUBLIC SERVICE

Local governments units (LGUs) and government agencies have begun investing in drones.

1) In Benguet, with the aid of the Department of Agriculture (DA), drone technology fertilizes

farms in mountainous areas with a service fee of P1,500 per hectare. The LGU has also proposed an ordinance to regulate drones in the different municipalities of Benguet.

2) The City Council of Zamboanga made an initial allocation of P500,000 for the purchase of drones to be used for disaster risk reduction management, security, and traffic management.

3) The National Commission on Indigenous People in the Caraga Region (NCIP-13) participated in a training seminar to use UAVs for mapping and monitoring, with participants from the Department of Environment and Natural

Memorandum Circular 29-15 also required the securing of permits from the CAAP. Drones are also not permitted to fly in populated areas, airports, and no-fly zones such as military training camps and the Malacañan Palace. There is also a pending bill filed in March 2018 by Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III. Senate Bill No. 1723 seeks to regulate the use of UAVs or any component of an unmanned aerial system (UAS). Registration with the CAAP is necessary with listed requirements before issuance of a permit to operate. The bill also has penalties for violations; confiscation of the equipment and a fine ranging from P50,000 to

Resources (DENR), Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO), and the Bukidnon State University.

4) In the Cordilleras, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) partnered with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to procure drones for data gathering of the region's road system.

5) The Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) also seeks to utilize drones in traffic and flood management for the rainy season, thanks to drones worth Php400,000 from a private citizen.

6) The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) invited experts from the CAAP to conduct basic drone pilot handling operation for PDEA agents to be CAAP-certified drone controllers after procuring 20 units of drones.

7) The Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) held a demonstration and basic training seminar on RPAS for the survey, assessment, monitoring, and mapping of aqua structures, industries, shore lands, and land covered by the Laguna de Bay watershed.

A modern solution to age-old problems, UAVs, RPAS, or drones offer technological advancement, convenient operations, and efficient service for governmental and commercial operation—soaring to new heights and unmanned skies in the field of public service. ■



Photo by Thomas Griesbeck on Unsplash

Use Eco-Charcoal, Save Trees and Help PWDs

Don't know what to do with water lilies lurking in your river system? Use them to grill your barbecue and put food on the table of our differently abled fellowmen

BY RHODA OSALVO

While the presence of water lilies may cause alarm among many people who immediately think that the river is dirty or dying, there are others who actually delight in this abundance because they can make a living out of these aquatic plants.

Meet the water hyacinth lover—Julieane “Aya” Fernandez, the founder and president of Project Lily PH, which helps persons with disabilities (PWD) in Taguig make a living by turning these flowering aqua plants, coconut husks, and other agriforest waste to eco-friendly charcoal.





Project Lily PH's group photo; Aya Fernandez is standing second from left.



Fernandez is not your usual business owner, and especially not one who makes charcoal. First of all, she's still in school—an incoming fourth year college student majoring in Broadcast Communication at the University of the Philippines, Diliman. Second, she's not who you would have in mind when you think of an entrepreneur dealing with charcoal. Definitely no plain Jane, she's a beauty titlist. Her refreshing looks and her heart for the environment and the PWDs is what made her stand out among the 19 hopefuls at the 2015 Miss Teen Earth Philippines pageant.

In an interview, Fernandez, shares why she was reluctant to take on the job at first. She says, "I met this group in 2014. Back then, they were already converting water lilies to charcoal, having received training from the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)."

Fernandez became interested in the group's endeavor because back in high school, she and her Makati Science High School team did research on using water lilies for fiberglass reinforcement. (This same research paper won them a silver medal at the Taiwan International Science Fair in 2014.) She took

up the group's cause and used Miss Teen Earth as a platform to shine a light on the PWDs and not just on environmental issues.

"All I wanted to do was help them promote their business online. It never occurred to me that I was their leader," this young lady shared when the topic of leadership awards was brought up. The group would later on become Project Lily PH.

Fernandez is the recipient of the Youth Poverty Reduction Challenge Award with Project Lily PH as Most Promising Youth Social Enterprise 2017 during the first Villar SIPAG Award. It was an honor this former student council member didn't expect.

Before that, she was nominated in 2016 by the IamSAM Foundation as one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Youth Leaders. This recognition became an eye-opener.

"I used the opportunity to promote the project to benefit the PWDs.

For one to two months, I worked on the project proposal only to find out that they wanted to stop production, because they didn't have the finances to continue their livelihood. Wanting to save face, what with the foundation's nomination, I thought I'd help out by using my savings from my hosting and modeling jobs. But, to be honest, in my mind, I was just lending the money to them.

"In October, we bought machines and I helped them with marketing – from the labels and packaging to online presence and attending events. In one of those events, I was introduced as the founder and president, and only then did it occur me that Project Lily PH is mine, too," Fernandez admits.

In February 2017, she completely embraced this advocacy and registered the business.

This year, she again received an important award – 2018 Inspiring Filipina Awardee, under the Youth Category, from Go Negosyo.

Today, Project Lily PH has household consumers and restaurants as clients, including the popular Korean restaurant that serves unlimited barbecue, Samgyupsalamat. It produces two metric tons of eco-*uling* per month. That's 176 trees spared per month. And best of all, while protecting the environment, Project Lily empowers PWDs to earn a decent living for themselves and their families.

As Fernandez finishes her last year in college, she aims to raise more awareness on Project Lily PH so that it can prosper, and in the process, hire more PWDs. | ■

The WEAVES of Our Ancestors

Indigenous textiles and weaving traditions are slowly gaining the global spotlight. Know more about these vibrant fabrics and how these traditions represent Filipino culture

BY JOHN LEE CANDELARIA

Before the dawn of colonialism, the land that was to be known as the Philippines was a wonderful world of vibrant colors that were, and still are, best represented by the indigenous tradition of weaving. This is manifested by outstanding textiles of different indigenous groups that still persist up to this day. Notably, most of these weaves originate from the mountainous Northern Luzon and the diverse island of Mindanao, two areas that were the most resistant to colonial powers. This enabled the people to maintain their weaving traditions that we marvel at today.

The world has surely taken notice of these beautiful yet practical textiles. Philippine indigenous weaves have inspired many local and international fashion designers for the bright hues and intricate patterns, or the muted elegance, lightness, and style of many of these cloths. The likes of Salvatore Ferragamo, Valentino, and Giorgio Armani have been enthralled by the *piña* cloth, while Christian Louboutin has created bags out of the bold colors and patterns of the *T'nalak* and other fabrics, in a collection he called *Manilacaba*.

And amidst this newfound interest in Philippine textiles, the designs and colors serve as a window to the Filipino culture of old, and how these cloths have stood the test of time.



T'NALAK WOVEN DREAMS

T'nalak is found in Mindanao, made by the T'boli of Lake Sebu, South Cotabato.

Strands of abaca fibers (in the original red, black, and neutral hues) are boiled and dyed. These are then woven into intricate and creative patterns based on the visions that the T'boli dreamweavers see in their sleep.

The cycle of life in the T'boli culture—from birth, to marriage, to death—is a predominant theme of the T'nalak. For a group of people

with no formal reading and writing structures, weaving is of utmost importance since it tells the story behind their history, tradition, practices, and religious beliefs.



ABEL HERO'S FABRIC

The Ilocos weaving tradition is prominent in the tale "Biag ni Lam-Ang," where the hero, Lam-Ang, wears a shirt and trousers in striped colors, which must have been made out of abel.

Abel fabrics are made from a local sagut cotton yarn, which is woven from an intricate and long process, from harvesting cotton, to processing, dyeing, pattern-making, and weaving using a loom operated by both hands and feet. But what makes abel special is its strength. It is a strong weave meant for everyday wear, and in fashion, could be used for designs that need a lot of structure.

Its strength has been popular for centuries, to a point that the American Plain Indians of yore have been documented as expressing preference for the thick and coarse cotton blankets that come from Ilocos to the New World of the Americas via the galleon trade.

Today, abel-weaving is a rising industry in the Ilocos region, further bolstered by the support of the local and national governments and the innate high quality of the fabric itself.

HABLON ILONGGO'S PRIDE

Iloilo's weaving tradition has given the hablon great prominence since the colonial times; the fabric used to be Iloilo's main export. It is through this fabric that Iloilo became the textile capital of the Philippines, but only for a while, since cheaper Chinese fabrics started flooding the country as early as the 19th century.



Both tattooing and weaving are art forms, and the connection between the two is undeniable through the distinct geometric patterns woven in tight bands of predominantly red, black, and blue. Texture is added through a twill-weave technique; tiny patterns and embellishments made out of beads, Mother-of-Pearl platelets, and small pieces of metal complete the fabric.



YAKAN BEAUTY IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT

The Yakan homeland of Lamitan in Basilan has been marred by conflict for years. But out of this shines the Yakan weaving tradition, where hand-loomed fabrics of bold colors and geometric patterns make a distinct and awe-inspiring statement.

There are five kinds of weaving in the Yakan arsenal of techniques, each lending a different form or function to the textile they produce. The *bunga-sama* is a weave that utilizes pattern sticks in the loom to create the pattern. The *sinuluan* is a warp-floating pattern that is known for its variety of colors and stripes. The *saputangan* is a square cloth with intricate designs that utilize optical illusions to create a depth of field for those who look at it.

The *inalaman* is a technique used often to weave women's wrap-around skirts. Lastly, the *pinantupan* uses simple patterns that are also used for skirts.

Yakan weaving is now a priority industry that is brought to life through the continuous efforts of the Yakan and the government, and demand for Yakan cloths have definitely resurged recently.

There are more Filipino weaves that are seeing a slow but sure revival in recent years. After all, with 7,641 islands and thousands more of ethnically diverse groups, we are bound to create beauty out of the gifts that nature has given us.

In this day and age when foreign fabrics have dominated our daily lives, we need not look far for new patterns, designs, and quality of fabrics for our everyday and occasional use.

So let us all wear the fabrics of our ancestors, and be proud of our own heritage's beauty and artistry. |



PIÑA SHINING FILIPINO ELEGANCE

Piña is Spanish for pineapple, a popular tropical fruit that thrives in the Philippines. The fruit is also the source of the fibers that are woven to make piña cloth, a soft and glossy fabric that is known for its lightness and durability. It is comfortable and yet luxurious, which explains why it has been the fabric of choice for the barong and saya.

While the name is Spanish, the tradition is purely Filipino, and *piña*-weaving has been the oldest industry known in Aklan. The process of extracting the fibers of the pineapple leaves is tedious and cumbersome, but the resulting cloth is beautiful and elegant. This makes piña very expensive, but nonetheless the most desired fabric for formal Filipino attire.

KALINGA ICONIC PATTERNS

Kalinga is currently very popular with millennials who want to be inked by the legendary mambabatok Whang-Od. But another thing the Kalinga are known for is their weaving tradition, exemplified through their textiles.



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