

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT MAGAZINE

# LEAGUE

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2017

VOL. 1 NO. 2 PHP 180.00

**VICE MAYOR  
JOY BELMONTE**

**BRGY. BEL-AIR  
SHINES BRIGHTER**

**ANGONO, RIZAL:  
ARTISTS' HAVEN**

**LAPU-LAPU, CEBU:  
A HISTORIC  
RESORT CITY**

**PAMPANGA SPREADS  
HOLIDAY CHEER**

A portrait of Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte, a woman with long dark hair, smiling, wearing a blue turtleneck sweater, with her arms crossed. The background is a solid dark red color.

## EXPANDING HORIZONS

**QUEZON CITY'S ROADMAP TO MODERNIZATION**

**INSIDE:** VICE PRESIDENT LENI ROBREDO | PCOO ASEC. KRIS ABLAN  
SEN. WIN GATCHALIAN | CONG. MONSOUR DEL ROSARIO  
COUN. RAISSA LAUREL-SUBIJANO



2546-1672



# NEWS 5



LOURDE  
DE VEYRA

RAFFY  
TULFO

LUCHI CRUZ-VALDES  
NEWS5 CHIEF

ED  
LINGAO

CHERYL  
COSIM

## AKSYON

UMAGA 5AM | TANGHALI 12NN | PRIME 6:15PM | TONITE 10:30PM

LUNES - BIYERNES

ON AIR. ONLINE. UMAAKSYON. ALWAYS ON.

RADYO 5  
92.3 NEWS FM

f /News5Everywhere

www.news5.com.ph

@News5AKSYON

➤ Travel in style



THULE  
SWEDEN



New



### Thule Subterra Collection

A complete line of high quality, sleek and contemporary travel bags and luggage for the modern business traveler.



Jake Bros. Inc. exclusively distributes Thule bags, cases and luggage in Thule Stores: SM Aura, SM North EDSA, SM MoA, SM Cebu, SM Clark, SM Store Makati, Landmark Trinoma, Urbanize Stores, Tripologie, Eastwood Mall | Jake Bros - Thule Partner Philippines

Bring Your Life  
thule.com





**REGULARS**

**10 ROUND UP**

**12 BARANGAY FORUM**

**14 SPOTLIGHT**

Food for the Holidays

**17 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**30 SECOND IN COMMAND:**

Vice President Leni Robredo

**84 FINANCE & ECONOMY**

Decoding IRA

**86 SOLUTIONS & INNOVATION:**

Green Antz

**88 SOLUTIONS & INNOVATION:**

Waste to Energy

**COLUMNS**

**20 TALKING POINTS:**

Rep. Monsour Del Rosario

Championing Sports

**24 10 QUESTIONS:**

Sen. Win Gatchalian: The Rundown

**96 LEGAL OPINION**

The 3Ps to Progress

Public-Private Partnership

**92 THOUGHT LEADERS:**

Eng. Robert Rito

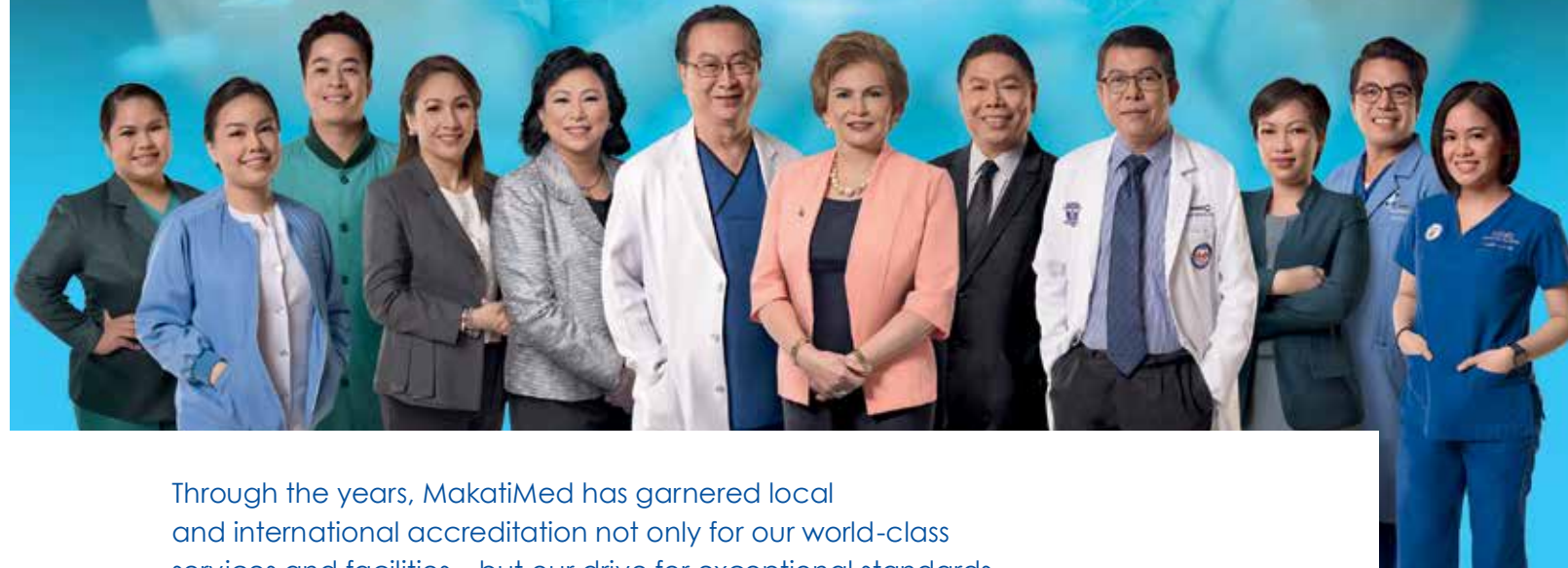
Taking on Traffic



# Makati Medical Center

## A commitment to wellness.

## An assurance of global standards.



Through the years, MakatiMed has garnered local and international accreditation not only for our world-class services and facilities – but our drive for exceptional standards and compassionate patient care.

With the goal of being at the forefront of transforming Philippine healthcare, we integrate modern medical treatment options with top-of-the-line technology, as we diligently serve our patients the quality of care the world enjoys.

**The hospital that truly cares.**



**MAKATI MEDICAL CENTER**  
The Hospital with a Heart.

MakatiMed On-Call +63 2 8888 999

Email [mmc@makatimed.net.ph](mailto:mmc@makatimed.net.ph)

ASC Ref No. M007N112216M



## FEATURES

### 32 ASEC. KRIS ABLAN

Sending a Message

### 38 COUNCILOR RAISSA LAUREL-SUBIJANO

Life with No Limits

### 78 THE HEROES OF MARAWI

Courage at the Front Line

## GOVERNANCE IN REVIEW

### 42 COVER: VICE MAYOR JOY BELMONTE

The Next Step

### 52 BRGY. BEL-AIR

The Value of Progress

### 58 LAPU-LAPU, CEBU

Historic Resort City

### 64 ANGONO, RIZAL

Art & Soul

### 72 PAMPANGA

The Spirit of Christmas



**Publisher** Generoso M. Dungo / **Editor In Chief** Lakambini Bautista / **Art Director** Agnes S. Escasa / **Managing Editor** Kristel Dacumos-Lagorza / **Associate Editor** John Lee Candelaria / **Copy Editor** Ma. Lourdes E. Rosal / **Editorial Assistants** Gemma Dungo, / **Marketing Associates** Juan Miguel Paolo Tungpalan, Daniel Marco Nicanor / **Account Managers** Joey Montanejos, Fruel Rebellon / **Production Coordinator** Isaac Villalobos / **Contributing Editor** Mio de la Cruz / **Contributing Writer** Anna Chato, Leslie Anne Mahusay, Michelle dela Cruz / **Photographers** Ricky Ladia, Renjie Tolentino, Pie David, Paulo Valenzuela / **Illustrator** Amiel Rufo

LEAGUE MAGAZINE is published bi-monthly by The League Publishing Company, Inc. All rights reserved. Copyright 2017 by The League Publishing Company, Inc. No part of the magazine may be reproduced in any manner without the permission of the publisher. Opinions and views expressed in this publication are the writers' and not necessarily endorsed by editors and management of LEAGUE. Address all correspondence to: LEAGUE Magazine, The League Publishing Company, Inc., Unit 1810 Prince David Condominium, 305 Katipunan Avenue, Loyola Heights, Quezon City, Philippines 1108; Tel Nos. (02) 238-3698; (02) 436-2880 / email: editorial@leaguemag.com.ph / www.leaguemag.com.ph



COVER PHOTO BY RENJIE TOLENTINO  
MAKEUP BY FLOE TAPAYAN OF KANEBO  
HAIR BY ERRIZA SANTIAGO

CONNECTIVITY • CONFERENCES • SOCIAL FUNCTIONS • DINING

**EUROTEL**  
The No. 1 Businessman's Hotel

LAS PIÑAS • PEDRO GIL • MAKATI • NORTH EDSA  
BAGUIO • ANGELES • BORACAY • NAGA • VIVALDI EDSA

Central Reservation:  
(+632) 935-6732 / 736-5859 / (+63) 999-888-EURO  
eurotel-hotel.com /myeurotel /eurotelhotelph

MEMBERSHIPS & ACCREDITATIONS






Welcome to the holiday issue of *League* magazine!

The release of our first issue (September-October 2017) was warmly received by the industry. The concept was admired by Local Government Units (LGUs), the Legislative and Executive branches, and even the private sector. Upon knowing about *League*, a number of them offered to share stories to be featured in our pages. This inspired me to continue what we have pioneered, being the first magazine to feature the LGUs' success stories and best practices. The same inspiration drives our editorial team to maintain the quality, work efficiency, and creativity that we put in every issue.

Never have LGUs been very competitive until today. This is seen by how mayors find unconventional ways to establish partnerships, fund the developmental flagship projects, and improve their system from manual to automation, economically competing against their neighboring LGUs. Leaders of today are more focused on environmentally friendly projects, thus, many environmental protection programs were launched in the whole archipelago in recent years.

These rapid changes must be shared with many Filipinos nationwide, and *League's* purpose is to communicate and bring the good message to the Filipino people—the planning, implementation, challenges, and success stories. *League* wants to showcase how these modern LGUs sustain their position to be competitive, innovative, and developmental.

Standards have evolved to create these new parameters that define modern LGUs today. This is the right time to publish the success stories and best practices of the LGUs the way they want it—timely, detailed, and accurate. The time has come for *League* to shine.

  
Generoso M. Dungo

**FIRST PACIFIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY**

**THE COUNTRY'S PREMIER CORPORATE UNIVERSITY**

*Inspire your organization to deliver powerful and measurable results.*

For Program inquiries, contact:  
Jeremy John A. Pintor, Head for Executive Education  
[jjapintor@fpacademy.net](mailto:jjapintor@fpacademy.net)  
Tel No. (02) 696-3051 loc 802

For Facilities and Teambuilding inquiries, contact:  
Norwin Mark T. Saymo, Head for Sales  
[nmtsaymo@fpacademy.net](mailto:nmtsaymo@fpacademy.net)  
+63 998 843 1575  
Tel No. (02) 696-3051 loc 300

FIRST PACIFIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY  
Km 27 Sumulong Highway, Antipolo City  
Tel No. (02) 696-3051 loc 893

"Man's reach must exceed his grasp. In other words, you should be able to set and touch your goals higher than what your hand could grasp. So always reach out for more than what you can think you can do. It's good to set up lofty ambitions. You may not get there but at least you'll enjoy the journey."

CHAIRMAN MANUEL V. PANGILINAN

**BE WITH NATURE**  
IT'S TIME TO LEARN AND EXPLORE IN ANTIPOLO!

**PROGRAMS:**

- ANATOMY OF A GLOBAL FILIPINO LEADER
- INNOVATION CONGRESS
- TEAM BUILDING
- EXECUTIVE EDUCATION
- GLOBAL STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
- BASIC LEADERSHIP SKILLS
- ARS DUCENDI
- WORKPLACE DYNAMICS
- MENTORING AND COACHING
- YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP
- CRAFTING CHAPTERS AND LESSONS IN THOUGHT LEADERSHIP
- ACCULTURATION PROGRAM
- MVP FUTURE THOUGHT LEADERS SUMMIT
- STRESS MANAGEMENT
- ASSERTIVENESS WORKSHOP
- CORPORATE SERIES
- MASTERING THE ART OF LEADERSHIP
- PASSAGE TO A NEW CHAPTER
- LEADING BEYOND THE SELF

**SOCIAL MEDIA & WEBSITE:**

- Facebook: [First Pacific Leadership Academy](#)
- Instagram: [fp\\_academy](#)
- Twitter: [@officialFPLA](#)
- Website: [www.fpacademy.net](http://www.fpacademy.net)



The road to good governance is riddled with challenges. And whenever we are asked why we decided to produce this magazine, our automatic answer is: because we know and we believe that there are many local government officials who are *seriously* doing their job *well*. We in *League*, took it as our social responsibility to propagate these good governance practices for our country to attain progress.

*League* ends the year 2017 on a positive note, by honoring the province, city, municipality, and barangay which have excelled in government competitiveness and efficiency, and sharing lessons that we can all apply in our respective fields of endeavor.

From Quezon City Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte, we learned the importance of having a clear and concrete roadmap to guide local government units in achieving their city's vision. She also stressed the value of truthfulness and accountability in building people's trust.

The province of Pampanga reveals a beauty that is usually overshadowed by the bright lights of its giant lanterns—that is, making the poor and marginalized a priority in its government programs, particularly in healthcare and education.

Bel-Air, the country's richest barangay, espouses a similar philosophy, as it champions the welfare of house helpers in their community and also sharing their blessings to other barangays.

Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu highlights tourism in helping spur economic growth and stimulate local businesses to flourish.

We laud Mayor Gerry Calderon of Angono, Rizal, not only for constantly promoting its art geniuses, but also for its zero squatter policy. He used his mandate to use under-utilized government lands to build low-cost houses for former informal settlers, with each homeowner paying from P300 to P500 only to have a place to call home.

San Juan Councilor Raissa Laurel-Subijano's story teaches us that all of us are called to serve—whatever our status and condition in life is.

We also learned an important tenet from former Taekwondo Olympian, Cong. Monsour del Rosario. "What separates a champion from a person who only does sports to win is that the latter quits when faced with defeat. When you learn to lose, you will learn what it takes to win. The measure of a champion is how many times you rise when you lose," a tenet that we can use as we take on the challenges that our country faces.

Vice President Leni Robredo echoed a similar message highlighted in the "10 Golden Rules," shared by her spokeswoman, Georgina Hernandez Yang: Keep that *laban* attitude. According to Yang, it means an inner disposition to always keep your head up and to stay strong within, even when you feel defeated. "*Laban* doesn't mean bringing other people down, but carrying on with our own mission, which is to continue helping others," said Yang.

Our country was painfully wounded by the enduring battle in Marawi. But we, Filipinos, are tough and resilient. One of the best things we can learn from that harrowing experience is imparted by one of our brave soldiers: "Don't lose hope, especially when in the danger zone." Guided by faith and optimism, and the help of everyone, Marawi can rise up and stand victorious again.

*League* made sure you have an informative and enriching read. So leaf through the pages and pass on your learnings to others.

Don't hesitate to write to us, if you'd like us to feature laudable programs and initiatives in your locality. Our email address is [editorial@leaguemag.com.ph](mailto:editorial@leaguemag.com.ph).

*Lakambini*  
Lakambini Bautista

# Home Loan 100% Cash Back



**It's a loan.  
It's an investment.  
It's an affordable way  
to finance your dream  
home with a reward  
waiting at the end  
of the 20-year term.**

**CALL: (02)8573822**  
**MONDAYS-FRIDAYS • 9AM-4PM**

**Veteransbank**

**A Bank with a Heart for Every Filipino.**

**MOBILE NUMBERS:** 0917.551.6782 (Globe) or 0998.958.8782 (Smart)

#### YOU CAN ALSO VISIT OUR BRANCHES NATIONWIDE:

**METRO MANILA BRANCHES:** Alta Vista-Katipunan, Antipolo City, Camp Aguinaldo, Camp Crame, Marikina, Timog, UP Diliman, Gagalangin (Tondo), Las Piñas, Makati Head Office, Muntinlupa City, Parañaque City, Pasay City, Port Area (South Harbor), Taguig City

**NORTH LUZON BRANCHES:** Baguio City, Baliuag, Cabanatuan City, Clark, Dagupan City, La Union, Laoag City, Lingayen, Malolos, Olongapo, Paniqui (Tarlac), San Fernando (Pampanga), Santiago, Tuguegarao City

**SOUTH LUZON BRANCHES:** Batangas City, Calamba, Imus, Legazpi (Albay), Lipa City, Lucena, Naga, Puerto Princesa, San Jose (Occidental Mindoro), San Pablo (Laguna), Talisay (Batangas)

**VISAYAS BRANCHES:** Bacolod, Catarman, Cebu City, Dumaguete, Iloilo City, Kalibo, Mandaue City (Cebu), Roxas City, Tacloban, Tagbilaran (Bohol)

**MINDANAO BRANCHES:** Butuan, Cagayan de Oro, Davao City, General Santos, Kidapawan, Koronadal, Pagadian, Valencia (Bukidnon), Zamboanga City

[www.veteransbank.com.ph](http://www.veteransbank.com.ph)

Member: **BancNet** and PDIC.  
Regulated by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas  
For inquiries/complaints, you may call the BSP Financial Consumer Protection  
Department at (02) 708-7087 or email [consumeraffairs@bsp.gov.ph](mailto:consumeraffairs@bsp.gov.ph)



### OPAPP CONTINUES PEACE BUZZ IN LEGAZPI CITY

The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) continues with its Peace Buzz in Legazpi City, joined by Bb. Pilipinas Grand International 2017 and National Peace Ambassadress Elizabeth Clenci. The Peace Buzz is a nationwide ongoing caravan to promote peace across the country in observance of the National Peace Consciousness Month. The send-off began in Baguio City (Sept. 21), followed by a second stop in Quezon City (Sept. 22), before continuing to Legazpi City (Sept. 24).

The local government of Legazpi organized a peace walk around the city proper, while Deputy Presidential Peace Adviser Undersecretary Nabil Tan, was present for the opening activity in the provincial capitol. After this, a Youthful Peace Conversation



was held at the Bicol University, with Clenci reminding the youth of their role in the peace process. The Peace Buzz moved on to Catarman and Catbalogan in Samar, then to Butuan City and Davao City, and concluded in Iligan City.



### INAUGURATION OF THE PHILIPPINES' FIRST MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

The National Museum of the Philippines held an inauguration ceremony last Sept. 30, with former President Fidel V. Ramos and Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones as guests of honor. The ceremony was officially opened by National Museum Director Jeremy Barns. Thereafter, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees Ramon del Rosario Jr., gave a formal message expressing gratitude and appreciation for the benefactors, as well as public and private partners, who were instrumental in the completion of the country's first Museum of Natural History.

There will be 12 galleries that will exhibit the country's extensive flora and fauna collection. One of the centerpieces featured is the *ARCANUM XIX, Paradise Gained (1976)*, a large-scale glass mural by renowned glass sculptor Ramon Orlina. The original Antonio Toledo-designed courtyard also features the *Tree of Life*, a P600-million monolith structure made possible by 16 private donations forming the Philippine National Museum Foundation. The grand opening of the new museum is scheduled later this year, in time for the National Museum of the Philippines' 116th anniversary.



### SEA GAMES MEDALISTS REWARDED WITH INCENTIVES

The Philippines took home a total of 121 medals (29 gold) from the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games held this year in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The medalists, along with their coaches, were honored during an awarding ceremony at the Malacañang Palace. President Rodrigo Duterte personally handed out the presidential citations and cash incentives. Also in attendance were officers of the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) headed by PSC Chairman William Ramirez, Siklab Atleta Pilipinas, Philippine Olympic Committee President Jose Cojuangco, Jr., Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, and Presidential Adviser for Sports Dennis Uy.

Pursuant to Republic Act No. 10699, or the National Athletes and Coaches Benefits and Incentives Act, a total of P18,037,500 was given to the athletes, while P7,181,250 were given to the coaches. Gold, silver, and bronze medalists received P300,000, P150,000, and P60,000, respectively. Presidential Adviser for Sports, Dennis Uy, also gave additional incentives to the medalists in the amount of P50,000 for gold, P30,000 for silver, and P10,000 for bronze. The Philippines will be hosting the 30th SEA Games in 2019.

### PHILIPPINE HARVEST MEETS BON APPÉTIT

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and Stores Specialists, Inc. (SSI) partnered with the Embassy of France in Manila for the 6th Philippine Harvest held last Sept. 22 to 24 at Central Square, Bonifacio High Street Central, Taguig. Spearheaded by DA Undersecretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat, the three-day trade and food festival was called "Philippine Harvest Meets Bon Appétit." Philippine Harvest is one of the DA's activities to promote local farm and fish products, while Bon

Appétit is a weekend food market forming part of the "PhilFrance: Feel French!" campaign by the French Embassy in Manila.

The DA gathered 24 exhibitors from across the country featuring organic, artisanal, natural, and indigenous agricultural products, including organic colored rice from the Cordilleras; artisanal chocolates from Davao; cheese from Negros Occidental and Davao; fresh produce from Bukidnon, Davao, and Rizal; and coffee produced by the Tausug farmers from Sulu.

### DOTR BREAKS GROUND ON COMMON LRT-MRT STATION

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) broke ground on Sept. 29 to commence construction of the common station that links four major metro train systems: the MRT-3, the LRT-1, the MRT-7 currently under construction, and the recently greenlit Metro Manila Subway. This comes as positive news after a decade-long legal battle, culminating in a Memorandum of Agreement signed by DOTr, Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA), SM Prime Holdings, Inc. (SMPHI), Light Rail Manila Corp. (LRMC), San Miguel Corp. (SMC), and North Triangle Deport Commercial Corporation (NTDCC) last January.

The common station is built under a Public-Private Partnership at an estimated cost of P2.8 billion to be completed by 2020. The main concourse will have an area of 13,700 sqm, and is projected to accommodate 1.2 million passengers daily. Located between SM North EDSA and TriNoma Mall in Quezon City, the station will have three areas: Area A for LRT-1 and MRT-3 under DOTr and LRMC, Area B as a connector under NTDCC, and Area C for MRT-7 under SMC.



### AFPMBAI REMEMBERS MARAWI TROOPS DURING 52<sup>ND</sup> ANNIVERSARY

The Armed Forces & Police Mutual Benefit Association, Inc. (AFPMBAI) celebrated its 52nd Anniversary last Sept. 8 at the AFPMBAI Head Office's Social Hall, recognizing the plight of their comrades in Marawi. Since 1949, the institution has been offering financial assistance to members of the Philippine troops and their families. The

protection covers the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

In support of their brothers, AFPMBAI launched Lingap Marawi, a donation drive aimed at gathering

support and supplies for the soldiers and civilians affected by the Marawi conflict. They also organized Run for the Troops, a fundraising marathon for all Marawi soldiers. As of August 31, around P7 million have been released to 787 wounded soldiers and P4.17 million given to 12 soldiers killed in action.

### USAID PROVIDES READING ASSISTANCE TO CEBU

The US Embassy in the Philippines, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), aims to improve the reading skills of early grades in Cebu and Mandaue City. Together with the Department of Education in Cebu, Basa Pilipinas was implemented to help more than 420,000 students between kindergarten and Grade 3 in more than 900 elementary schools. The P1.9 billion project has helped more than 1.8 million early graders improve their reading, trained more than 19,000 teachers, and provided more than eight million reading and learning materials. USAID's Mission Director Susan Brems visited the Vito Elementary School in Minglanilla, Cebu last Aug. 9 to hand over books and other educational materials.

USAID also has other projects in Cebu, including the installation of the eCourt systems in the Hall of Justice in Cebu City and the support of a residential facility for sexually exploited children called the Teen Dreamers' Home. USAID also partners with Fellowship for Organizing Endeavors, Inc., Children's Legal Bureau, and Bidlisiw Foundation, Inc. to fight human trafficking.



### DOT HOLDS 28<sup>TH</sup> PHILIPPINE TRAVEL MART

"50 Shades of Fun" at Visit ASEAN 50 was the theme for this year's Philippine Travel Mart (PTM) held last Sept. 1 to 3 at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City. The event was organized by the Philippine Tour Operators Association (PHILTOA) and co-presented by the Department of Tourism (DOT). DOT Secretary Wanda Tulfo-Teo gave a message during the opening ceremony as delivered by Assistant Secretary Malou Japson.

The 28<sup>th</sup> PTM had over 200 exhibitors, who occupied all four halls of the convention center, offering promotional holiday packages, promotional deals on local and international flights, and other travel and accommodation services. In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the event also sought to promote tourism within neighboring ASEAN nations through special tour packages.



## Merry and Meaningful

For these barangays, Christmas is indeed the most wonderful time of the year

INTERVIEWS BY SHIMICO DIANNE NAKAMURA

"Every year, it has become a tradition in our barangay to give happiness to the children and their parents by sponsoring their bonding time. With the help of the NLYPSS Youth Organization, we do outreach programs, where we provide tutorial sessions, filmmaking, and gift-giving. For the *lolas* and *lolas*, we organize a simple Christmas party. We give a special gift for those with the best holiday getup. This year, we are doing the same thing. We are open to those who would like to add anything to our programs."

**Councilor Dave Plande Española**  
BARANGAY 186, ZONE 16, DISTRICT 1, TALA, CALOOCAN CITY



"Every Christmas season, we see to it that all the senior citizens in our barangay have a great time, especially those who have no family or relatives to share this special day with. We hire singers, performers, comedians, and magicians. We serve good food. Before they go home, we give them a Christmas basket consisting of rice and other goods like milk and vitamins. We try our best to make them happy."

**Barangay Captain Allan Martine S. de Leon**  
BRGY. DOLORES, TAYTAY RIZAL



Every Christmas, we have a project called "Maligayang Bata." We give gifts to 5,000 kids in our barangay. We hold a children's party for them. We invite clowns, we prepare a feast. Last year, the kids didn't go to the malls anymore. We brought life-sized robots here in our barangay. We wore the robot costumes ourselves and paraded around the barangay. They didn't know I was one of the robots. The kids were so happy! Aside from the food, we also give gifts and cash prizes. Parents look forward to what we have in store for Christmas, because they get to save. We put up a cinema inside the barangay hall for the kids; they get to watch movies and cartoons. We've been doing this ever since I became barangay captain in 2007. So this is the 10th year of this project.

**Barangay Captain Bernard C. Perez**  
CANIOGAN, PASIG CITY



As the father of Barangay Bambang, it is heartwarming to see the people in our barangay with smiles on their faces during Christmas season. Together with the Sangguniang Barangay and Volunteer Workers, we go to the homes of families with malnourished kids. First, we sing them Christmas carols, then we give them food gifts that they can share with the rest of the family. You can really see the joy in the faces of these parents and kids. We also give toys to indigent kids.

The season of giving is not only for the kids. For the senior citizens, we hold a fun Christmas party. It's when we give them gifts and raffle prizes. As for the Persons with Disability (PWD), we give them groceries that they can share with their families.

This year, after the Simbang Gabi, warm meals will be waiting for the parishioners at the patio of the church.

**Barangay Captain Eddie Meneses**  
BAMBANG, BULACAN

# JLLV

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SERVICES

## CASH NOW??

## NO CREDIT CHECK

## NO PAPER HASSLE

## LOANS FOR ALL PURPOSES

### CONTACT US:

Email: [jllvbussinessservices@yahoo.com](mailto:jllvbussinessservices@yahoo.com) | [jllvbuss.mngt.services@gmail.com](mailto:jllvbuss.mngt.services@gmail.com)

**5738497-09234171407-09277616703**

**MONDAY-SATURDAY | 9:00am-6:00pm**

Ever so grateful to Andreas 'Andy' Kramer and Joyce Sotot for their trust and valued support





Celebrate the best of the Philippines this holiday season with this uniquely Filipino feast.

BY MAIELLE MONTAYRE

The Philippines is known for having the longest Christmas celebration—it starts as soon as the calendar strikes September, and we enjoy it way past its due until January. For most Filipinos, the holidays have a deeper significance—perhaps because as a historically tribal nation, we cherish this particular holiday which brings together entire families; or we're a predominantly Catholic nation; or because Christmas traditions are the continued displayed influences from our Western conquerors.

Whatever the reason, each Filipino household embraces the Christmas season and tirelessly prepares *noche buena* each year. From the scrumptious glazed *hamon* to the familiar round red ball of the *queso de bola* to the ever-present fruit salad, the Filipino Christmas table is unique and filled with delicious delicacies.

Here we dissect the table of a truly Pinoy *noche buena*.

### PASTILLAS DE LECHE

The *pastillas de leche*, with its traditional bite-size shape, is a famous Filipino delicacy from Bulacan. Initially made from carabao milk, other ingredients are added to form a dough that can be shaped into little milk tablets or *pastillas*. As the production of this delicacy has spread to other regions like Cagayan and Masbate, so has its variety increased to include *pastillas de ube*, *pastillas langka*, and *pastillas manga*. *Pastillas* is served as finger food, while everyone waits for the *angkan* (clan) to arrive.

### PASTEL DE CAMIGUIN

Practically an edible Christmas present contained inside that familiar weighty yellow box, the *Pastel de Camiguin* is a brioche bun with filling that can either consist of *yema*, *ube*, mocha, or *macapuno*, among others. Originating from the province of Camiguin, made

since the 1960s by the Gultiano family, the pillow-soft buns are the result of an originally hand-baked recipe, requiring the ingredients to be kneaded together by hand on a hardwood surface. This sweet bread is the perfect pick-me-up for the holidays.



### BIBINGKANG MANDAU

The Filipino Christmas tradition of *simbang gabi* always means completing the nine dawn masses before the 25th, and this tradition is never complete without stopping over for some piping-hot, fresh *bibinka*. A mixture of flour, eggs, and coconut milk or water yields a spongy, sweet rice cake deftly cooked with charred bits at the top and bottom. Grated coconut, cheese, sugar, and butter or margarine can be added as a topping. Aside from the usual *bibinka galapong* and the *bibingkang malagkit*, there is also the *bibingkang Mandaue* from Cebu, which is made instead with *tuba* (coconut toddy) for a tangier aftertaste.



### PANCIT

Almost every grand family gathering in the Philippines has to have some form of *pancit* or fried noodles. Now forming a large part of the Filipino culture, and typically served with the



### WHO IS CURRENT SWELL COFFEE BREWERY?

#### A COFFEE ROASTER & A CAFE

We focus on serving in-house freshly roasted coffee, where guests can choose which type of blend they would like to have, depending on the availability of the daily brew. It also served carefully selected dishes to dine in and offer ready to go foods for the on-the-go people. Our purpose is to serve well crafted and specialty coffee paired with quality homemade foods and dessert.

#### Current Swell Coffee Brewery

Pioneer St. Market, Mandaluyong City (Pioneer St. corner Reliance St. Beside HMR Philippines)

Open from Tuesday- Sunday 10am-10pm

website: <http://www.currentswellcoffeebrewery.com>

ig: currentswellcb #currentswellcb #enjoythebuzz / fb: current swell coffee brewery



belief that it will bring “long life,” there are as many variations of *pancit* as there are regions in the Philippines. There is *buko pancit* from Quezon where coconut strips are used in place of noodles, the *pancit kilawin* from Cavite where unripe papaya is cooked with vinegar and fish, *pancit lomi* from Batangas, *pancit batchoy* from Iloilo City, seaweed *pansit* from Albay, and the famous *pancit Malabon* from Metro Manila.

## PINANGAT OR LAING

Every feast needs a vegetable side dish on top of all the juicy meats and tasty desserts. The *pinangat*, more commonly known in Manila as *laing*, is a popular dish from the Bicol region. Everyone knows food from this region incorporates plenty of *sili* and coconut milk or *gata* in their gastronomic culture. A combination of taro leaves, meat, chillies, and coconut cream are wrapped inside *gabi* leaves, and further simmered in coconut milk to make up the *pinangat*. Spicy and creamy come together in this signature dish that brings some love and heat to those cool December nights.



## KARE-KARE

It's a hearty stew to serve one and all. Kare-kare is a popular Filipino stew from Pampanga cooked in thick peanut sauce and served with a side of shrimp paste or *bagoong*. This versatile dish can be made either with meat such as oxtail, pork hock, offal or tripe; or with seafood such as prawns, squid, mussels; or simply just with vegetables such as eggplant, green beans, Chinese cabbage, or

other greens. It's a family favorite that is sure to herald the spirit of the holidays.

## NAPOLEONES

Round shapes and shiny stars may be the popular theme during Christmas, but there's always room for sweet rectangles on the table. *Napoleones* is a famous delicacy from Bacolod, known as the “Sugar Bowl of the Philippines” for its production of sugar cane and sugar. *Napoleones* is a pastry made of sugar, egg, flour, butter, and milk with a sweet velvety custard similar to the French *mille-feuille*. According to sources, the *napoleones* may have been introduced by the Gaston clan, who originated from France and settled in Negros Occidental.



## SUMAN

For ties that bind the family together, there is always *suman*, a rice cake that combines glutinous rice and coconut milk, wrapped and steamed in banana leaves, and served with either sugar or *latik*. It is a widespread delicacy that has been adapted into different forms by many provinces. In Ilocos, the *sinumanipus* is shaped like a cone; in Pangasinan, the *tupig* is a version of *suman* with coconut strips and is slightly more charred; in Albay, it is called *ibus*; in Tacloban, the *suman moron* is mixed with cocoa; and, in the Western Visayas and South-Central Mindanao regions, there is *suman inilonggo*. Unwrapping these rice cakes are akin to unwrapping presents on Christmas day!



## BUKO PIE

Nothing says Filipino more than warm, fresh *buko* pie. This specialty of Laguna is a baked coconut custard pie, created by the Pahud sisters who, desiring to imitate the American classic apple pie but finding difficulty in securing the main ingredient, dabbled and decided that the Philippine tropics offered a more sensible ingredient—the *buko* or young coconut. The result is a flaky pie crust with a sweet condensed filling containing tender bits of coconut strips. Serve with *ube* ice cream for an even more local touch. Christmas dinners are never complete with cakes or pies, and this is why this particular pie deserves a place on the *noche buena* table.



## LECHON

Everyone knows what it is, and everyone wants a piece of it—skin and all! *Lechon*, made popular by Cebu, is practically a national dish that is a staple in every Filipino *fiesta*, not just Christmas. A serving of *lechon* belly, *lechon kawali*, *lechon liempo*, or an entire pig, which is roasted for several hours over a coal fire, completes the traditional Filipino *noche buena*. 🍖

## NOVEMBER FESTIVALS



### PINTAFLORES FESTIVAL

**(November 3-5)** San Carlos City, Negros City Occidental  
A three-day religious festivity honoring the patron saint of San Carlos City, St. Charles Borromeo.



### HIGANTES FESTIVAL

**(November 23)** Angono, Rizal  
A fiesta of gigantic proportions highlighted by a grand procession of 10-foot high paper-mâché puppets, surrounded by a crowd drenched, water fighting revelers.



### FRUIT AND FLOWER FESTIVAL

**(November 5-9)** Nabunturan, Compostela Valley  
A festival showcasing the abundance of the province produce.



### PUTONG POLO FESTIVAL

**(2nd Sunday of November)** Polo, Valenzuela, Metro Manila  
A festival which aims to promote a deeper cultural awareness about Valenzuela through its famous native delicacy called Putong Polo.

## DECEMBER FESTIVALS



### GIANT LANTERN FESTIVAL

**(December 15-31)** San Fernando, Pampanga  
An annual competition and parade of the biggest, most spectacular lanterns around 40-feet in diameter and bearing thousands of lighting bulbs per piece.



### TAWO-TAWO FESTIVAL

**(December 21)** Bayawan City, Negros Occidental  
Celebration of the scarecrows (*tawo-tawo*) through paper-mâché *higantes* as guardians of the town's crops.



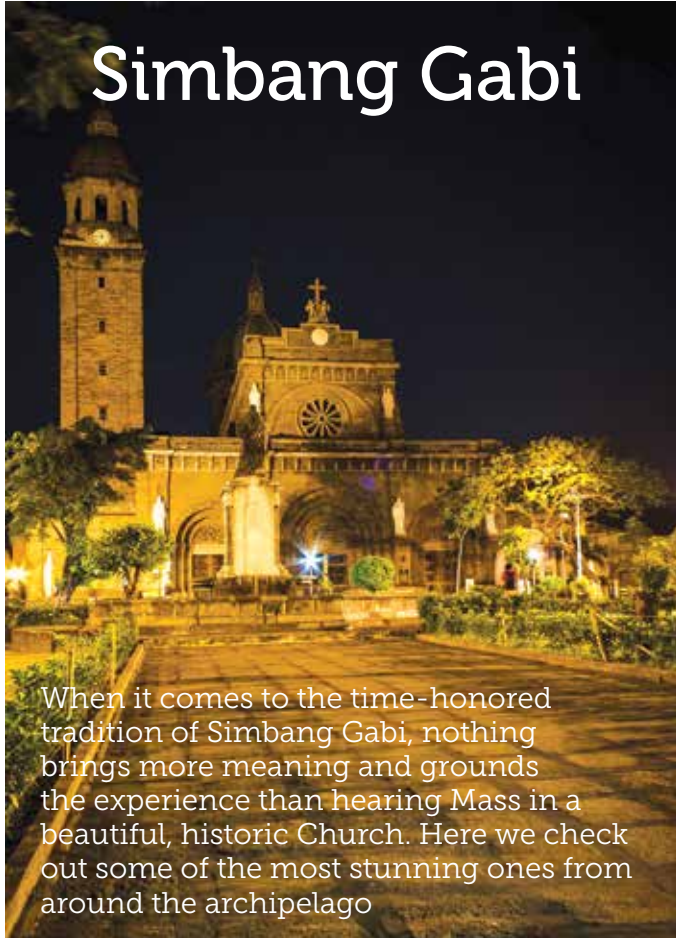
### SINADYA SA HALARAN FESTIVAL

**(December 4-8)** Roxas City, Capiz  
Joy in sharing and thanksgiving celebrated through fireworks display, a sumptuous food fest, and a grand dance festival

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



# Simbang Gabi



Manila Cathedral at night.  
Photo by SANDROCK001 / Wikimedia Commons

## MANILA CATHEDRAL, INTRAMUROS

The Minor Basilica and Metropolitan Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, more fondly known as the Manila Cathedral, is a popular go-to by faithful followers as it is both a symbol of nationalism and Catholicism. It is also a well-loved historical icon located inside the famed walled city of Intramuros, Manila.

Detailed travertine carvings, marble floors, refurbished columns, vaulted ceilings, and a patinated dome, all comprise the neo-Romanesque architecture of the Manila Cathedral. Giving off an old-world vibe, the Manila Cathedral exudes romance and historical charm.

## SAN AGUSTIN CHURCH, INTRAMUROS

Another Intramuros gem is the San Agustin Church. It has been renovated several times, but it still retains the romantic charm, which has garnered the awe of all those who have walked through its doors.

## NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GRACIA CHURCH, MAKATI

If you adore rustic and weathered churches with many romantic stories to share, then the Nuestra Señora de Gracia Church, also known as the Guadalupe Church, is a perfect choice. It is smaller than the two previously mentioned churches, but it is grand in its own right.

## BASILICA ST. MARTIN OF TOURS, TAAL

The Minor Basilica of St. Martin of Tours, located in Taal, Batangas, is known as the biggest Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines, and even in Asia. With a neo-classic architecture perfect for grand celebrations, it stands at 291 feet and is 157 feet wide.

An antiquated facade with columns greets you upon sight, while inside Taal Basilica boasts of wide passageways and high ceilings with trompe l'oeil paintings, an art technique creating optical illusions.

## SAN AGUSTIN CHURCH, PAOAY

Saint Augustine Church was built in 1710 in Paoay, Ilocos Norte. More commonly known as the Paoay Church, it was declared a National Cultural Treasure by the Philippine government in 1973, and became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993, recognized as one of the baroque churches of the Philippines.

## ECO-CHURCH, KAUSWAGAN

Commonly known as the Eco-Church of Kauswagan, San Isidro Labrador Parish Church is found in Kauswagan, Cagayan de Oro, Misamis Oriental.

## DAUIS CHURCH, PANGLAO

Panglao Island, Bohol is known for its white shores, but lying within it is an obscure gem that is the Our Lady of Assumption Church or Dauis Church. It has a mix of Byzantine-Romanesque architecture, gothic styles and neo-classical ornamentation.

The enchanting albumen facade with its romantic portico leads to a bright airy interior, painted blue in devotion to the Virgin Mary. Intricate designs line the ceiling against a checkered tile floor. Before the altar is a legendary well that is said to have provided water for Dauis locals who lacked provisions during the Dutch invasion. Immerse yourself with the folklore and mysticism that is Dauis Church.

## CEBU METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL, CEBU

The Metropolitan Cathedral of the Most Holy Name of Jesus and of St. Vitales, with its Spanish colonial architecture, is the seat of the Archdiocese of Cebu. As grand and prestigious as its Manila counterpart, the Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral is the choice for a solemn, meaningful celebrations and masses.

## MIAGAO CHURCH, ILOILO

The St. Tomas de Villanueva Parish Church or the Miagao Church in Miagao, Iloilo is one of the baroque churches declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993. Distinct for its two attached uneven belfries, its facade houses an intricate design sculpture featuring the images of St. Christopher holding on to the tree of life, St. Thomas Villanueva as the patron saint, St. Henry of Bavaria, and Pope Pius VI. The exterior is made of adobe and coral limestone, while the interiors feature low concave ceilings, an open pillar-free space, and a sanctuary gilded in gold. 🏰

# Good Governance



THE QUALITY OF  
A LEADER  
IS REFLECTED IN  
THE STANDARDS  
THEY SET FOR  
THEMSELVES.

REP. MONSOUR DEL ROSARIO • SEN. WIN GATCHALIAN • VICE PRESIDENT LENI ROBREDO •  
VICE MAYOR JOY BELMONTE • ASEC. KRIS ABLAN • COUNCILOR RAISSA LAUREL-SUBIJANO



“

Sports is  
my passion,  
public service  
is my vocation.



## Kick Into High Gear

How the ebullient Monsour del Rosario found his way from being an international Taekwondo titlist, to action star, to congressman and sports advocate, representing the First District of Makati and the rights of Filipino athletes in the House of Representatives

BY ANNA CHATO  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAULO VALENZUELA  
GROOMING BY FLOE TAPAYAN OF KANEBO

Recently named the chief of mission when the Philippines hosts the 30th Southeast Asian (SEA) Games in 2019, First District of Makati Representative Manuel “Monsour” del Rosario III definitely has his assignment cut out for him. With 11 countries in Southeast Asia competing in over 22 sporting events, the world-class athlete and congressman admits there is pressure for the Philippines to become overall champion as host country. “People are hungry for sports and glory in this country,” he says.

### THE JOURNEY OF A CHAMPION

Like every great athlete, del Rosario started out small and with life struggles that ended up fueling his passion for sports. “As a child, I was always getting picked on. I was getting bullied because I didn’t speak Bisaya or Ilonggo; I spoke Spanish and English at home. I always fought back but I always lost. Those experiences of being bullied in school and my exposure to Bruce Lee movies drove me to the world of martial arts.”

He tried out a number of sports (basketball, swimming, track and field) in his adolescence, but found that he

excelled much more in Taekwondo. But the trauma and fallout from the breakdown of his parents’ marriage cut his martial arts training short, and it wasn’t until high school that he was able to resume training in the sport.

“First year high school in Colegio San Agustin, I saw a full-contact tournament. I joined a Taekwondo tournament to test out my skills. There was a Malaysian boy who gave me a hard time. I realized my stamina and endurance couldn’t finish the fight. After the fight, I made a pact with God. I said, ‘If You think I could excel in this sport, make me win. I’ll give up all my vices.’ *Ang tagal ng* decision *ng* referee. When the referee raised my hand, I thought it was a draw. I was surprised I won. Nine minutes in the ring and it changed my life,” del Rosario recalls.

As for his foray into the world of cinema, he says, “I didn’t want to be an actor. I didn’t come from a showbiz family. But I was asked to enter the movie industry to help promote Taekwondo. Back in the 1980s, many people knew about karate and Judo, but very few people knew about Taekwondo. “They might be so inspired they’d join Taekwondo,”

they said. “The next Taekwondo may be inspired to enter because of you. That was my mission.”

### SEGUEING TO CONGRESS

In the 1990s, when del Rosario was at the peak of his showbiz career doing lead roles in four films at once, he was approached to run for public office in Makati. “They said, ‘You have a good heart. You can use your popularity to enter politics.’ I declined. I was having fun, I was not from a political family. It was not my dream. When I was a kid, my idols were Muhammad Ali, Bruce Lee, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, and Ken Norton. Until I had my firstborn, my son. I said, ‘My son is going to grow up in this world. It’s not the world that I want for him.’ Then I had my daughter.” Being a father became a game changer for him.

“In 2007, I ran for councilor of Makati. I lost. I learned that in order to win in politics, you have to have a good political party and someone true to their word.” He decided to run again and won. Up for re-election as councilor, on Dec. 10, 2016, at 1 p.m. on the last day of filing for candidacy, the stakes were suddenly raised when he was asked to withdraw his candidacy for councilor and to file for congressman by 5 p.m. And with that, he was elected into his current position.

As for his continued focus on sports, he says, “I don’t get anything from my advocacy for Philippine sports. I do it for love of the sport, love of country, and to show that we can kick ass.”

### KICK THE BAD HABITS

Sports as a weapon to combat drug addiction has been tried and tested, since in many ways, the problem of illegal drugs is both a health and a psychological issue. “A lot of people who go into drugs are hopeless. They don’t know what to do,” says del Rosario. He empathizes with the youth in particular and sees hope in sports, which he considers a way to turn their future around. “I was able to change my life through sports,” he quips.

Del Rosario adds, “Instead of wasting your energy in destroying your life, why not use it constructively? Focus your energies on activities that will benefit your future. You’ll never know what opportunities will open up for you.





**What separates a champion from a person who only does sports to win is that the latter quits when faced with defeat. When you learn to lose, you will learn what it takes to win. The measure of a champion is how many times you rise when you lose.**



“The reason I continued with sports is because it changed my life,” he says. “I want to show the younger generation that if you come from a broken home, are into drugs, into alcohol, are thinking of suicide, sports can change your life.”

#### GROOMING WORLD-CLASS ATHLETES

Del Rosario puts forward a plan to develop athletes at the barangay level, and in doing so, discover world-class athletes ready for international competitions.

He proposes to pass a resolution requiring barangays to have an inter-barangay sports competition in swimming, basketball, and other sports in the SEA Games. The winners will then proceed to represent their districts in an inter-district competition. After that, they move on to an inter-city competition. That way, good athletes can be scouted by top universities. Talented kids are discovered and, if poor, are given a chance to receive the quality undergraduate education that they deserve. Thereafter, they can enter the Palarong Pambansa, the winners of which qualify for the national team. The training and the levels and number of competitions that they have to go through prepare them for the rigors of international competition.

On how the Philippine team can improve when the country hosts the SEA Games in 2019, he says, “We need the support of the Philippine Olympic Committee, Malacañang, Philippine Sports Commission.” Regarding the preparations for hosting the event, they are looking at inviting four or five countries for pocket competitions to see if the venues, transportation, and other logistics are viable. As for the Philippines competing, he says, “The sports media have been asking me if we can be overall champion. I tell them, ‘I have seen the Philippine athletes, I have seen their hearts. We can win. If we are united, like dominoes, everything will fall into place.’”

He reveals that his ultimate dream is to see the Philippines win a gold medal in the Olympics. The Philippines has been competing since 1924; its highest achievement thus far has been winning three silver and seven bronze medals.



At the Philippine Sports Commission-Philippine Olympic Committee Incentives Awarding Ceremonies with Hidilyn Diaz, weightlifting silver medalist in the 2016 Rio Olympics; Steve Hontiveros, Philippine Olympic Committee Secretary General; and Arnold Agustin, Philippine Sports Commission Commissioner

#### CHAMPIONING SPORTS IN CONGRESS

The first bill he drafted aims to protect the national athletes who represent the country and their coaches. Since most of them are forgotten after they retire from their sport, some of them have had to sell their medals to put food on the table for their families. To make a living, some are compelled to teach in other countries and pass on their skills and know-how to foreign students.

To address this, del Rosario drafted a bill that will provide retired national athletes with an allowance or the same benefits as senior citizens, discounts in housing and transportation. “Sports is my passion, public service is my vocation,” he says.

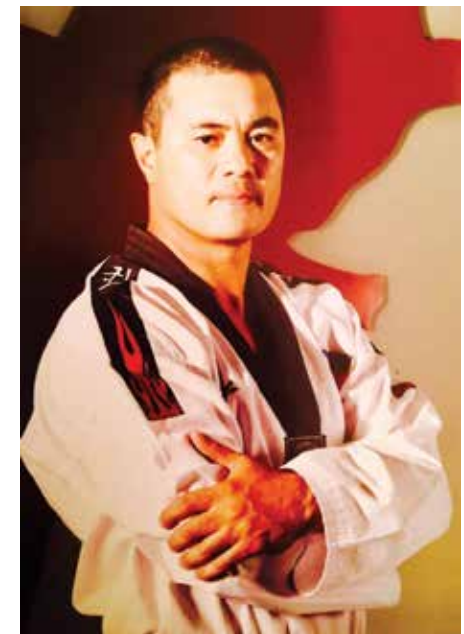
#### SPORTS MANTRA

Del Rosario has faced many of the challenges in his life head on, living to fight another day in the face of defeats and standing with head held high through life’s ups and downs. He says, “As a driven athlete, I want to excel and do well in whatever I do. What separates a champion from a person who only does sports to win is that the latter quits when faced with defeat. When you learn to lose, you will learn what it takes to win. The measure of a champion is how many times you rise when you lose.” He also emphasizes the importance of humility in sports and in life, as he says, “The higher you get, the lower you should bow your head.”



At the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Youth Tenpin Bowling Championship with World and Asian Bowling Federation President, His Royal Highness Sheikh Talal Mohammed Al-Sabah of Kuwait (middle), POC President Jose “Peping” Cojuangco Jr., and POC Secretary General and Philippine Bowling Association President Steve Hontiveros

**The sports media has been asking me if we can be overall champion. I tell them, ‘I have seen the Philippine athletes, I have seen their hearts. We can win. If we are united, like a dominoes everything will fall into place.**



Cong. del Rosario was recently bestowed the Man of the Year for Taekwondo award by the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) last Dec. 7. He received the honor from World Taekwondo Federation President Dr. Chongwon Choue at WTF’s Kukkiwon headquarters in Seoul, South Korea.

More importantly, he has learned from his experiences and dedicates himself to constant self-improvement the

way a consummate athlete does. “If you see the world at 50 years old the way you did at 25, then you haven’t learned anything,” he says.

In 2019, Del Rosario will also be facing another round of battle in a different sport: the national elections. Going up against the challenge of being both chief of mission for the SEA Games and running for re-election as congressman, he remains pumped and ready to face both. He does admit, however, “If I do win as congressman, I’ll be fired up for the SEA Games.” ■





# In It to Win It

BY JOHN LEE CANDELARIA  
INTERVIEW BY KRISTEL DACUMOS-LAGORZA

**I**t has been an eventful first year for newbie senator Sherwin Gatchalian, one of the few first-termers elected to the Senate. He proves, however, that his experience in the private sector and local government allows him to bring something new to the august senate halls. In this Q&A, we take a peek into his ruminations on his first year in the Senate, his advocacies, and his ideas on how the government can be more efficient in serving the nation's best interests.

## 1 How is your first year in the senate? How different is it from former positions you helmed?

The first few months were just immense culture shock. I may have had experience in the House of Representatives, but the Senate is a different thing altogether. You are under the microscope all the time. Once you enter the session hall of the Senate, you will be scrutinized on all fronts. That hall's seating capacity is just around 300, but all cameras from all mainstream media networks are present. The entire nation is watching you. I had to get used to it and adjust as fast as I can.

My experience as a Congress representative and as mayor of Valenzuela is very distinct from my current position, and the stark difference is that now, my constituency is the entire country. You are expected to know all issues, local or national. It is impossible to know everything but as a senator, you have to make it possible. So I do my best to constantly update myself on many issues. In this aspect, it is important to have a team that you trust to deliver, and I am happy to have a staff that is as dedicated in this as I am.

## 2 How would you describe the work in the Senate? How do you prepare for it?

My background is very local. When I was mayor, I was tired physically. I make sure I talk to each person who enters my office. The Senate is different in a more cerebral, mental dimension. You have to absorb reports and briefs in a matter of minutes. You process information all the time. You have to know what is happening inside the country, in the region, and even outside the country, because whatever happens outside interplays with the inside.

I must also note that the Senate has a very competitive environment. We may all be friends but when it comes to work, you feel that there is competition. This is but expected because we all work towards delivering the best to the nation. We do our best to outdo, not just each other, but ourselves. That is what

I appreciate in the Senate. The people here are so good, you cannot help but be inspired. And it would be a shame to arrive in any meeting or session unprepared.

**We are lucky that Marawi's local leadership, under Mayor Majul Gandamra, is progressive and proactive. I am confident that the national and local government will have no problem in rebuilding Marawi, and transform it into a vibrant economic powerhouse in the south.**



It may not be apparent in the media but I would say that majority of the time, the senators maintain a cordial and harmonious relationship. But there are certain topics that are too polarizing and are usually the source of intense discussions. We take sides on certain issues and we do not take it personally. I may be a member of the Senate majority but when I go against the majority, they understand because my stand is based on my personal convictions.

## 3 Who among your colleagues in the Senate do you look up to as mentors?

The Senate is a pleasant mix of seasoned senators from different backgrounds and walks of life. Since I am chair of the Committee on Economic Affairs, I learn a lot from Senator Ralph Recto. He is impressive especially on economics, finance, and commerce. He has a way of dissecting issues that I would describe as creative. He can show you the in-and-out of different variables of an issue and the interplay of these. Everyone in the Senate has something to offer so I learn a lot from my colleagues.



Senator Gatchalian in his first meeting with President Rodrigo Duterte at the Malacañang Palace last January 2017



“

**The country's energy situation needs our attention, and we must focus on the supply. Our electricity demands may be sufficiently supplied, but to lower the cost, we must find other suppliers.**



Senator Gatchalian, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy, learning the dynamics of an electric facility at the First Gen Clean Energy Complex in Sta. Rita, Batangas



Senator Win Gatchalian has been a vocal proponent of free college education since 2015. The passage into law of the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act is a world-class reform that elevates educational access in the Philippines to a superior standard.

#### 4 As a senator, what is your strength, and what do you bring to the table?

In my work as a senator, I draw upon two very distinct backgrounds. One is business and the private sector, and another is my local government experience. I would not say I am an expert in any of the two, but my learnings from these two fields prove to be very instrumental in how I go about my role as a legislator.

#### 5 What are the bills that reflect your advocacy, your legislative agenda?

We recently passed the Free Higher Education Act. It is a radical reform in the education sector and one that is direly needed. I have been an advocate of this since 2015, when I was still in the House of Representatives. Back then, we projected the cost to be around 15 billion. That is just 0.4% of the national government's budget then. But that projection only included tuition, and we must admit the reality that tuition is but one cost of education, and with everything considered, the projection is now at around 30 to 40 billion. I still remain steadfast that it is sustainable.

Free higher education is sustainable, especially if the president remains an advocate of education. And I think all politicians are perpetual advocates of education. We must contend with the fact that we are far behind compared to our neighbors. Our education spending currently stands as less than 5% of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while the international standard is at 6-7%. And if we are to compare what we spend for higher education to the amount we spend for basic education, the disparity is very big. With this law, we are beefing up spending for education in general, putting it up to par with the international standard.

Another legislative priority for me as chair of the Senate's Energy Committee is to lower electricity rates. To do this, we would need several laws. But the goal is to make electricity rates much affordable for the Filipino people.

“

**We do our best to outdo not just each other but ourselves. That is what I appreciate in the Senate. The people here are so good, you cannot help but be inspired. And it would be a shame to arrive in any meeting or session unprepared.**



The country's energy situation needs our attention, and we must focus on the supply. Our electricity demands may be sufficiently supplied, but to lower the cost, we must find other suppliers. We must explore indigenous sources to build a stable and sustainable supply of affordable electricity. Renewable sources of energy such as wind, solar, hydro, and geothermal must also be given attention, because these sources insulate the Philippines from supply shocks due to external global events.

#### 6 One of your advocacies since you were in the House of Representatives was the strengthening of the Anti-Hazing Law. What are your thoughts on it, especially now that hazing has taken another life again?

It is sad that talks of hazing as a crime

only booms when someone dies. But after all the media attention, it also dies down as an advocacy, something we easily set aside. Those vocal about it would go on and focus on issues that the media puts into the spotlight. This time around, it is different. Before, it was only the House of Representatives that was vocal on its stance against hazing. Now, even the Senate is definitely up to task. Now that it is a priority, I believe we will pass something very soon.

#### 7 As chair of the Committee on Economic Affairs, how do you see the Marawi crisis, and what steps are being taken towards rebuilding the city?

Now that the President has declared the end to the Marawi Crisis, we will

definitely work on rebuilding the city. The only question now is how fast and how enduring the efforts would be to rebuild a city, especially since it is not just any ordinary city, there are religious considerations we must always take to mind.

We have fought for a higher budget for the rehabilitation efforts. The initially proposed P20 billion would not be enough; we must spend at least P47 billion to make sure that facilities will be rebuilt, and that the lives of the people will be returned to normal.

We are lucky that Marawi's local leadership, under Mayor Majul Gandamra, is progressive and proactive. I am confident that the national and local government will have no problem in rebuilding Marawi, and transform it into a vibrant economic powerhouse in the south.





Senator Gatchalian's proposed Senate Bill No. 199, which seeks to replace the Anti-Hazing Law of 1995 (Republic Act 8049), aims to completely abolish hazing. Photo shows officials and students of Urdaneta City University in Pangasinan expressing their support in one of his series of forums in different schools and communities.

## 8 How would you describe your leadership style?

I am fair, but I am also very strict. My team could attest to that. I am very disciplined. While I believe that leadership styles must also be situational, I would say that I make it a point to embody this discipline so that my team would also follow suit.

I treat my team as an organization that is my own. The same level of prudence, of discipline that I apply on myself, I apply it on my team as well. This has been the way I have been doing it since my time as mayor. I am very prudent and transparent when it comes to money. I scrutinize it to the smallest centavo.

This applies to my work in the Senate, especially when we tackled the national budget. While we may have touched on the sensitivity of agencies in terms of budget allocation, we maintain the same amount of strictness in the way we handle our own finances. Some feel bad that their budgets were cut. But what can we do? It is the money of the people. If you cannot justify your budget, we would not have second thoughts in cutting it.

## 9 Change in the government is said to be slow. What are the hurdles on government efficiency?

I would have to agree that the

government is really slow. While other countries have embraced technology and have embedded it in governance, the Philippines is still stuck. My best example of this slowness is evident in communication. Our country still lives in the age of paper. Everything is still on paper, otherwise, it is not deemed official communication. Instead of utilizing email, all our invitations must be sent via paper. A message that could be sent and received in an instant takes a week before it reaches the person.

The public has taken technology in its hands. The millennials are more and more online now. And yet the government is still stuck in the belief that technology is expensive. This is not true anymore. It is cheap now, and with government promotion, it can reach a wider audience and can definitely aid us in government efficiency and service delivery.

Another hurdle in government efficiency is the lack of a national ID system, something that could immensely improve the way the government delivers services and makes transactions faster. But the resistance from several sectors makes it difficult to enact this system.

## 10 You mentioned how fast communications can be because of technology, since we are now living in the age of social

## media. Can this help government efficiency?

Through technology, communication is faster. And it is impossible to know everything without proper communications channels. But in the age of social media, we also notice that the attention span of people has become shorter and shorter. This means that communications mediated through social media will be more effective if they are clear, simple, and organized. We must also consider the broadness of the reach of social media, and this may be augmented by traditional and mainstream media platforms such as radio, television, print, and the like. The government must utilize all platforms to reach the people and technology can aid us in this.

While social media can help the government, it is also a challenge. At some point, it is good to be on social media to gain feedback, but it also opens you to possible "trolls." Just a few days ago, I was not able to stop myself from engaging a critic on Twitter. So as a personal rule, I welcome feedback and engage real people. But, as my colleague Senator Sonny Angara recommended, there is always the mute button when someone is obviously just there to troll you. There is no winning over these trolls, so we just have to learn to turn it off. ■

# A STRONG REPUBLIC THROUGH PROGRESSIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS

Feasibility Study for Flagship Projects  
Environmental Management  
Ecosystem Management  
Urban Planning and Development  
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)  
Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC)



Partner for the Development of LGUs and Government Entities in the Philippines

Unit 1810 Prince David Condominium, 305 Katipunan Avenue, Loyola Heights, Quezon City, Philippines 1108  
Tel Nos. (02) 238-3698 (02) 436-2880



# 10 Golden Rules of Public Service

Vice President Leni Robredo's spokesperson, Georgina Hernandez-Yang, talks about the leadership lessons she has learned from the second highest executive official of the Philippines

AS TOLD TO LAKAMBINI BAUTISTA



**1 Keep that *laban* attitude.** This doesn't mean being *palaaway*. It's more of an inner disposition to always keep your head up and to stay strong within, even when you feel defeated. Stand your ground. *Kahit tinitira ka na, huwag kang mawalan ng lakas ng loob.* *Laban* means continue doing our work, fighting for our objectives and for the people who put VP Leni in office. *Laban* doesn't mean bringing other people down, but carrying on with our own mission, which is to continue helping others.

**2 Serve the poor and marginalized.** VP Leni genuinely cares for the poor. She makes sure that all that we do in the office, the direction that we take responds to the needs of the least, the last, and the lost. She always mentions that in her messages and speeches. I feel that it comes from her heart and it's something that she really believes in. She's been a lawyer for the poor, even before she became a congresswoman and vice president. She goes to different fisherfolk communities, defending the rights of women and labor organizations, and it's something that she still brings with her even until now that she works as VP. She maximizes her position to give and do as much as she can for the families in the *laylayan*.

***Kahit tinitira ka na, huwag kang mawalan ng lakas ng loob. Laban doesn't mean bringing other people down, but carrying on with our own mission, which is to continue helping others.***



**3 Listen before making decisions.** VP Leni's type of leadership is participatory. Hers is not the top-down approach. She consults with her constituents. She personally talks to the people, she goes to the communities, *'yung mga nasa laylayan ng lipunan*. She sits with them in the *kubo*, eats with them, talks to them—without any fanfare. She has it in her to connect with the people in a very personal way. She really immerses herself in the lives of the people in the communities in a participatory way, *hindi* authoritative, *hindi* *nagdi-dictate*. *Nakikinig muna bago magdesisyon*.



Finding joy in public service is one of the things that Georgina Yang learned from VP Leni Robredo.

**4 Bring people together.** She engages the different stakeholders—private companies, NGOs, communities, etc.—because she knows that she cannot do it alone. She makes her office available to them. VP Leni has a convening power to enjoin people to resolve issues, to come together to address the concerns of people in the community.

**5 Stay true to who you are.** During the campaign period, in one of the first few meetings that we had with (then vice presidential candidate) Leni Robredo, she told us: “I know this is a national campaign and that there will be some demands from me. But as much as possible, I want to make sure that we do not veer away from my core or who I really am.” And even now that she's VP, she's still that same person. *Hindi siya plastik. Ang mga ginagawa niya ay palaging totoo sa kung sino talaga siya.* So we, her staff, also take after her. We stay true to ourselves.

**6 Be solution oriented.** Never come to her with a problem without offering any solution. We have to be able to offer alternatives and make sure that we also have the capacity to resolve the issues and concerns that we encounter. She is solutions-oriented herself, so we make sure that we give her alternatives before she even recognizes that there is a problem.

**7 Don't forget to laugh.** I like opportunities when we're just waiting for the flight—from the provinces, going back to Manila. VP Leni loves to share stories, *nagtatawanan lang kami*. There's always time for laughter with her. When it's time to work, *talagang bigay todo lahat. Pero kapag kuwentuhan at tawanan, marunong din siyang magbiro.* *'Yun ang na-appreciate ko sa kanya, hindi parating serious, may mga light moments din*, especially after a long day of traveling to communities.

**8 Be caring and nurturing.** VP Leni shows motherly care. Knowing that our relationship is not an impersonal boss-staff relationship is very important to me.

She takes time to listen to my stories, ask questions about my family once in a while. And I know those questions are asked out of motherly care; she's like a second mom to us. I appreciate that she makes herself available for that kind of personal time that we spend with her once in a while.

**9 Be frugal, but within reason.** For instance, she looks at our proposed budget for provincial trips. She makes sure that we employ just the right amount of manpower, because she knows how much it would cost. She looks at the budgets for van rentals, etc., making sure that we don't do any excessive spending in the office. It's a trait that I would like to continue to emulate.

**10 Be thoughtful.** On our birthdays, she never fails to give us a little token or gift. When she travels, attends international conferences, *bawat isa sa amin may pasalubong* from VP Leni. We appreciate that she remembers us. Very motherly, *parating may pasalubong*. ■

*Georgina Hernandez-Yang is the spokesperson of Vice President Leni Robredo, and the head of the anti-poverty advocacies and programs unit, which is responsible for the Angat Buhay program. She has been working with VP Leni since 2015.*



# The Road to Freedom of Information

An inside look at the Presidential Communications Operations Office and their implementation of the historic FOI program

BY MARCO NICANOR  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RENJIE TOLENTINO  
GROOMING BY FLOE TAPAYAN OF KANEBO



**T**he Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) has been at the forefront of the unprecedented implementation of the Freedom of Information (FOI) program. The agency was tasked by President Rodrigo Duterte to ensure the implementation of the FOI to allow the Filipino citizens to request from the executive agencies any information about government transactions, documents, decisions, and research data, provided that it does not compromise privacy restrictions and matters of national security.

Atty. Kristian Ablan, Assistant Secretary of the PCOO for Policy and Legislative Affairs and Director of the FOI program, points out that “All the best democracies have transparent relationships with the citizens, where the citizens know everything that the government is doing. We have to embrace this culture of transparency and openness because all of these information came from the taxpayers’ money.”

The Executive Order of the President pertains to all government agencies, government owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), and state universities and colleges (SUCs). These agencies and institutions under the Executive branch are also instructed, not only to make their information and data available and accessible, but also to come up with a People’s Manual



Ablan and his team have been conducting FOI caravans to increase awareness of the FOI program.



containing necessary guidelines to aid the general public in making FOI requests from their office.

## THE LONG, UNEVENTFUL HISTORY OF THE FOI

The right of every Filipino citizen to have access to information from the government is written in the constitution. In the aftermath of martial law and the end of dictatorial rule, the people clamored for more transparency and accountability, recognizing that access to information concerning public affairs can help limit the incidences of deception and corruption in the government.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution carries that promise of FOI. But after almost three decades of failed attempts at legislation for an FOI program, there was still nothing tangible to be had of such promise.

Fortunately, barely a month in office, President Duterte made good on his campaign promise of combating corruption and ensuring a transparent government by signing Executive Order No. 2. The order operationalizes the executive branch to have an FOI program in place.

## SPEARHEADING A CULTURE OF TRANSPARENCY

The PCOO’s mandate is to monitor compliance to the program and to collect the submissions of different agencies.

**All the best democracies have transparent relationships with the citizens, where the citizens know everything that the government is doing. We have to embrace this culture of transparency and openness, because all of these information came from the tax payers’ money.**

Ablan says, however, that there were some agencies that were reluctant to disclose information. He explains, “We found out that usually, agencies don’t comply not because they don’t want to comply but because they don’t know how to comply. That’s the source of their reluctance. They feel that there’s a gray area. We come in and say that there is no gray area. This is what you disclose, this is what you withhold, this is what the other agencies are doing, and maybe you can replicate them in your particular agency.”

Realizing this oversight, the PCOO saw the need to guide and capacitate the agencies about the FOI so that they are equipped to come up with their own manuals and handle the FOI requests appropriately.

To encourage the agencies to be active in this endeavor, the PCOO also solicited the help of the Department of Budget and Management along

with the Inter-Agency Task Force for Performance Base Bonuses to include a provision for having their FOI manual done and uploaded to the FOI website as criteria for the agency to get their bonuses.

“We started with only 15 agencies in December 2016. Since we started the monthly FOI workshops, there’s at least a monthly 30% increase on boarding. So from 15 agencies, we now have more than 150 agencies and on track to get all national government agencies by first year anniversary,” Ablan proudly shares as evidence that the executive branch is embracing the culture of transparency.

## SPREADING THE INFORMATION

“We try to maximize the resources of the department. Maybe that’s one of the reasons why the President gave it to the PCOO—because we have resources on radio, TV, social media,



and print,” says Ablan. “We came up with infographics that we spread on Twitter and Facebook; we requested movie houses to show our animated video before screenings.”

He admits that there is still much ground to cover outside of Metro Manila. “We still need to go around; we still need to explain to the masses in the rural areas of the country.”

Ablan and his team have also been consistently making the rounds on major TV and radio stations, and conducting FOI caravans and workshops in different provinces to talk about and increase awareness of the program, especially with the agencies and government units that request for their assistance. FOI paraphernalia and briefers have been made available in English, Tagalog, Bisaya, Hiligaynon, and Ilocano

languages. There are also comics printed for the general public to better grasp and understand the FOI.

Additionally, informing the general public is as much an exercise of giving them the right knowledge and correcting their misconceptions. Some have a limited notion that the FOI is only for the media, or society organization, to make sure that a contract is above board or to expose corruption. The FOI Director agrees with those statements, “Yes, the FOI is for that, but the FOI is more than that. We want our fellow Filipinos to learn that the FOI is more than holding the government accountable; it is also about getting the information to make better decisions in life.”

He further shares that through the FOI, a citizen can get education

statistics from DepEd, or information on how to get conditional cash transfer from DSWD, or get crime statistics to know which areas are safest, as these are among many other information the general public has the right to access and acquire.

#### FREEDOM OF INFORMATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Although it was not part of the executive order, the PCOO recognizes the significant role that the internet plays as a vehicle for information dissemination and a platform for discourse and communication. Ablan shares that they foresaw how not having a centralized website would only spur other agencies to create their own portals and would lead to difficulties in gathering pertinent data for the FOI. “We want the FOI to be data-driven and the only way to be data-driven is to consolidate all the data coming from different agencies. And you can only achieve that through a centralized website,” says the Assistant Secretary.

Hence, they have also launched the eFOI website ([www.foi.gov.ph](http://www.foi.gov.ph)) to complement their efforts. Through this website, people can not only access all important resources of the FOI online but also make requests to the agencies themselves (and see the statistics of agencies and how they are handling FOI requests). He further shares, “We are also among the very few FOI websites in the world that is initiated by the government, while others are initiated by civil society organizations.”

Ablan is proud of the website’s success. He says, “It is already fully up and running and we have good feedback about the website. We have almost all of the departments online. The US website has only 115 federal agencies; we have more than 150 national agencies on ours—meaning to say that Filipinos have more access to information than in the US.”

#### RECOGNIZING THE EFFORTS AND SUCCESS

To celebrate the first anniversary of the FOI, the PCOO will be hosting an FOI Summit. International experts on the FOI from different countries will be invited to give their insights in addressing challenges and share their best practices as well. They purposely scheduled this as such so that the agencies will already have a year’s worth of experience and relatability

when they engage in healthy discussions with the guests from abroad.

The PCOO will also be conferring awards in recognition of agencies which have performed well with the program and show appreciation to civil society organization which have put the FOI to good use.

#### EMPOWERING THE LGUS

Having served as a legislator in his home province of Ilocos Norte, Ablan is no stranger to the importance of empowering the local government units (LGUs) and devolving national functions to better serve the local constituents. “In between capacitating the general public and the agencies, we are trying to capacitate the LGUs as well,” says Ablan. “That’s why we

are conducting caravans, not only to tell them that we have a national FOI program, but to convince the local government to have their own as well.”

He reveals that some LGUs have already passed their FOI ordinances and they are encouraging more to do the same because a lot of information that Filipinos want to know is actually at the local government level already. “We would like the LGUs to not wait further and pass their own FOI,” says Ablan.

#### POINTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The whole journey has been a totally new endeavor for the government, and a learning experience for all involved. Ablan admits that there is much room for improvement, such as with the inventory of exceptions. “We feel that a board composed of the Executive Secretary, Secretary of Justice, as well as the Solicitor General, should review all these additional exceptions and come up with a revised inventory.”

Ablan also admits that they weren’t as successful with the government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) and the state universities and colleges (SUCs) mainly because they prioritized the government agencies first. He, however, expressed confidence that they will be successful in making the other executive offices come on board as they conduct more and more capacity building talks and workshops.

#### MOVING FORWARD

The executive order, while a momentous step in the right direction and is a testament to the political will of the President, is still far from what the FOI hopes to achieve. It still lacks the necessary authority to get the full power of the law. Legislation must be ratified so that all facets of the government will be involved to give the citizens the power of information. “We are strongly advocating to the Congress to give teeth to the Executive Order, and to expand coverage to include the other government branches,” says Ablan.

Ablan concludes, “The implementation of the FOI in the Executive branch shows that we can do it. Hopefully in the future, we can involve the other branches of government as well, including the Judiciary and Legislative, and our LGUs. It’s important that the local chief executives see the wisdom behind having the FOI because it’s just good and transparent governance.”



(From top) FOI capacity building seminars are conducted in various government agencies; the PCOO-FOI team.



**FOI is more than holding the government accountable, it is also about getting information to make better decisions in life.**



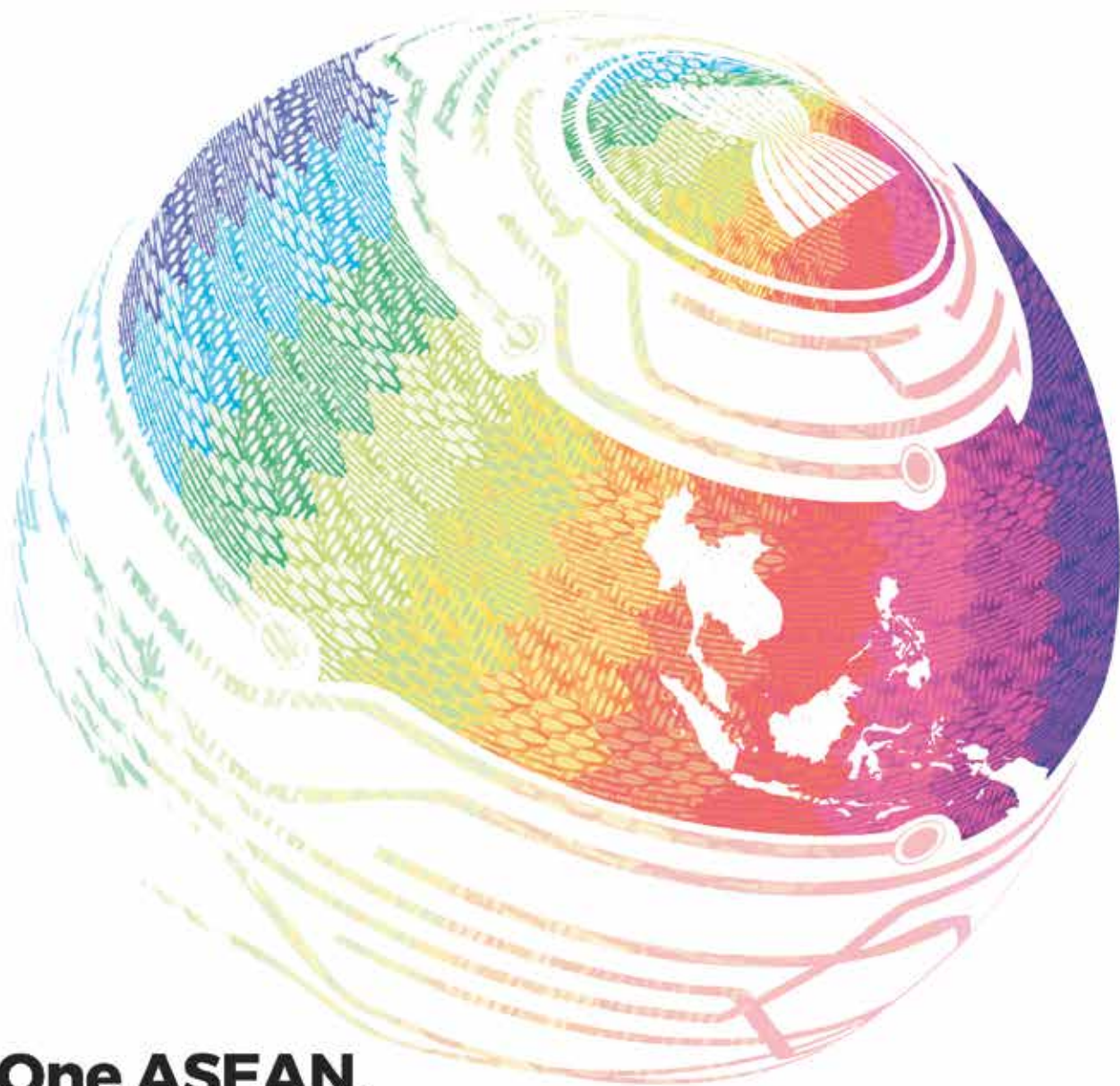




THE PHILIPPINES PROUDLY HOSTED THE

# 31<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Summit and Related Summits

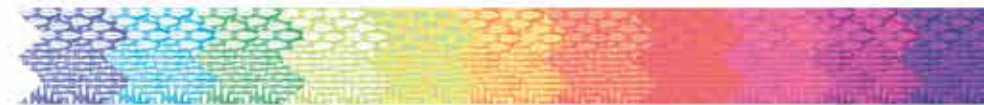
10-14 NOVEMBER 2017



## One ASEAN, A Global Player

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM • CAMBODIA  
INDONESIA • LAO PDR • MALAYSIA  
MYANMAR • PHILIPPINES • SINGAPORE  
THAILAND • VIET NAM

@ASEAN2017  
ASEAN 2017  
www.asean2017.ph  
#ASEAN2017



## ASEAN: A dynamic global player in the digital age

As the regional bloc envisions the future, its demographic speaks volumes of the possibilities it can seize in the digital age

Former Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) veteran Delia Albert stood at the podium of The Verdure in De La Salle University. In front of her were an audience of 80 young students from each ASEAN Member State, and she heralded a message that's timely for the hour and her listeners.

"The region really is profiting from a rather young demographic base, which is part of—I think, I believe so—the propelling energy that's making ASEAN move forward," she said. "While you are there, you will really be the engines."

For 50 years, the regional bloc built on the goals of peace, security, and prosperity through dialogue and cooperation, and has been engaging key partners from outside the region. As the region moves forward and sets its sight to the next 50 years, the

next generation of ASEAN citizens are poised to bring the association to greater heights in the global arena.

ASEAN Member States have a much larger pool of budding individuals and a younger population signifies that a nation can adapt to change and, thus, find new ways to initiate progress.

As ASEAN unites archipelagos and peninsulas in the coming decades, it only needs to tap its most precious resource—the youth.

### Young Southeast Asian leaders are making a global impact

ASEAN movers and shakers were highlights in the 2017 30 under 30 Asia list, where Forbes features 300 young entrepreneurs, 30 in each of the 10 fields who are "pushing the boundaries of innovation."

At 27, Indonesia's Gibran Huzaifah turned his life around as a former fish farmer into a huge success, using his

feeding technology eFishery to tap his country's aquaculture industry—valued at a whopping \$54 million.

Meanwhile, Cambodia's Daroath Phav, 28, used his entrepreneurial skills in pushing his countrymen to use toilets, increasing rural sanitation from 25 to 50 percent in the span of five years.

Even more impressive are Malaysia's Neelofa and Vivvy Yusof, both under 30, who are breaking stereotypes as Muslim women who have become triumphant in business.

"ASEAN has a young population, fast growth and an emerging middle class. Digital trade and finance should be at the center of the ASEAN Economic Community in the next decade," said a study by UK company Deloitte.

With the region's "propelling energy" well-oiled and at full speed, fasten your seatbelts. ASEAN might not just be a driving force in Asia—it may be the engine that runs the world in the digital age.

*"As Chair, the Philippines has an important leadership role to play.*

*But we recognize the truth that the success is defined by the collective work of our nation and in ASEAN's entire membership.*

*In this journey, I call on all Filipinos to take an active and constructive part during the Philippines' Chairmanship of ASEAN.*

*I also call on ASEAN Dialogue Partners to renew their dedication to the valued purposes and principles stated in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation – including non-interference – in promoting regional peace and stability through abiding respect for the rule of law.*

*This is a golden opportunity for all to work for an ASEAN that has taken its firm and secure place in the community of nations. An ASEAN that has its own significant role in effecting positive change for our world. Let us all work hand-in-hand to make this vision a reality enjoyed by all."*



**PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE**

GRAND LAUNCH OF PHILIPPINE CHAIRMANSHIP OF ASEAN  
JANUARY 2017 | DAVAO CITY

@ASEAN2017  
ASEAN 2017  
www.asean2017.ph  
#ASEAN2017







# Raissa Above the Storm

Bomb survivor and double amputee, Councilor Raissa Laurel-Subijano, is living a life with no limits and inspiring impactful leadership as councilor of San Juan

BY ANNA CHATO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RENJIE TOLentino

STYLING BY FLOE TAPAYAN OF KANEBO



Seated at her desk, Raissa paints the picture of a typical young, hardworking woman in government, with papers piled high on top of the table. Bright eyed and idealistic, Raissa speaks without cynicism and brims with positivity. It seems unlikely that this young lady—with all her optimism—was the victim of a bomb blast that took both her legs seven years earlier.

In 2010, while waiting on Taft Avenue for her friends to finish the bar exams in the law school tradition of *salubong*, an explosion shook the crowd. The next thing she knew, she was lying on the street with her legs mangled.



At the young age of 23, with only a 20% chance of surviving, she had to undergo the amputation of both legs below the knee. She was a second year law student at San Sebastian College at the time. After her operation, she had told her friends who came to visit her, “Why are you sad? Be happy! I’m alive.” Her radiant smile welcomed them and instead of their encouraging her, she encouraged them. “I’m blessed with a second chance at life,” she says simply, and adds that she’s transforming the weight of that unfortunate, senseless, and violent incident into something inspiring and worthy of a second chance.

## THE WISDOM OF THE GOOD COUNCILOR

Despite the spiritual weight of her physical downfall, Raissa Laurel-Subijano was elected councilor of San Juan City in May 2016. As councilor, her main duty is to participate in the making of laws in the form of ordinances for the city. She holds advocacies and is currently the chairperson of three committees: Committee on Social Services, Women, Children, and Persons with Disabilities’ Welfare; Committee on Laws and Ethics; and Committee on Public Order, Safety, and Illegal Drugs.

As a PWD herself, Raissa is pushing forward the rights of the disabled, and in 2017, the council approved an ordinance providing registered indigent Persons with Disability (PWD) in San Juan City with benefits and allotting funds for that purpose. Ordinances creating new schools, such as the San Juan Science High School in Barangay St. Joseph, the San Juan Technical-Vocational and Livelihood Senior High School also in Barangay St. Joseph, and the Emilio Jacinto Elementary School and High School in Barangay Batis, were also passed.

“Being a leader doesn’t mean *na pa-importante ka*,” she says and one wonders where her enthusiasm comes from. She explains that she saw herself as a simple person, that her running for office was not planned, though she has always had a heart for public service. “It’s really my dream because I have a heart for service, but it seemed impossible,” she shares.

At the young age of 23, with only a 20% chance of surviving, she had to undergo the amputation of both legs below the knee.







After law school, Raissa underwent a two-month internship with the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland, with the endorsement of the International Society of Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) and Exceed International, and there she gained invaluable experience. In 2015, Raissa was invited to join the campaign in San Juan. “I thought I’d just be part of the campaign team, *’yun pala ako ang candidate!*” she chuckles. “They invited me because they want a leader for the young people. So *sabi ko, ‘Sige, tingnan natin, at pinag-pray ko.’*” At that time, Raissa was still reviewing for the Bar Exams and couldn’t join most of the events on the campaign trail. “So, in the initial surveys, I was at the bottom,” she explains. “There were 14 candidates in our district; I was 13th.” After the bar exams, however, the voters got to know her better, which she believes is what won her the votes. By way of advice, she says, “Just introduce yourself, who you really are.”

#### CITY OF EXCELLENCE

As for the goal of San Juan City, she expounds, “We are a city of excellence, so the reward is to be excellent in everything. So, our project is a new hospital, then there are new schools... And we are first [in building] an in-house city, that’s St. Josephville, like you’re in a condominium though it’s a housing project. So, that’s what is being achieved here and then there were plenty of awards last year.”

In October 2016, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) awarded the San Juan City government for making it to the 2016 Seal of Local Governance, which requires the maintenance of standards in three core areas and at least one of the essential areas set by the DILG. Local governments throughout the country were assessed based on upgraded criteria and the San Juan City government was commended for their work in the core areas of financial administration, social protection, and disaster preparedness. Moreover, they met the DILG standards in not just one, but all three essential areas given by the DILG: (1) Business Friendliness and Competitiveness; (2) Peace and Order; and (3) Environmental Management. Several opportunities were bestowed on the San Juan City government as a result of the award, including access to funding and loan approval for further projects of the city.



City resolutions providing social pension for indigent senior citizens, supplementary feeding programs for children within the local government’s daycare program, and projects to address the situation of the homeless in San Juan were approved in 2017.

#### THE SUN RISES FOR RAISSA

For Raissa, every day is a new day, bearing with it new blessings from God to be thankful for. She encourages the next generation of leaders to enter public



service, cautioning them, however, that it is a lot harder than it looks, that it involves hard work and dedication to achieve the true goals of public service. “Being a leader is service from the heart. You have to enter public service for the right reasons, not for purposes of personal achievement. You want to help the people. You want to serve the people wholeheartedly.” In five to 10 years’ time, she hopes to still be in public service regardless of the position. “*Di naman kasi ako nag-aasam [ng mataas na posisyon], basta kung saan lang ako dalhin.*”

Trials, challenges, struggles, and obstacles are essential parts of life. Letting light shine on the challenges of life and holding close her faith have allowed Raissa to see another sunrise and appreciate every new day for what it is. Raissa’s life and dedication to her work is an example of how to embrace struggles and overcome obstacles. And somehow, some way, the world is a better place. ■■



**Being a leader is service from the heart. You have to enter public service for the right reasons, not for purposes of personal achievement. You want to help the people. You want to serve the people wholeheartedly.”**



# JOY OF SERVICE

BY KRISTEL DACUMOS-LAGORZA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RENJIE TOLENTINO  
MAKEUP BY FLOE TAPAYAN OF KANEBO  
HAIR BY ERRIZA SANTIAGO



“

**“While we should seek leaders who are passionate and inspired, and who have great ideas, it’s also important to find those who—more than simply having a vision—also have a road map.”**

With 142 barangays under its wing, Quezon City has become the largest city in terms of land area in Metro Manila (occupying 161 sqm of land), and is the most populated to date, with an estimated three million people residing within its six districts.

More than just a major central business district, Quezon City has grown to become a well-respected historical arts and culture hub—home to the People Power Monument, Mowelfund Institute, and Museo Recoletos, among others. It is also the locus of the country’s most important government operations such as the House of Representatives, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), the Social Security system (SSS), the Office of the Ombudsman, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) office, and many more. To date, there are about 125 national government offices and 25 government-owned and controlled corporations with headquarters in Quezon City.

Indeed, Quezon City is an integral player and major force when it comes to national economy, because of its size and influence, and keeping this city functioning like a well-oiled machine and servicing its millions of residents and visitors requires a keen, forward-thinking leader. And for years, it has found one in its current administration led by Mayor Herbert Bautista.

And by his side, working in tandem for three terms, is Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte, who has proudly proclaimed her intentions of leading Quezon City into the next period of progress as she completes her third and final term as vice mayor.

Of her plan to pursue the mayorship, she reveals: “After serving as vice mayor for all these years, I think it’s a natural progression for me to run for the next highest post. Also, I think being a mayor or a local chief executive provides the perfect position wherein I can enact greater change. They say that if you want change to happen, it’s really in the local level,” reveals the youthful and inspiring leader, who also is the daughter of former Quezon City mayor, Speaker Sonny Belmonte, and the late founding chairman of *The Philippine STAR* Betty Go Belmonte.

## PROVING HER METTLE

Belmonte, with her kind face and bright disposition, may seem at first glance to be soft and timid for her role, but she is made of sterner stuff and has proven her mettle as a worthy leader.

When she had first run in 2010 for the second highest position in the local government, she was met with certain doubt by other politicians, as she was a neophyte in public service. However, Belmonte—unknown to many—had already been training to become a leader since her youth.

Belmonte graduated with a Social Sciences degree from Ateneo de Manila University and spent a year working as a teacher with the Jesuit Volunteer Philippines, leaving behind a lofty lifestyle and a pampered childhood. For her first assignment, she was sent to Bukidnon to serve the underprivileged folk, teaching



“

**We have been able to successfully carve out a different model here, because our focus is on life, and giving surrenderees a second chance. We're really trying our best to live up to that promise: that if you surrender, you get treated, and we'll help you get back to the mainstream of society.**



history, values education, physical education, and music. In the far-flung communities, which had no running water or electricity, she lived with the people, ate with them, laughed with them, and worked with them. In return, she gained a greater appreciation and understanding of their plight. And from that invaluable experience, a fierce desire was ignited: “I wanted to be an effective agent of change.”

This pivotal moment set into motion her dreams of becoming a public servant. “I think in the past seven and a half years, I have gotten a firm grasp of the problems of our city,” she explains. “I think that’s a definite advantage I have over other candidates who are considering to run for the mayoralty post. I know and have become well-versed with the problems, unique to the city.”

Despite being a newcomer then, Belmonte hit the ground running and pushed for legislation that would benefit the regular folk. She prioritized issues she had promised to address on the campaign trail, like health, poverty, and the rights of women and children. She also pushed for more programs and projects that would highlight the city’s initiatives in arts and culture.

While many would consider arts and culture a “lesser” concern in the hierarchy of priorities, Belmonte underscores its importance. A former archaeologist and holder of Master’s Degrees in Museum Studies from the Leicester University and Archaeology from the University College London, she stresses: *“Totoo ’yung sinasabi nila, ‘ang di marunong lumingon sa pinanggalingan ay hindi makakarating sa paroroonan.’*

“All these disciplines—history, economics, arts and culture, politics—help us better understand society and humanity. They provide us a different lens through which to better view the world. This becomes important especially as we nurture and build a better country. We need an enlightened



Vice Belmonte’s priorities include health, poverty, and the rights of women and children.

understanding of the past, in order to make more informed decisions about our future,” she asserts. This passion and more enlightened perspective is what breathes life and meaning into the legislation she drafts, the ideas she pursues, and the other programs she has spearheaded in Quezon City.

#### LEADING CHANGE

Some of Belmonte’s most notable contributions in recent years include the Joy of Urban Farming program—inspired by her stint in Bukidnon—which advocates sustainable farming and green living. First launched at the Quezon Memorial Circle, the green initiative encourages residents to grow and cultivate their own food in the gardens for free. It has since been moved to the Quezon City Hall grounds, as the construction of the LRT, which will traverse the Quezon Memorial Circle, is set to start soon.

“When I started the program, the problem was the mindset that farming is not [adaptable] in the city. In fact, you don’t need a big plot of land and you can grow your own food and start a vertical garden in your own backyard,” says Belmonte. The program has since been widely lauded and continues to serve as a blueprint for other barangays



seeking their own sustainable green initiatives.

Belmonte’s office is also responsible for implementing the anti-drug campaign, which has become the most controversial government-led effort under President Rodrigo Duterte.

“When this campaign started, we were the most prepared local government and we were the first to have our own rehab facility, which is located in Payatas,” she says. “We’re quite proud because we’re the first local government unit that has actually

developed a community-based rehabilitation program that is being copied now all over the Philippines.”

Belmonte understands the need to create a safer, more protected society. However, as a strong human rights advocate, she believes that winning the war against drugs lies not in senseless violence, but in dealing with it as a health issue. “We have been able to successfully carve out a different model here, because our focus is on life, and giving surrenderees a second chance,” she affirms. “We’re really





trying our best to live up to that promise: that if you surrender, you get treated, and we'll help you get back to the mainstream of society."

Working hand-in-hand with the local police and churches, the city has not only been able to rehabilitate surrenderees but also communities. She says: "For us to quell the problem of drug dependence, we have to address it as a societal problem and not merely as issue of an individual."

"We need to build a community that cares for the community. It's not enough that you deal with the drugs and users, you have to educate the community to take part in the process as well. Most of the time—as you study each of the cases—you see how the cases of violence and physical, sexual, and drug abuse are rooted in something bigger. You understand how everything is connected and how they're not isolated cases."

For her work, Belmonte was recognized as a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International, and was awarded the Gawad Liza Masa for her support of Filipino women and children's rights. She was also honored as an Ambassador of Peace by the Universal Peace Federation and the

Gerry Roxas Excellence in Leadership Award. She had also received the Local Legislative Award for 2016, the national award for most outstanding City Council that's given every term..

While grateful for the recognition, she is by no means driven to work for the accolades. "I'm here to do what's good, what's right," she says simply.

#### LEVEL UP

Today, Belmonte is more driven and inspired to pursue her next goal—that of running for mayor. She shares her vision and the areas of growth and opportunities, which she seeks to fulfill, should she be elected.

"I think one thing I would do is to improve internal governance, which entails ensuring the greater efficiency in the delivery of services to the people and focusing on transparency of local government," she says. "I think that it's very important that the government



**I think that it's very important that the government is seen to be open, truthful, and accountable, in order to build trust with the people.**







Courtesy call of Ambassador Kok Li Peng of Singapore with Mayor Herbert Bautista



is seen to be open, truthful, and accountable, in order to build trust with the people.

“I speak of transparency in terms of information, transparency in terms of processes, and transparency in even little promises and deadlines, like the time it takes for certain things to happen.” This, she believes, will build greater confidence among citizens as well as nurture a competitive, more investor-friendly business environment.

To achieve this, Belmonte plans on strengthening e-government services, upgrading IT systems, and automating/streamlining many of the local government’s process. “When there’s less person-to-person contact, and

processes of services can be relegated to the online, we can do more work efficiently and lessen the instances of corruption,” she says. “And when that works, then there’s less wastage in terms of the resources.”

“In addition to making processing faster, automation and going digital can help us farm data more efficiently. If you collect data and use it well, then you can craft better legislation and develop better, more effective programs and products. Everything that we do in government, therefore, will be based on empirical data—and not on random, gut feels of what we *think* is needed. With data, you *know* what is needed,” she continues.

“I want governance that’s based on science. With correct and accurate information, we can allocate funds better, be more targeted in our approach towards addressing needs and providing services, and achieve inclusive growth,” she explains, adding that this is why she has become a serious advocate of federalism, which will provide local governments with greater liberty and control to govern themselves.

In addition to building a centralized database, she sees the importance of establishing a feedback mechanism for the local government, which will serve as a channel where people can report on the performance of local government agencies and air their grievances. “This is necessary, because how can you evaluate how effective your agency is if there is not a means for the people to directly report their needs? This will offer, hopefully, a sort of check and balance.”

In a nutshell, Belmonte presents a future for Quezon City that is founded on modernizing systems and “going back to the basics—providing for health care, food security, job security, housing, and education.”

“With Mayor Bautista, we concentrated a lot on the issues of the times: climate change and disaster risk reduction—all important and all timely—but I think now it’s time to go back to the basics. I’d like to concentrate on that,” she reiterates.

Whether she may or may not be elected in the next election, she leaves a wise word to the voting public. “While we should seek leaders who are passionate and inspired, and who have great ideas, it’s also important to find those who—more than simply having a vision—also have a road map.

“As someone who has been here every day, crafting ordinances with the city council and working with the mayor, I know how to take us there. And I believe that I am in the best position to make change happen,” she ends. ■

## Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte’s Noteworthy Initiatives

Belmonte shares some of the exciting projects the local government has undertaken

### THE JOY OF URBAN FARMING

This urban farming project, initiated by Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte, has now grown to 166 urban farms and they are currently in the works to set up a TESDA-accredited urban farming school with the help of Sen. Cynthia Villar.

### PROTECTION CENTER

From occupying a small room, the Protection Center has grown to a three-story building, which serves as a one-stop protection center for victims of gender-based violence. Initially, it had only catered to women, but after adopting a gender fair ordinance—with Quezon City being one of the very first cities to do so—the Protection Center now caters as well to the LGBT group.

Here, victims can find refuge and seek help from the center’s in-house team of doctors, lawyers, social workers, and guidance counselors. In addition, the center provides livelihood assistance to victims. The center works closely with all the Quezon City barangays.

### TINDAHAN NI ATE JOY

This particular livelihood program was created for solo parents. Under the program, solo parents with an entrepreneurial inclination are given P10,000 worth of groceries with which to start a small sari-sari store



business. They are also given training on entrepreneurial and financial literacy skills. As of date, around 1,000 solo parents have benefitted from this program. The project has managed to help many children of solo parents finish their education.

### CHILD-FRIENDLY QC PROGRAM

The program started with the crafting of legislation called the Children’s Code of Quezon City, participated in by thousands of

children’s rights advocates. Some of Belmonte’s projects under the Child-Friendly QC Program include Operation Birthright, which provides free birth registration for children 17 years and below. The program has benefitted close to 7,000 children. The Special Drug Education Centers (SDECs) located

in all six districts of QC provide intervention programs to street children at risk, especially those who have been found to have started using solvents and rugby, which could, if untreated, lead them to use harder drugs like shabu. Under the Child-Friendly QC Program, the Barangay Councils for the Protection of Children (BCPCs) are strengthened and given more power through intensive training with partner NGOs. This helps in dealing with children’s rights issues like child abuse at the community level.

### QC PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAM

Talented, indigent children, aged 16 years old and below, are given free scholarships in performing arts like dance, music and voice. Since its inception, the program has trained more than 1,000 kids and the scholars have won numerous awards in many international competitions on behalf of Quezon City. The program’s partners include retired arts teachers who want to give back to the community.





## Explore And Discover The New Two Seasons Coron Bayside Hotel: Luxury This Side Of Coron Bay

Luxury has found a home in Coron town as Two Seasons unveils its newly-opened Coron Bayside Hotel, the third property under Two Seasons' signature Hotels and Resorts (the two other being Two Seasons Boracay and Coron Island Resort and Spa).

Nestled in the heart of Coron, it ups the ante in Coron vacations by being the only first-rate accommodation in town with breathtaking views of both the bay and the town, making every holiday delightful in more ways than one.

The experience begins with impressive accommodations. Choose from these rooms: the comfortable Standard, the plush Bayview, the opulent Bayview Deluxe and the luxurious grand Panorama Suites—all of which are spacious and elegantly designed. And if you are on a working vacation, the hotel's expansive conference room can accommodate up to 130 people.

The icing on the cake is the infinity pool. Whether you want to swim in the morning and bask in the sunshine while enjoying a panoramic view of Coron Bay or simply laze in the late afternoon away and watch the picturesque sunset, the experience is sure to be awe-inspiring.

For health buffs who simply can't do without their exercise regimen, the hotel has a well-equipped gym. A souvenir shop is located in the property for shopping for essentials and mementos of your stay.

### Tropical tastes

Meals are to be savored as much as the island holiday and Two Seasons Coron Bayside Hotel has leveled up every tropical dining experience with the

BAYA Resto Lounge's beautifully - crafted wooden seats, jellyfish ceiling lights. Its menu of local and international dishes offers sumptuous all - day breakfast.

Baya's menu is made more exciting by exotic dishes including Crocodile Barbecue, Crocodile in Coconut Milk, and Fried Crocodile strips for those with adventurous palates. Desserts, of course, should not be put aside at Two Seasons Coron Bayside Hotel, they are a showcase of the Filipino sweet tooth.

At the end of the day, you'll find hotel guests relaxing at the deck marveling at the sunset or enjoying the Happy Hour by the infinity pool from 1 pm to 6 pm daily.

### Island indulgence

The hotel willingly links its guests to Coron's rich history and other beautiful attractions by way of specially-arranged day trips. These include visits to Culion, Kayangan Lake (touted to be the country's very own Blue Lagoon) Sangat Wreck and SietePecados and lunch at Banol Beach.

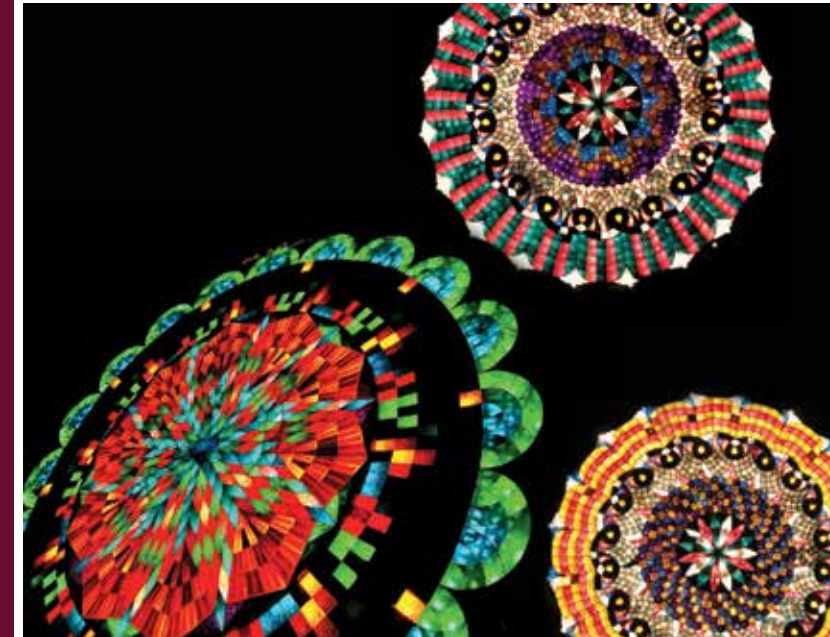
Two Seasons Coron Bayside Hotel is the ultimate vacation that offers you the two beautiful sides of Coron— the town and the islands. With the perfect melding of nature's breathtaking beauty that's just a boat ride away, and luxurious rest and relaxation, it will give you your own piece of paradise.

(For inquiries, call (63)2 4102075 to 80 or email [bliss@twoseasonsresorts.com](mailto:bliss@twoseasonsresorts.com) and/or visit [www.twoseasonsresorts.com](http://www.twoseasonsresorts.com).)

## Features



A CITY IS NOT GAUGED BY ITS LENGTH AND WIDTH,  
BUT BY THE BROADNESS OF ITS VISION AND THE HEIGHT OF ITS DREAMS.



BARANGAY BEL-AIR, MAKATI • LAPU-LAPU, CEBU • PAMPANGA • ANGONO, RIZAL





## A Shining Example

Local government leaders all over the country could learn a thing or two from Bel-Air, the country's richest barangay

BY JOHN LEE CANDELARIA  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICKY LADIA

**Barangay Bel-Air has secured a slot in Makati's "Hall of Fame" as the cleanest and greenest barangay in 2005 after winning eight consecutive times.**

**T**he barangay is the country's smallest, most basic administrative unit, and its leadership, although the most direct to its constituents, gathers little political clout. Those with political ambitions would rather start somewhere higher, if they desire to be more popular and influential in the future.

It is therefore quite interesting why and how barangay leaders stay, and last. For Barangay Captain Constancia "Nene" Q. Lichauco, the answer is simple: "I like what I'm doing, and I cannot see myself doing anything else."

It must be daunting to lead a barangay situated deep in the heart of the country's central business district (CBD), with two of the country's most exclusive subdivisions, Bel-Air and Salcedo Villages. But it comes with a great advantage, too, because Barangay Bel-Air is known to be the richest barangay in the country. "The bigger challenge is to innovate programs where we could spend the money. I have been asking everyone for programs they want to implement, money is not a problem," says Lichauco. Barangay Bel-Air's income could rival the income of many cities and municipalities in the country.

### PILOTS' HAVEN

Lichauco has led the barangay since 1989, and even before, since she was initially the president of Bel-Air Village homeowners' association.

There's a story why it's called Bel-Air. Back in 1956, pilots of the Philippine Airlines requested a subdivision from the Ayala Corporation, and desired to include the word "air" to the name. Bel-Air was born in 1957, which was built in four phases, Bel-Air I to IV. Now, the barangay includes Ayala North, Buendia Avenue Extension, the Ayala Triangle, and Salcedo Village. Shaped like a tobacco pipe, the barangay's land use is predominantly residential and commercial.

Bel-Air's location is something that other barangays would envy. It is in the heart of the CBD, so access is easy for residents to visit major shopping districts like Greenbelt, Rockwell, or food and entertainment hubs like Salcedo, Poblacion, and Jupiter Street. It is easy to be where you need to be, and quite an advantage for those wanting to look for recreational options at walking distances.



The barangay hall itself could put to shame many city and municipal halls. The clean and white building that serves as the barangay's center is located inside the exclusive Bel-Air village, near the village's association building. "We also have a satellite hall in Salcedo," adds Lichauco, "so that access to barangay services would not be so troublesome for our residents."

### RICHEST AND CLEANEST BARANGAY

It is no wonder the barangay has secured a slot in Makati's "Hall of Fame" as the cleanest and greenest barangay in 2005 after winning eight consecutive times. The barangay leadership puts a premium on cleanliness, sanitation, and aesthetics. "Our residents are very particular about that," says Lichauco.

Bel-Air has a homey and peaceful vibe—not only in the residential areas, where residents are regularly seen jogging, walking their dogs, or strolling at parks, but also the commercial areas, that seem to balance business and recreation.

The distinction of being the richest, however, is based on the barangay's earnings. Barangays earn in many ways. One source of income is the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) from the national government. The rest of the income is from local real property taxes and fees. Barangays may also receive grants and donations.

Barangay Bel-Air's shares in the IRA range from 8 to 10 million pesos. Not that big, since a barangay's IRA is based on population. But its overall income from real property tax alone is more than P140 million. With all other miscellaneous incomes, Bel-Air estimated its 2016 income to be at P167.6 million--this barangay



Barangay Bel-Air is lauded for its modern and efficient services that benefit the community.



The theme of this year's Pasinaya is "Bel-Air at 60: Kumikinang." Different sectors of the barangay community were seen as "jewels" that have survived the test of time, growing more and more beautiful each day.



could qualify as a fifth class city or a first class municipality by virtue of its income alone.

"Values of real property in Bel-Air are high because it is in the CBD," says Lichauco. "But because it is in the CBD, that means a lot of our constituents are businessmen. We must be very particular with auditing and accounting rules, so we do our best to ensure all expenditures of the barangay follow all budgetary rules and regulations set by the Commission on Audit (COA)."

#### 'KABALIKAT SA TAHANAN' AND OTHER PROGRAMS

Bel-Air is also known for its barangay program that has been in place since 1992 and has been honored many times, and that is the *Kabalikat sa Tahanan* (KST), a program for the barangay's household help. The goal of the program is to serve the community's underprivileged constituents, household helpers in particular, and develop them into better individuals through empowerment endeavors centered on values formation and skills and service development.

Lichauco notes that the program started as a way to safeguard Bel-Air residences by ensuring that the helpers are trained and given values formation training since they are part of the family. "On our first year, we had to add another cycle to accommodate those who were not able to join the first time," Lichauco remembers. "Since then, we do it every year, and the response of the members of the community is amazing."

Lichauco points out that the *kasambahay* is a member of the family, a member of the community, and they must



be given opportunities to better themselves. "At some point in the almost three decades of implementation, we ran out of participants—because we have covered everyone! And since these helpers stay a long time with their employers, we had to find other *kasambahays* to help. So we opened the program to outsiders," she says. Now, nearby villages and barangays can avail of the program as well.

Now on its 24<sup>th</sup> cycle, the program has graduated 2,392 individuals. It has also been replicated in many other villages and barangays in the metro. Last year it was honored as one of the three Most Gender-Responsive Programs by the Makati City government.

Another program that Lichauco is proud of is their Senior Citizens Dialogue and other programs for the elderly members of the barangay. "They say senior citizens are pampered in Makati. Here in Bel-Air, they are more pampered," she quips. Weekly breakfasts for the seniors are held at the barangay hall. "As a senior citizen myself, I go as often as I can. It is a joy to talk to our constituents, and seeing them enjoy themselves over breakfast is one of my guilty pleasures."

One project that has been so popular and Lichauco is proud to share is the Salcedo



Barangay Captain Nene Lichauco is a hands-on public servant, and tries to personally attend all meetings, events, and launches.



Community Market, which she, together with the Women of Bel-Air Foundation, started. It is held every Saturday at the Jaime Velasquez Park in Salcedo Village. Not many know that this foodie haven is a barangay project, which was conceived with the goal of showcasing products of Bel-Air entrepreneurs. “I go there every weekend,” Lichauco says. “It has grown a lot, and it is so popular that it would be difficult for new concessionaires to come in.” It is definitely a go-to spot for foodies, and has been accredited by the Department of Tourism as a hub for tourists.

#### BEL-AIR, KUMIKINANG

Bel-Air celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, with the annual “Pasinaya,” an anniversary activity that has

been part of the community since 1993, another milestone project of Lichauco. “We are celebrating the anniversary of the Bel-Air village which started in 1957,” Lichauco notes, “Of course, the barangay itself is a lot younger, but the celebration is for everyone.”

The theme of this year’s “Pasinaya” is “Bel-Air at 60: Kumikinang.” Different sectors of the barangay community were seen as “jewels” that have survived the test of time, growing more and more beautiful each day.

The “Pasinaya” is an awaited event for the residents of the barangay, and its hallmark is community involvement and inclusivity. “We make the *kasambahays* vote on who would be our celebrity guest,” Lichauco says,

“so usually it is a popular actor. We had Jericho Rosales before.” This 2017, the “Pasinaya” is a lot grander. Last May, the celebration started with free *kalesa* rides for children, the traditional “Gabi ng Kasambahay,” where talented *yayas*, drivers, and *kasambahays* took the stage with the grand finals of “Kasambahay Idol.” A fashion show was also held, with other special performances at the “Pasinaya Velada.”

#### CHALLENGES TO LEADERSHIP

For such a model community, Barangay Bel-Air’s leadership, through Lichauco, sees problems as challenges. “And the biggest challenge is to find more innovative programs that could help the barangay,” she remarks.



Barangay Bel-Air continually seeks new ways to more efficiently deliver basic goods and services.

One unique thing that Lichauco says they do that other barangays do not, is that they offer assistance to other barangays. “It is important for me to share all the blessings of Barangay Bel-Air to help out others,” she adds. As long as the proposals are sound and the beneficiaries have a lot to gain, Lichauco says they do not think twice in approving these programs. Outreach programs are also a mainstay in their roster of activities.

Another challenge to leadership is making barangay services as consistent as possible. Lichauco says they have a lot of plans, like building a clinic near the vicinity of the barangay hall. “It is only logical that barangay services could be availed of in the same area, so as not to burden our constituents,” she explains.

#### BEL-AIR OF THE FUTURE

Lichauco sees a brighter future for Barangay Bel-Air. At 60, the community remains participative and inclusive, and they intend to keep it that way. “We plan to develop more programs so that other sectors of the community could also benefit,” she says. Certainly, Bel-Air has no other option but to shine brighter in the future, and continue to outdo itself as a bright spot of local governance that others may emulate. ■■

**At 60, the community remains participative and inclusive, and they intend to keep it that way. “We plan to develop more programs so that other sectors of the community could also benefit.” - Barangay Captain Constancia “Nene” Q. Lichauco**





The 66-foot bronze statue of Lapu-Lapu stands in Punta Engaño, Lapu-Lapu.

# BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

A delicate balance between modernity and culture gives Lapu-Lapu a unique advantage as the country's "Historic Resort City"

BY JOHN LEE CANDELARIA  
INTERVIEW BY DANIEL MARCO NICANOR

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CITY TOURISM  
OFFICE OF LAPU-LAPU

Imagine living in a city with a deep connection to its past as a site of an epic historic event. It would be great to be able to relive these moments, in a place where our ancestors bravely fought encroachers to their land.

Now, how about living in a modern city with a world-class airport, luxurious five-star hotels and resorts, a bustling industrial center, and top-notch technological centers and development hubs?

You do not have to go far to experience both, because in the City of Lapu-Lapu, the best of both worlds is a reality.

## OPONGANON'S LAPU-LAPU

Lapu-Lapu was formerly a municipality called Opon, established by Augustinian friars in 1730. It was renamed in 1961 through Republic Act 3134, also known as the City Charter of Lapu-Lapu. The city chose to honor a Filipino chieftain of Mactan Island, whose troops defeated the Spaniards led by Ferdinand Magellan in 1521. The site of the Battle of Mactan in 1521 is located in the city, declared a national shrine in 1973. Today, the people of Lapu-Lapu refer to themselves as "Oponganons," as an homage to their original name.

Composed of 19 barangays in the mainland and 11 barangays in Olango Island, Lapu-Lapu is separated from the province of Cebu by the Mactan Channel. Two bridges, the First Mandaue-Mactan Bridge and Marcelo H. Fernan Bridge, facilitate transportation to and from the province. Lapu-Lapu's proximity to Cebu City, another major city in the region, creates a mutually beneficial relationship for further growth and development.





The Terminal 2 of the Mactan-Cebu International Airport, once inaugurated, will be the world's first resort airport.



The Mactan-Mandaue Bridge facilitates transportation to the province from the city, and back.

The city is also the seat of the Mactan-Cebu International Airport, the second busiest airport in the country. In 2016 alone, it serviced 8.8 million passengers, and might even go past 10 million in 2017 as arrivals increase every year.

#### A TOURIST DESTINATION IN AN INDUSTRIAL HUB

Under the leadership of Mayor Paz Radaza, the city branded itself the “Historic Resort City” in 2014 to highlight its two prominent features—as the site of the historic Battle of Mactan, and a major tourist destination in Cebu because of its pristine sandy shores and white beaches. The city’s tourism tagline, “Free Yourself,” is also telling of the amazing recreational experience one could have in the city, as well as the national importance of the history of the island of Mactan as Lapu-Lapu is believed to be the country’s first freedom fighter.

Tourists are treated to a host of destinations to choose from in Lapu-Lapu itself. They can regale in the tradition of pride and freedom in the Lapu-Lapu Shrine in Punta Engaño, where a towering statue of the Filipino hero can be found, as well as the “Liberty Shrine,” formerly known as Magellan Shrine.

They can also head to any of Lapu-Lapu’s world-class resorts, such as the Mövenpick Hotel Mactan, a five-star Mediterranean-inspired beachfront hotel, and enjoy its very popular Ibiza Beach Club. Another five-star resort and once the country’s

largest, Shangri-La’s Mactan Resort and Spa is a beachfront hotel with its own marine sanctuary.

Cebu’s food could also be best sampled in Lapu-Lapu, and nothing beats feasting on Cebu *lechon*, or a selection of “SuTuKil,” coined from three methods of preparing food whether *sugba* (grilled), *tula* (stewed), or *kinilaw* (raw meats cured in vinegar), while enjoying Mactan Island’s view of the ocean and its fine white sands.

If one side of the island is dedicated to resort amenities, the other side of the island facing Cebu has deep harbors, making it an ideal location for oil companies, shipbuilding and repair, dry-docking industry, and an industrial complex known as the Mactan Export Processing Zone (MEPZ). This is a 120-hectare industrial estate in the city that started out with eight companies in 1986. Now, the MEPZ houses around 200 companies, delivering world-class products to the US, the European Union, and Japan.

## Tourism [in Lapu-Lapu] has fuelled a real estate boom in the city.

As part of the Mactan Economic Zone, exponential growth is expected in the area in the future. Certainly, both sides of the island provide for distinct economic opportunities that the local government leadership has chosen to focus on.

#### TOURISM’S MULTIPLIER EFFECT

Tourism remains to be a great economic driver that creates a “multiplier effect” since it impacts other industries to develop. Tourism requires quality hospitality services, food companies and restaurants, souvenirs and novelty items, and a host of other industries that could spur economic growth and stimulate local economies to flourish.

Hembler V. Mendoza, head of the City of Lapu-Lapu Tourism Council,

agrees that tourism has this effect on the local economy. He notes that tourism “generates local employment, and income from tourism is allocated to infrastructure, social services, and other things that will benefit tourists and residents alike,” and all these make tourism an important part of the local government’s agenda for economic development.

According to data from the Department of Tourism in Central Visayas (DOT-7), close to 1.4 million of the 4.17 million foreign and domestic tourists that arrived in Cebu in 2016 stayed in Lapu-Lapu. “Tourism [in Lapu-Lapu] has fuelled a real estate boom in the city,” he notes.

In fact, three property developers came together for a 14-hectare leisure



Mövenpick Cebu's beachfront boasts its pristine white sands and view of the ocean, perfect for leisure and relaxation.



development in Lapu-Lapu, called “Seagrove.” Located in Punta Engaño, it is positioned as a “seafront resort and commercial development unlike anything Cebu has seen before.” Mayor Radaza says that this development is “something that we all look forward to, as it will not only bolster tourism but also provide thousands of jobs for the locals of Lapu-Lapu.”

Another development to be seen in Lapu-Lapu is a new integrated casino resort, which has been named “Lapu-Lapu Leisure Mactan.” A 12.5 hectare development, it is believed to put the country “at par” with other regional destinations designed for leisure, gaming, meetings,

incentives, conventions, and exhibitions. Targeted to begin operations in 2019 and to be completed in 2022, Mendoza says it will be a “game changer” for tourism in Lapu-Lapu. “It will create employment and generate great tax revenue. The big plus is that it will also be a prestige landmark of the city for its state of the art amenities and facilities.”

#### THE WORLD'S FIRST RESORT AIRPORT

Among Lapu-Lapu’s exciting and awaited infrastructure projects, it is the Terminal 2 of the Mactan-Cebu International Airport that has generated a lot of buzz. Touted as the world’s first resort airport, it is expected to be, in itself, a tourist destination, and a much-needed addition to the already hectic Terminal 1 of the country’s second busiest airport.

Terminal 2 is designed to look distinctly Filipino, and will aim to create a unique tourist experience. Design icon Budji Layug, architect Royal Pineda, and Cebu-based and world-renowned designer Kenneth Cobonpue were tapped for the airport’s design. The terminal will be made of glulam (glued laminated timber), a first in Asia. The airport is themed to look like a resort, utilizing wood as its main material instead of steel, which will give it a distinct Filipino feel.

Once completed, the terminal will come with a commercial center and a hotel, mirroring the Cebu tourist lifestyle that has made it popular to local and foreign travelers alike.

#### ENGAGING LOCALS IN THE TOURIST INDUSTRIES

Mendoza notes that part of their Tourism Master Plan to be launched in 2018 is to make economic development

derived from tourism sustainable and inclusive.

“Our big ticket tourism development projects involving corporations are but one strategy; our goal is to involve local entrepreneurs,” he says. This could be done through the assistance of government agencies such as the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Souvenir-making has long been seen as a cottage industry with little potential, but with the right mindset, it could grow into something bigger.

#### CHALLENGES TO LAPU-LAPU'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

A great concern for local tourism in Lapu-Lapu is making sure that policies are in place to guarantee sustainable growth. Mendoza explains that a sound solid waste management system has ensured the cleanliness and sanitation in the city, which is quite a responsibility since Lapu-Lapu gets the lion’s share of tourists in Cebu.

“Our main tourist attractions are natural destinations. When too many tourists visit a place, the chance of pollution and disturbance of the natural ecosystems could wreak havoc to the destination,” Mendoza explains. “Local city ordinances are implemented, with the joint effort of the local government and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR),” he adds.

Mendoza also mentions that Mactan has a water scarcity problem, something that affects majority of Cebu. “We need a new water source, and this is being addressed by tapping the help of the private sector.”

Traffic also poses a great challenge, and the city hopes to address this by installing traffic lights in seven road intersections. “Traffic congestion is a problem that could affect tourists; their experience could be hampered by the slow pace of vehicles. Traffic lights will lessen this issue,” explains Mendoza. Narrow roads are also scheduled to be widened, and will certainly facilitate traffic better.

These challenges are merely bumps in the road that could be conquered with political will, inter-governmental interventions, public-private partnerships, and sound local government leadership strategies.

Mendoza remains steadfast that Lapu-Lapu is poised to be a must-visit destination in the Philippines and in Southeast Asia, offering the best of both worlds for anyone who wants to make their dreams a reality in the city. ■

“

**Our big ticket tourism development projects involving corporations are but one strategy; our goal is to involve local entrepreneurs.**



Cebu is known, among others, for its guitar making industry and the historic Battle of Mactan, which is relived annually at the Kadaugan sa Mactan Festival.



Mactan has been the home of IRONMAN 70.3 Philippines since 2012, with its race central located in the beautiful Shangri-la Mactan Resort and Spa.





# ART TOWN WITH BIG DREAMS

Local government officials take pride and honor in having Angono as the go-to place not just for art aficionados, but also for municipal and city planners to observe and learn how a small town with meager resources managed to become a model in local governance.

BY MIO GALIT DE LA CRUZ  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PIE DAVID

Angono is a quaint little town steeped in customs and traditions, immortalized by National Artist for Visual Arts Carlos “Botong” Francisco in the murals he has painted, depicting the country’s historical milestones and cultural milieus.

Some of Botong’s great works have been inspired by what he witnessed and experienced growing up in Angono, then a rural town where a *fiesta* in honor of San Clemente was held annually, *harana* was the way to win a woman’s heart, and *bayanihan* was fully alive alongside chivalry and gallantry. Indeed, “Fiesta,” “Harana,” and “Bayanihan” are the titles of some of the popular mural paintings of Botong.

Many of the inspiring traditions and scenes witnessed by Botong and other famous artists of Angono may have faded with time, progress, and modernization, but they continue to exist as timeless murals in the streets of Angono—on the walls of major establishments in the Philippines and, more importantly, in the hearts and minds of Filipinos.



The “higantes” of Angono are artistic larger-than-life representation of the typical haciendero family that ruled this town during the Spanish Period.





This is the house of National Artist for Music Prof. Lucio San Pedro. The musical notes are from his famous lullaby entitled “Sa ugoy ng duyan.” Other artworks dot the streets of Angono.

Local government unit (LGU) officials do not stop the influx of people into the town, as long as they have their own homes to stay in. But the mayor has zero tolerance for new informal settlers.



TITLE WELL-DESERVED

Not too long ago, Botong and another favorite son, National Artist for Music, Maestro Lucio San Pedro, were more familiar names across the country than in Angono, their own hometown. The town was known far and wide in the arts circle, but not by the general public, according to old-timers.

The influx of thousands of migrants and new homeowners from neighboring Rizal towns and Metro Manila in recent years provided this once sleepy municipality with a distinct identity and character as the Art Capital of the Philippines. Real estate developers and marketing gurus began using the term in their sales pitch.

But it was former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who first suggested the title before a crowd of *fiesta* revelers, and it held fast and firm as naturally as oil on canvas. No formal pronouncement was ever made. No decree or executive order was signed. Angono assumed the title as if by virtue of divine right.

The presence of petroglyphs in the so-called Angono Cave might provide

a deeper historical and socio-cultural explanation for the townsfolk’s natural inclination towards the arts. A total of 127 sketches of people and animals have been found etched on the walls of the cave that, according to archaeological studies, have been there since the late Neolithic Age or roughly 300 BC. Strangely, they were discovered by chance by Botong himself during a field trip with a contingent of boy scouts.

LEGEND OF ANGONO

The town’s population has ballooned to 113,000 as of August 2015, with only 30 percent of this representing the original residents.

The town’s once lush forest hills and mountains have been turned into residential subdivisions and resorts, including the areas around the petroglyphs close to a posh golf course near the boundary of Angono and Binangonan.

Angono is now far different from the former *barrio* that originally belonged to the Municipality of Binangonan. It was declared an independent municipality on January 1, 1935, by then President Manuel L. Quezon and named, according to a legend, after a small bearded creature called *ang nuno* that dwelled in a once imposing *balete* tree at the center of the *barrio*.

The town of Angono, or parts of it, used to be an *hacienda* owned and ruled by wealthy

Spanish *hacenderos* and *propietarios*, who imposed stringent rules on pagan celebrations, allowing their tenants to hold feasts only once a year during an official feast day in honor of the patron saint. The workers apparently disliked them and made giant stern-looking figures of the *hacendero* family from papier mache—father, mother, and child—in hands-on-hips pose for display during *fiesta* parades, apparently to scorn them.

These colorful figures evolved into regular fixtures called *higantes*, now paraded during the annual town *fiesta* celebration in honor of patron saint San Clemente. The 12-foot giant figures that were limited to only two or three figures representing the family of the *hacenderos*, have since multiplied into several



Nemi Miranda, one of many famous artists in Angono.

FAST FACTS

Municipality of Angono

Art Capital of the Philippines

Home of the Higantes Festival

ASEAN Culture Capital

Established as a Municipality: January 1, 1939

Land Area: 10.12 square miles

Population: 113,283 as of 2015

Population Density: 11,000/square mile

Number of Barangays: 10

Region: Region IV-A (CALABARZON)

Mayors since 1986

Gerardo V. Calderon 2010 to present

Aurora A. Villamayo 2007-2010

Gerardo V. Calderon 1998-2007

Saturnino V. Tiamson 1995-1998

Vivencio B. Villamayor 1988-1995

Nemesio B. Miranda 1986-1988

The street arts are mostly the works of Carlos “Botong” Francisco, a National Artist for Visual Arts, whose famous works are usually related to Philippine history, like “First Mass at in Limasawa,” and ordinary countryside scenes, like “Fiesta” and Bayanihan.”



*higantes* when town officials decreed all its 13 *barangays* were to have two or three *higantes* each to symbolize their character and main industry. It has later on become a separate attraction called the Higantes Festival.

#### ZERO INFORMAL SETTLERS

With a meager land area of 2,300 hectares, this former *hacienda* of wealthy Spanish landlords is not looking forward to the day when it becomes a land of towering skyscrapers and complex highways. There is hardly space anymore for farms and factories. Even the town's popular *itik* (duck) industry, a major business enterprise in lakeshore municipalities of Rizal and Laguna, has ceased to exist, although there are still some restaurants in

Angono selling the town's famous fried *itik*.

Local government unit (LGU) officials do not stop the influx of people into the town, as long as they have their own homes to stay in. They have no issues with couples when determining how many children to have. But the mayor has zero tolerance for new squatters or informal settlers.

"We have already built homes for those who were here before, but we have no more space for new ones," stresses Mayor Gerardo "Gerry" Calderon, one of the country's most awarded municipal chief executives. He used his mandate to use under-utilized government lands to build low-cost houses for former informal settlers, with each proud homeowner paying from P300 to P500 only to have a place to call home.

In the absence of farms and industries to provide more jobs for residents, local planners and political leaders concentrate on tapping the town's rich cultural heritage to attract tourists and easing traffic for its growing population, who work in nearby towns and cities, including Metro Manila.



St. Clement's Parish Church.



Anyone who wishes to visit Angono can go directly to the town's tourism office for guides, brochures, and maps to plan the best routes in order to fully enjoy the trip. A day tour is enough to visit the town's famous landmarks, including the Blanco Family Museum, Bahay ni

Botong, Nemiranda Art House, Angono-Binangonan Petroglyphs, and cultural murals lining the streets of the *poblacion*, including the works of Francisco and the notes and lyrics of San Pedro's popular

composition "Ugoy ng Duyan."

"We still need to do more to support our title as art capital, like building a cultural center," suggests Nemi Miranda, one of many famous artists in Angono, even as he acknowledged the contribution of former First Lady Imelda R. Marcos to the cultural awakening of Filipinos and the recognition being given to Angono artists.

Town officials take pride and honor in having Angono as the go-to place not just for art aficionados, but also for municipal and city planners to observe and learn how a small town with meager resources managed to become a model in local governance. Calderon admits that he copied some of the best

practices in the cities of Olongapo, Naga, and Puerto Princesa during the watch of former mayors Richard Gordon, Jesse Robredo, and Edward Hagedorn, and introduced some of his own.

#### FIRST CLASS SUBDIVISION

Like most cities and municipalities at the fringes of Metro Manila, the Municipality of Angono used to be locked in traffic, constant floods, uncollected garbage, lawlessness, corruption, and other problems that beset many communities around the country.

"I had to be tough and show that I mean business," says Calderon, who first took over as mayor in 1998. But being tough, he learned in time, was not enough. He had to convince everyone that he was working for them and that if he hurt anyone in the process, it was part of his job to put the town in order.

"Asking a vendor not to occupy sidewalks and streets, or a homeless family to vacate a government property, for example, is easier said than done," he says. "I have to convince them that it is all right, that it will not affect their business, that they are assured of relocation—and delivering on that promise."

Delivering promises requires creative management, with Calderon networking and partnering with political allies, national government agencies, businessmen and suppliers, and friendly constituents to extend the limits of the funds he draws from the municipality's share of Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) and locally sourced income to finance more projects.



For example, the cost of constructing alternative roads from neighboring cities and towns was largely drawn from provincial and congressional funds. The continuous river dredging as part of Angono's flood control program is in partnership with local contractors. Materials from dredging are also used as landfill to turn former dumpsites into parks and to prepare certain lands for low-cost housing in partnership with the National Housing Authority and other concerned government agencies.

In the absence of more lands for farms and factories, LGU officials are focused on making the commute to and from Angono, to other Rizal towns and Metro Manila, fast and easy, to allow them more quality time with their families. Calderon, in particular, envisions the creation of an integrated, secured, and professionally managed "subdivision" with a clean and green environment, free-flowing traffic, and unhampered access to amenities such as schools, banks, healthcare facilities, and markets.

This vision requires more than a lifetime of sustained work and commitment, but Calderon and his team are doing it one term and one award at a time, to make their dream for Angono come true. ■■

## 'My Town is My Canvas'

Mayor Gerry Calderon's biggest dream for Angono is not anchored on cityhood, but sustaining its identity as a haven for real artists and those who appreciate their craft.

BY MIO GALIT DE LA CRUZ

**I**f our master artists have giant murals for their canvas, I use my town as my own personal canvas to create my own masterpieces that would make life less miserable and more fun for my constituents."

Big words for a small town mayor surrounded by giants in Philippine arts. But Mayor Gerry Calderon uses more than words and colors to bring life to his masterpieces, that impact on the lives of the people of Angono.

His chosen medium has elicited acclaim and recognition from award-giving bodies for local governance, including the Hall of Fame Gawad ng Pangulo sa Kalinisan Award as the cleanest municipality in the country. Last October 21, 2016, Angono received for the second straight year the "Seal of Good Local Governance" from the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

In the same year, the mayor received, **on** behalf of his town, the top prize for having the "Best Literacy Program" in the entire Calabarzon Area, and another Hall of Fame Award in the "Clean and Green Program" of the Province of Rizal.

In 2015, the municipality was given the First Prize in the "Best Infrastructure Pillar" by the National Competitive Council (NCC) and the "Best in Public Employment Service" and the "Most Child-Labor Free Municipality" in the entire country by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). His "canvas" has won practically all categories of awards in local governance—tourism, environment, education, peace and order, anti-drug abuse program, and leadership—at various times during his watch as elected mayor.

"My town participates in as many contests for local governance as possible, not only for recognition and prize money, but also to raise the bar for us," says Calderon, who started his political career as municipal councilor 30 years ago at a young age of 26. "Winning awards also entices businesses to operate in our municipality, generating money for our coffers and employment for our people."

After his third and final term as mayor in 2010, he worked as Assistant Secretary in charge of Local Government Concerns and Lands at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Executive Director of the National Solid Waste Management Commission Secretariat.

His expertise in local governance was likewise recognized by the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP), which made him chairman of the Project Management Team and by the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP), which he served as secretary general between 2004 and 2007.

The mayor does not see his town evolving into a city soon. "We're already qualified to become one in terms of income and population, but our town's land area is too small to aspire for cityhood," says Calderon. "My biggest dream for Angono is not anchored on cityhood, but **on** sustaining its identity as a haven for real artists and those who appreciate their craft."

Such a masterpiece, he says, entails a lifetime of dedicated service and commitment. ■■





# MUNICIPALITY OF TAYTAY

## PROVINCE OF RIZAL

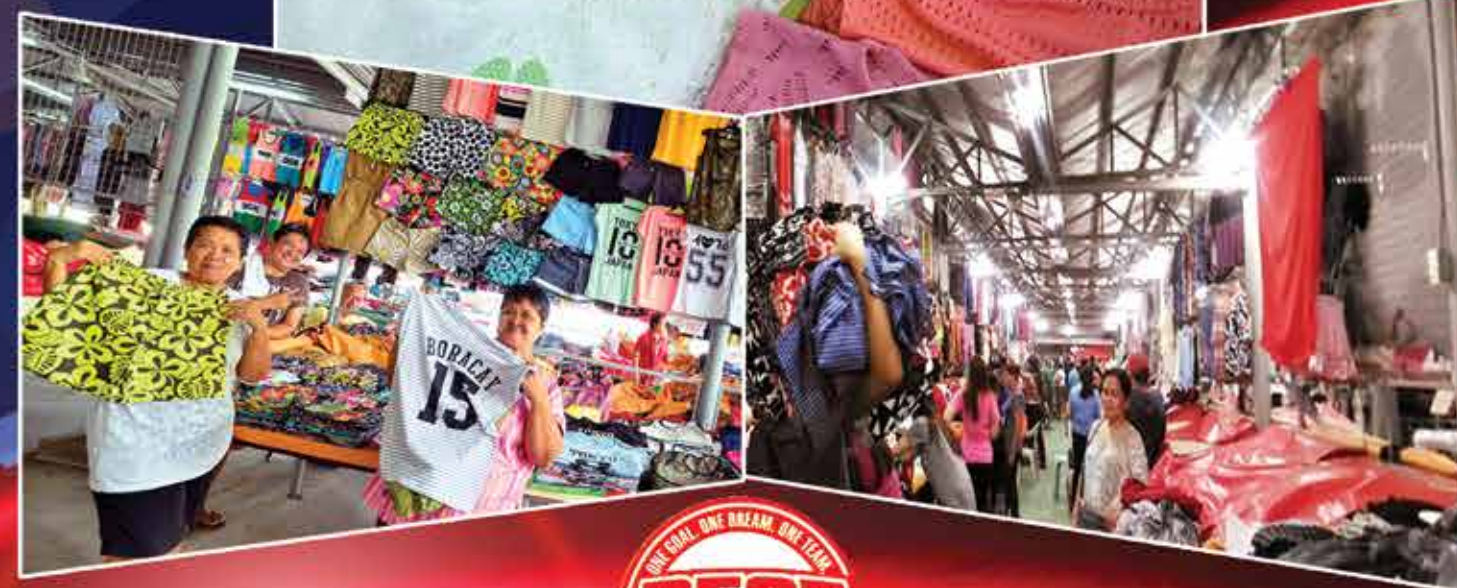
### Taytay Tiangge

*The New Haven for Shoppers!*

TAYTAY TIANGGE is known not only in the whole Province of Rizal but across the whole Archipelago. This street bargain market is strategically located beside the New Taytay Public Market, right at the entrance arc of Club Manila East Road. Tourists will find along the road, a succession of different stores selling different kinds of fabrics, different variety of ready to wear (RTW) clothes, curtains and more. Most of the retail shops in Divisoria, Tiendesitas and Greenhills continue to patronize and buy our products because of its high quality yet affordable price.



**Taytay Municipal Tiangge**  
**opens every**  
**Monday 7PM until Tuesday 12NN &**  
**Thursday 7PM until Friday 12NN**



**GARMENTS CAPITAL OF THE PHILIPPINES**



# CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS THE KAPAMPANGAN WAY

Many have tried—but failed!—to take the “Christmas Capital of the Philippines” title away from Pampanga. Its uniquely Pinoy grandeur and joyous spirit continue to inspire those who have witnessed and experienced it

BY LESLIE ANNE MAHUSAY  
WITH MICHELLE DELA CRUZ

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CITY TOURISM  
OFFICE OF SAN FERNANDO

Pampanga has undeniably preserved the Christmas feels. The dazzling and colorful Giant Lantern Festival (GLF) continues to make the province a top tourist destination during the holiday season, says Joel Mapiles, Pampanga’s Provincial Information Officer.

According to history, as written in the City of San Fernando’s official website, the Christmas Lantern, or *Parul Sampernandu* in Kapampangan, can never be separated from the town that created it, the City of San Fernando.

The San Fernando lantern industry progressed from the Giant Lantern Festival of San Fernando. The festival, which is held every December, finds its roots in Bacolor, where a much simpler activity was held. ‘Ligligan Parul’ (Lantern Competition) was said to have started in San Fernando in the year 1904. But some say that the “Ligligan Parul” did not happen immediately after the transfer and, in fact, began in 1908.

The giant lanterns with dancing lights started in 1931, when electricity was established in the city. At that time, the lights were controlled by individual switches that were turned on and off following a selection of tunes. In the years that followed, more improvements were introduced to the giant lanterns, such as the replacement of *papel de hapon* with colored plastic.

Instead of bamboo, the lantern makers weld together a steel frame, which is then lined with cardboard and foil, followed by another enormous task—placing about 5,000 light bulbs and wiring them together using hundreds of yards of electrical wires. Large steel barrels called rotors also replaced the hand-controlled switches to maneuver the lights. Strips of masking tape on the rotors establish the sequence of the blinking of the lights. Hairpins, attached to the end of the wires leading to each bulb, connect the lights to the rotor, which in turn, is connected to the source of electricity.

Nowadays, contest participants can use up to 10,000 bulbs. All entries must measure 20 feet in height to qualify for the competition.





The Philippine International Hot Air Balloon fiesta, a perennial crowd drawer at Clark Air Base, Pampanga, is slated for February 8-11, 2018.

### RAINBOW CONNECTION

The Grand Lantern Festival is a month-long celebration showcasing the activities spearheaded by different sectors of the community. Students from grade school to college participate in an inter-school lantern parade. There is also an inter-village Christmas decoration competition, participated in by subdivisions and barangays. This year's theme is "Rainbow Christmas," challenging communities to deck the streets with colorful Christmas ornaments. Establishments around San Fernando are also encouraged to get involved by decorating their facade with locally handcrafted lanterns.

To promote the upcoming GLF, the tourism office of San Fernando City has partnered with Robinsons Land Corporation in bringing the experience to three Robinsons Malls (Magnolia, Galleria, and Antipolo). Replicas of the giant lanterns will also be displayed in malls, and handcrafted lanterns from San Fernando will also be on sale.

The City of San Fernando and the 11 competing barangays—Calulut, Del Pilar, San Jose, Del Rosario, San Juan, San Nicolas, Sindalan, Sta. Lucia, Sto. Nino, Pandaras, and Telebastagan—will carry the theme

"Partnering for Change, Lighting Up the World," paying tribute to the ASEAN Summit held last November in Clarkfield, Pampanga. Winners will take home P150,000 (first place), P100,000 (second place), and P75,000 (third place). The competition is slated for December 16, 2017 and will have its nightly exhibition until January 2, 2018.

The makers of the giant lanterns usually allocate about three months for making the lanterns. This year, each participating barangay received a total subsidy of P195,000; they are expected to shoulder the expenses beyond the amount given.

There may be a lot of changes in the multicolored giant lantern-making of this city, but the beautiful and inspiring message behind it still remains, and that is to bring light, faith, hope, and love not only to all the Cabalens, but also to all Filipinos and to people around the globe.

### CELEBRATING THE KAPAMPANGAN SPIRIT

Pampanga also takes advantage of the most significant holiday of the year to demonstrate the strong camaraderie shown by its people, specifically the government officials

and the townsmen, through the Pampanga Day celebration.

The Pampanga Day celebration, or "Aldo Ning Kapampangan" in the native language, mostly happens every first week of December. It is a festival joined by all the towns and cities of Pampanga and facilitated by the provincial government led by the incumbent Governor Lilia "Nanay" Pineda.

Mapiles says that it is the grand event that the Kapampangans look forward to, wherein various activities, games, performances, and other surprises take place, participated in by the municipalities and cities of Pampanga.

The awarding for the Most Outstanding Kapampangan and the coronation night of the Mutya Ning Kapampangan are two of the most exciting highlights of the celebration.

Aside from these, medical missions are also conducted during the "Aldo Ning Kapampangan." But the absolute favorite of all the Cabalens is the practice of gift-giving that was initiated and funded by the provincial government.

Mapiles says that the provincial government allocates more or less P60 million every year for the gift-giving, benefiting government employees (from the barangay level up to the provincial level), marginalized communities or families, and the Aetas.

"The reason for the gift-giving is to let the marginalized communities and families and especially our natives, the Aetas, experience the Christmas spirit in the province of Pampanga," says Mapiles. A typical gift package contains rice, chicken, canned meats, and other food that are usually served during Christmas and New Year's Eve.

### GREATEST GIFT OF ALL

But Mapiles says the greatest gift that the provincial government has given to its people is the health service that was prioritized by Governor Pineda since she began her term in 2010.

He notes that Kapampangans who will be consulting for health medications or will be confined in any of the 11 district hospitals managed by the provincial capitol will benefit from Philhealth's "no balance billing program."



The improvement of health services and public hospitals in the province is Governor Pineda's greatest gift to Kapampangans.



According to Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III, the Clark International Airport is one of the priorities of the government's "Build, Build, Build" program, which is set for completion by 2022.

Mapiles adds that aside from the 80,895 Philhealth Kapampangan beneficiaries, the Pampanga capitol also focuses on the health of pregnant women and newborn babies through the "Buntis Congress." Senior citizens, on the other hand, receive pension; those aged 95 to 100 receive cash gifts worth P100,000.

"We can consider the improvement of the health services and public hospitals of Pampanga as the legacy and greatest gift of our Governor Pineda to the Kapampangans, not only for the Christmas day but for lifetime," he says.

### THE MASTER PLAN

Tourists will have another reason to come back to Pampanga as it prepares for its grand plan called "Megalopolis."

"The provincial government wants to develop the municipalities to become cities and their initial target year is five years from now, which is by 2022," explains Mapiles.

The said program aims to entice more local and international investors to create more job opportunities for Kapampangan families, and thus boost its economy.

The Clark International Airport, the only international airport in Region III (Central Luzon), is undergoing further development.

Pampanga is known for many things—its giant lanterns, unique restaurants, tourist attractions, hot-air balloon festivals, themed parks, and museums. It's not a long shot for it to bag another coveted title in the near future. ■■

## Kapampangan Cook-off Challenge



The province of Pampanga is out to prove that they are still the undisputed "Culinary Capital of the Philippines."

In an effort to preserve Pampanga's "Culinary Capital of the Philippines" title, Lilian Lising-Borromeo (more popularly known as Atching Lilian), Pampanga's culinary historian, in cooperation with Mama Sita's and the local government of Mexico, Pampanga held last October the very first "Kusinero't Kusinerang Kapampangan, The Grand Cook-off with Atching Lilian."

"We want to reintroduce our heritage dishes, especially to the youth, and discover our great cooks," she says of the event, which is only the beginning of what would eventually be a provincial wide tilt.

Each town has its own pride. Mexico and San Fernando has *ensaymada*, Candaba has *braso de mais*, San Fernando has *panara* (their version of empanada), and Sasmuan has Zarzuela Nin Malat (seafood curry), to name a few. Popular in the whole province is the *tibok-tibok* (carabao's milk pudding), *tamales* (ground rice, peanut, and coconut milk cooked into a paste and then wrapped with meat, usually chicken and egg), and various *kakanin* (*halayang ube*, *sapin-sapin*, rice cake, and *moche*).

According to Atching Lilian, Kapampangans are perfectionists. "*Kumpleto na sa sahog, maghahanap pa ng mas mahal. Gusto namin palaging bongga*," she quips. This is evident in their dishes that are well-loved by Filipinos.



# Mangan Tamu!

BY MICHELLE VICTORIA CRUZ

Pampangueños take pride in their heirloom recipes and homegrown restaurants, allowing it to earn the well-deserved “Culinary Capital of the Philippines” title. Planning to take a gastronomic tour in this province this holiday season? Here are our top recommendations.

## DOWNTOWN 1956 (ANGELES CITY)

This retro style restaurant is owned by Chef Claude Tayag. Must-tries: Trianggulos (tinapa, kesong puti, and pine nuts all wrapped together), Crispy Crablets with Pure Talangka on Rice, Crispy Aromatic Spring Duck (served with madarin pancakes, cucumbers, and hoisin sauce), Bagnetta (rolled fried pork stuffed with garlic and rosemary)

## ALING LUCING SISIG (ANGELES CITY)

The resto has grown since they reinvented the Original Pork Sisig that most Filipinos love. Must-tries: Seafood Sisig, Sisig Pusit

## CAFE FLEUR (ANGELES CITY)

Chef Sau Del Rosario serves Kapampangan cuisine with an international twist in this heritage house. Must-tries: Tamales Pampangueña (coconut cream, quail eggs, rice flour, and peanuts), Pinoy Caesar (greens with salted egg and milkfish tinapa), Salted Egg Bibingka Cheesecake, Crispy Pork Belly Macadamia Kare-Kare, and Tsokolate Batirol.

## KUSINANG MATUA NG ATCHING LILLIAN BORROMEO (MEXICO)

Atching Lilian is considered the Queen of Kapampangan cuisine. In her *sawali* restaurant, you will surely find something you can't find anywhere else. Must-tries: Bobotung Asan (boneless milkfish cooked in *kamias* and tomatoes, *alagao* leaves, soy sauce, and oil), Morcon (mixture of ground pork, egg yolk, tomatoes, *chorizo de bilbao*, cheese, red and green bell pepper, cornstarch, pepper, and bay leaf), Quilayin (quite similar to *dinuguan*, but with less blood and more pork innards); and San Nikulas cookies.

## MATAM-IH (CLARK FREEPORT ZONE)

“Matam-ih” means “delicious” in the Aeta dialect. They have many food choices that are all prepared the authentic Kapampangan way. Must-tries: Pork Sinigang, Pinaputok na Tilapia, Sinigang na Hipon, Lechon Kawali, and Adobong Pusit.

## BINULO RESTAURANT (CLARK FREEPORT ZONE)

A favorite among *balikbayans* and tourists, Binulo Restaurant serves authentic Kapampangan cuisine in bamboo stalks, thus the resto name Binulo. Must-tries: Pangat na Hipon, Crispy Binagoongan, and Beef Kare-kare.

## BALE DUTUNG (ANGELES CITY)

Also owned by Chef Claude Tayag, this is a strictly by-reservation-only restaurant. They serve three menus: the Kapampangan Menu, Lechon Menu, and the recently launched Anthony Bourdain Menu.

## HISTORIC CAMALIG RESTAURANT (ANGELES CITY)

It is known for being the Home of Pampanga's Pambansang Pizza. Must-tries: Armando's Best Pizza (loaded with ground beef, mushroom, green bell peppers, and Canadian bacon), Very Vegetarian pizza (topped with mushrooms, cucumbers, tomatoes, green peppers, cheese and garlic powder).

## DIDI'S PIZZA (ANGELES CITY)

The place is kind of small, so there's always a queue. But just like anything we work hard for, it will surely be worth it. Must-try: Pizza Sisig

## 19 COPUNG COPUNG GRILL (ANGELES CITY)

It's a favorite hangout among locals looking for a nice and cozy place to unwind and relax. Must-tries: Crispy Camaru (Deep-fried crickets), Crispy fried frog's legs, Bopis, and Crispy Crablets.

## MILA'S TOKWAT BABOY (ANGELES CITY)

There's more to Mila's than its *Tokwa't Baboy*. Must-tries: Crispy Pata, Pork Barbecue, and Sisig.

## APAG MARANGLE (BACOLOR)

The name of the resto means “dining in the farm,” like how our ancestors best enjoyed their food. Must-tries: Betute (fried frogs with minced pork filling), Camaru (rice field crickets in soy sauce, salt, and vinegar), and Suam na Mais (corn soup prepared in a clay pot).

## EVERYBODY'S CAFÉ (SAN FERNANDO CITY)

This restaurant serves Filipino fare at a very affordable price. Must-tries: Mami, Pancit Lug-lug, Palabok and exotic food like Kamaru (field crickets that are fried until crunchy), Betute (fried stuffed frogs), and Tapang Kalabaw (cured water buffalo meat).

## DENLIM'S KITCHEN (SAN FERNANDO CITY)

They serve private dining only, so be sure to book a reservation. Every corner in this restaurant is Instagram-worthy! Must-tries: Denlim's Classic Chicken Roast, Squid Spaghetti Marinara, and Summer Salad (tomato, garlic, herbs and cheese).

## RAINFOREST KITCHEN (SAN FERNANDO CITY)

Go organic in this nature-inspired restaurant. Must-tries: Buttermilk Fried Chicken (served with blue rice), Seafood Paella, Organic Salad with edible flowers, and freshly baked breads.

# From Mexico with Love

This town's greatest gift to its people—improved healthcare, education, and government facilities

BY LAKAMBINI BAUTISTA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RENJIE TOLENTINO

GROOMING BY FLOE TAPAYAN BY KANEBO

Mexicanos have a lot to be thankful for this Christmas season, as its leaders endeavor to make health services and education—their top two priorities—accessible particularly to the underprivileged members of their municipality.

Mexico, Pampanga Mayor Teddy Tumang, who's serving his fourth term as mayor, happily talks about their hemodialysis center—the first in Pampanga—providing free services not only to Mexicanos but also to indigent patients from other cities and provinces. “This is 100% locally funded,” Mayor Tumang says with pride.

At present, they have a total of 20 machines. “Part of the earnings of the center will help the indigent patients who are having their dialysis. We'll help augment what Philhealth is currently providing, since they can only give a maximum of 90 free sessions,” he says.

Mayor Tumang is also proud of the locally funded Mexico Community Hospital, which currently has almost a hundred bed capacity. They are hoping to build the second floor of the hospital this coming November, with the financial assistance from the Department of Health. “Our good congressman, Aurelio ‘Dong’ Santos, helped us get the funding for that,” he adds.

Vice Mayor Jonathan Pangan, on the other hand, has been making sure that Mexicanos are sporting their best smile, by personally providing free dental services twice a week. “*Hindi ko ipinagdadamo ang profession ko*. From the time that I became a councilor, at least once a week, I really go to the barangays to give dental services,” he says; he also joins dental missions in other cities and provinces.

Putting a premium on education, Vice Mayor Pangan has made it a part of his office's Christmas tradition to recognize the poor but deserving students in their municipality. “We screen the elementary schools in our 43 barangays and look for the less fortunate kids who excel in school. We recognize them, give certificates of excellence, and some food and gifts. We prepare a simple program and a feast,” he says, adding that he sees it as a way to encourage and motivate them to give importance to their studies. Last year, his office recognized 20 students, and they hope to double (or even triple) that number this year.

One of Mayor Tumang's ultimate plans is to put up a community college that will especially cater to the underprivileged students in Mexico, Pampanga. “*Kapag well-managed ang pera ng taong bayan, maraming mai-implement na proyekto. Kung mabibigyan pa ng pagkakataon sa susunod na term, balak naming bilhin ang lupa na pwedeng pagtayaan ng bagong munisipyo. Ililipat namin ang munisipyo at public market. Magtatayo kami ng government center*,” he shares his dreams for Mexico. ■



Mayor Teddy Tumang



Vice Mayor Jonathan Pangan



# MARAWI: HOPE RISES

In the face of countless tragedies and against all odds, the Filipino has always proven to be resilient

BY MAIELLE MONTAYRE



(From top) Islamic Center in Marawi City; the valiant troops head to the front lines.

**G**uided by their faith and family, Filipinos endure in times of disaster, catastrophe, and crisis. Their mettle was put to the test during the recent hostilities in Marawi.

It has been several months since the Battle of Marawi began on May 23, 2017, igniting what would be months of armed conflict between government forces and local terrorist groups. The Maute group, affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and led by brothers Omar and Abdullah Maute, initiated the assault on the capital of Lanao del Sur on the island of Mindanao. The group laid waste to the city, setting fire to buildings and houses, taking hostages, and waving the black flag of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

On the same day, President Rodrigo Duterte proclaimed Martial Law in Mindanao for a 60-day period. Undeterred, the Maute continued their assault and hold on Marawi City. On July 22, Congress voted to extend the proclamation until the end of the year, granting the President's request for extension in hopes of quelling the rebellion. What followed was a long drawn out battle between the government and militants, a mass evacuation of the city, and a series



**To my comrades who have fallen there, I apologize [for not being] able to see them, because we are not well enough to leave the hospital.**

(From top) Marines bring home a fallen brother; President Duterte at the wake of a hero.

of raids and air strikes. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) sought to capture Isnilon Hapilon, appointed ISIL emir in Southeast Asia and former leader of the Abu Sayyaf. Hapilon was said to be working with the Maute.

It was only on October 1, after a five-month-long battle, when Marawi was declared liberated by President Duterte. This declaration came a day after Omar Maute and Isnilon Hapilon were killed during an operation to rescue hostages.

## REBIRTH, REBUILD

Battle operations had officially ended on October 23, and now, many months after the Battle of Marawi began, the Maranaos begin to rebuild their city. Completely war-torn and savaged, the city is a pile of rubble, illustrating the harsh effects of the armed conflict. President Duterte and Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana have said that P50 billion will be needed to rehabilitate the city. Aside from the mangled landscape and the historic sites that have been pounded into dust, the greater tragedy is the country's painful wound of lives lost. This tragedy reportedly has left 165 soldiers killed, more than 1,400 wounded, 87 civilians dead, and more than a million displaced from their homes.

Here, we share the stories of these survivors and heroes.



## THE WOUNDED SURVIVOR

At the Manila Naval Hospital in the Naval Station Jose Francisco located at Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, several wounded soldiers of the AFP have been brought from the frontlines of the Battle of Marawi.

Sgt. Richard M. Llagas of the Philippine Army (PA) recalls his days during the battle, with comrades falling and wounded in combat. "There was fighting right away. There were 14 of us who were able to enter the house. We were the ones wounded. Others, who were not able to enter, called for support

to evacuate us. They couldn't get to me. I also could not get out. We did not have support until we were evacuated," Sgt. Llagas narrates.

He recounts how they had little to no help, simply relying on their own means. His unit, tasked to nab Hapilon allegedly inside one particular house, suffered several casualties when the said terrorist leader fired at them first. Once Hapilon escaped, rebel fighters suddenly converged upon the house, leaving Sgt. Llagas and his comrades trapped inside. They fought back when they could and other AFP soldiers





Marawi City under siege

outside provided suppressing fire, but they were overwhelmed by the terrorist militants. It would take two days before a military tank would be able to get Sgt. Llagas and his unit out. In that agonizing time of waiting, the soldiers clung to their hope of survival.

Corporal Raul Pabuaya (PA) says that what gave him the strength to endure the battle was the thought of his family waiting for his return, echoing the sentiment of other soldiers in Marawi. Others cite the support of civilians, the troops, and the Armed Forces & Police Mutual Benefit Association, Inc. (AFPMBAI) for giving them the courage to fight.

Courage and optimism kept them going, says Cpl. Leonard Roy F. Doloso of the Philippine Navy (PN). “Don’t lose hope, especially when in the danger zone. They burned our hideout, but we thought to ourselves they wouldn’t be able to defeat us because we were still alive,” he recalls. They had four wounded men, and spurred by the courage of their military unit, they sought to secure their injured away from the combat zone.

PFC Jefril Dapulano (PN) had wanted to continue fighting with his brothers, but had to be taken out of the line of duty to recover from his wound. Thus, he could only wish his comrades well. “I just want to tell them to take care. To my comrades who have fallen there, I apologize [for not being] able to see them, because we are not well enough to leave the hospital,” says PFC Dapulano, as he recovered.

#### THE BRAVE VOLUNTEER

Upon seeing the disarray and desperation shown over the news, Muriel Vega Perez, a volunteer and private citizen based in Manila, was moved to immediately visit one of the victim centers in Brgy. Balo-i, Lanao del Norte, last September 7 to 10. There, he witnessed firsthand the resilient spirit of the Filipino.

At the refugee center, there was a strong presence of the AFP, which provided security to the troubled communities. Muriel notes the dismal conditions of the evacuees who were all “jammed in one covered court.” While there was an adjacent tent city,

many evacuees slept on the floor, which became muddy and dirty after the rains. It was extremely hot, too, and uncomfortable, according to Perez.

Apart from the delays in the arrival of relief goods, which forced the people to subsist on whatever crackers and canned sardines were last given to them, he observed as well that clean water—for drinking and washing—became a problem. The lack of water and hygiene compounded the health issues of the people who were already susceptible to cough, flu, and other more serious health conditions. Despite all these, Perez saw the resilience of the Maranaos. “*Sinusuklian nila ng mas malaking ngiti ang aking ngiti*,” he tells us as he shared provisions he had gathered during a donation drive in Manila. Admitting that more help is needed despite efforts from the government, religious sectors, and other non-government organizations (NGOs), and also inspired by the courage, faith, and positivity of the Maranaos, Perez emphatically encourages others to aid in the rehabilitation of the city through SharethelovePH and other NGOs.

#### THE HEROIC FALLEN

The Maranaos’ miserable conditions in the evacuation centers and the uncertainty of their future created much fear and anxiety. But despite these circumstances, they are grateful to be alive, knowing that others were not fortunate enough to be given another chance.

First Lt. John Frederick S. Savellano of the PN Marines was a man with a purpose. For a long time, he had felt the call to serve his nation and become part of the Philippine Marines. Savellano was already on his third year of Nursing when he decided he was going to follow a different path. His family was, for the most part, extremely supportive of his decision. However, his eldest brother, who too had chosen to become a soldier, was afraid of losing him, and Savellano’s mother cried every day during his early training days because she didn’t want her son to experience the hardships of life. But she admired him for his perseverance and endurance in becoming a soldier.

“When the results came out, there was nothing I could do. He was really going to continue with his decision. Then, he received his first assignment in Mindanao, Palembang. From then on, we accepted his choice. We already offered him to God,” says Savellano’s father.

**Despite the darkness, we must remember that dawn and light will always come through.**



The Savellanos experienced the darkest hours of their lives as a family upon receiving news of First Lt. Savellano’s death. His sister was initially in denial, only accepting the pain upon seeing his body being taken down from the airplane at Villamor Air Base. His eldest brother grieved for the “baby bro” who had been there by his side all his life. “I don’t remember a time when he wasn’t with me,” he says. “When I heard of his death, I weighed my options—to be sad when nothing good would come out of it or to be

strong so I could be of service. I chose to be strong.”

Savellano came home in a coffin, which is the worst pain any parent could ever experience. But Savellano’s parents were buoyed by the outpouring of support and sympathy from their family, friends, the military, and media. His sister recounts that, “There were private citizens who went to the wake saying, ‘Your brother’s a hero. Your son’s a hero. Thank you for giving him to this country.’ That’s when you realize *na*, my brother did not die for nothing. I know he died for a greater cause.”

With Savellano being hailed as a hero of Marawi, his family’s grief was tempered by the knowledge that he had touched many lives with his unyielding integrity and immense courage—a true hero of our time.

#### A NEW BEGINNING

The Battle of Marawi is now officially over, the city liberated from terrorist oppressors, and the Maranaos are free, returning to their homes. As the smoke clears, the ravages of war are clearly displayed – houses

devastated, surroundings damaged, lives forever changed and some forever lost. But even as the battle’s painful effects linger, the rebuilding begins, the wounded recover, and grief is steadily replaced with hope.

Despite the darkness, we must remember that dawn and light will always come through. If there’s war, a time of peace always follow. There will be a time to grieve and a time to heal; a time of darkness and a time of hope. With many vowing to give aid to the rehabilitation of Marawi, and with the memory of the sacrifice and the victory of our fellow countrymen igniting our desire for a future that is better, hope is indeed kindled from the ashes of Marawi. *Bangon, Marawi, bangon Pilipinas.* ■■

(From top) Marawi residents evacuate to nearby Iligan City; aid and donations make their way to the displaced communities







LEAGUE offers the best subscription rate ever!  
Enjoy one-year subscription (6 issues) for only

**P999** within Metro Manila.

For inquiries, call LEAGUE office  
at Tel Nos. (02) 238-3698; (02) 436-2880  
email: [editorial@leaguemag.com.ph](mailto:editorial@leaguemag.com.ph)

## Progress

PROGRESS LIES NOT IN ENHANCING  
WHAT IS, BUT IN ADVANCING  
TOWARD WHAT WILL BE.  
-KHALIL GIBRAN





# Decoding IRA

The significance of the internal revenue allotment in nation building

BY MARCO NICANOR



ILLUSTRATION BY AMIEL RUFO

Empowering the local government units (LGUs) is vital for the nation to truly prosper in its entirety. The devolution of national agency functions of government and the decentralization of activities allow the LGUs to effectively address the welfare of its constituents and better their quality of living. The internal revenue allotment (IRA) was legislated for this purpose: to allow for an equitable sharing of national revenue and resources to enable LGUs to move in the right direction of development and ultimately self-sustenance.

The IRA is derived from the national internal revenue collections. The Local Government Code mandates the appropriation of 40% of the collection of the national government of three years prior to the current fiscal year. This allocation shall be automatically released to them “without need of any further action, directly to the provincial, city, municipal, or barangay treasurer” (Section 286, RA 7160). The only exception would be in the event of an unmanageable public sector deficit by the national government wherein dire adjustments to the allotment should be undertaken. But at the very least, 30% of the collection of internal revenue taxes would still be purposed for the LGUs’ benefit.

## MAIN SOURCE OF LGU REVENUE

The source of operational revenue for LGUs can be categorized into three: local sources, external sources, and non-income receipts.

The LGUs are empowered to create their own sources of revenue through taxes, fees, and charges as guided by provisions from the Congress. Tax revenues come from real property, special education, business, and other local taxes while there are also the non-tax revenues in the form of regulatory fees, service charges, and receipts from economic enterprises.

External sources come from the shares from the national tax collection in the form of the IRA, shares from Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCCs), Ecozones, Extended Value-Added Tax (EVAT), National Wealth, Tobacco Excise Tax, as well as inter-local transfers and receipts, grants, donations, and aids.

And lastly, non-income receipts come from capital and investment receipts and from loans and borrowings receipts.



If we are to consider the total revenue of all government units, it reflects almost 70% coming from the shares from the national tax collection. The significance of the IRA to the LGUs is very apparent as it is the clear majority contributor to its revenue. Highly urbanized and developed cities and LGUs are able to derive much better earnings from their thriving economy through local taxes and are, therefore, not so dependent on the national allotment. However, the vast majority of cities and municipalities still need further development and, thus, are more heavily reliant on the IRA for their functions.

## PRIORITY OF THE IRA

For the part of the LGUs, they are mandated to prioritize the use of their IRA. It should first cover the basic services and facilities, particularly those devolved and conferred power and authority to the local government by the Department of Health, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Additionally, it is also an imperative to allocate no less than 20% for developmental projects, and no less than 5% of their estimated revenue be devoted and set aside as the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund. Lastly, they are monitored by the Department of Budget and Management as all financial affairs, transactions, and operations are governed by the same fundamental principles of the national government budgeting.

## ALLOTING THE ALLOTMENT

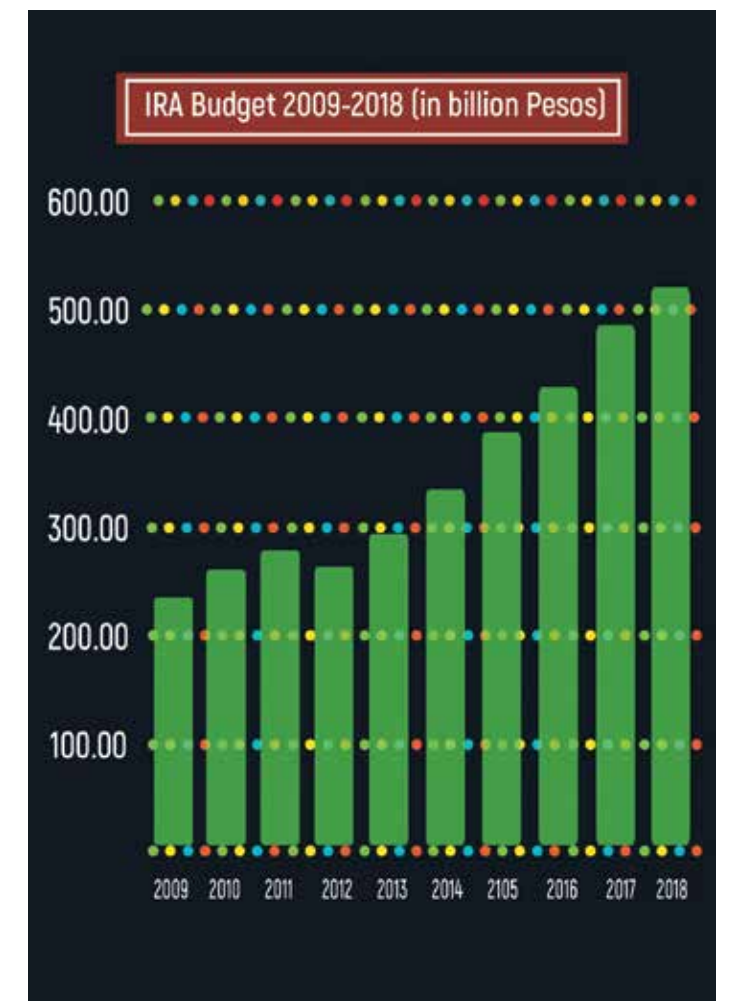
Level of LGU	No. of LGUs	Total IRA Share (in millions)
Provinces	81	91,023.82
Cities	144	89,207.11
Municipalities	1,478	132,952.70
Barangays	41,889	76,676.81
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43,592</b>	<b>389,860.43</b>

Source: Local Budget Memorandum No. 75

The table above reflects the IRA allocation through the various LGU levels in 2017. All levels of the local government each get a separate allotment of the IRA, with both the provincial and city levels receiving 23% each, the municipalities are given 34%, and the barangay level shares the remaining 20%. There is also a share equivalent to the cost of devolved functions/ city-funded hospitals that is factored in the budget.

Furthermore, the share for each province, city, and municipality shall be determined on the merits of the population (55%), land area (25%), and equal sharing (25%). Implementing such criteria ensures that the LGUs with bigger population to support and greater land areas to develop, have more access to funds. As for the barangays, it is only determined by population (60%) and equal sharing (40%).

## INCREASE OF IRA



In recent years, the LGUs have been benefitting from huge increases in their IRAs, with the 2018 IRA amounting to 522.74 billion pesos, more than doubling the IRA of 2009 worth 249.99 billion pesos. This much welcomed increase is largely attributed to an improved and more efficient tax collection on the national level of government.1

Sources:  
RA 7160: Local Government Code of 1991  
Local Budget Memorandum No. 75  
Local Budget Memorandum No. 74  
Local Budget Memorandum No. 70A  
Local Budget Memorandum No. 68  
GAA FY 2014, GAA FY 2013, GAA FY 2012, GAA FY 2011, GAA FY 2010, GAA FY 2009  
Department of Budget and Management  
Budget of Expenditures and Sources of Financing FY 2017, DBM



# Building a Bright Future Brick by Brick

Green Antz Builders is turning plastic sachets—which proliferate in our communities, clog waterways, and end up as litter in garbage dumps or oceans—into building blocks

BY ANNA CHATO

A hundred years from now, our generation will be judged on whether or not we did our best with what we had. The landmark case of Oposa vs. Factoran speaks of “the responsibilities of each generation [to act] as trustee and guardian of the environment for succeeding generations.” One company, in particular, is a pathfinder in this regard.

Green Antz Builders is transforming the problem of sachets into a solution for the country’s other seemingly insurmountable problems one Green Antz Eco-brick at a time.

## THE PRODUCTIVITY OF ANTZ

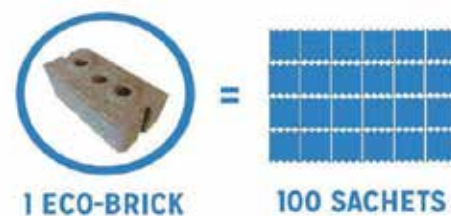
Green Antz started this advocacy in 2012. Its tagline: “Creating Sustainability. Challenging Poverty. Now.” reveals its mission to create livelihood and develop environmentally responsible communities. It promises to be a responsible corporate citizen that complies with all laws and regulations, which is a rarity, but needed now more than ever in today’s society. To be a law abiding and responsible citizen may seem at first to be of little consequence. But in life, as in the ant world, a little goes a long way.



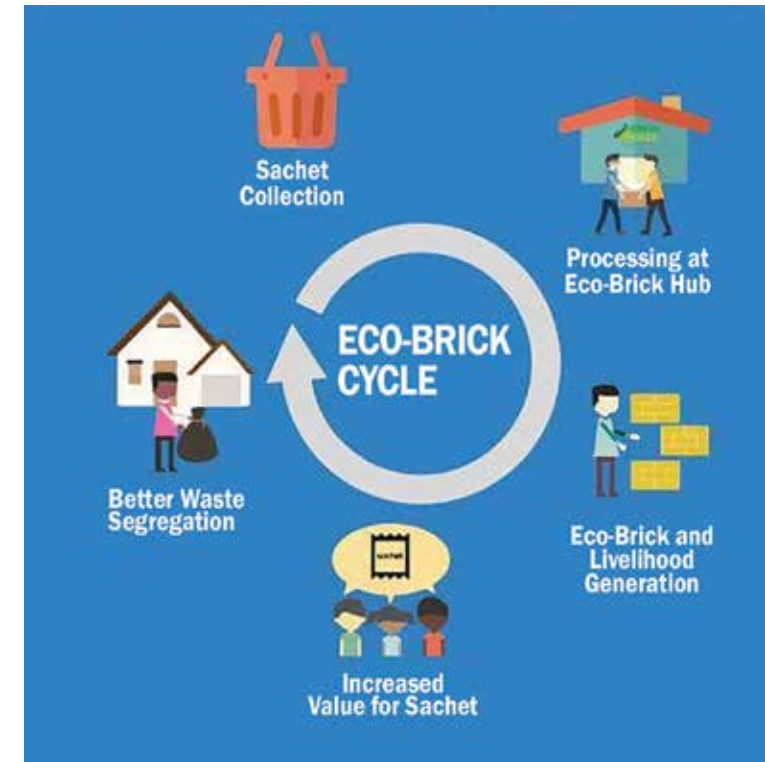
Green Antz Builders converts plastic waste into construction materials. Using 100 discarded sachets to build one Eco-brick, it is able to build a brick that is five to six times stronger than the usual hollow block. When a wall of the Lego-like designed Green Antz Eco-bricks are stacked to their final height, its tensile strength is greater than a regular wall of layered bricks. It also costs less: one square meter of Eco-brick costs P830, versus the P900 to P1,100 price per square meter of the average hollow block.

Deeply ingrained in Green Antz’ operational principles is the perspective of waste as a valuable resource. Plastic laminates, more commonly known as sachets, are collected from industrial or commercial waste, washed, and shredded using a snazzy green shredder bike, which Green Antz invented to be pedaled by foot. The shredded laminates are mixed with cement, then poured into another snazzy-looking green machine for brick pressing. The newly-formed Eco-bricks are dried and presto, the final product is produced! To ensure the quality of its bricks, Green Antz had conducted compression tests in the University of the Philippines Civil Engineering Construction Materials and Structures Laboratory.

With the Eco-brick, Green Antz shows how it is possible for construction materials to be both green and cost-efficient.



ECO-BRICK	HOLLOW BLOCK
<b>550 PSI</b> COMPRESSIVE STRENGTH	<b>158 PSI</b> COMPRESSIVE STRENGTH
<b>PHP 830</b> AVE. PRICE PER SQUARE METER	<b>PHP 900-1100</b> AVE. PRICE PER SQUARE METER
<b>BRICK STACKING</b> 	<b>BRICK LAYERING</b> 



## BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

Green Antz Builders is a Social Enterprise. It aims to be a leading driver of social value and has designed its machines for that purpose. From sachet collection to processing at Eco-brick hub, to Eco-brick livelihood generation, to increased value for sachet, to better waste segregation, and back again to sachet collection, the goal of the Eco-brick cycle is to create sustainable communities.

With innovation, professionalism, grit, care for people, care for the environment, and care for the future as its core values, Green Antz Builders aims to grow as a company that promotes practices and technologies that will protect the environment, along with the communities, that are very much a part of the environment.

The model school of Culianin Elementary School is among its impactful initiatives on green sustainability and improving access to shelter and classrooms. Culianin Elementary students collected 8,750 kilos of garbage to produce a watchtower, a pavement, and a canteen made of Eco-bricks.

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Green Antz Builders recognizes the important role of LGUs in its

**With the Eco-brick, Green Antz shows how it is possible for construction materials to be both green and cost-efficient.**



advocacy and social business. It has also teamed up with social entrepreneurs and corporations engaged in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs. For instance, it recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Nestle Philippines, Inc., the LGU of Cagayan de Oro City, Barangay Carmen, and CSO-Zayas for a new solid waste management program for non-decomposable waste. This will involve turning sachet waste at the former open dumpsite in Zayas-Carmen into Eco-bricks. Alongside this, at the same location, is the ongoing initiative of NorMin Veggies for turning decomposable waste into organic fertilizer.

Green Antz has also partnered with the LGUs of Teresa, Rizal and Plaridel,

Bulacan, and plans to expand to Cebu, Davao, Cavite, Bicol, Metro Manila, and other key cities and municipalities soon. The idea is to be present in all cities and key municipalities with the help of social franchisees, corporate partners, organizations such as Rotary, and LGUs.

Montepio Enterprises is Green Antz’ authorized representative for LGU projects. LGUs that find difficulty coming up with their 10-year development plan as required by the government’s environmental and public health mandate may turn to its group of consultants for assistance. ■

*For queries and free consultations, call or text Montepio Enterprises’ hotline: 0906 3417 555.*



# Finding Ways to Deal with Waste

With the complicated issue of waste, a singular approach isn't the solution

BY ANNA CHATO



**O**n July 10, 2000, a trash slide buried a thousand people in Payatas, Quezon City. A mountain of garbage collapsed and then burst into flames, reportedly killing 287 and leaving over 300 families homeless. Among the survivors were eight-year-old Erwin Dolera and 10-year-olds Jason Vann Banogan and Jomar Pabalan. They wrote their dreams on paper and folded them into boats, which they launched into the dark waters of the Pasig River. They became known as the “*bangkang papel* boys (paper boat boys),” the poster children for poverty, when former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo relayed their story in her first State of the Nation Address (SONA) in 2001. She mentioned their dreams; Erwin’s dream was that the Payatas dumpsite be closed and that his family be given their own land.

**Because the new Waste-to-Energy technologies harness energy and lessen the need for dumpsites, they have become an alternative solution to landfilling in countries where land is scarce.**

## THE CHALLENGE OF RA 9003

Under the Ecological Solid Waste Management law (RA 9003), garbage that cannot be reused or recycled must be placed in a sanitary landfill, with strict guidelines set for the protection of the environment. Given the burgeoning problem of illegal dumpsites and flooding from garbage, however, a number of LGUs have turned to newer technologies, in particular that of Waste-to-Energy (WtE), which aims to reduce up to 95% of waste produced daily by converting it into fuel or electricity.

In March 2017, the Quezon City government granted original proponent status to Metro Pacific Investments

Corporation (MPIC), Covanta Energy, and Macquarie Group Limited to build a P15-billion WtE facility. Its purpose is to convert up to 3,000 metric tons of municipal solid waste a day to 42 megawatts of renewable energy, which could power between 60,000 to 90,000 homes.

In August 2017, the Dagupan City government similarly signed a joint venture agreement with SURE Global Waste to Worth Innovations Philippines, with the support of Procter & Gamble, to build a waste management and reduction facility, but at no cost to the city government. The aim is to provide the whole city of Dagupan with

sustainable means to convert waste into biogas and diesel fuel.

Davao City, in turn, is carefully considering proposals for a WtE facility. City officials are taking into consideration the fear of environmentalists that WtE might encourage the public to produce more garbage, given that the WtE facility requires a daily minimum waste volume of around 600 metric tons to sustain its operations, while Davao City’s daily waste averages only 500 metric tons. They are also looking to build new sanitary landfills in environmental compliance with RA 9003 in two locations to cut costs on trash transportation.

## THE ALCHEMY OF WASTE-TO-ENERGY

Waste-to-Energy (WtE) is the process of generating fuel or electricity from garbage. The most common and controversial form of WtE is incineration. Its inception occurred in the 1800s with the invention of the first incinerator in the UK. Better known as Energy-from-Waste (EfW) in Europe, technology was developed to harness energy and limit emissions from incineration. It has found success in many countries particularly in Western Europe, which derive heat and electricity from the burning of their municipal waste. Because the new technologies harness energy and lessen the need for dumpsites, these have become an alternative solution to landfilling in countries where land is scarce. These have also been shown to

lessen the greenhouse gases coming from landfills by up to 90%.

In the Philippines, however, there has been great debate over its use. Incineration has been banned by the Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999 (RA 8749). Incineration is associated with the release of dioxins, which environmentalists argue to be the most toxic chemical known to science, and has been shown to cause cancers, reproductive disorders, and congenital birth defects. The effects of dioxins on the environment are said to last many generations. And even at small concentrations, the substance can pollute water sources, exposing people to the associated health risks.

Compared to the incinerators of yesteryear, today’s WtE technologies employing incineration have extensive pollution control mechanisms that limit the release of dioxins to the air. These new technologies, however, cost billions of pesos as a result. Dr. Jorge Emmanuel, former UNDP Global Environment Projects Chief Technical Advisor, in an environmental forum in December 2016, warned LGUs that some WtE companies are able to offer these technologies at a lower price because they reduce pollution control mechanisms. In considering these technologies, there is the danger of companies minimizing the design to reduce cost to make more money or to make it affordable to a developing country like the Philippines. Plus, these technologies need constant monitoring over emissions, since even in first world

countries, violators have been found exceeding the allowable emission limits.

Environmentalists like Dr. Jorge Emmanuel also fear it will encourage the public to produce more garbage and hinder recycling efforts, especially since WtE incinerators thrive on mixed garbage to generate the most amount of energy. They recommend to go “Zero Waste” instead and to shift to wind, wave, solar, and geothermal power.

In Europe, the presence of WtE facilities correlates with high recycling rates among communities. The results, though, are case specific and cultural. For WtE and recycling to work in conjunction, it is important to strengthen LGUs and their recycling policies.

## THE CASE OF SAN FERNANDO

In the country, there are several models and communities already adopting the greener approach of WtE. San Fernando City, for example, has been winning awards for waste management by putting up more than one Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) per barangay. According to a report, the city has seen great changes since 2013 when they started to implement RA 9003 at a barangay level. When they began, residents were still throwing their trash without segregating and turning vacant lots into dumpsites. With the help of Mother Earth Foundation, led by the barangay captain, each barangay began teaching each resident how to segregate trash into organic waste, recyclables, and residual waste through a door-to-door campaign. Within a year, they were



(From left) Sanitary Landfill in Barangay Inayawan in Cebu; the infamous Payatas dumpsite.





able to turn things around and have experienced continuous success.

Keeping things at a local level, around four garbage collectors per barangay use tricycles and pushcarts to inspect each resident's trash for segregation compliance. They then collect the trash, and bring it to a nearby materials recovery facility (MRF), where each kind of trash is placed into its own labeled compartment. If the resident's trash is not segregated, the collectors leave the trash and inform the barangay hall of the resident's non-compliance. Dialogue and an "Agreement Logbook" meet non-complying residents at the barangay hall, where they are asked to sign the logbook, verifying they understood the program and promise to comply with it. Upon second violation, they are fined P500, and on third, a case is filed against them.

At the MRF, organic waste is composted, paper sells for P6 per kilogram, metal sells for P19 per kilogram, and the residual waste (10% of the barangay's total generated garbage) is brought to the Metro Clark sanitary landfill.

As a result of their efforts, the barangay was able to save P300,000

annually. It went from spending an average of P700,000 a year to pay for dump trucks and fuel to P400,000, covering the maintenance of the MRF, the salary of the garbage collectors, enforcers, and MRF manager.

#### CONVERSION TECHNOLOGIES

Waste-to-energy is not a single technology, but a variety of technologies. WtE has largely been associated with incineration a.k.a. direct combustion to create electricity, which has given the term "waste-to-energy" a bad rap in our society, labeled as incineration masquerading as something new. The following are various conversion technologies used around the world to produce energy from waste.

#### AUTOCCLAVING: BETTER ALTERNATIVE TO WTE?

In a Waste Management forum in August 2015 organized by Health Care Without Harm-Asia (HCWH-Asia), in partnership with the local government of Cebu City and the Rotary Club of Mandaue East, Dr. Jorge Emmanuel lectured that there are "environmentally sound alternative technologies and systems that are more effective and low-cost [than WtE technologies]." According to him, "Standard autoclaving is one of the

cheapest alternative waste technologies that employ steam to disinfect medical wastes. Unlike burn technologies such as incineration, it does not produce toxic substances like dioxins and furans that are hazardous to people's health."

Around the world, autoclaving is being used to sterilize hospital and surgical equipment and some biohazard wastes before bringing them to landfills to prevent the spread of diseases. Although there have been proposals for its use on municipal waste in countries like the UK, where it is also known as Fibrecycle Steam Treatment, this application is fairly recent. It has been shown to reduce waste volume by up to 60% and turns the waste into a homogenous fiber called fluff. However, its benefits in solid waste management and to the environment, as well as the best practices available around this technology, are yet unclear and have to be studied further.

In the same 2015 forum, HCWH-Asia's Director Merci Ferrer warned, "When addressing the issue of wastes, local governments should not look for quick and easy solutions, which only lead to bigger problems with long-term negative implications on people's health and the environment. LGUs, hospital owners, and administrators should invest on health care waste management systems and technologies that do not do more harm."

#### BIOGAS FUELING CEBU HOSPITAL

Cebu's Perpetual Succor Hospital is already employing an alternative waste management technology called a biodigester to create biogas. It reportedly installed the first hospital biodigester in the country, which converts food and garden waste into methane gas for the kitchen and laundry.

Biogas is a homemade clean and renewable fuel (similar to LPG). Using a biodigester, in a large tank, bacteria convert organic waste through the process of anaerobic digestion. You put market waste, kitchen waste, and manure from livestock into it to produce methane gas for cooking, lighting, and other energy needs. The leftover which exits the digester is thereafter used as a high-quality organic fertilizer.

#### WORLDVIEW MATTERS

In *Environmental Health Perspectives* (2016), Nate Seldenrich suggests that the heart of the debate between proponents

### THERMAL TECHNOLOGIES

**GASIFICATION** produces combustible gas, hydrogen, synthetic fuels

**DEPOLYMERIZATION** produces synthetic crude oil

**PYROLYSIS** produces combustible tar/bio oil and chars

**PLASMA ARC GASIFICATION** produces syngas

### NON-THERMAL TECHNOLOGIES

**BIOGAS FROM ANAEROBIC DIGESTION** rich in methane

**FERMENTATION** (same process as wine-making) produces ethanol, lactic acid, hydrogen

**MECHANICAL BIOLOGICAL TREATMENT** (similar to MRF) Biogas production from landfills

**CHEMICAL** Conversion (Esterification) – produces biodiesel

and opponents of WtE technologies is not, in fact, dioxins or emissions; it is beliefs about what trash really is and how to handle it. Opponents of WtE are proponents of "zero waste," which contends that at least 80% of Municipal Solid Waste can be recycled or composted, and "that reuse and waste prevention can reduce the remaining portion—if not all the way to zero, then close."

Putting it another way, to the environmentalists on the "zero waste" side, nothing reusable or recyclable goes to waste, therefore burning plastics which could stay in the world market and constantly producing virgin materials are unconscionable (i.e. "huwag magsasayang"). They tend to argue that WtE encourages people to produce more garbage. For them, WtE leads to loss of income to recyclers; to burn garbage is to burn money and resources. Following RA 9003 saves a lot of money, while WtE needs a lot of money (billions) as capital and to keep operating, spending so much to produce so little energy. Their preferred sources of clean renewable energy are solar, wind, wave, and geothermal power. Their idea of ecological solid waste management is to reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost. Ultimately, to them, regardless of technology, short cuts will lead to pollution. People must change their habits of waste.

As for the pro-WtE, Seldenrich explains, "Supporters of conversion technologies, meanwhile, contend that recycling and composting aren't enough to sufficiently improve landfill-diversion rates, and that some sort of thermal processing of leftovers is necessary. They employ the newer term 'zero-waste-to-landfill' to allow for

conversion technologies and other WtE strategies as an additional and in some cases preferred form of recycling."

To the advocates of "zero-waste-to-landfill," it is more important that no visible garbage, nothing unsightly should destroy the environment. In many model cities around the world, that is what "zero waste" looks like: a combination of various efforts (e.g. recycling + various WtE, including direct combustion) dealing with different kinds of garbage, until nothing pollutes the streets. European countries known for the best recycling practices employ WtE practices to avoid landfilling. Their technologies meet strict emission standards, including those against dioxins deleterious to health. They argue that WtE via direct combustion is nowadays safer than barbecues and burning waste in backyards. Even the 'Green' Scandinavian Countries, such as Norway known for its Green Party, have turned to Energy-from-Waste as a solution to Greenhouse gases and environmental degradation. Although admittedly some, such as Sweden, have been known to import garbage from other countries to fuel their WtE power plants because there's not enough garbage produced daily.

#### LANDFILLING LAST AND LEAST

The Asian Development Bank and the DENR jointly project that if current trends continue, the country will need 200 new landfills the size of a current Manila landfill by the year 2020. The Philippines is a "sachet culture" used to buying things in small scale.

Perhaps the solution to our problems may be found therein as well. Instead of trying to fit the technologies, why not anticipate the creation of new

technologies that conform to the needs of a barangay? Waste-to-energy is a developing technology and new technologies of smaller scale are emerging, offering less costly options that run on less waste tonnage and produce less deleterious byproducts. Biogas as a technology, for instance, is probably best implemented on a local level, with establishments like the Perpetual Succor Hospital leading the way.

Small-scale actions matter, such as in the case of San Fernando City, which was able to turn things around and save money by enforcing a "No Segregation, No Collection" policy. Even our small-scale consumptions, if countered with small scale actions, can lead to great results. Green Antz Builders is turning every 100 sachets into an Eco-brick that, when mixed with cement, comes out stronger than hollow blocks. Other advocates are stuffing PET plastic bottles with plastic to make them into building blocks. Envirotech Waste Recycling, Inc. is converting plastic bags into chairs for schools. The chairs cost half the price of a wooden school chair and are designed with six interlocking parts held by plastic dowels, made standardized and interchangeable to make it easy to fix if something breaks. Eco-design and recovery procedures make reusing things like printer ink cartridges easy. We can do a number of little things to make landfilling last and least.

If any real improvement is going to take place, it will happen on the LGU or barangay level. Even with WtE technology, recycling is still absolutely necessary, and it still has to be implemented on the barangay level and even smaller, the home, the self. ■





# Trapped in Traffic Hell

We need to look at the bigger picture and study an adoptable model for us to effectively address the growing issue of traffic and congestion

BY ENGINEER ROBERT RITO, JR.

In the previous issue, we talked about basic traffic management concepts and the common sense that the public must demonstrate by following existing rules and regulations. However, knowing these simple definitions and rules would not be adequate for today's traffic situation. Complex troubleshooting is a must, as we patiently wait for long-term transport solutions to take effect.

## TODAY'S TRAFFIC TRIBULATIONS

Vehicle volume has been the concern of the government for many years now. The number of vehicles traversing our roads is too much to provide an acceptable level of service—meaning, the volume of vehicles exceeds the capacity of the roads.

The reduction policy has been favorably considered by the government and revised through the extension of effective period and removal of window hours. This type of solution is only a patch to a symptom, but not a cure to the problem. The effort of the government to reduce traffic volume through color/number coding has become a one-sided strategy due to the absence of better mass transport modes or other alternative ways of mobility. This prevents the public from traveling, going to work, attending school, and performing day-to-day tasks that would have increased the country's productivity.

Despite this, promotions for vehicle sales for both new and used car brands have increased. In a very short time,

vehicle volume will catch up and exceed what has been reduced previously. This only brings us back to our traffic volume problem, unless other policies that may hinder the acquisition of vehicles are implemented. This is obviously a better way than preventing ourselves from traveling and becoming productive.

Our circumferential and radial roads (e.g. EDSA, C5, Commonwealth Ave, Marcos Highway) are supposed to serve as trunk roads. Presently, these major roads mimic what local roads are intended for. Most establishments feed traffic directly to these roads, thus adding roadside friction along the outermost lanes. This makes a wide road very narrow by reducing the effective volume capacity. It also affects the inner lanes, making travel speed a lot slower. We could wish that these major roads would only accept incoming traffic from collector roads at strategic junctions, thus totally separating intercity from local traffic. We could also wish for these roads to behave like some segments of Roxas Boulevard, where the outer lane has somewhat been delineated and segregated from the inner lanes to reduce local traffic from invading the free-flowing characteristic of the inner lanes.

Most of the time, free-flowing traffic is non-existent. Our roads make us drive by constantly weaving between lanes. This kind of driving

behavior compromises safety. In fact, to travel safely equates to a very slow travel speed. There can be several factors that may have caused this, such as improper road infrastructure and transport policies that do not coincide with efficient road utilization. From highway master plans, the above-mentioned roads should be wide enough for fast travel speed to serve as connectors between cities and capable of providing acceptable level of service for years to come. In spite of these highway master plan forecasts, road usage has been modified in many ways and in such a way that the infrastructure loses its original efficiency and effectiveness.

Closing an intersection and replacing it with a U-turning slot has helped reduce delay back in the days of acceptable traffic volume levels. But would it have been more effective if existing traffic signal phasing and timing at intersections were modified based on vehicle demand and not on guess work? Would it have been also better, if these supposed trunk roads were designed and constructed to have exit ramps at the outer lane instead of the inner lane such as those found in EDSA? Or if flyovers were constructed to provide free-flowing traffic instead of providing an intersection and then eventually have it replaced with a U-turn?

For some minor intersections, the implementation of U-turn slots replacing a regular intersection has somewhat facilitated the flow of vehicles. However, at a major intersection where demand along its legs are great, a U-turn strategy only complicates the smooth flow of vehicles. It is like crossing two skewed intersections, especially if U-turn slots are too close to the original intersection. A vehicle making a U-turn blocks all through traffic. Imagine several vehicles weaving from the outermost lane towards the innermost lane, then would do it again on the opposite direction, making every vehicle slow down or even stop for each lane weaved. Safety is definitely an issue here. This traffic management approach further diminishes the effective volume capacity of the road by adding another cause of

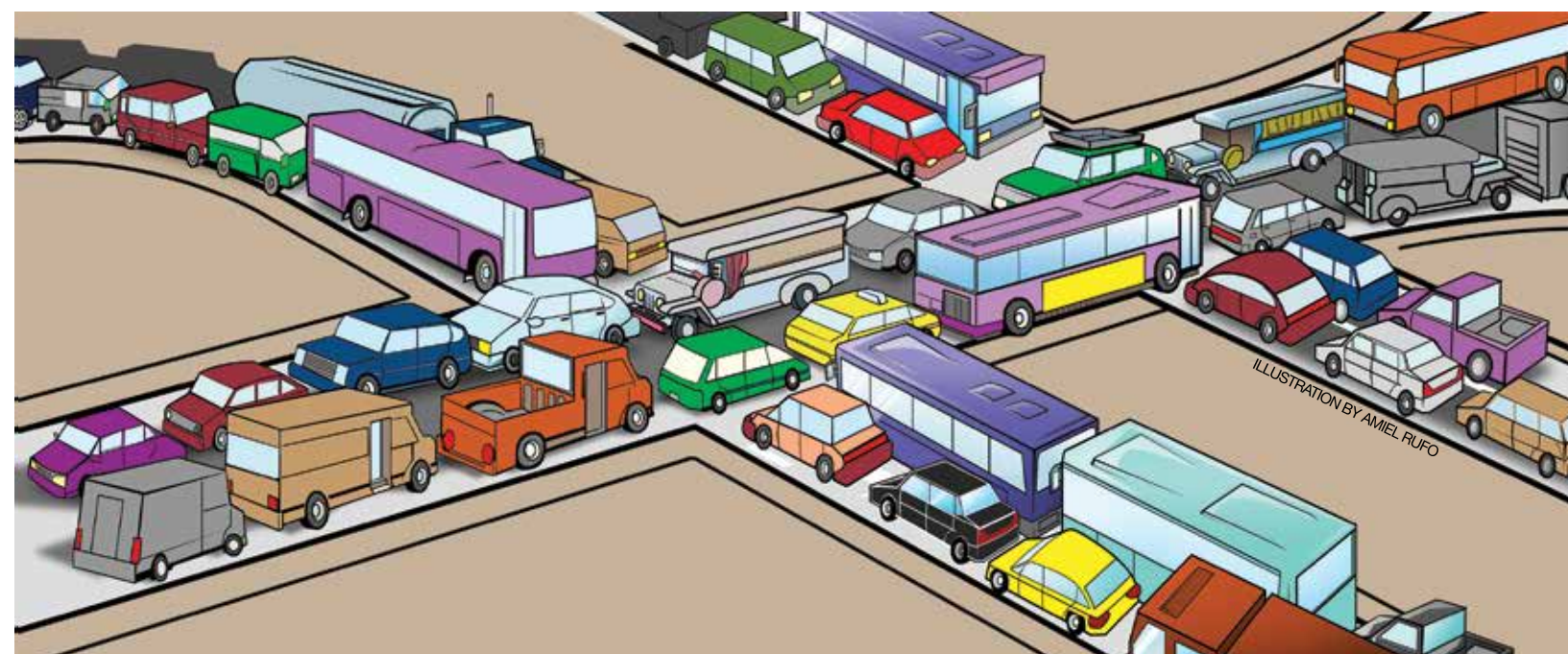
**With all these conditions happening simultaneously, we are left with not even a single lane of free-flowing traffic along our roads during extended peak hours.**

road side friction not from the outer lane but from the inner lanes. And in extreme cases, due to traffic slow-down, queuing occurs from all directions and a gridlock is always a possibility.

Another point of concern is pedestrian safety. Pedestrian traffic is as important as motorists' and should have been considered when building road infrastructure. Is it all right for us to cross several lanes in the absence of a controlled traffic? If not, then, what is the use of a pedestrian crossing lane along an eight-lane or more roadway? Sidewalks are there but are occupied by other things so people tend to share space with vehicles at the carriageway. This is another example of a one-sided strategy wherein one is favored and the other is compromised. This kind of strategy is also seen explicitly in the execution of projects along the road right of way.

Project implementation is always a sign of putting taxpayers' money to good use, whether it be a new transport infrastructure, road rehabilitation, or utility work. Additionally, execution of these projects will always have a negative impact to traffic but can definitely be addressed through traffic management. It is therefore only proper for the contractors working along these roads to be socially responsible by providing good traffic management.

In the effort to immediately implement these projects, traffic management has been seen as a documentary





requirement only. I thought we had learned from past experiences and careful planning and stricter implementation of traffic management would have been required. This, however, is not the case. Should the contractor be blamed? I say, the government should have obligated the contractor to produce a good traffic management plan and should have a way to evaluate and validate it in a quick and efficient manner.

With all these conditions happening simultaneously, we are left with not even a single lane of free-flowing traffic along our roads during extended peak hours. In effect, we are experiencing one hell of an inconvenience and magnitudes of safety issues.

#### UNRAVELING THE GRIDLOCK

Accepting these things as our normal way of life and saying we cannot do anything about the traffic situation should not be the attitude towards this problem. We are critical thinkers, we innovate, and we work hard. So, let us give competent Filipinos the opportunity to be recognized for their hard work. I am confident that our traffic problem can be solved through our existing talents.

So, the trillion-peso infrastructure question still stands. How do we solve Metro Manila's traffic problem? A holistic approach is needed to address our transport infrastructure and policy enforcement issues. Aside from producing disciplined drivers, enforcing strict rules, and making roads safer, what we would like to change is the "too much stop, but little go traffic." We would like a steady flow along our major roads regardless of traffic volume. We can start by understanding vehicle flow behavior. We can only provide a stable flow if we have dedicated lanes unaffected by road side friction. However, a constant flow from an upstream segment of the road would also mean a congestion

downstream if it cannot cope with incoming traffic demand. For a trunk road to experience such a classic case is a matter of infrastructure inefficiency and road side friction. Light congestion and queuing should be expected near the final destination wherein demand management is attributed to the capacity of local roads.

On the other hand, local roads incapable of accepting its traffic demand is characterized by inefficient

has been built and what it was intended for. Otherwise, we will need our road infrastructure to be modified based on revised road use policies.

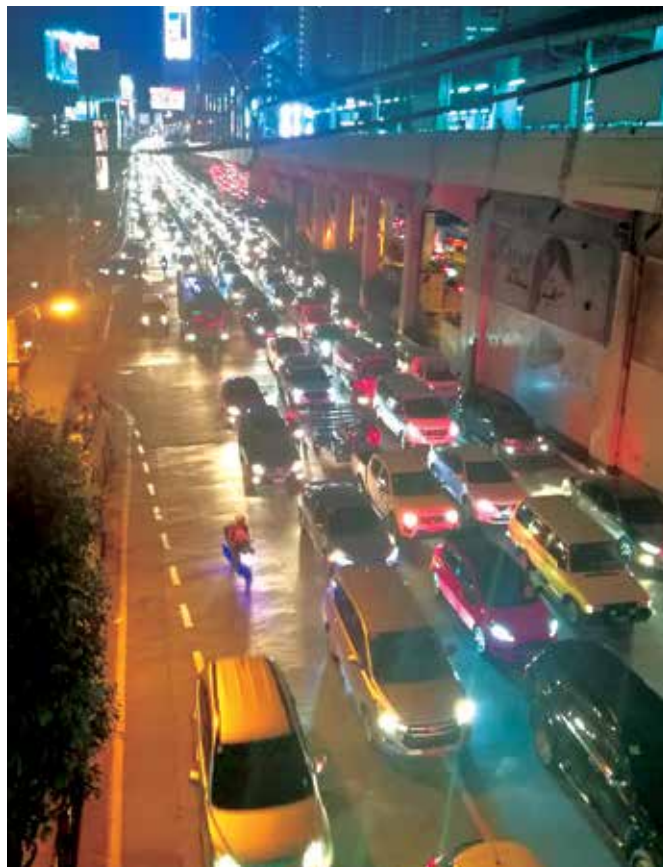
The government has implemented various traffic management measures already and even with almost all solutions in place, it seems we are still missing something that would give us a distinct sense of the traffic impact. Present traffic management measures implemented usually address a particular stretch of road, only to

transfer the problems to its nearby corridors. This proves our limited view on what is happening. We need to approach things over a wider field by developing a dynamic transport model. This is the development of Mega Manila's transport model as our first step, then expanding to include the whole Philippine transport network. Without a transport model, we are unable to comprehend the traffic impact of any activity (new infrastructure, traffic operation and policy changes, mass events/evacuation, etc.) over a wide area network.

The transport model will aid in planning, solutions implementation, and transport operations. This will also provide an effective feedback mechanism through vast database and simulation. In this way, we are able to address short- to long-term transport and traffic management issues and concerns, whether these be simple traffic circulation

modification, policy enhancements, or costly infrastructure projects. Unlike doing on-street policy trials or implementing poorly planned projects/programs, we can rigorously test anything before physical implementation by capturing what needs to be tweaked, thus, eliminating a traditional way of trial and error. Let us support this primary step towards better transport and traffic management by building a dynamic transport model. ■

*Next issue: Let us take a closer look at how to develop a dynamic transport model and its key role in transport/traffic planning, solutions implementations, and operations.*



# WASTE MANAGEMENT INC.



#### ONE TEAM

- People working together effectively as one team.
- Our leader and team player should have sense of Responsibility
- Sense of Ownership and sense of Urgency.



#### ONE PLAN

- Nationwide campaign for eco-friendly waste management system, as measured by: Client, Partner, Supplier, Employee and community satisfaction.



#### ONE GOAL

- An exciting viable WMI delivering profitable growth for all.
- Resolutely focus in providing first-class integrated waste management solution nationwide.



**Collection and Handling  
Garbage Bins System  
Waste Management Consultant  
10-Year Solid Waste Management Plan**

**Material Recovery Facility  
Transfer Station  
Sanitary Landfill  
Waste to Energy**



INTEGRATED SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT  
SOLUTION PROVIDER

8th Floor Galleria Corporate Center,  
Ortigas Avenue Corner EDSA, Quezon City  
Telephone Numbers: (02) 238-3698 / (02) 285-6367 /  
HP: (0917) 520-7894

Website: [www.wmiphils.com](http://www.wmiphils.com) / Email: [inquiry@wmiphils.com](mailto:inquiry@wmiphils.com)

CEBU • DAVAO • METRO MANILA • VIGAN



# What You Need to Know About PPP

Certified PPP specialist **ATTY. ALBERTO C. AGRA** explains how Public-Private Partnerships can benefit LGUs



## INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT.

A country cannot prosper without the development of its constitutive units. Integrative, sustainable, and holistic development can only come about with the growth of *all* LGUs. This is the hallmark of a unitary form of government and a stated policy under the Local Government Code of 1991.

**GAPS.** Advancement is largely anchored on plugging gaps. There are policy, funding, technology, infrastructure, and participatory deficiencies: 1) There is no single PPP law in the country; 2) Most LGUs are still dependent on the internal revenue allotment; 3) Innovation is not yet a byword for all LGUs; and 4) LGUs still do not have (enough or adequate) roads, socialized housing units, mass transport systems, water and power

supply, and irrigation facilities, among others.

## AN ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY.

PPP is vertically- and horizontally-decentralized. PPPs offer an alternative to traditional procurement and project implementation through administration, and a solution to dependency on the national government. Because of local autonomy, LGUs are free to adopt their own PPP ordinances provided no law is violated. Private capital may be made available for local infrastructure and social service-related projects, while scarce resources of LGUs may be used for non-revenue raising activities. PPPs allow private sector to introduce technology and innovate. PPPs permit LGUs and private sector

proponents (PSPs) to pursue resource exchange and partake of the upside.

**PPP FOR PEOPLE.** PPPs are not just intended to financially benefit the public and private corporations. While having more funds will benefit the parties to a PPP arrangement, revenues are not the be-all and end-all of PPPs. Policy- and program-wise, non-parties to a PPP contract are the real beneficiaries. Memorandum Circular 120, s. of 2016 (MC 120) issued by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) underscored the true worth of PPPs. DILG now advocates P<sup>4</sup> or PPPs for the People.

## CLOSE TO 100 PPP ORDINANCES.

Even prior to the issuance of said landmark executive issuance, LGUs have enacted their own PPP and/or

joint venture (JV) ordinances. To date, some 100 have done so including the 237 barangays of Bataan Province. The authority of LGUs to pass their own ordinances has been confirmed by the Office of the President, DILG, and Department of Justice. This author hopes that there will be more LGUs that will adopt their own. This is truly bottom-up rather than imposed from the top.

## MORE THAN 40 AWARDED LGU PPP PROJECTS.

Compared to other government agencies (i.e., national government agencies and government-owned and -controlled corporations) that can enter into PPPs, LGUs have entered into more PPP projects. There are, to date, more than 40 LGU projects awarded in the recent past.

Manila has signed JV agreements for six public markets. The provincial governments of Bataan, Laguna, and Nueva Ecija will allow PSPs to redevelop their respective provincial capitols. Manila, Pasay, Parañaque, Cordova, and Consolacion in Cebu will soon have new land through reclamation. The provincial government of Quezon has bundled three projects in one contract—bulk water supply, hydropower, and wind power. Puerto Princesa City will soon undertake a waste-to-energy project, possibly the first of such kind. Cebu City and the Municipality of Cordova

will be interconnected by a bridge through a PPP. Malabon City will house the marginalized sector through a socialized housing PPP. Valenzuela City entered into JVs for its city center and market, one through solicitation and other through the unsolicited route.

**PPP MENU.** Applying the principle of subsidiarity, LGUs are in a better position to know their respective local problems and address these challenges. There is no one-size-fits-all. For those who have adopted their own PPP framework patterned after the template of this author, which incidentally is the model ordinance under MC 120, LGUs are presented with a Menu. The *PPP Menu* by Casa Agra offers a host of choices—development strategies, hard and soft projects, modalities, selection procedures, value drivers, LGU contributions, risk allocation schemes, selection parameters, among others. Making the right and appropriate choice, whether through act or omission, will either serve or not serve the public.

**POPULAR CHOICES FOR LGUS.** For LGUs, the popular choices in the Menu are: bundling of hard and soft projects (nature of project), unsolicited proposals (selection procedure), JV (modality), and concession and use of public property (LGU contribution).

**TRUSTING LGUS.** Yes, LGUs can; LGUs have done it; the future of PPPs lies with LGUs; LGUs can be trusted and must be worthy of the people's trust. LGUs as agents of the state and the people must serve our interest. Let us be trusting, vigilant, and engaging. ■

## About the author:

*Alberto C. Agra is the incumbent Chairman of the Board of the Philippine Reclamation Authority. He is a Certified Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and Regulation Specialist<sup>TM</sup>, a PPP Law professor, and an active lecturer on PPPs. His template PPP ordinance has been referred to by 81 provinces, cities, and municipalities. He was the former Acting Secretary of Justice, Acting Solicitor General, and Government Corporate Counsel.*

**The core of progress lies with local government units (LGUs). The future of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) likewise lies and relies on LGUs.**





## 1. PPP DEFINITIONS – What is a PPP?

- **National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) (2013 Mid-term Report):** A contractual arrangement between the government and the private sector to deliver public infrastructure and/or public services.
- **PPP Center (official website):** PPP can be broadly defined as a contractual agreement between the Government and a private firm targeted towards financing, designing, implementing and operating infrastructure facilities and services that were traditionally provided by the public sector. It embodies optimal risk allocation between the parties – minimizing cost while realizing project developmental objectives. Thus, the project is to be structured in such a way that the private sector gets a reasonable rate of return on its investment.
- **DILG Memorandum Circular No. 120 – 2016:** At the policy level, PPP is a developmental, innovative, change and partnership strategy aimed at promoting the general welfare, inclusive growth and better quality of life of Filipinos. At the project level, a PPP is a contractual arrangement between the government and the private sector proponent (PSP) to deliver public infrastructure and/or public services where each party assumes specified functions, bears certain risks, provides contribution, performs particular obligations, and earns benefits and revenues.
- Others

## 2. THE 10 Ps OF PPPs – What are these?

- PPP is about Partnership
- for the People/ Public Good
- who are the beneficiaries and act as Payors and must be co-champions.
- The Government and the PSP are the Parties to a Pact who
- who undertake and co-implement Projects and allocate Peril or Risk between themselves.
- The PSP is selected through competitive Procedures where the contracts have Performance targets
- which should be achieved in a given Period.



## 3. FUNDING/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES – How are government projects financed and implemented?

- Usage of national, local or public corporate funds
- Utilization of proceeds from loans or bonds
- Availment of private capital
- By administration
- Through procurement
- PPP
- All or some of the above

## 4. PUBLIC PROPONENTS – Who are the Implementing/ Procuring Agencies?

- National Government Agencies
- Government-Owned and -Controlled Corporations
- Government Instrumentalities
- Government Financial Institutions
- State Colleges and Universities
- Local Government Units
- All or some of the above



## 5. VALUE DRIVERS – Why pursue PPPs?

- PPP is a policy
- Accelerated service delivery (“additionality”)
- Risk-allocation between partners
- Introduction of innovation
- Better value-for-money
- Lack of resources
- All or some of the above

## 6. PAYORS – Who pays for PPP projects?

- End-users (those who use the facility)
- Government, indirectly taxpayers
- Both

## 7. PPP PROJECTS – What are the possible projects?

- **Hard**
  - Roads
  - Bridges
  - Power Supply
  - Water Supply
  - Water Distribution
  - Airports
  - Seaports
  - Reclamation
  - Markets
  - Transport Systems
  - Terminals
  - Government Buildings
  - Parks
  - Information Technology
  - Cemetery
  - Solid Waste Management
  - Bridges
  - Malls

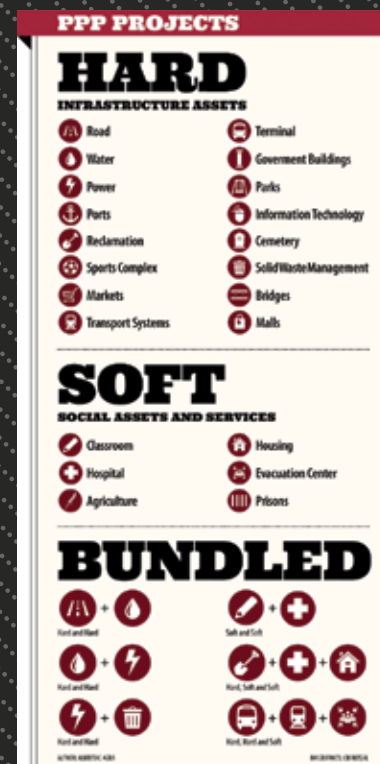
- **Soft**
  - Socialized Housing
  - Education
  - Health care
  - Rehabilitation Centers
  - Evacuation Facilities
  - Prisons
  - Others

- **Bundling**
  - Waste-to-Energy
  - Hydropower
  - Market with Mall and Bus Terminal
  - Airport with Monorail
  - Mixed-Used Development with Socialized Housing on Reclamation

- Others

## 8. PERIODS – How long is the contract life?

- Short-term (1 to 2 years)
- Medium-term (10 to 15 years)
- Long-term (25 to 50 years)



## 9. TYPES OF RISKS – What are the typical risks in PPPs?

- **Policy and Political**
  - Succession
  - Corruption
  - Legislative
  - Regulatory
  - Risk mismatch
  - Taxation
  - Audit
  - Political Force Majeure
- **Economic and Fiscal**
  - Credit
  - Demand
  - Economic
  - Cost
  - Foreign exchange
  - Gearing
  - Inflation
  - Insurance
  - Interest
  - Life cycle costs
  - Market competition
  - Market familiarity
  - Payment mechanism
  - Revenue tariffs
  - Sponsor
- **Legal and Procedures**
  - Acquiring planning approval
  - Bid process
  - Consortium structure
  - Counterparty
  - Feasibility studies
  - Legal/ Capacity
  - Local partners Interface
  - Social or protester
  - Time
- **Environmental and Spatial**
  - Asset quality
  - Availability
  - Commissioning or start-up
  - Construction
  - Demographic
  - Design
  - Environmental
  - Force majeure
  - Ground conditions
  - Installation
  - Operational
  - Technology
  - Project management ability
  - Project performance
  - Raw material Supply
  - Residual value
  - Site Acquisition
  - Usage
  - Volume
  - Weather

## 10. RISK-ALLOCATION – How are risks spread between parties?

- Risk-Retention (retained by government)
- Risk-Transfer (transferred to the PSP)
- Risk-Sharing (shared between the parties)

## 11. RISK ASSESSMENT – How are risks assessed in terms of certainty and impact?

- **Likelihood**
  - Certain
  - Likely
  - Possible
  - Unlikely
  - Rare
- **Significance**
  - Catastrophic
  - Major
  - Significant
  - Minor
  - Insignificant

## 12. PPP MODALITIES – What are the arrangements?

- **Under the BOT Law**
  - Build-and-Transfer (BT)
  - Build-Lease-and-Transfer (BLT)
  - Build-Operate-and-Transfer (BOT)
  - Build-Own-and-Operate (BOO)
  - Build-Transfer-and-Operate (BTO)
  - Contract-Add-and-Operate (CAO)
  - Develop-Operate-and-Transfer (DOT)
  - Rehabilitate-Operate-and-Transfer (ROT)
  - Rehabilitate-Own-and-Operate (ROO)
- **Possible under BOT Law**
  - Rehabilitate-Lease-and-Transfer (RLT)
  - Rehabilitate-and-Transfer (RT)
  - Rehabilitate-Transfer-and-Operate (RTO)
- **Under other laws and regulations**
  - Concession
  - Joint Venture (JV)
  - Lease or Affermage
  - Management Contract using LGU funds
  - Management Contract without using LGU funds
  - Service Contract using LGU funds
  - Service Contract without using LGU funds
  - Divestment or Disposition
  - Corporatization
  - Incorporation of a Subsidiary with PSP equity
  - Onerous Donations
  - Gratuitous Donations

- Other similar arrangements

## 13. GOVERNING LAWS – What laws and regulations must be followed?

• 9 BOT Law Variants	BOT Law (RA 6957, amended by RA 7718)
• Concession	Special Laws/ Local Ordinances
• Joint Ventures	2013 Guidelines issued by NEDA/ Local Ordinances
• Management and Service Contracts	Using Public Funds: Government Procurement Reform Act Not using Public Funds: Local Ordinances
• RT, RLT and RTO	Possible under BOT Law/ Local Ordinances
• Lease and Affermage	Civil Code/ Public Land Act/ Local Ordinances
• Divestment/ Disposition	Commission on Audit Circular No. 89-296
• Corporatization/ Subsidiary	Corporation Code

## PPP RESOURCE EXCHANGE

Modality	Government	Private Sector
Build-Operate-Transfer		
Joint Venture		
Concession		
Management Contract		
Public Land Lease		
Policy-setting		
Financing		

## 14. SELECTION PROCEDURES – How does government select the PSP?

- Competitive Selection or Open Bidding or Public Solicitation
- Limited Negotiations (when there is failed bidding)
- Competitive Challenge or Unsolicited Proposal
- Competitive Negotiations

## 15. SELECTION PARAMETER – Who wins in a competitive process?

- Highest Payment to Government: What is in it for government?
- Lowest Government Subsidy: What is the cost to government?
- Lowest Tariff by End-User: How much will the users pay?
- Highest Share in Revenues: How much is government's share?
- Highest Purchase Price: How much is the government willing to sell?
- Highest Rated Bid: Who can provide the “best” service?
- Lowest Calculated Bid/ Price: Who is the “cheapest?”
- Others

## 16. TARIFF MECHANISMS – What are the formulas to determine the tariff?

- Rate of Return
- Price Cap
- Revenue Cap
- Cash Needs
- Others



**17. CONDITIONS PRECEDENT** – What are the post-award and pre-notice to proceed requirements?

- Incorporation of Single-Purpose Project Company
- Financial Closure
- Environmental Compliance Certificate
- Permits
- Government Approvals
- Franchise
- Right-of-Way
- Supply Contract
- Insurance
- People's Support
- All or some of the above

**18. ROLE OF GOVERNMENT** – How does government participate?

- Policy-Maker
- Regulator
- Funder
- Subsidy-Provider
- Guarantor
- Partner
- All or some of the above

**19. GOVERNMENT SUPPORT** – What are forms of government support for a project?

- Cash
  - Available cash
  - Proceeds from loan or bonds
  - Direct Government Equity
  - Cost-sharing
  - Viability Gap Funding
- Non-Cash
  - Franchise
  - Concession
  - Services
  - Personnel
  - Intellectual Property
  - Usufruct
  - Lease of Land
  - Tax holidays
  - Direct Government Equity
  - Permits
- Commitments
  - Minimum Revenue Guarantee
  - Direct Government Guarantee
  - Direct Government Subsidy
  - Credit Enhancement
  - Legal Assistance
  - Security Assistance
  - Performance Undertakings

**20. THE 10 CONTRACTUAL PROVISIONS** – What are typical provisions in a PPP contract?

- Parties
- Modality
- Project
- Term
- Division of Responsibilities
- Contributions
- Risk-Allocation
- Approvals
- Amendments
- Dispute Resolution

**21. VIABILITY TEST** – What are the ingredients for success?

- Legally-compliant
- Organizational-preparedness
- Technically-feasible
- Socially-acceptable
- Economically-viable
- Environmentally-sustainable

**22. AUDIT FORMS** – What are audit mechanisms for PPPs?

- Public Good Audit
- Regularity Audit
- Performance Audit
- Forensic Audit
- Participatory Audit
- All or some of above

**23. PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION** – What are the levels of constructive engagement of civil society, consumers and taxpayers?

- Part of decision-making
- Interactive
- Beneficiaries or Incentives-based
- Consultation
- Availability of information
- Passive or no involvement

**24. THE 10 VALUES OF PPPs** – What are core values of PPPs?

- Pro-People
- Pro-Change
- Pro-Learning
- Pro-Sharing
- Pro-Innovation
- Pro-Law
- Pro-Green
- Pro-Decentralization
- Pro-Process
- Pro-Impact
- All or some of the above

**25. LEARNING ECOLOGY** – Do you want to learn more?

- Yes
- No



**Branches**

Puerto Galera, Mindoro

Santiago City, Isabela

Iligan City, Isabela

Lemery, Batangas

Roxas, Isabela

Pansol, Laguna Hotspring

For reservations, please call us at:  
0977-191-2988





**TOTAL**

COMMITTED TO BETTER ENERGY

**TOTAL EXCELLIUM  
+CLEAN  
+ECONOMICAL**



MADE IN  
**FRANCE**

## The advanced French fuel technology

Breathe new life into your car with the top-tier fuel formulated with innovative French technology to keep both old and new engine cleaner. Get more out of every drop, kilometer after kilometer. Drive longer, go further and perform better with TOTAL EXCELLIUM. Available in premium gasoline and diesel.

The fuel that cleans  
your engine km after km

 **TOTAL**  
*excellium*