

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT MAGAZINE

LEAGUE

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2018

VOL. 1 NO. 3 PHP 195.00

APEC'S MOST
LIVEABLE CITY
SINGAPORE

LLDA
FROM STRICTLY
REGULATORY TO
DEVELOPMENTAL
AGENCY

CAVITE PROVINCE
ON THE DIGITAL
HIGHWAY

CAGAYAN DE ORO
BUILDING BRIDGES

LINGAYEN,
PANGASINAN
GLOBALIZING
LOCAL FLAVOR

REP. KARLO
NOGRALES
SETTING
PRIORITIES

The Game Changer

Mayor John Bongat
on driving Naga to be
one of the country's
most competitive cities



NEWS 5



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Core of Integrity

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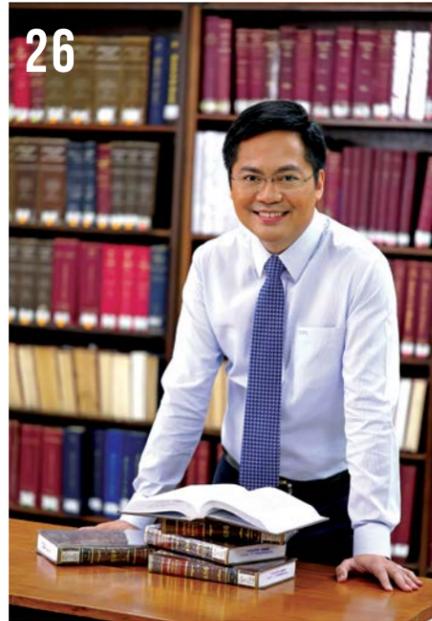
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COVER PHOTO BY RICKY LADIA

FIRST PACIFIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

ANATOMY OF A GLOBAL FILIPINO LEADER
STRESS MANAGEMENT
INNOVATION CONGRESS
TEAM BUILDING
EXECUTIVE EDUCATION
ASSERTIVENESS WORKSHOP
ACCULTURATION PROGRAM
GLOBAL STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
MNP FUTURE THOUGHT LEADERS SUMMIT
WORKPLACE DYNAMICS
CORPORATE SERIES
MENTORING AND COACHING
MASTERING THE ART OF LEADERSHIP
BASIC LEADERSHIP SKILLS
PASSAGE TO A NEW CHAPTER
LEADING BEYOND THE SELF
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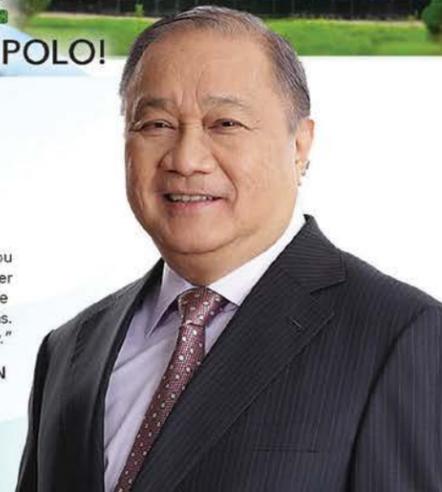
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"Man's reach must exceed his grasp. In other words, you should be able to set and touch your goals higher than what your hand could grasp. So always reach out for more than what you can think you can do. It's good to set up lofty ambitions. You may not get there but at least you'll enjoy the journey."

CHAIRMAN MANUEL V. PANGILINAN





As we embark on another year, we face new opportunities to feature the best and the brightest public servants in the country. We train the spotlight, as well, on projects and initiatives that could be replicated by other local government units.

This February-March 2018 issue, we focus on exceptional programs, innovative solutions, and sustainable projects. We feature the laudable developments in different barangays, municipalities, cities, and provinces in the country.

We introduce a new set of public servants, from Pangasinan to Cagayan de Oro. These local leaders have dedicated their fruitful years in the service of the Filipino.

This year, *League* will travel from the northern part of the country to the most remote places in the South to provide our growing readers the kind of articles that only we can produce.

Here at *League*, we continue to work ahead with our efforts to support our country, and we are grateful for the dedication of our public servants as we continue to discover their stories. *League* balances the political with the cultural, along with travel and tourism, plus developments, plans, and programs of our featured LGUs. Every issue is the result of our editorial staff's hard work, creativity, and teamwork.

We always strive to keep you, our readers, informed.


Generoso M. Dungo



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For more details, please visit: www.nyc.gov.ph



SSEAYP Philippine Program Implementing Agencies



This third issue you're holding, like our two previous releases, inspires each one of us to be of service to our country and help achieve its goals—whether be it in the barangay, municipality, city, provincial, or national level.

The first quarter of the year is a good time to evaluate our achievements, realize our current priorities, and recalibrate our plans for the future. We hope our stories this issue motivate you to become better public servants, in whatever capacity you may have.

What we learned this issue that we wish to share with you:

1. The importance of “inclusive leadership” as can be gleaned from the feature of Naga City Mayor John Bongat (page 56). LGUs need to encourage the active involvement of different sectors and stakeholders in fulfilling their goals, otherwise, it would be difficult to achieve collective growth. A leader also needs to make sure that all the government and non-government institutions are moving in the right direction.
2. Strengthening capabilities for disaster management. Learning from the tragedy that was Typhoon Sendong in 2011, Cagayan de Oro has developed its own early disaster warning system and flood risk mitigation programs. This way, they can easily respond to emergencies, distress calls, vehicular accidents, fire suppression, urban search and rescue, and even possible terror attacks. CDO is the second city in the country to have adapted a 911 24-7 response center, patterned after Davao City’s Central Communications and Emergency Response Center (page 70).
3. Courage to make unpopular decisions. Man of action, Laguna Lake Development Authority General Manager Jaime “Joey” Medina puts his game face on as he endeavors to transform Laguna de Bay into a vibrant economic zone, showcasing ecotourism by addressing the negative impact of watershed destruction, land conversion, and pollution (page 34).
4. Making digital technology a priority. By providing fast Internet service to the entire population of Cavite, Governor Boying Remulla intends to achieve greater work productivity, improve access to online jobs, assist in traffic management, and help maintain peace and order (page 66).
5. Help each other become agents of positive change. Rep. Karlo Nograles gave a comprehensive report of some of his past and current projects and legislation that will help our country. Go back to the basics: invest in education and the youth, provide jobs, help our coconut farmers, and eradicate hunger (Page 26).
6. Aspire for greatness. This is what Singapore’s story is telling us. Find out on page 40 how this Southeast Asian country earned the reputation of being the “Most Liveable City in Asia,” and how we can replicate their success in our country.
7. Lead by example, as exemplified by Ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales, who has served as a role model to the people she has worked with. From her, we learn about being strong and dignified under all circumstances, and having the grace and resilience in the face of adversity (page 52).
8. Stand up for our rights. Norman King gives us an insider’s view of the life of Indigenous Peoples, and tells us the importance of knowing our rights and upholding them.
9. Grow our industries. Lingayen, Pangasinan teaches us about supporting products that are proudly Filipino and aspiring to enter the global market.

As you leaf through the pages of this magazine, you may also be inspired to share your community’s success stories. Write to us at editorial@leaguemag.com.ph.

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Newborn Hearing Screening

A screening to check the baby’s ability to hear through the use of Otoacoustic Emissions Test

Pure Tone Audiometry and Speech Audiometry

Hearing tests for adults including ability to process speech sounds

Screening and Fitting of Hearing Aids

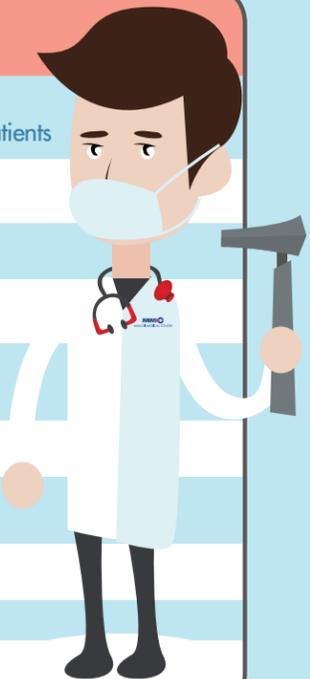
Videolaryngostroboscopy

A visual evaluation of the function of your vocal cords in sound production

Video Otoscopy - A visual check-up of the external ear canal using video

VNG (Videonystagmography) - A series of tests used to determine the cause of dizziness

Play Audiometry - Hearing test for children



Department of Otorhinolaryngology ENT Head & Neck Surgery Subspecialties

Head & Neck Cancer

A subspecialty concerned with benign or malignant tumors of the head and neck

LaryngoBronchoesophagology

The diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the voice box, tracheobronchial tree and esophagus through endoscopy and other means

Maxillo Facial, Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

Deals with facial deformities, congenital malformations, head & neck cancer surgery and trauma injuries

Otology - Specializes on the diseases of the ear

Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology

Specializes in treatment of ears, nose and throat problems in children 0 -18 years old

Rhinology - Specializes on the anatomy, function and the diseases of the nose, nasal passage and the sinuses

Sleep Surgery - Specializes in the surgical management of sleep-related breathing disorders



PHLPOST RELEASES COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS OF NATIONAL ARTISTS

The Philippine Postal Corporation (PHLPost) commemorates the birth centenary of six Filipino National Artists from 1917 to 2017. The National Artists are Cesar Legazpi, National Artist for Visual Arts; Daisy Avellana, National Artist for Film and Theater; Jose Macedam, National Artist for Music; Leonor Orosa Goquingco, National Artist for Dance; Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero, National Artist for Theater; and Nick Joaquin, National Artist for Literature. The National Artists of the Philippines is an order administered by the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the National Commission for Culture and Arts, awarded to exemplary Filipinos who have made significant contributions to the culture and arts programs of the Philippines.

PHLPost printed 50,000 copies of the stamps, designed by artist Victorio Z. Serevo. Each piece bears the image, name, title, and year of birth of each artist. The stamps also bear a P12 denomination as they are to be sold at face value until Dec. 12, 2018, or until supply lasts. The stamps are available at the Post Shop, Central Post Office, Door 203, Liwasang Bonifacio, Manila and area post offices nationwide.



MGEC REVISES GENDER-FAIR MEDIA GUIDEBOOK

The Media and Gender Equality Committee (MGEC) launched the revised “Gender-Fair Media Guidebook” (GFMG) on Dec. 14, 2017, at Bayleaf Hotel in Intramuros, Manila. In development since August 2017, the GFMG replaces the previous 2013 guidebook, “Towards a Gender-Fair Media,” to include women’s issues in online and social media. The revised guidebook further aims to promote gender sensitivity in the conceptualization, creation, presentation, and distribution of media. It also has tips on gender-fair language and gender-fair content for news, entertainment, advertising, and communication.

Created under the Magna Carta of Women, the MGEC is an inter-agency mechanism tasked with ensuring equal portrayal of women in media and film. The MGEC is composed of the Presidential Communication Operations Office (PCOO), the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), Movie Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB), National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), Optical Media Board (OMB), Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCEP), and Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP).



JAPAN EMBASSY LAUNCHES PROJECT FOR BICOL RIVER BASIN

The Embassy of Japan in the Philippines partners with the government of Camarines Sur and Department of Science and Technology (DOST) to launch their project “Rehabilitation of Equipment for the Project to Strengthen Flood Forecasting and Warning System in the Bicol River Basin.” Japanese Embassy Minister Takehiro Kano, DOST Secretary Fortunato Dela Peña, and Camarines Sur Governor Miguel Luis Villafuerte were present for the project launching under Japan’s Non-Project Grant Aid.

The project aims to restore existing observation facilities and communication equipment of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) geared towards better flood forecasting and warning in the Bicol river basin, as well as repair program and software of the central monitoring system. Strengthening the relations between Japan and the Philippines, the project also affirms Japan’s commitment to aid the Philippine government’s efforts towards a disaster-resistant society.

ILOCOS SUR BUILDS ORGANIC FARM INSIDE PROVINCIAL JAIL

The 1.4 hectare Ilocos Sur Provincial Jail (ISPJ) located in Barangay Taleb, Bantay, Ilocos Sur, now houses

a flourishing organic farm for the consumption and self-sustenance of the inmates. The once idle 3,000-sqm portion of the property was turned into a vegetable garden after jail warden, Raymund Tablos, noticed some inmates growing vegetables on their cell windows. Tablos, then, proposed the idea to Governor Ryan Luis V. Singson, who, prioritizing food security and agriculture programs, immediately agreed.

The empty grassland was excavated and filled with 70 truckloads of fertilized soil before being divided into 13 plots: 10 for male inmates occupying the 10 cells; one plot for female inmates in the three cells; one plot for the inmates in the infirmary; and one plot for the jail guards. Twelve species of vegetables were planted and maintained by at least 30 inmates. With more than enough for the inmates’ and guards’ daily consumption, excess harvest is also sold at the provincial capitol. The ISPJ has also been recognized by the Agriculture Training Institute (ATI) of the Department of Agriculture (DA) as the first provincial jail in Region 1 to become an organic farming center.



THAILAND DONATES ELEPHANT STATUES TO BAGUIO

The Royal Embassy of Thailand in the Philippines has donated a family of life-size elephant sculptures to the City Government of Baguio to mark the upcoming 70th anniversary of Philippine-Thai relations in 2019. The five-foot tall sculptures were placed in the Baguio Botanical Garden, where an inauguration ceremony was held in the presence of Thailand Ambassador to the Philippines Thanatip Upatising and Baguio Mayor Mauricio G. Domogan last Dec. 18, 2017. Thailand-based cement manufacturer Siam Cement Group (SCG) was responsible for erecting the life-size elephants, while Thai artists Somphong Boonthip, Prasan Pransatketkam, and Natithivat Khantharankham sculpted the five replicas for four months.

The elephant is sacred to Thailand as it is their national animal and symbol for royalty. Mayor Domogan appeals to the public to respect the new attraction of the Botanical Garden and has also instructed the City Environment and Parks Management Office (CEPMO) to ensure that the donated sculptures will not be vandalized.

PCG ON FOURTH MARAWI RELIEF OPERATIONS

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), through the Coast Guard District Northern Mindanao and in partnership with the Coast Guard Civil Relations Service, continued the relief operations for Marawi. Serving almost 1,000 families at Bitio Buadi Itowa, Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, this is the fourth humanitarian relief operations of the PCG in an effort to stabilize affected areas of the devastated city. The PCG also brought relief goods containing grocery items, hygiene kits, used clothes, and slippers to deployed military and police personnel. School supplies and packed gifts were also given to children of affected families.

The entire event was also aided by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC), and the PCG National Directors Office, National Capital Region and Medical Squadron. The University of the Philippines, O.B. Montessori, Pointwest Inc., Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary, and Interferry, an association of international shipping ferry operators, were the benefactors of the said relief operations.



PAG-IBIG FUND PARTNERS WITH HLURB, NHA, NHMFC, AND LTRFB AT THE BALAI FILIPINO LAUNCH

The Pag-IBIG Fund signed a Memoranda of Agreement and Understanding with four government agencies at the launch of the BALAI Filipino (Building Adequate Livable Affordable and Inclusive Filipino Communities) Program, held at the Crown Plaza, Quezon City.

“President Rodrigo Roa Duterte is very emphatic in addressing the needs of those who have less in life, particularly their housing needs. Pag-IBIG Fund will play a very big role in achieving our target of 250,000 housing units per year for both the formal and informal sectors. With the 70% reduction in the national housing budget, Pag-IBIG will come into the picture,” said Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Chairperson Eduardo D. del Rosario.

“The partnerships are Pag-IBIG Fund’s way of supporting the BALAI Filipino Program. The four memoranda show Pag-IBIG’s commitment to serve our public better. As we build our corporate headquarters through National Housing Authority (NHA), we help build the homes of our brothers and sisters in the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTRFB). And as we fast-track our services by partnering with Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB), we ensure due diligence and evaluation on our socialized housing receivables by partnering with National Home Mortgage and Finance Corporation (NHMFC),” Pag-IBIG Fund Chief Executive Officer Acmad Rizaldy P. Moti said.

The MOA with HLURB will be for the synchronization of the implementation of policies and business rules to ease the flow of transactions. The MOU with NHA will be for the construction of Pag-IBIG Fund’s corporate headquarters inside the NHA Main Compound in Quezon City. The MOU with NHMFC will be for NHMFC’s purchase of socialized housing receivables from Pag-IBIG Fund. Lastly, the MOU with LTRFB will be for the housing project of LTRFB employees.

The launch of the BALAI Filipino Program was attended by officials from HUDCC and the six key shelter agencies, as well as representatives from other government agencies, the private sector, and other stakeholders.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

What are the priority issues you'd like to resolve this year?

INTERVIEWS BY SHIMICO DIANNE NAKAMURA



In our *barangay*, one of biggest problems are the stray animals. A lot of the people leave their pets and animals, including cows and sheep, to roam about. Since there are a lot of cars, some of the animals unfortunately get run over and cause accidents. Currently, we've been going door-to-door and speaking with owners, asking them to keep their pets on a leash and keep the bigger animals locked up in their property. We are also offering free rabies shots at the *barangay*.

Barangay Captain Clever Castaneda
BARANGAY DOPAJ, NUEVA VIZCAYA



One of the main problems we want to resolve in our *barangay* is unemployment. This is seen as the root of many of the issues within the *barangay*. Without work, people become idle and are lured into doing drugs and other vices.

To give them livelihood, we have opened up several training programs such as massage therapy, *barista* training, and powder soap and dishwashing liquid making. We've also offered call center training, and up to 80% of our recent "graduates" now have work in call centers around the metro. Also, we employ people to be part of the *barangay's* disaster preparedness/ response team. Our *barangay* was recognized by the MMDA for our earthquake drill and we've even won in the Fire Olympics.

Barangay Captain Editha Labasbas
BARANGAY 178, CALOOCAN CITY



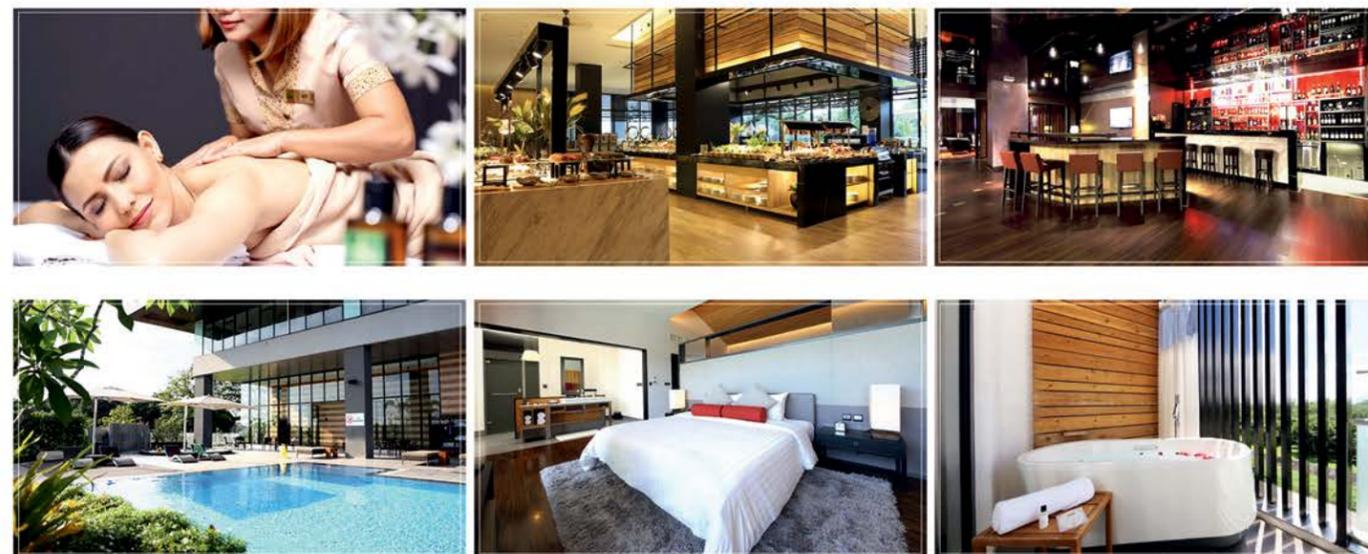
In Quezon City, most especially in our *barangay*, traffic has become a big problem. We are at the center of Ateneo, UP, Miriam College, and other schools, including businesses. To help us address the issue as a community, we put together the Katipunan Business Council wherein we've invited stakeholders – homeowners' associations, the local police, the MMDA, and other relevant members of the *barangay*. We've started a few initiatives, such as prohibiting tricycles from driving on the main road and putting pressure on establishments that don't have parking areas, in order to ease traffic.

Kagawad Florentino D. Murao Jr.
BARANGAY LOYOLA HEIGHTS QC



Our *barangay* has just a little under 25 subdivisions, with a lot of our residents being pet-owners. Our most concerning issues include roaming dogs, pet waste and incessant barking. To resolve this, we've released a *barangay* ordinance that limits one pet per household. We've also initiated a *barangay*-wide information drive on how to be a responsible pet owner. We have roaming teams who also pick up stray dogs. At the *barangay*, we offer rabies shots for pets, dog registration and vaccination.

Barangay Captain Delia S. Bautista
BARANGAY GUITNANG BAYAN 1, SAN MATEO RIZAL



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FEBRUARY FESTIVALS

Philippine International Hot Air Balloon Fiesta (February 8-11) Clark, Pampanga

An event featuring a variety of sports aviation activities, including hot air balloons, aerobatic exhibition, paragliding, skydiving, and more.



Panagbenga Festival

(February 1-March 4) Baguio City

Highlights of this year's festival include the street dance parade and the float parade that showcase multiple colors of nature.



The 43rd International Bamboo Organ Festival

(February 22-28) St. Joseph Church, Las Piñas City

This year's festival showcases highlights of the Baroque period, and includes performances by the Manila Baroque ensemble under the baton of Beverly Shangkuan-Cheng.



Caracol Festival

(February 23) Glorietta 4 Park, Makati City

It's the official festival of Makati City, wherein participating groups are dressed in flowers, trees, birds, butterflies, and endangered species, expressing the need to preserve and conserve Mother Nature.



Tinagba Festival

(February 5-11) Iriga City, Camarines Sur

The locals bring out their colorfully decorated bull-carts, packed with the best of the province's products.



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Auro is a proudly Filipino bean-to-bar chocolate company that sources cocoa beans directly from local farming communities in Davao.



MARCH FESTIVALS

Malasimbo Music and Arts Festival

(March 23-25) Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro
It's three days of nothing but good music, arts, and culture. This year's festival features Hiatus Kaiyote, Laneous, Ruby Ibarra, Stick Figgas, Skarm, Crwn, Yung Bawal, and many more.



Pintados Festival

(3rd week of March) Iloilo
This annual festival is celebrated with lots of dance performances, garden shows, and tattoos decorating the bodies of participants.

Wanderland Music and Arts Festival
(March 10) Filinvest City Event Grounds, Alabang
Meet some of the biggest international and homegrown indie acts as they power up the Wanderland stage.



<https://marinduquegov.blogspot.com/2011/11/mesmerizing-mogpog.html?m=1>

Moriones Festival

(March 26-April 1) Marinduque
Festival-goers wearing Morion masks can be seen on the streets during Holy Week. Aside from the Senakulo, the Pugutan is also a highlight of the celebrations.

Sinigayan Festival

(March 19) Sagay, Negros Occidental
An annual celebration and thanksgiving in honor of the city's patron, St. Joseph. The Sinigayan Festival is a showcase of the best of Sagay in arts, culture, products, and its people. "Sinigayan" comes from the word, "sigay," the shell which abounds in many islets and shores of the city.



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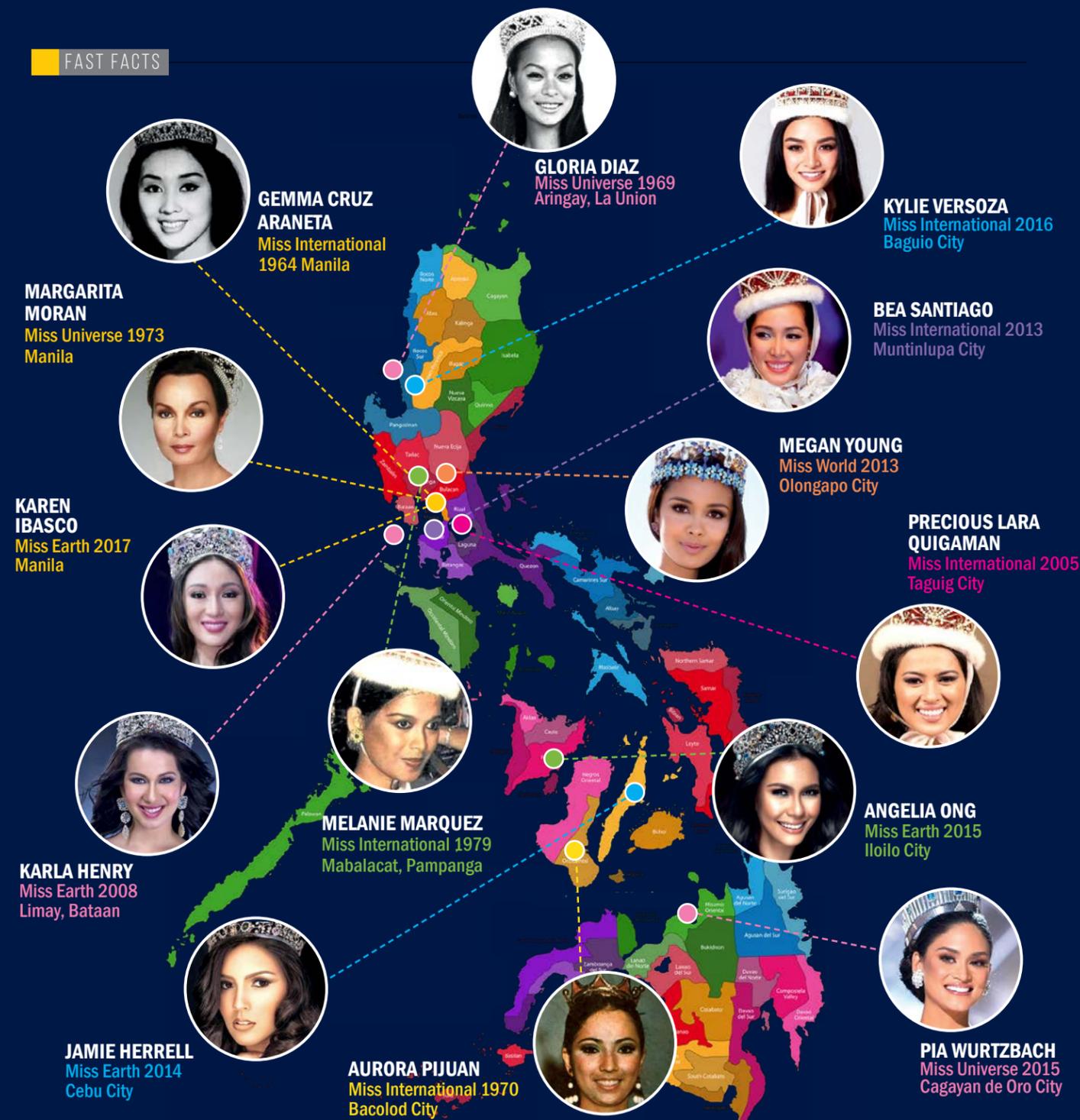
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As one of the Philippines' top architecture studios, Visionary Architecture partners with the top countries' top development companies to contribute to our nation's growth.

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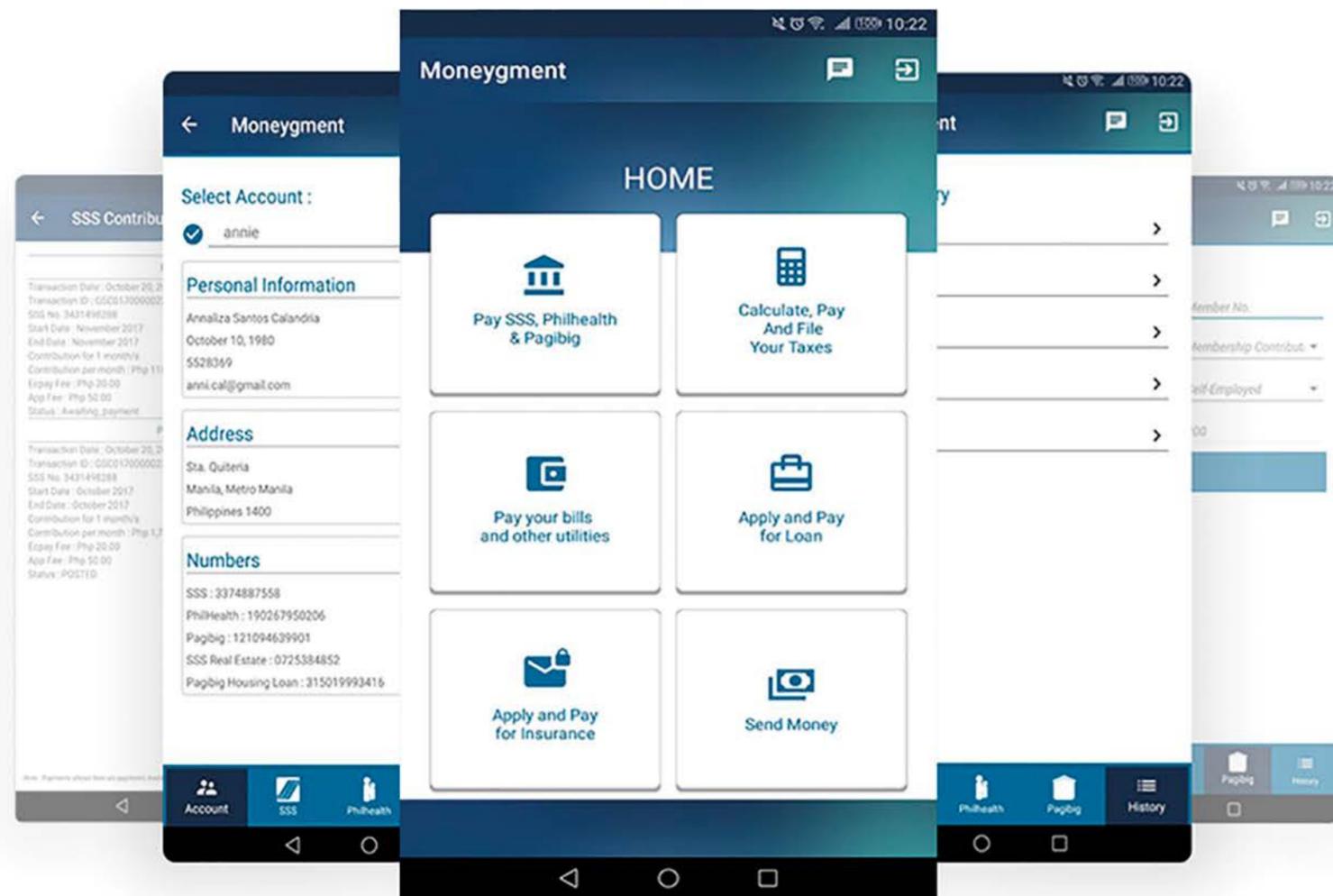
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Hometowns of Beauty Queens

The Philippines is home to countless beauty queens, being a major powerhouse in the world's major international pageants, also known as the Big Four: Miss Universe, Miss International, Miss World, and Miss Earth. But where in the Philippines do these beauties come from? LEAGUE collates the list of Filipina winners to see which city or town has produced the most number of beauty queen titleholders.

Philippine map: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peoples_of_the_Philippines_en.svg



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DISSECTING FEDERALISM | REP. KARLO NOGRALES | LLDA AND THE LAKE
SINGAPORE: APEC'S MOST LIVEABLE CITY | FILINVEST CITY: A MASTERPLANNED DEVELOPMENT
NORMAN KING | OMBUDSMAN CONCHITA CARPIO MORALES

WHY GO Federal?

BY HERMAN JOSEPH S. KRAFT

Will federalism solve the major issues of governance or will it only push the political system into turmoil? Professor Herman Joseph S. Kraft dissects the debate.

The question in the title can be interpreted in a number of ways. It could be seen as an incredulous query into a course of action that does not make sense (to say the least). Or it could be taken as the first step into a pedantic elocution into the benefits of shifting from a unitary form of government to a federal one. The current debate over whether the Philippines should shift to a federal political structure normally elicits either of the two reactions reflected in the interpretations of the question above. Or a more thoughtful response that falls somewhere in-between. But where does this discussion take us? What are the key issues that drive this debate? And is a shift to a federal form really going to help address those issues?

Without being overly academic about it, we must understand that the classic understanding of a federal (from the Latin “foedus” meaning a “compact” or “agreement”) form of government presumes the existence of an agreed upon arrangement between two distinct and co-equal levels of government — the national and a sub-national level, whether this is based on regions or provinces. That is to say, neither is subordinate to the other. Hence, we have the notion of shared sovereignty with distinct responsibilities shared between these two levels being specified in the agreement. Where the agreement is silent on specific responsibility, there should be reference as to which level has residual powers. That is to say, the agreement must specify which level wields those powers that are not specifically assigned under the agreement. All these are in contrast to a unitary system of government where a national government presides, consolidates, and coordinates the needs of subordinate units of government and the people under their jurisdiction. This is the current structure of the Philippines under the 1987 Constitution.

Reasons supporting the drive for federalism have included geographic and social ones. The fact that the Philippines is an archipelago seems to make it more naturally suited for the kind of decentralization and devolution of powers that a federal structure entails. This, however, ignores the fact that the most successful federal states are continental geographically. These include Australia, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America. At the same time, Indonesia and Japan are archipelagos and yet have unitary systems of government. Diversity in language and culture have also been presented as an argument for federalism, yet there are examples of multicultural societies that are under unitary systems of government (again, Indonesia is an excellent case), while federal systems were adopted by societies that had predominant ethnic and cultural groups

(which is illustrated by the cases of the United States and Australia at their establishment).

Ultimately, the key argument that has been made rationalizing the need to shift to a federal form from the current unitary system of the Philippines is economic in nature. Too much of the national wealth is concentrated in Metro Manila and the provinces surrounding it. This has contributed to the lack of economic development in the provinces farther away from Metro Manila. This has consequently contributed to overpopulation in Metropolitan Manila as people migrate there in the hope of tapping into the economic opportunities available. Shifting to a federal structure of government helps alleviate these issues in a number of ways. First, federalism decentralizes political decision-making and devolves powers across a number of issue areas. In particular, federalism would enable

regions or provinces to retain locally generated income and plan their use based on local needs and conditions. Secondly, they would be able to undertake their own development programs without having to rely on some form of national government intervention. Presumably, this would lead to economic growth and development outside of Metro Manila and its environs which in turn would create economic opportunities that would reduce pressures to emigrate towards the center. Third, regional and provincial governments will have their own bureaucracies and legislative arrangements that will be responsible for planning, overseeing, and implementing development programs in ways that are more responsive to the social and economic structure on the ground. In essence, a federal structure will allow the regions and provinces to stake out their own destinies within the national context of the Philippines.



ILLUSTRATION BY AMIEL RUFO

There is merit to the argument that the virtue of distributed growth is not exactly one that can be attributed to the current structure of government that we have. And yet, adopting federalism as a cure-all does not necessarily guarantee the economic development of the Philippine countryside as an outcome. Other factors have to be taken into consideration.

At the hearing conducted by the Senate Committee on Constitutional Amendments and Revision of Codes and the Committee on Electoral Reforms and People's Participation on January 17, 2018, the Department of Political Science of the University of the Philippines in Diliman submitted

by-product of those discrepancies in endowments and resources. Full devolution of public services across the board will encounter the market problem of highly-skilled labor flocking to those regions with excellent salaries and benefits provided to government workers. Again, unless some form of national standard across regions and states on salaries and benefits is adopted, economically disadvantaged regions and states will remain poorly positioned in the quality of the provision of services.

3. Decentralization of decision-making faces the possibility of parochial thinking and focus getting in the way of resolving issues and societal concerns that require coordinated

current structure are more often settled in the elected legislatures.

6. Federalism will make it more difficult to pursue nation-building and the construction of a national identity. Maybe, it is a better fit with the regionalistic tendencies of Filipinos, but it will certainly not make the internalization of a Filipino identity any easier. If other cases of federal states are any indication (Canada and Nigeria), it is also not necessarily going to bring an end to secessionist aspirations.

7. A major challenge for federalism in the Philippines is how to ensure that it will not perpetuate the "abuse and monopoly of power of a few political clans and elites." Political dynasties have constantly been an issue of democracy in the Philippines, even leading some noted political scientists to claim that the Philippines is not a democracy. The question that faces Filipinos who will have to confront a plebiscite should the initiative to change the constitution and transform the Philippine political structure into a federal one progress is whether there will be checks against these political families that have dominated all levels of politics in the country in a federal system. Or will it effectively perpetuate their dominance?

There are legitimate reasons for Filipinos to think that their political system has somehow failed them, and that there is a need to try something else. Changing the structure of the political system, however, is not something that should be done in haste. Certainly not something to be done in six months. If we are intent on pursuing this process of charter change, then it should be done with much reflection. Change, yes. But let it be studied change. ■

Herman Joseph S. Kraft is an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science in the University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City; former Executive Director of the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies; and former President of The Philippine Political Science Association.

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a position paper that, among other things, pointed to possible pitfalls that have been experienced by federal states. In particular, the following issues were raised:

1. Discrepancies in regional endowments in terms of resources and levels of development already exist. Even as a federal system will allow regions and provinces the autonomy to address their economic and social concerns, capacities to pursue development goals will differ and inequalities will continue to bedevil inter-regional relations. Poorer regions or provinces will find it more difficult to cope without some form of revenue sharing arrangement across regions which could become a basis of resentments on the part of the economically stronger regions and provinces.

2. Disparities in the provision and quality of public service will be a

responses across regions and provinces. The case of Metro Manila's multiple jurisdictions getting in the way of a more coordinated response to the traffic situation is an example of what could happen across multiple jurisdictions in a federated structure.

4. Higher operating costs of having multiple bureaucracies and legislatures must be taken into consideration. A federal system has a different set of requirements as far as infrastructure and personnel are concerned. It is not the case of simply giving more power and authority to existing local governments and letting them operate as is.

5. The judiciary will become an important power broker between the two levels of government (national and region or province) as it adjudicates disputes between the "powers or competencies of national and federal institutions" – disputes which in the

Thoughts on Federalism

Federalism has been a hot, polarizing topic in our country as can be gleaned from news reports. Here's what political experts and government officials have to say...

Kayo pong, lahat kayo na nasa poder ngayon who are elected officials, nandiyan kayo kasi gusto ng taumbayan nandun kayo. Huwag ninyong isantabi y'ung proseso where the people would exercise their sovereignty to place you in power, just so you can stay in power forever.
Former Senator Nene Pimentel

A shift to federalism is a lethal experiment. A fatal leap. A plunge to death. A leap to hell.
Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr.

There would be faster delivery of aid during calamities and faster reconstruction of damaged areas which, at present, are undertakings which must first be approved by the central government.
Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr.

Intensified political dynasties, even warlordism in some areas might be a drawback of a federal form of government.
Senator Bam Aquino

A shift to federalism will weaken our republic, fragment our nation, and render the many years we've spent to attain national unity. This country will be fragmented and there will be attempts at secession.
Former Supreme Court Associate Justice Vicente Mendoza

We are a failing democracy. We have to be realistic. Our Congress must really change it."
Former Chief Justice Reynato Puno

The problem is not the Constitution but the legislators who slept on the job for 30 years to fully implement it. Or when reform legislation was passed, [they] made sure it was watered down and underfunded. This is a legislature that wants to rewrite the Constitution.
Former Comelec Chair Christian Monsod

Very weak ang ating mga institutions and even our security is very weak. Hindi po agriculture ang Metro Manila. Sino mag e-establish ng mga bilihan. Paano ang mangyayari sa mga career officers natin na madi-displace? As far as I am concerned, I am for federalism but dapat pagtibayin natin ang mga institusyon.
Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista



First Things First

Rep. Karlo Nograles discusses the challenges of governance and legislation, and why, when it comes to sustaining the growth of our country, we must first focus on providing the basics

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MANUEL GENEROSO
GROOMING BY FLOE TAPAYAN OF KANEBO



1 As recipient of the Golden Globe Awards for Excellence in Public Service in 2015 and 2016, and awardee of Outstanding Congressman Award in 2012 and 2015, what are the achievements you are most proud of?

I am most proud of our Oplan Kaalam scholarship program. I began this scholarship program when I was Chief of Staff to my father, the former Speaker Prospero Nograles. We began in 2001 with just 41 scholars from poor families; to date we have graduated some 5,600 scholars with around 28,000 students benefiting from the scholarship. What began as a small project to give tuition assistance to some students became one full-fledged scholarship program for students at the University of Southeastern Philippines. Eventually, we were able to include the University of the Philippines-Mindanao campus and private colleges and universities in Davao City. It is one of the biggest congressional scholarship programs in the country.

The Oplan Kaalam scholarship program also became the impetus for the Oplan Kabuhayan Livelihood and Employment Program as when we began having scholar graduates, we needed to help them find jobs. Today, Oplan Kabuhayan, in partnership with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), conducts monthly job fairs in the 54 *barangays* of Davao City. We also hold an annual big Job Fair, that has become one of the most anticipated job fairs in Davao City, attracting job seekers not just from around the area but from nearby cities and provinces as well. Through our Oplan Kabuhayan program, we also conduct livelihood education programs and trainings through our partnership with TESDA and well-meaning civil society organizations. We emphasize the need to conduct livelihood trainings in the *barangays* on a regular basis to ensure that those who need trainings are able to access them easily right in the convenience of their own communities. We have also expanded the program to help DOLE in implementing its emergency employment, the government internship program, and the Jobstart program.

Many of our scholar graduates are now professionals, licensed teachers, engineers, and architects here and abroad,

What we really need to do now is come together as one people and really help each other become agents of positive change. I have always believed that the country's greatest asset is its people.



and it makes me really happy when they update us about how they are doing. It is also inspiring to know that our scholars have learned the value of paying it forward to their families and communities, with some of them even supporting the education of their own siblings. A good number of our education scholar graduates are now public school teachers, sharing their knowledge and talents to public school pupils in their own *barangays*.

2 What programs/projects/house bills are you working on now, which has you excited to share with the public?

FREE HIGHER EDUCATION: We worked really hard on the Free Higher Education Law (RA 10931), I am very proud of that. It was not easy. But even more difficult was looking for the funds to make sure that the law will be implemented. As Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, the heavy task fell on my shoulders, but we were able to do it despite the obstacles and hurdles and the naysayers. A total of P40 billion have now been set aside in the 2018 budget to ensure the law's full implementation. With this law, tuition fees and miscellaneous fees will now be free for all college students in all state colleges and universities in the country including our premier university, the University of the Philippines. It will likewise be free for local colleges and



It is called the Zero Hunger Bill because it sets a clear deadline to bring the incidence of hunger in the country to zero in 10 years' time, using a whole-of-government approach to the problem of hunger. It recognizes the institutional responsibilities of the executive departments, government agencies, and all other agencies and instrumentalities whose functions are necessary to ensure its full implementation.

universities accredited by CHED and for Technical Vocational Institutions run by TESDA. This law makes education a state priority, recognizing the importance of making higher education a right for all Filipino students.

This law likewise acknowledges the complementary roles of public and private higher education institutions and technical vocational institutions in the educational system and the invaluable contribution that private tertiary schools have on education. A mechanism has also been placed in the law so students in private colleges and universities may also receive education subsidy from government to pay for tuition and other school fees. We will prioritize students who are academically able, but come from poor families. By doing that, we give poor students a better opportunity for higher education.

ZERO HUNGER BILL: I am also working for the passage of House Bill 3795 or the Zero Hunger Bill. The problem of hunger remains prevalent not just in our country but in the world, and it is, indeed, a tragedy that despite all the progress we have made, many of our countrymen suffer from involuntary hunger. We really need to work to end hunger in our lifetime and we need legislation to address this in our country.

House Bill 3795, now pending in Congress, provides the legal framework

for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food, to ensure continuity in the enjoyment of such right regardless of who may be sitting in the Palace. It entails that the government's core obligation is to take the necessary action to mitigate and alleviate hunger, even in times of natural or other disasters, even as it underscores the obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill the basic human right of any person to adequate food, not to interfere nor impair the enjoyment of it, provide guarantees against infringement of one's rights, and adopt or pursue appropriate measures or policies to foster and promote it.

The right to adequate food is realized "when every man, woman, and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food, or the means for its procurement." Central to realizing such right is food adequacy, food availability, food accessibility, food that is free from adverse substances, and cultural or consumer acceptability, all of which are clearly defined under this proposed Act.

The Zero Hunger Bill provides that "Every person has a right to be free from hunger. Every person suffering from hunger or under nutrition, or at risk of suffering from hunger or under nutrition is entitled to a minimum amount of food according to his or her

age, sex, health status, and occupation."

It is called the Zero Hunger Bill because it sets a clear deadline to bring the incidence of hunger in the country to zero in 10 years' time, using a whole-of-government approach to the problem of hunger. It recognizes the institutional responsibilities of the executive departments, government agencies, and all other agencies and instrumentalities whose functions are necessary to ensure its full implementation.

BILL FOR COCONUT FARMERS: I am also working on the Bill for coconut farmers so that the coco levy fund may finally be utilized to benefit them. House Bill 5745, an act establishing the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Trust Fund and providing for its management and utilization, makes it a policy of the State to pursue and attain the balanced, equitable, integrated, and sustained growth and development of our coconut industry. With this bill, we adopt the necessary measures to immediately address the serious problems besetting our coconut industry and protect the socio economic well-being of coconut farmers, to ensure the delivery of benefits due to them, especially the poor and marginalized.

This bill also creates the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Trust Fund, a perpetual trust fund that shall be capitalized, managed, utilized,



and accounted for, which shall be used exclusively for the benefit of coconut farmers and farm workers. The initial capital for this trust fund shall be sourced from all assets and/or properties derived from all coconut levy recovered assets, dividends, earnings, and incomes available upon the effectivity of this Act.

FREE IRRIGATION SERVICE ACT: House Bill 5670, an act strengthening assistance to all farmers by providing free irrigation service fee and all other similar or related fees or charges, ensures that our government pursues a genuine agricultural development strategy by providing support services to all farmers, including their irrigators' associations and farmers' cooperatives, with the end view of increasing their productivity and improving their access to markets. More particularly, our government shall promote and institutionalize irrigation

systems that are free, effective, suitable, applicable, and efficient as a key strategy to achieve genuine agricultural development.

Under this law, all irrigation systems constructed/built, funded, operated/managed, and maintained by the National Irrigation Administration, the Department of Agriculture, other government agencies, or those turned over and maintained and operated by farmers' organizations, irrigators' associations, and the local government units (LGUs) shall be free of charge.

During the budget deliberations last year and finally in the enactment of the 2017 national budget, we were able to allocate the funds necessary to make irrigation service fees free for all our farmers. But if we are able to pass this law, we will be able to institutionalize free irrigation in our country.

Considering that we are an agricultural country, it must be our priority to help our farmers. Free irrigation allows them to increase their productivity without the added burden of worrying about their costs. Helping our farmers helps feed our country.

3 As a lawmaker, what issues/causes are close to your heart? Education, jobs, livelihood, total human development, environmental protection, and healthcare have always been the causes close to my heart. Most legislation that I author or support center around these themes.

4 Even with the P3.767 trillion General Appropriations Bill (GAB), can free tertiary education under the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act be sustained?

We all need to come together and unite to achieve the progress we deserve. Finding ways to destabilize the seated government and efforts to discredit the work we do or politicking is a disservice to our country.



I am very happy and proud of our accomplishment in making sure we have the funds for this. Yes, free higher education can be sustained. It is the Law and as such, it is incumbent upon government to allocate the necessary funds for its implementation. By ensuring that we are more judicious in the allocation of our resources, making education a funding priority is an investment in our country's future. It was a challenge for me to locate the funds needed to support the Free Higher Education Law. In the end, I was able to find items in the budget that were not ready for implementation in 2018 and was able to pool P40 billion that we re-channeled to CHED to implement the Free Higher Education Act. For the 2019 budget and the next budget cycles after that, we will ensure that the funding for Free Higher Education will always be there annually and perpetually.

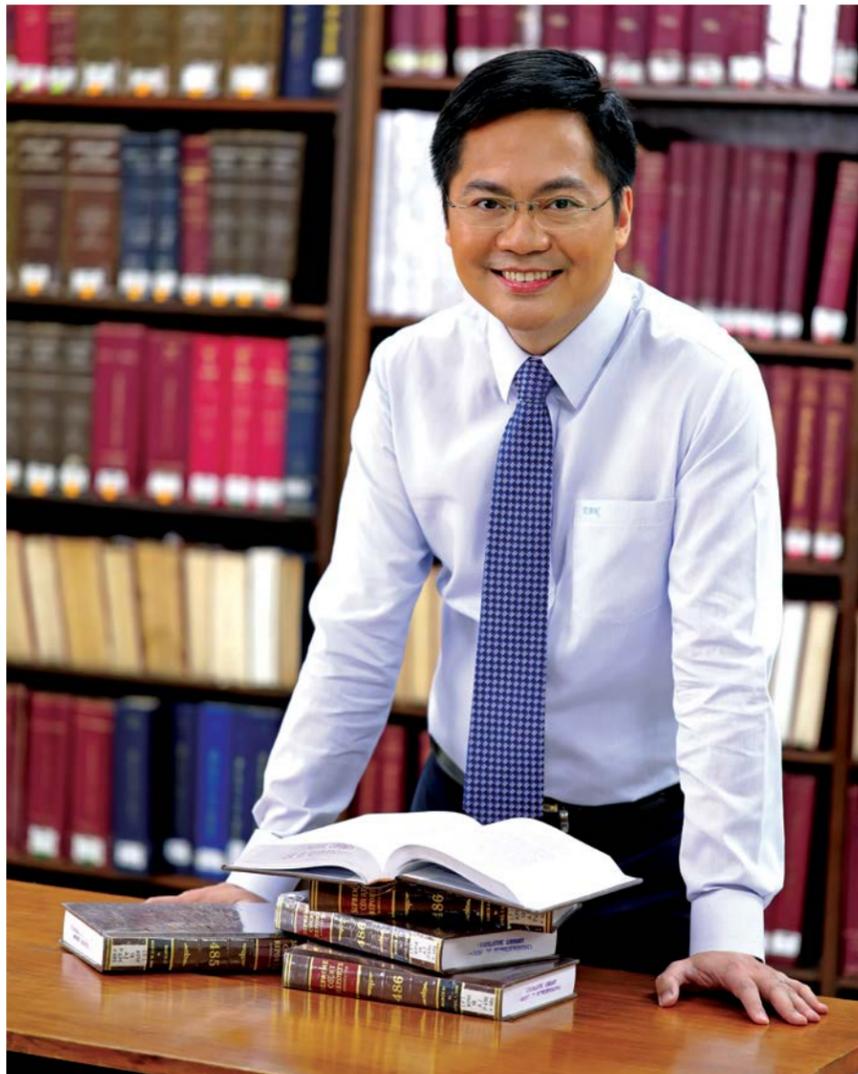
It is not difficult to appreciate and understand how we will reap the dividends of our investment in free higher education for our students. Investing in this will increase the number of professionals and the educated workforce in our country. It will ensure that more of our countrymen will be gainfully employed, contributing more to the development of our nation and our national coffers. Our economy will grow, our government revenues will grow, and we will be able to invest even more for the development of more Filipinos. This will perpetuate a sustainable cycle of growth for our nation.

5 Can you share a bill and/or program that you think has been one of the most successful and which can be easily adopted across the country?

Green Jobs and JobStart are close to my heart. I was the primary author of both bills. I had the privilege of working closely with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) during my term as Chairman of the Committee on Labor, and both Green Jobs and JobStart are laws that the country really needs.

GREEN JOBS: With Republic Act 10771, or the Philippine Green Jobs Law, we lay a stronger foundation for sustainable development by promoting full and productive employment and equality of employment opportunities for all, while at the same time protecting the rights of our people to a balanced and healthy ecology.

The ILO recognizes this landmark legislation as a first-of-its-kind not only in the Asia and Pacific Region, but in the world; the first national law that bears the term "Green Jobs." This is truly something to be proud of — our country being the first in the world to enact such a law that will spur similar reforms in other countries as well.



The Philippine Green Jobs Act combines two of my most favorite advocacies — job generation and environmental protection.

Through the Green Jobs Act, the Department of Labor and Employment shall take the lead role in coordinating with other government agencies to develop a national green jobs human development plan to generate more green jobs towards more employment, identify the knowledge and skills requirements of a green economy, and train and educate our labor force and link them with green job opportunities in the private and public sector.

The law also provides fiscal incentives for 1) skills training and

research and development in pursuit of supporting a green economy; 2) the development of green technologies and practices; and 3) the production of green goods and provision of green services. Thus, by incentivizing the need for private sector to start greening their workplace, this will create a natural demand for and fresh hiring of green workers in the company.

Happening simultaneously with this, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) shall formulate the necessary skills training program and regulations, and together with DOLE, provide productivity and livelihood training, and assess and certify our green workers, all with the aim of supplying the skilled-manpower requirements of the green economy. And to further sustain the development of green workers, the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall pursue faculty, facility, and curriculum development so that students in the elementary, high school, and college levels will be properly oriented in supporting this shift to a greener economy.

The Jobstart law, I believe, is another such worthy effort. The JobStart Act serves as a tangible and sustainable answer to combat youth unemployment. The need to present our country's at-risk youth with the opportunity to become productive citizens by providing them with the training to not just acquire the technical skills, but more importantly the life skills they need to build better lives for themselves, this is a paramount responsibility of the state. With this law, we hope to not only address the problems of poverty and inequality most especially for the youth, but to also strengthen our partnership with the private sectors through the participation of our private employers, businesses, and industry. It is through legislation that empowers all sectors of society that we will be able to realize our goal for a stronger and prosperous country.

It has been over a year since the JobsStart Act was enacted. And I am happy to note that the JobStart program, which only started as a pilot program in four local areas, has already reached 32 municipalities, cities, and provinces nationwide. We are the very first in Southeast Asia to have a program such as this. And the results are promising, with 30-40% of JobStarters finding employment only after 10 days of Life Skills Training and 74% overall placement rate for the first batch who completed the program.

The need to present our country's at-risk youth with the opportunity to become productive citizens by providing them with the training to not just acquire the technical skills, but more importantly the life skills they need to build better lives for themselves, this is a paramount responsibility of the state.



efforts, I know we can reach more areas and help thousands of at-risk youth nationwide.

LGUs can communicate with the Department of Labor and Employment on their intent to implement JobStart in their locality.

6 What do you think is the greatest threat to the government now or our greatest hindrance to progress? What is needed to bring about greater change?

I believe the greatest threat to our government is the constant attempt at discrediting the efforts of our President. We all need to come together and unite to achieve the progress we deserve. Finding ways to destabilize the seated government and efforts to discredit the work we do or politicking is a disservice to our country.



JobStart aims to make the youth more effective in job searching, while equipping them with the skills and values demanded by employers. The program gives their beneficiaries one-on-one career guidance and coaching, and provides them with life skills and technical training, with the opportunity for internship in private companies, and receiving an allowance during their internship. And we have seen more and more of those interns getting hired immediately after their internship.

The success of the Jobstart Law depends on the support of LGUs and their respective Public Employment Service Office (PESO). I would like to appeal to more local government units and our PESO managers to push for the implementation of JobStart in their respective areas. With our combined



Considering that we are an agricultural country, it must be our priority to help our farmers. Free irrigation allows them to increase their productivity without the added burden of worrying about their costs. Helping our farmers helps feed our country.



What we really need to do now is come together as one people and really help each other become agents of positive change. I have always believed that the country's greatest asset is its people. There are so many Filipinos, and if we could equip each and every one of our countrymen with the means to become productive in their businesses, in their workplaces and communities, then collectively we will all be engines of growth and development for our country and economy. Training and education are really the keys to progress. An enlightened, educated people make for an evolved, progressive, and modern republic and society.

7 What's a misconception/misunderstanding people have about the current administration?

Our President is unorthodox, but that does not mean he will not deliver. Some people have this misconception that the current administration is only concerned with eradicating illegal drugs and criminality. While these are two objectives that the President is particularly bent on accomplishing, there are many other various areas of concern that the current administration is addressing. Growing the economy faster, lifting the people out of poverty, bringing development to the countryside, addressing the people's basic needs, providing jobs, better education, and healthcare are just some of the many items under the current administration's socioeconomic agenda and the Philippine Development Plan that will propel our country and our people to greater heights by year 2022.

8 Describe your leadership style.

I believe in people, I believe in team work. I believe each person has an invaluable purpose no matter how small the work they do. I believe it is important to share a common ideal, practice the same values, and have passion for what we do. I work with people closely and always try to lead and inspire by example, while also learning from them. It is only when we are able to inspire and learn from each other that we are able to come together and become more effective in the work we do.

9 What's one of the most meaningful lessons you've learned from your father, former House Speaker Prospero Nograles?

My father taught me the value of hard work and helping others. He showed me that we each carry the responsibility of helping others and creating good in the lives of others. He also taught me the importance of family, and that the love and support of family is what we must cherish most in this life.

10 What's the next step for your political career?

I have dedicated my life to public service. Right now, I'm just concentrating on the responsibilities of my current office and the tasks I need to do. I don't know where God will lead me next. So I just pray He will allow me to continue being of service to the people. ■■

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Wake the Lake

Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) General Manager Jaime Medina hits hard at illegal fish pen operators, restoring the balance and reviving the country's largest freshwater lake, Laguna Lake

BY JOYCE REYES-AGUILA

The shorelines of certain parts of Metro Manila and nearby provinces have long shared an affinity with the mighty Laguna de Bay—the country's biggest freshwater lake, and the third largest in Southeast Asia. It feeds some 100 rivers and streams, and is a widely recognized source of food and livelihood for many. The many roles of this 900 sq-km expanse of water include supporting businesses and small enterprises, providing electricity and water, and serving as a floodwater reservoir.

The relevance of the lake to the country is the pillar of Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) General Manager Jaime “Joey” C. Medina’s drive to ensure its sustainability and to look after the welfare of the most vulnerable Filipinos who depend on it. The LLDA chief is armed with a directive from no less than President Rodrigo Duterte himself who, during his first State of the Nation Address, instructed Medina and the agency to transform Laguna de Bay “into a vibrant economic zone showcasing ecotourism by addressing the negative impact of a watershed destruction, land conversion, and pollution.”



(From left) LLDA GM Medina inspects the water during a visit to a water treatment facility; during a tree planting project in Pakil, Laguna



... Only 9,200 hectares of aquaculture are sustainable for Laguna Lake. For every hectare, there should be at least eight hectares that are free. That is the challenge to — how to limit it to only 9,200 hectares when, at present, we have around 15,000 hectares of aquaculture

MAN OF ACTION

Taking on a significant administrative role is not new to the Political Science graduate of the Ateneo de Manila University. Medina was mayor of Pateros for three consecutive terms for which his adroit governance was recognized. The city's competitive index—measured by the productivity of its schools, roads, financial markets, and consumers according to the Philippines National Competitive Council—rose in rankings during his terms in office. Pateros received numerous recognitions, including the Seal of Excellence Award in Population Development in 2014, and the Kaagapay Award in Urban Poor Solidarity Week from the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor Commission in 2015.

Known for being a man of action, he did not surprise many when he oversaw a demolition of structures in the lake on his second day of office. It was a clear demonstration of the

LLDA's renewed commitment to effect change. “We targeted the structure of big corporations, many of which abused the system,” he tells *League*. “Many were given permits for five hectares but built structures 60 to 80 hectares big. These blocked many navigational lanes intended for transportation. Some of these structures are located outside designated areas, and many also did not have permits to operate.” As of January 2018, the general manager estimates that a total of 2,100 hectares of these illegal structures have been demolished under his leadership, the highest number of demolished structures. This is equivalent to the land area of the entire city of Makati.

In line with the President's order to prioritize smaller

fisherfolk in the Lake's development, Medina is making sure that they are given priority when permits to operate are issued. “I will not prioritize the big corporations because they are already rich,” explains Medina, who previously led different councils and committees in the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) on solid waste, health, regional peace and order, and public works. “Our challenge is how we can prevent small fisherfolk from being used as dummy entities of these corporations.”

A general registration of the fisherfolk and their families is being coordinated with different local government units (LGUs) to collect biometrics and ensure that the right recipients benefit from planned government



LLDA GM Medina is pushing for awareness about the lake's potential for transportation to aid the worsening traffic situation in Metro Manila, particularly the 16 million residents who live around Laguna de Bay



(From top) LLDA GM Medina with DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu, QC Mayor Herbert Bautista and LLDA AGM Generoso Dungo; DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu, LLDA GM Medina and AGM Generoso Dungo join the others at the recent LGU Summit



specific designated areas for aquaculture, transportation, and business will be formalized. To help the lake “breathe” more, Medina requested a team of scientists and technical experts to look into its aquaculture to understand the sustainable amount of breeding, rearing, and harvesting of plants and animals in the area.

“The team was led by Dr. Emil Javier, former president of the University of the Philippines and a member of the National Academy of Science and Technology,” he shares. “They did two days of pro-bono work. They concluded that only 9,200 hectares of aquaculture are sustainable for Laguna Lake. For every hectare, there should be at least eight hectares that are free. That is the challenge to us—how to limit it to only 9,200 hectares when, at present, we have around 15,000 hectares of aquaculture.”

NEW MANDATE
Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu has consistently emphasized the importance of Laguna de Bay. The former military

projects. Medina estimates that 22,000 smaller fisherfolk and around 125,000 to 150,000 of their family members will benefit from the livelihood programs being fashioned.

AVENUE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

According to Medina, the development of communities surrounding the lake has been one-sided because of access. More affluent cities have had the benefit of infrastructure such as good-quality roads; the poorer ones are not easily accessible by any dependable highway.

Medina observes, “Now, when there are development

projects that are proposed, we bring these to the other side so that jobs will be created as well as economic development.” The initiative is aligned with the Duterte administration’s Build, Build, Build program that aims “to increase the productive capacity of the economy, create jobs, increase incomes, and strengthen the investment climate leading to sustained inclusive growth,” according to the Philippine Infrastructure Transparency Program website.

The LLDA will also announce details of the zoning and management plan for the Laguna de Bay Region Master Plan that was last revisited in 1999. In it,

chief has committed to the lake’s sustainability efforts and implementation of laws such as the Clean Water Act, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, and the Clean Air Act. Cimatu heads the LLDA’s board of directors scheduled to be presented with the updated zoning plan during the first quarter of 2018.

LLDA employees were also challenged anew by their new chief when he assumed office last year. “Before, the mindset of the LLDA was strictly regulatory and there was not much development in the region,” shares Medina. “I have been slowly telling our staff that there should be a new mindset. From being strictly regulatory, we should function as a regulatory-developmental agency.”

The general manager also decided to let go of employees leveled with graft and corruption charges, and with recommendations for dismissal. This is to show the LLDA’s stakeholders “that we are serious.” He also had the president’s SONA directives for the agency printed on the wall of his office and in front of their building to remind employees of what is expected of them every day.

Medina has also observed in the Duterte administration that government agencies are encouraged to harmonize their services instead of being only interested in their own respective turfs. “I think that among the responsibilities of the LLDA is to make sure that there is no overlapping of functions and to help complement the work of government agencies,” he says. As an example, different agencies provide permits to every type of motorboat in Laguna Lake.

THE MASTER PLAN

The 2015 “Pinakamahusay na Punong Bayan sa Kalakhang Maynila” awardee of the Gawad Sulo ng Bayad and Golden Tanod, Inc. has made his office accessible to its stakeholders as well, meeting regularly with mayors so that the developmental projects in the area can be harmonized with city projects. “I learned that there are 11 fish landing centers that are fully funded by the national government, but have not been implemented because they are not able to obtain permits from the LLDA,” he discloses. “The funding was

about to expire. When I learned about it, I talked to the mayors and local government officials. Now, these fish landing centers are almost complete or are done with their groundbreaking. The coordination is faster now.”

The LLDA head shared that this year, he is pushing for a mega project that is based on a masterplan created during the Marcos administration. The plan had three components, with two being completed. First is the construction of the Manggahan Floodway and the building of the Napindan hydraulic structure to serve as sort of a gate to the Pasig River so water will not backflow.

“The third and most important component, the construction of a Paranaque spillway, has not yet been done,” he reports. “Right now, the only outlet of the Laguna Lake is the Pasig River. This means that if the Pasig River reaches full capacity, it will take some time for water to find its way out. That’s what happened during Ondoy in 2009 when Laguna Lake was still flooded three to four months after the typhoon. And most of the time, the Pasig River is also silted.”



At the groundbreaking ceremony of “Tubig Para sa Barangay Project” at the Taytay Municipal Hall Grounds, Rizal; LLDA GM Medina with Manila Water Chairman Fernando Zobel de Ayala





(From left) Keynote Speaker Sen. Cynthia Villar at LLDA's Laguna de Bay Development Forum: Riding on the Waves of Change; LLDA GM Medina joins Taiwanese delegates on their visit to Laguna Lake

I have been slowly telling our staff that there should be a new mindset. From being strictly regulatory, we should function as a regulatory-developmental agency



He also reported that feasibility studies for the project will be completed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Department of Public Works and Highway by March this year. "I am really pushing for it. I came from the region and I was mayor of Pateros for nine years. During Ondoy, I really experienced the flooding. I saw that if there was no substantial flood control project for Laguna Lake, with climate change and everything, flooding will really occur. I will be very vocal and noisy about this," he adds.

The LLDA is also in coordination with agencies to distribute portable toilets to municipalities to help lessen the untreated sewage the lake takes in, and ensure that waste is brought to facilities for treatment. Medina shares a recent study by the World Health Organization which revealed that while 83% of Filipino households have mobile phones, only 73% have working toilets. "Where does human waste go but to the streams, rivers, and eventually the lake? There are 24 major river systems that all discharge into the lake, contributing to its destruction and pollution.

"Many do not know that the lake is already a source of water from Metro Manila—4% of our water supply comes from it,"



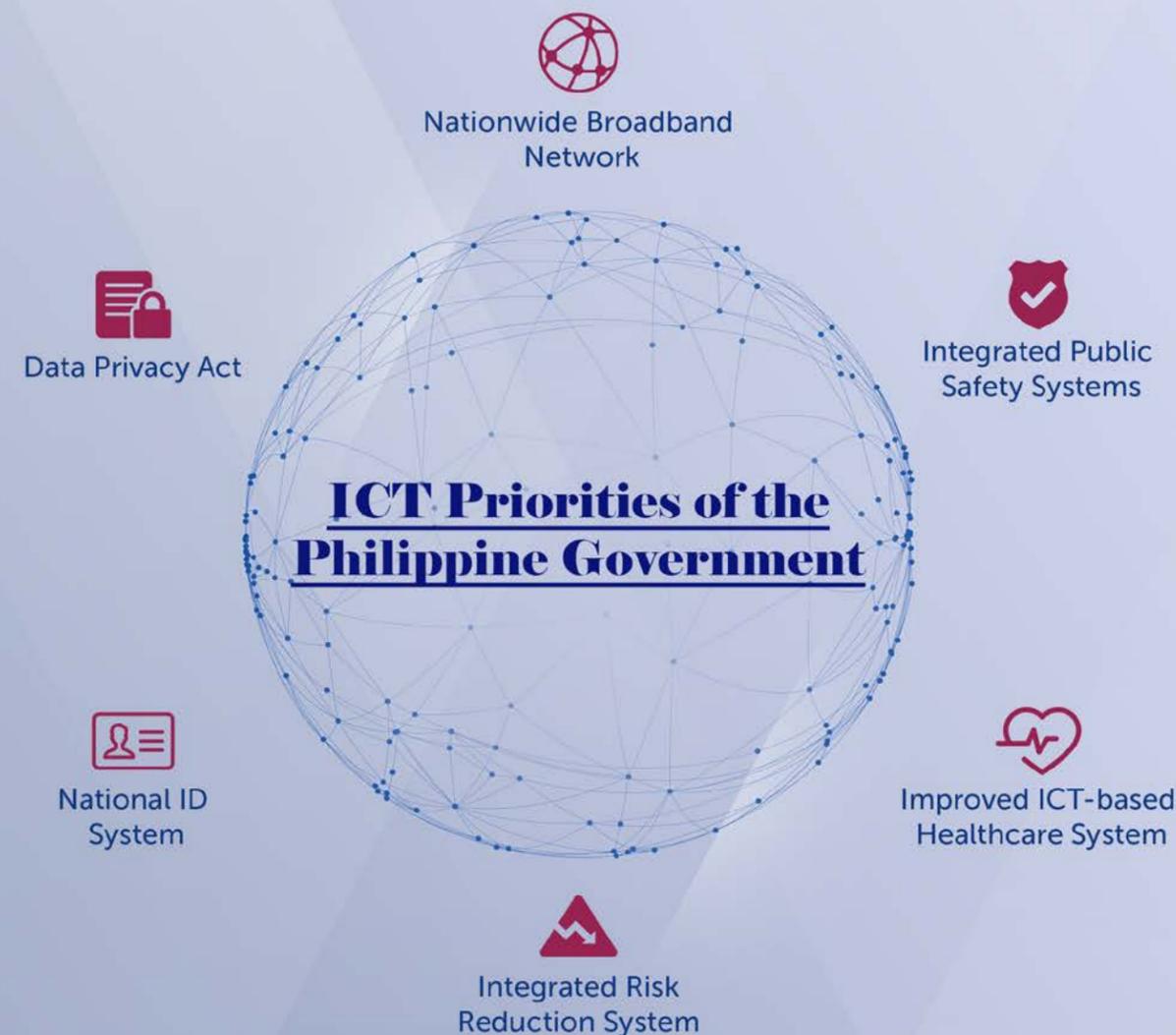
LLDA GM Medina and the Philippine delegation went to Hungary to further discuss the plans of Hungary's Eximbank to finance development projects in the Philippines

he reveals. "The lake is multi-use and is also a source of affordable protein. The fresh water fish for Metro Manila is sourced from Laguna Lake. And if you compare the cost of fish from Laguna Lake and Dagupan City in Pangasinan, you'd be surprised that fish from the lake is cheaper because there is no commercial feeding."

Medina is also pushing for awareness about the lake's potential for transportation to aid the worsening traffic situation in Metro Manila, particularly the 16 million residents who live around Laguna de Bay. Aligned with

the President's directive to develop the area into an ecotourism destination, his office has already started talks with the mayors of Talim Island—the largest lake island in Laguna Lake—to have its roads fixed and identify opportunities for development. "Later on, we can have ferry boats from C-6 and bring tourists to the island. It has hot springs but, currently, there are no restaurants or resorts on it. There is great potential for ecotourism. As long as these plans do not destroy or pollute the lake, it will help with its economic development." ■

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The stunning Singaporean skyline

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The Most Liveable Country in Asia

A Filipino living abroad shares six lessons that the Philippines can learn from Singapore

BY RAPHAEL FRANCISCO GERVASIO

After residing in Singapore for 12 years, it comes as no surprise to me that it has replaced Hong Kong as the most liveable city in Asia in the Global Liveability report by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

A technological hub that is the heart of a dynamic region in Southeast Asia, Singapore continues to excel across various sectors, a quality that entices immigrants to uproot to this multiracial city-state.

The EIU's in-house analysts rank cities by allocating each a score for over 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five main categories: stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure. The scores are then collated and totaled up to give a score out of 100.

So how did Singapore become the most liveable city in Asia? Here are six reasons how the small island achieved this.

1. EDUCATION

Education has always been a crucial investment for Singaporeans.

The main factors for Singapore's rise to the title were impressive and consistent improvements in its world-renowned education system, attaining a perfect score for the first time from the EIU.

From the onset of their education, children are subjected to a strong culture of academic competitiveness that pushes students to excel in their studies.

This is evident in how most parents invest hundreds of Singaporean dollars for extra tuition classes after school hours so that their children can improve in weak subjects or be well-prepared, especially when nearing national examinations.

Singapore's comprehensive curriculum framework complements this competitive culture. The EIU ranked the country as the best in effectively equipping their students with the



(Above) The Singapore Armed Forces deployed for an overseas exercise. (Left) Singaporean children begin to undergo rigorous academic training from a very young age



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/43/43/Students_of_Man_Hua_Hill_School%2C_Singapore%2C_in_the_school_hall_-_200612.jpg

necessary skills for future labor markets.

Hence, it is an educational system that not only nurtures bright students and prepares them for exams, but also lays the groundwork for the younger generation to make a difference in the future workforce.

The Philippines needs to realize the importance of this investment and fund its educational sector to upgrade public schools and revamp its curriculum to meet the needs of the younger generation.

2. SECURITY AND STABILITY

Singapore is ranked as the second safest city in the whole world after Tokyo, according to EIU's

Safe Cities Index.

Known to be a very disciplined and secured society, Singapore's safety is one of its finest characteristics due to the lack of crime, military conflict, and civil unrest—undesirable events that take place in many countries.

The lack of crime can be summed up in one observation: You can walk out on the streets at three in the morning without fear of getting kidnapped or mugged.

Unlike other cities, Singapore's ban on drugs, guns, and public alcoholic consumption restrictions

after 10:30p.m. creates a safe city that easily attracts foreign investments.

In the sphere of international relations, Singapore finds itself in a volatile geopolitical situation where terrorism is rife in nearby countries. Hence, it has built a military force to be reckoned with despite its small population.

All able-bodied men who reach the age of 18 are required to go through two harsh years of National Service in order to train them for any deployment or mission even after they have finished their service. This essentially means that Singapore has a combat-ready citizen army that is ready for armed conflict.

Singapore's educational system not only nurtures bright students and prepares them for exams, but also lays the groundwork for the younger generation to make a difference in the future workforce.

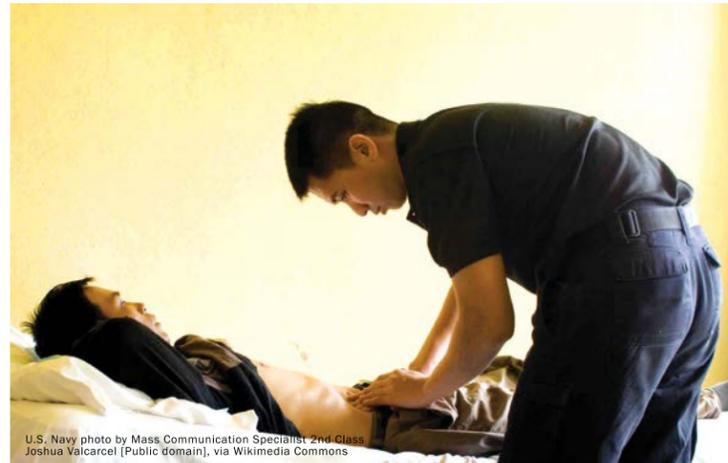
In the Philippines, security is lax compared to Singapore. Stricter laws with firm actions are needed to ensure discipline in our society.

It is also the fierce poverty cycle that leads many to a life of crime. There is a lack of job opportunities in the country and more must be done to allow the poorest to change their lives for the better.

3. HEALTH CARE

Singapore's health care system ticks all the boxes for an effective and efficient structure.

All workers until the age of 55 need to put 20% of their earnings into a Central Provident Fund (CPF) account, with a further 17% added by their employers. This account is further divided into three other accounts: one for housing, investment, and education; one for retirement; and the last one is for health care insurance.



Affordable healthcare is accessible to everyone in Singapore

The government's unique health care system is heavily reliant on the last account—Medisave. This helps to promote individual responsibility for one's own health to avoid an over-dependency on state welfare and third-party medical insurance. Due to this cost-sharing policy, basic healthcare becomes more affordable.

The presence of private healthcare also challenges public services, creating a free market that fosters competition, which indefinitely brings greater quality of services for Singapore's citizens.

The same cannot be said of the Philippines, where good quality healthcare is only affordable to middle and upper class Filipinos who can pay for private health services.

The public sector is often underfunded and its clinics lack resources and doctors to tend to poor families. As a result, the country has a high mortality rate and a number of issues that have yet to be solved to achieve a proper and stable healthcare system.

4. ENVIRONMENT

The Philippines has a lot to learn from Singapore when it comes to improving and cleaning our environment. Announced as the "Greenest City in Asia" by EIU's Green City Index in 2016, it only takes a few days in Singapore's streets to understand why.

The public maintenance of the environment is admirable; you almost won't find any trash lying on the streets or dirty streams full of garbage and muck. One reason for this is the law that bans any form of littering on public space. Should you be caught littering, you can be fined up to S\$1,000 (P38,300) and forced to do community service as a deterrent for others who might wish to do the same.

This rigid enforcement may seem illogical for some, but maintaining the cleanliness of the



A clean environment makes a city much more liveable

By chensiyuan (chensiyuan) [GFDL (http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html) or CC BY-SA 4.0-3.0-2.5-2.0-1.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0-3.0-2.5-2.0-1.0)], via Wikimedia Commons

city thwarts any incident of diseases reaching epidemic levels in a small country like Singapore.

Furthermore, most Singaporeans have a "clean as you go" attitude, which is an admirable trait so public cleaners do not have to go the extra mile just to keep amenities clean.

Our country can adopt stricter environmental laws and improved maintenance of irrigation systems so as to improve the quality of living. It also needs to solve the mammoth task of relocating illegal settlements or "squatters."

5. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Just last year, Singapore was ranked No. 8 in the world at the Sustainable Cities Mobility Index by Arcadis, a global design and consultancy group. It considers indicators such as safety, ridership, congestion, delays, affordability, and more to grade the best transport systems.

Singapore's public transport system includes the Mass Railway Transport (MRT), LRT (Light Railway Transport), buses, and taxis.

It's hard to imagine that 25 years ago there was only a single MRT line operating in Singapore. Currently, there are five lines with over 119 stations and LRTs, trains that cover the small and crowded regions of Singapore.

The beautiful thing about Singapore's public transport is that it is so convenient. You can travel from one end of the country to another within an hour, with no complaints about the cleanliness of the trains and buses.

In Manila, widespread traffic congestion is a common sight and its public transportation needs to be improved so Filipinos will use their cars less frequently. Bus services should also be nationalized and not run by numerous private companies.

To build an effective transport system—its roads, highways, and public transportation—urban planning of congested cities needs to be top-notch.



Photo by: CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5193414

You can travel from one end of the country to the other in one hour

6. LEADERSHIP

Lastly, it is Singapore's leadership that has transformed the country from a backward sea port to a thriving hub with a booming economy within half a decade.

The first Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, was an intelligent and visionary leader who knew the high stakes of driving Singapore's independence, with the country's future in the balance.

He performed an economic miracle by galvanizing a nation with multi-racial and religious groups and developed a highly technocratic government that resolutely pushed for competitive, meritocratic, and results-based policies across all sectors.

In one of his famous speeches, he said: "Whoever governs Singapore must have that iron in him. Or give it up. This is not a game of cards."

Governance is not an easy task. There is so much to lose when a government does not serve the needs of its people.

A bad example would be the corruption that is rife in Philippine politics. Until our leaders become exceptional in their duty to lead, our country will not be exceptional in how it is run.

In conclusion, the most liveable country in Asia has proven itself by succeeding in almost every sector of the Global Liveability report. Its achievements in education, security, healthcare, infrastructure, and the environment were all possible due to outstanding leadership that allowed Singapore's progress to be strong and steady.

We, Filipinos, can learn so much from Singapore's success story. There is so much hope in our country, especially since it's filled with talented people who can change the world.

But for now, we must take a combination of baby steps and giant leaps to improve our homeland, not for the sake of global indexes and for our reputation, but for the sake of our people. █



The first Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew

Robert D. Ward [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons



Filinvest City: A Blueprint for Balanced Living

A city built intentionally serves a greater purpose—to fulfill all the needs and desires of all who live within its fold. Filinvest City in the Metro South proudly shows how it can be done.

In recent years, Filinvest City has become the epicenter of economic activity in the Metro South, bringing to light a grand vision of mixed developments such as residential communities and condominiums, malls and commercial centers, hotel chains, and business hubs.

Today, Filinvest City has become a thriving central business district, or CBD, at par with other business capitals in the metro such as Makati, Bonifacio Global City (BGC), Ortigas, and the Manila Bay area. But this was not the case some two decades ago.

In 1995, it was simply an empty expanse of land—244 hectares of underutilized stock farm

that the late Chairman Emeritus of Filinvest Development Corporation Andrew Gotianun Sr., realized as having great potential. He, together with his team of engineers, developers, and other experts, recognized the opportunity to build a city from the ground up, as they saw fit — one that was master-planned and which would become a true model of modern urban development.

LEARNING FROM THE MISTAKES

One of the greatest ills of Metro Manila, as many agree, is the lack of master-planning and smart urban design. Each CBD governs its own progress. And while they flourish, they also grow separately and disjointed from each other,

making the flow of business and movement from city to city, CBD to CBD, very inconvenient and constricted. While the growth and progress of these CBDs are to be lauded, traffic and transportation, among other things, have become unbearable.

There’s also an imbalance of infrastructure and open spaces, with concrete buildings creeping into what should be open public space.

Filinvest City identified these issues from the very beginning and determined what it would take to correct them. Thus, when developing the Metro South, they designed Filinvest City based on a well-planned blueprint that brought order and structure, as well as balance, that could support the different lifestyles of the people and communities.

More than determining relationships between structures and edifices, urban planning is about designing how people move around these structures, and ultimately, designing a way of life.

Don Ubaldo, Filinvest Alabang Inc.’s Senior Assistant Vice President for Townships, shares, “We have always believed that urban planning is not just about creating structures. More than determining relationships between structures and edifices, urban planning is about designing how people move around these structures, and ultimately, designing a way of life. That is what we consider when doing masterplans of communities.”

Filinvest City was then envisioned to include more open spaces, public parks, bike lanes, and green architecture. According to Ubaldo, it was to be a city that nurtured a live-work-play environment, and where everything is within easy reach.

When it came to planning the CBD, Filinvest City developers drew inspiration from the country’s sister cities in Southeast Asia. “We took note of the best practices in



(Opposite page) Filinvest City was formerly an empty, underutilized stock farm; (This page) Filinvest City complements the laidback vibe of the Southern community



Filinvest City was envisioned to include more open spaces, public parks, bike lanes, and green architecture

other cities like Singapore where greens are integrated into the CBD. In addition, we divided the city into zones and districts, with each area playing a vital role in the dynamism of the city,” Ubaldo explains.

In the Metro South CBD, these districts are the City Centre where Festival Alabang, the biggest lifestyle mall in the Metro South, is located; the Northgate District, which is also the IT hub of Filinvest City; the Spectrum District, the designated center of commerce with high-rise offices; South Station, and the transport hub, among others.

Each zone is distinct and serves a specific purpose, yet all are woven together into a seamless community, accessible via a complex transportation network comprised of electric jeepneys, shuttle services, and buses, among others. This

allows great freedom and ease of movement for residents and corporate professionals, and makes working in the Southern CBD incredibly attractive.

“As a general rule, all the zones/districts must be mixed-use, ensuring that each would be self-sustaining,” says Ubaldo. “There still has to be a dominant character or use.” In Northgate, for instance, the dominant locator there is Northgate Cyberzone, the premier IT hub. But residential buildings, hotels and serviced apartments, and other retail hubs are also found there.”

THRIVING AND SUCCEEDING

Today, the CBD is thriving and has successfully positioned itself as a strong, competitive city. Filinvest is now home to thousands of residents, and its population fluctuates throughout the day due to employees at the BPO central.

Meeting the growing demand for more offices in the area, Filinvest City is fast-tracking the building of over 450,000 sqm of office space. To date, a total of 50 buildings—dedicated to BPOs and other organizations—have been completed or have commenced construction over the past five years.

As a testament to the city’s progressive planning, Filinvest Alabang Inc. (FAI), a subsidiary of Filinvest Development Corporation, was awarded by BCI ASIA as one of the top 10 developers in the Philippines. In addition, it was conferred with the most prestigious honor by the Asia Pacific Property Awards Development as the “Best mixed-used development in the Philippines” in 2017.

GREEN INITIATIVES

While it has become a

burgeoning business capital, Filinvest City has never sacrificed its open spaces and gardens to make way for more buildings. In fact, it has invested immensely in making the city greener and more inviting for its residents, fitting it with gardens, trails, and bike paths to encourage a life outside of the office and home. Even before pedestrian mobility became a trend in urban planning, Filinvest City was ahead of the game by 20 years.

Every Sunday, a portion of Filinvest City’s major roads—namely Commerce, Corporate, Parkway, and Filinvest Avenues—are closed off to traffic from 5am to 10am, so that the active community can walk, jog, bike, and simply enjoy the outdoors.

In addition, the city built the Filinvest Bike Trails, an approximately 9-km stretch dedicated to mountain biking enthusiasts, the Spectrum Midway Linear Park, and expansive Events Grounds. The CBD also has its own sewage treatment plant and water recycling facility.

Ubaldo proudly shares, “The construction of additional green parks is underway, as well as the construction of more bike lanes in the secondary roads.” As part of its green initiative, the CBD has rolled out three major developments in the pipeline, which include the Central Park along Promenade, the Greenbelt system along Spectrum Midway, and the Creekside Park development that stretches from Palms Pointe Village, all the way to the River Park in Festival Alabang, which brings nature closer to the people.

Thanks to these efforts, Filinvest City is now also proudly known as the “Garden City of Metro Manila.”

“We are proud to say that ever since the conception of Filinvest City in the mid-’90s, wide medians and pavements and tree-lined roads have always been there. Meaning, we have always encouraged this lifestyle of balance and that we’re truly committed to our vision,” he says.

“Through this development we hope to inspire other cities and developments to consider a ‘greener’ point of view,” he continues. “We believe that it only takes dedication and will to make something successful.”

As a real estate developer, Filinvest is very much willing to partner with the government in building cities and transforming people’s lives. In fact, aside from Filinvest City, Filinvest is also in Cebu with its mixed-use township, City Di Mare, as well as Filinvest Mimosa+ in Clark Freeport Zone, Pampanga. “These townships would definitely bring in more jobs to their neighboring locales and would offer the same complete live-work-play lifestyle with lush nature as the background,” adds Ubaldo.

GOING GLOBAL

Hoping to add another feather on its cap, Filinvest City is making its bid for the prestigious Gold Certification from LEED for Neighborhood Development, the US-based nonprofit organization that recognizes designs and developments that are environmentally responsible from construction to maintenance. Only two cities in the world have received this award – one in Italy and another in Japan – and soon (hopefully) Filinvest City will be the world’s third.

“The vision for Filinvest City has always been to transform people’s lives, not just those who live here, but also the transients who work here from the neighboring locales of CALABARZON and beyond.

“We want to give these people an option to a full life, an environment conducive for employees to get better at their jobs, and a home where residents can enjoy the great outdoors sans the pollution. In our community, we nurture a live-work-play balance. This is what we believe makes a model CBD here in the Philippines, and hopefully others will realize and follow suit, too,” Ubaldo ends.

As a testament to the city’s progressive planning, Filinvest Alabang Inc. (FAI), a subsidiary of Filinvest Development Corporation, was awarded by BCI ASIA as one of the top 10 developers in the Philippines. In addition, it was conferred with the most prestigious honor by the Asia Pacific Property Awards Development as the “Best mixed-used development in the Philippines” in 2017.

“

There is still a gap between the Aeta community and the low-lying communities. They still don't understand our culture, and our customary laws. To link the two wherein they can work harmoniously with each other, that's what I want to do within the next 10 years or so.

King of the Mountain



It's a triumph for Norman King and his people, as the young man becomes the first Aeta to graduate from the University of the Philippines.

BY MAIELLE MONTAYRE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL SORIANO

In a country with over 105 million Filipinos, a small band of indigenous peoples (IPs) resides in the mountainous regions of Luzon. They are the Aetas, one of the IPs of the Philippines, now resettled in Pampanga and Tarlac after the devastating 1991 Mt. Pinatubo eruption. Traditionally a hunting and gathering people, the Aetas and their culture are changing. Influences from the lowlands have crept in, along with reforms for education and struggles for ancestral domain. And Norman King, a true *katutubo*, is serving as the bridge, helping his people maneuver through modern society and educating the lowlanders and outsiders on the true struggles of the IPs.

FINDING PURPOSE IN U.P.

Norman King graduated from the Angeles City National Trade School in 2004. Almost a decade later, he was able to enroll at the University of the Philippines in Manila (UP-Manila). This was due to the intervention of Cynthia Neri Zayas, PhD, who approached his father, Aeta rights activist Roman King, offering any form of assistance. Roman replied: "If you really want to help me, help my son get the education he deserves."

Norman was a freshman at the age of 23. Perhaps because of his previous work experience, he had no trouble adapting to student life at the University of the Philippines-Manila. He didn't feel any discrimination as everyone appreciated his presence and treated him normally. He recalls, "Among the students, I was just this black guy standing in the class, physically and identity-wise, like one of the natives." He had no problems financially, as his funds came from the university stipend, the Diwang Magdalo Foundation, and his father also sent him an allowance. Sometimes, he'd visit the Office of Student Affairs to hang out and eat with the other students and faculty. They treated him like family, and he admits, they became like his family, too.

Norman only wanted to finish college to have that competitive edge when seeking employment. He had no particular university or course in mind, and credits it to divine intervention that he got into UP-Manila. "That's already a privilege for me. So I wasn't going to be picky on what course they'd put me in. As long as I got in, I'm good," he shares.

Norman aims to use his multi-disciplinary course—which covers Sociology, Anthropology, and Psychology—to help his community by writing a book about their culture. The Aeta culture is handed down orally and nothing is written. This becomes troublesome when businessmen arrive, demanding land titles. Despite the land being part of their ancestral domain, the Aetas face difficulties when they neither have proof nor written records of ownership. Norman also explains: "When a person would like to understand our culture, they don't have anything to read or refer to. If ever there's anything written, it's actually by scholars or westerners. But is it written from the perspective of the Aeta community or a biased perspective of the writer? I see my course as an answer to that question." Norman wants to bring the Aeta psyche to light by codifying the culture and laws of his own community.

TRANSCENDENTAL COMMUNAL VALUES

Most Aeta communities have a traditional value system that prioritizes their ancestral domain, but there are those with diverging value systems.

Norman coins the term "loose" communities to refer to Aetas who do not value their land unlike other tight-knit Aeta communities within Porac and Tarlac. These so-called loose communities have lost their ancestral domain, because they've already sold their rights to lowland people.

Under the law, the transfer of property rights should only be between or among members of the same indigenous cultural communities (ICCs) or IPs. Thus, Norman's father, as leader of Porac Aeta Ancestral Domain Federation Incorporated, buys the land of loose communities instead of the ICC selling to non-Aetas. Their purpose is to secure the land for the future of the younger generation. Norman explains, "As an heir to the mountains we own, I won't use all of those resources. My only purpose is to protect it so that no outsiders can get in." Despite having a noble intention of protecting the rights of other Aeta communities, the Kings have been accused of land-grabbing instead. Norman says this is because the lowlanders don't understand. In the lowlands, sale of land to a person results in sole ownership of that person. With the

Aetas, however, the property becomes communal and shared by all in the community.

With the passing of Republic Act (R.A.) No. 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act, the right of the IPs to their ancestral domain is recognized. Yet some politicians have their own personal agenda profiting from eco-tourism sites on Aeta land. They will hinder any claim for a certificate or title the Aetas enforce. Norman says it has been 10 years since they sought a communal title. He reveals, "Until you claim it, the government won't do anything. They know we're not like other Aetas. We know the value of our land, and the politicians know, once we get it back, they'll never own it again."

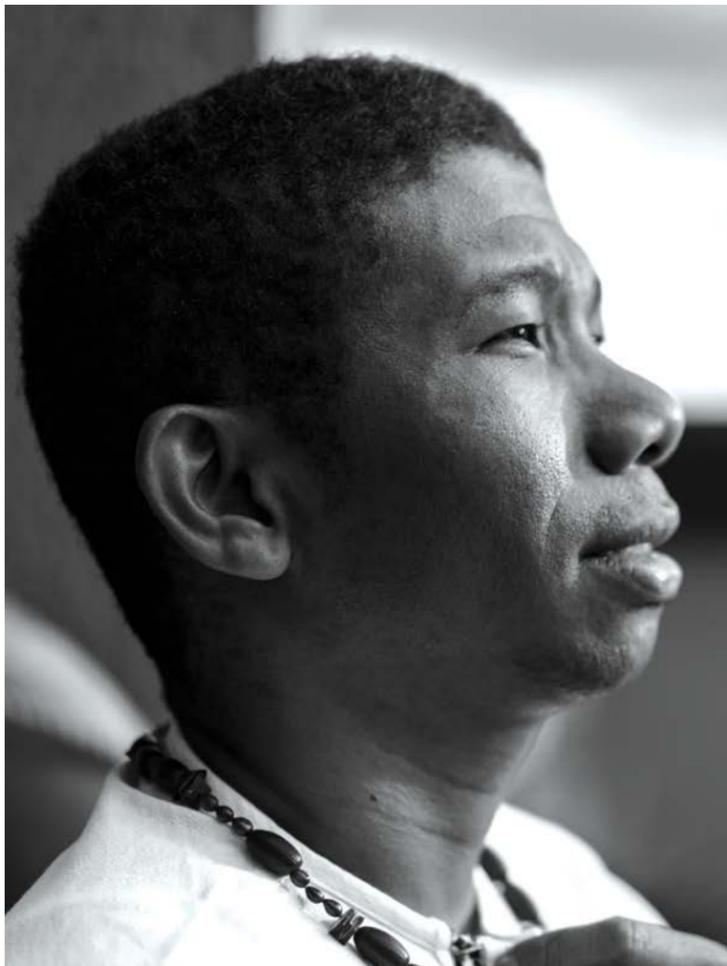
DUALITY OF LOWLAND INFLUENCES

"I can say that we're not really that poor. Our wealth is not directly translated to money. We have mountains. People have high respect for our family. For us, that is wealth; and that is something money can't buy," Norman emphasizes. Other Aetas who do not espouse the same way of thinking become greedy and turn



I can say that we're not really that poor. Our wealth is not directly translated to money. We have mountains. People have high respect for our family. For us, that is wealth; and that is something money can't buy.

”



to corruption. Many private groups have tried to bribe Norman's father; they even put a bounty on his head. Roman's life was endangered, so he was unable to attend Norman's graduation. These outside groups understand that because Roman is a chief in the Porac community, other Aetas follow him. Outsiders try to divide the ICC by saying they should also have a say in the matter, not just Roman. "The natives think dividing the power is better, but this is only good if everyone has equal intellectual capacity, which is not the case," Norman says.

With modern comforts finding their way into the Aeta community, old ways are compromised, too, shares Norman. The Aetas see the short-term benefits of technologies like motorcycles, TVs or cellphones, but lack the foresight to see long-term responsibilities like maintenance and repairs. The trade-off is inordinately high because they sell their lands or carabaos in order to purchase these things. Younger Aetas also luxuriate in these modernities instead of doing common chores like chopping wood.

However, the Aetas still prefer the traditional way. "Lowlanders are okay with having four walls, but we're not used to it," Norman remarks. "We cannot stay long in a room. Our concept of space is pretty wide, and you cannot simply put us in a box because our view is 360 degrees; which is why we don't have the concept of trespassing because we can go anywhere."

VISION FOR COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Norman has a specific vision for the Aeta community, and through his work he hopes to bring greater awareness to their culture and struggles. He says, "We're a diversified community, and while diversity is beauty, it causes us to be divided." He yearns for people to cast away self-

interest and work together harmoniously. There should be a commonality of principles as individuals think of the community, regardless of diverse practices. "There is still a gap between the Aeta community and the low-lying communities. They still don't understand our culture, and our customary laws. To link the two wherein they can work harmoniously with each other, that's what I want to do within the next 10 years or so," Norman declares. In addition to writing a book and sharing glimpses of the Aeta way of living through his photography (Norman is an aspiring photographer), Norman plans on pursuing a law degree to help protect his people and their lands through the teeth of the law.

A delicate balance between the uplands and the lowlands is needed, considering benevolent intervention from the latter destroys traditional values and cultural practices of the former. First, R.A. 8371 should be properly implemented as it already protects the ICCs, the IPs, and the environment. He says, "If you implement it correctly, the environment will be protected, and the environment itself is the ancestral domain where the IPs live." Apart from the government, each individual citizen should also work towards doing something to benefit the community.

Second, Norman insists on building

the identity of the Aetas starting from a young age to deter external influences. He recounts his personal struggles with his own identity. On school days, he was a regular UP-Manila student; other days, he was an Aeta. Norman envisions a pilot project, where the elders teach the younger Aetas the old ways like hunting, while explaining the reasons behind such traditional customs. "The emphasis to the young ones is that whomever you will meet, wherever you go, the only ones who will understand you are your people. When I went to U.P., I met different people but whenever I came back to my community, they were the ones who fully understood and accepted me for who I am," Norman maintains.

On the day of his graduation, Norman wore a *bahag*, the traditional clothing of his people. In evaluating his motive and purpose, he asserts, "My people were the ones who were there during the time I was having an identity crisis. I want to give them the respect they deserve. That's why when I walked onto the stage, it's not just simply me right there walking. Together with me, shoulder to shoulder, are my people. I held my head up high proudly on that stage representing my community, not just me as Norman King." ■

**THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS ACT (IPRA) OF 1997
BASICS OF R.A. 8371**

WHAT'S THERE TO KNOW?

Primary Government Agency: National Commission on Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (NCIP)
Bill Sponsor: Senator Juan Flavio Velasco (10th Congress)
Approved: October 29, 1997
Signing President: Fidel V. Ramos

KEY POINTS

- Recognition of native title and rights of IPs to ancestral domains
- Recognition of indigenous peoples' political structures and governance
- Respect for the right to cultural integrity
- Respect for human rights and elimination of discrimination
- Creation of an office that would cater to the IPs needs

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Indigenous Cultural Communities/ Indigenous Peoples refer to a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions, and other distinctive cultural traits, or who become historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos.

Ancestral Domains refer to all areas generally belonging to ICCs/IPs comprising lands, inland waters, coastal areas, and natural resources therein, held under a claim of ownership, occupied or possessed by ICCs/IPs, by themselves or through their ancestors, communally or individually since time immemorial, continuously to the present.

RIGHTS TO ANCESTRAL DOMAIN

- Right of ownership
- Right to develop lands and natural resources
- Right to stay in the territories
- Right in case of displacement
- Right to regulate entry of migrants
- Right to safe and clean air and water
- Right to claim parts of reservations
- Right to resolve conflict

A King's Eye

Norman King, an aspiring photographer and ambassador of Cloudfone, shares a glimpse into the lives of the Aeta people through the photos that he takes and shares on social media.



Words Learned From the Wise

Retired Supreme Court Justice and current Ombudsman, CONCHITA CARPIO MORALES, shares 8 lessons on life and leadership as she approaches her retirement from the Office of the Ombudsman in July 2018

BY ANNA V. CHATO



1 Lead by example. The way she carries herself, how she lives her life has always been to me a paragon of good leadership. Never to cower in the face of public opinion, the way she presents herself suggests seriousness and self-control.

An effervescent early bird, she is always one of the first to arrive at the office at 6:30 a.m. everyday. The fresh start is the boost of energy, which fuels her throughout the day. Her philosophy seems to be: in lieu of coffee, start early. Being around her, you can also tell that she enjoys the challenge of her work, and that work done well gives her a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

2 Learn from the great. Wise people are pygmies on the shoulders of giants; they learn from the ones who came before them. Ombudsman Morales has a number of past mentors and leaders

she looks up to for inspiration. One of them is former US President Barack Obama. I recall her enjoying his autobiography. Characteristically, she often quotes the words of the greats of history in her speeches because she finds wisdom in them.

3 Be your own person. Her strong, dignified, and intimidating demeanor, I think, is intentional on her part, to make her purposely unapproachable. Throughout the years, she has accepted and held positions of great responsibility where being unapproachable is ideal. She does not like to be approached in order to be influenced or manipulated.

4 Study, study, study. Ombudsman Morales seemed always updated and never out of the loop, both in law and in life. Whenever research

has to be done for a case, she is always ahead of her staff, having studied cases and examined them thoroughly before they present their research to her. She catches how much her staff has studied and knows of a subject matter with her questions, which is why it was always important to be assiduous, calm, and ready to answer any question in her presence. I think her parents ingrained in her the habit of studiousness, such that whether it is about new technology coming soon, or case law, she always keeps abreast of the latest reports.

5 Stand your ground. In the Office of the Ombudsman, hundreds of decisions have to be made on a daily basis. There comes a point after diligent study and discernment that one has to stick to one's guns and decide on an action no matter the consequences. One thing I have to hand to Ombudsman Morales is that she is decisive and determined. In a position that would probably faze most people with the amount of life-altering decisions that have to be made, she sticks to her guns and stands her ground.

6 Let people bloom. Ombudsman Morales spends a lot of time with her staff and likes to get to know each one personally. Most of those who have worked under her have gone on to bigger and brighter things with her full support. She is one to encourage growth and not stunt it, even if it means experiencing growing pains on both ends. She does not cling to the past, so when it's time for farewells, she wishes you the best with a full heart and a warm, affectionate hug.

7 Persevere and overcome. Ombudsman Morales has endured many hardships with grace and resilience. Many of us worked under her son Bert, who was her chief of staff in the Office of the Ombudsman and the Supreme Court. So, to

learn of his passing away at 41 years old in October 2015 was painful. Bert was a rarity as a chief of staff; kind, caring, and without any airs. In fact, every new employee has his or her own story about how he or she did not know Bert was Ombudsman Morales' son for months until some innocent conversation revealed this, to his/ her great surprise.

With grit and a steady work ethic, Ombudsman Morales is able to pummel through the dark times and find hope in the two grandchildren under her care, Bert's son, Ennio, and daughter, Cece, whom she both addressed when she was honored with the Ramon Magsaysay Award for her outstanding service in government, Asia's equivalent of the Nobel Prize, in 2016. Slogging through walls of legal cases in government

since 1971 when she started at the Department of Justice as a Special Assistant, she has gone through six presidents in her 47 years of service.

8 Strength comes in many forms. Ombudsman Morales can be very strict, but she can also be exceptionally kind. Known for being unyielding when attacked, she can also be fiercely loving. She is a loyal champion when she believes in you. One of her finest achievements was to have raised such a kind-hearted man in Bert. History, however, recognizes her for saying "yes" and rising to the occasion when it came calling. ■

Anna Chato worked for Ombudsman Morales for two years as Executive Assistant IV in the Office of the Ombudsman, and prior to Ombudsman Morales' retirement from the Supreme Court, as Executive Assistant II in the Supreme Court.

Throughout the years, she has accepted and held positions of great responsibility where being unapproachable is ideal. She does not like to be approached in order to be influenced or manipulated.

REAPING RECOGNITION

2016

- The University of the Philippines, her alma mater, conferred on her the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, during the commencement exercises of the UP College of Law for the graduating class of 2016 at which she was the guest speaker. The conferment recognized her "28-year service to the judiciary unmarked by any accusation of impropriety," and for being herself "the measure of integrity in government service" and "the face of courage and daring determination, of competence and independence, and one of resolutely intolerant of corruption."

- Ombudsman Carpio Morales was chosen as the Philippines' 2016 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for restoring faith in the rule of law. In presenting the award, the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation board of trustees recognized "her moral courage and commitment to justice in

taking head-on one of the most intractable problems in the Philippines; promoting by her example of incorruptibility, diligence, vision and leadership, the highest ethical standards in public service."

2017

- The Local Government Unit of Quezon City conferred on Ombudsman Carpio Morales the Tandang Sora Award in recognition of her ideals and virtues that mirror that of Filipino heroine Melchora Aquino who took the monicker Tandang Sora. She was cited for possessing the virtues of honesty, industry, service, word of honor, kindness, caring, and protectiveness. The award also recognized the Ombudsman's dedication and untarnished record as a public servant.

- Ombudsman Carpio Morales holds the distinction of being the first woman magistrate to administer the oath of office of a Philippine President.

" I take photos not just to see through my eyes,
but to live theirs - the nature."
#DoAwesome



Norman King
Nature Photographer/First Aeta UP Graduate

CLouDFONE

Good Governance



NAGA, CAMARINES SUR | CAVITE PROVINCE | CAGAYAN DE ORO
LINGAYEN, PANGASINAN | BARANGAY SAN ANTONIO, PASIG

JOURNEY TO THE TOP

Naga City Mayor John Bongat, with his game-changing leadership, braced by a solid foundation of good governance, is expected to continue leading his beloved city to greater heights

INTERVIEW BY LAKAMBINI BAUTISTA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICKY LADIA
ADDITIONAL PHOTOS COURTESY OF NAGA CITY TOURISM OFFICE

Naga City's solid track record speaks for itself. The "Queen City of Bicol" has consistently figured at the top rankings of the National Competitiveness Council (NCC). Naga was adjudged as the overall No. 1 most competitive component city in 2015 and 2016. When the competitiveness rankings first started in 2013, component and highly-urbanized cities were not differentiated and yet Naga ranked ninth. It jumped six places to capture the third place in 2014, before clinching the top spot for component cities in 2015 and 2016. In 2017, Naga ranked first in government efficiency, third in economic dynamism, and third in infrastructure.

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

The term "inclusive leadership" naturally comes up when Mayor John Bongat starts talking about keys to good governance. "That may sound like a technical term. But it just means that the city government by itself cannot hope to bring about the changes that we need in Naga. We have to engage and mobilize other government agencies, the private sector, non-government partners, even individual citizens. My role as a leader is to help craft a vision and goals that we all believe in; enable sectors and people to contribute to those goals; and make sure that we are all going in the right direction," says Mayor Bongat.

He explains that while improving government efficiency is well within the control of City Hall, they also have to take into account the processes of national government agencies in Naga.

Applying for permits, for instance, entails dealing with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), and the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), among others. Hence, to ensure that they are on top of the rankings, they have to discuss and agree on processes that they have to put in place to enhance efficiency.

Mayor Bongat explains further, “Infrastructure does not count only the facilities put in place by both local and national government. It also looks into private infrastructure such as telecommunications facilities, accommodations for businessmen and tourists, and educational and health facilities. For us to put the necessary infrastructure in place, we have to be able to get their inputs, discuss with them, and convince them about priority development concerns.



Our Lady of Penafraancia Shrine

“Economic dynamism largely measures the investments made by, and productivity of, the local business community. The role here of a local government is to put in place an environment where business can thrive. Again, that requires engagement and inclusive decision-making. The private sector has to feel that it is listened to and that is it part of the growth of Naga.

“Disaster resiliency is not only about rescue and relief. Engagement with all sectors is necessary as it deals with the ability of an entire community to weather natural and man-made calamities and resume life immediately after.”

NAGA SMILES TO THE WORLD

The term “SMILES” is more than just a word describing Nagueños’ outgoing nature. It’s in fact an acronym that symbolizes Naga’s goals of strengthening its position as a fast-growing progressive city in Bicol and in Southern Luzon.

Mayor Bongat shares that he and his core team thought of the term in 2010, before he was sworn in as mayor. While they had a pretty good grasp of their initial priorities—health, housing especially for the urban poor, education, livelihood, investments, tourism development, public safety, the environment, and good governance—they felt that they had to “market” their vision in a way that constituents and stakeholders can easily understand.

He challenged his team to think of action words to convey the dynamism in his administration’s plan. At first, they came up with the words “study,” “invest,” and “live.” Naga, being a top tourist destination and venue for hosting national events and conventions, they naturally decided to use “see” and “meet.” To highlight Naga’s distinction as a model for good governance, Mayor Bongat suggested the word “experience.” “As chance would have it, when we looked at the first letters of these verbs, they spelled out S-M-I-L-E-S. See Naga, Meet in Naga, Live in Naga, Experience Naga, and Study in Naga. To market our vision, we came up with the phrase ‘Naga SMILES to the World,’” he quips.

STATE OF THE CITY

The city’s chief executive says he is most proud of the fact that over the course of his tenure, they have seen significant and permanent improvements in basic aspects of living in the city such as health, housing, education, the economy, and peace and order. “The city’s physical landscape has changed for the better over the past seven years, perhaps the fastest such change in several decades. We are now among the country’s billionaire cities with local government revenues exceeding the billion mark in 2017. And that is not due to IRA, but to local revenues from a booming economy,” Mayor Bongat points out.

We are now among the country’s billionaire cities with local government revenues exceeding the billion mark in 2017. And that is not due to IRA, but to local revenues from a booming economy



But more than the statistics and figures, he considers the conceptualization and institutionalization of new programs and projects that address the citizens’ concerns and the inclusion and active participation of different sectors and stakeholders as some of his biggest achievements.

As for the awards and recognitions, the good mayor says the city government doesn’t really have a policy for actively applying for awards and recognitions. He admits, though, that he sometimes tend to micro-manage at City Hall when he sees that things are not being done or are not being done right. “I have made it a point to empower our individual departments and offices to enable them to attain our respective goals and objectives. We found out that by listening to their concerns and the concerns of the constituents they serve, agreeing on strategies, then giving our people enough



(From top) Must-tries at Chef Doy’s Gourmet Restaurant: Kinunot na Pating and Bicol Express; Naga is often referred to as the “Pilgrim City,” well-known for the Penafraancia festival

‘elbow room’ to craft and implement their own implementation plans rather than imposing my will, we are able to drive performance. In many cases, our city offices have been able to exceed their targets. This has resulted in award-giving bodies taking notice of their performance, leading to recognitions for the city government.

“I have always emphasized that the best way to receive recognition would be to not seek them from any award-giving body but to simply deliver on our promises, ensure that goals are met or exceeded, and to properly inform our stakeholders of what is being done,” he says.

PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

When Mayor Bongat was elected seven years ago, he had a firm conviction that if he could leave Naga in a much better situation than when he started, he would be at peace with himself.

Thus, in 2010, they started with seven priority areas: **H**-ealth and Nutrition; **H**-ousing and Human Settlements; **E**-ducation, Arts and Culture, and Sports Development;

L-ivelihood, Business and Employment; **P**-eace and Order and Public Safety; **C**-leanliness and Environmental Protection; and **T**-ransparency and Good Governance. For these, they coined the tagline *H²ELP your CiTy* which is also a call for people to get engaged in governing the city. Nagueños can attest to the strides that the current administration has made in addressing the city’s priority concerns.

Like any city, Naga was also faced with obstacles. One of the most challenging involved instituting fiscal reforms in the city government to lessen their reliance on their IRA share from the central government.

When he became mayor in 2010, he sought to review the city’s finances and utilization of resources. This allowed him to be more discriminating in budget spending and encouraged him to explore the possibility of strengthening the city’s economic enterprises such as the public market, which they reorganized and rebranded as the Naga City People’s Mall. Around 2,000 stalls at the public market serve not only shoppers from Naga but from nearby towns as well.

From barely earning enough to fund its operations, the People’s Mall is now the largest contributor to locally-generated revenues of the city government. This has given the city additional funding for its programs. The same holds true for its other economic enterprises: the Naga City Abattoir and the Naga City Hospital.

The other significant challenge that his administration faced involved the exercise of their political will to reclaim management rights over Naga’s Central Bus Terminal. When Mayor Bongat assumed office, the bus terminal, which is owned by the city government, was being managed by a private entity under a management agreement. Over time, however, remittances to the city government remained abnormally low despite the obvious income the terminal was earning. When the management contract expired, they decided not to renew it and regain control of the bus terminal. This was vehemently refused by the private management company, locking down the terminal and denying their personnel access to the facility.



(From left) Naga is well-known for its *pili* nuts; Plaza Quince Martires, one of the popular landmarks in Naga City



PRIDE OF NAGA 8 Awesome things about the Queen City of Bicol

PILGRIMAGE CITY

For over 300 years, Naga has been the center of the biggest Marian devotion in this part of the country. It had also been the seat of episcopacy that covered not only Bicol but other parts of Southern Tagalog as well.

THIRD OLDEST ROYAL CITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

Established in 1575 on order of Spanish Governor-General Francisco de Sande, the city, then named Ciudad de Caceres, earned its esteemed status as the third Spanish royal city in the Philippine islands, after Cebu and Manila.

MOST AWARDED LGU

Naga City has so far received over 150

regional, national, and international awards and distinctions since 1988, when it started to build a reputation for being a model local government unit, implementing innovations in local governance. And the counting continues...

CENTER OF TRADE & COMMERCE IN BICOL

Strategically located in the heart of the Bicol peninsula, Naga City accounts for Bicol’s most number of business establishments, even as it is favored by the country’s largest companies to be the center of their regional operations in this part of South Luzon.

BICOL’S EDUCATIONAL CENTER

Naga City is host to the country’s first and oldest

normal school for girls, the first private university in Luzon outside Metro Manila, and the only Jesuit school in Bicol and Southern Luzon. These institutions have produced some of the country’s famous and foremost leaders.

CRADLE OF ARTS & CULTURE

Dating back to pre-colonial period, this riverine village that eventually became a Spanish city is world-renowned for its rich cultural heritage. Its quaint charm and the people’s love affair with its glorious past are always there to ensure the city’s bright future.

MOST LIVABLE CITY

An international news magazine has singled out Naga as one of the

most improved cities in Asia because of its trailblazing programs that work to ensure a livable and forward-looking environment and strengthen other traditional indicators that make life easier for its citizens.

CENTER OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

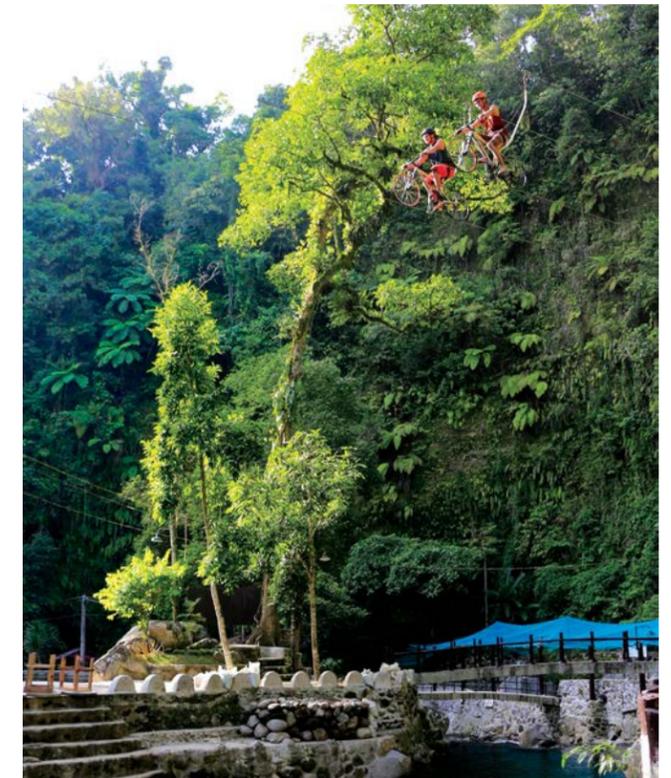
Known for its participatory mechanisms, the city government makes sure that in addressing its goals, the entire community becomes stakeholders and that transparency and accountability are promoted to ensure a clean and innovating local government.

(Source: nagacity.gov.ph)

Knowing very well that the law was on their side and that the general public would consequently benefit from their actions, they decided to exercise the city government’s will. Less than two years after that incident (and after several court and Ombudsman cases), and after being rebranded into the Bicol Central Station, it now trails the People’s Mall as the second-largest contributor of local revenues to the city government. After years of neglect, facilities at the central station have also been repaired, collection efficiency has significantly improved, and traveler and passenger services have been upgraded.

On his last term as the mayor of Naga, Mayor Bongat would like to focus on consolidating the gains made and institutionalizing policies and programs to ensure their continuity. “There are also other matters that deserve our attention. On top of these are efforts to provide a more holistic intervention to improve the lives of those in our poorest communities which we call Least Economically-Resilient Communities (LERCs); disaster resilience; and opening up new investment opportunities in Naga especially in the areas of IT/ business process management and manufacturing of high-value products for export, which are in addition to the city’s traditional role as the trade and finance center of the Bicol region.”

“I would like to leave behind a city which can take on new economic opportunities and is on its way to becoming one of the country’s economic powerhouses; is better-prepared for and can weather calamities; and where the poorest of the poor have a better quality of life,” he concludes.



For adventure-seekers, Naga City offers attractions such as bike zipline (in photo), rappelling, and trekking

Leadership by Example

Mayor John Bongat paints a portrait of a dynamic, trustworthy, incorruptible, and reliable local leader. Here's an inside look at his professional and personal life



John Garcia Bongat, the eighth local chief executive of the City of Naga, entered public service as a city councilor in 2001. A topnotcher member of the Sangguniang Panlungsod for three consecutive terms, Mayor Bongat finished Law at the UP College of Law after taking up AB Political Science at the Ateneo de Manila University.

In May 2010, Mayor Bongat won overwhelmingly on a platform of leadership by example, further cementing his motto that “Leadership is action, not position.”

In the May 2013 elections, running almost unopposed, Mayor Bongat was given a fresh mandate by his fellow Nagueños, and in 2016, he clinched his final and third term as mayor, again with overwhelming votes.

Like his predecessor, the late DILG Secretary Jesse M. Robredo, Mayor Bongat continues to bring honor to the city, the latest of which, among others, is Naga’s being adjudged for two consecutive years (2015-2016) as the country’s overall No. 1 Most Competitive Component City. Naga was likewise chosen in 2013 and 2016 as one of the 10 Next Wave Cities of the Philippines. Also in 2014, the Lee Kuan Yew Institute of Public Policy of the National University of Singapore recognized Naga’s ICT-driven project entitled “Using ICT for Civic Engagement towards Responsive Decision-Making” as the “Most Inspiring Innovation in E-Government and Participatory Innovations” in Asia.

To top it all, Mayor Bongat himself received in 2016, the prestigious CEO Excel Award given by the International Association of Business Communicators Philippines for his exemplary leadership in the field of public service.

NATIVE OF NAGA

Before there was John Bongat the public official, there was John Bongat the ordinary Nagueño. “I was born and raised here in Naga and have seen the great potential of my fellow Nagueños. Before I was even the mayor or the councilor, I was a son, a brother, a neighbor, a colleague, and a fellow citizen. Even now, I consider myself as the same. I think this is the main reason why I can easily relate to and empathize with ordinary citizens and understand their concerns. Over the years, as my role in society has changed and evolved, I have taken on new responsibilities and assumed new functions. This has fundamentally changed some of the ways the people of Naga have perceived me. But ultimately, I think that Nagueños would regard me as a dynamic, trustworthy, incorruptible, and a reliable local leader who is also as ordinary as they are.”

DEFINING LEADERSHIP

“As a leader, I have always made it a point to listen to those I lead. As an elected official, my mandate to lead comes from Nagueños themselves. I started my career in public service by going from house to house to understand the concerns and needs of individual citizens. This has given me tremendous insight into how our constituents think and how they believe their government should function.

“As a leader, I take it upon myself to always go back to the roots of any problem. This allows me the opportunity to analyze an issue and deconstruct its complicated nature, all the while considering how it will impact the lives of our constituents and stakeholders. Leadership is not about grandiose or highly-visible gestures, it is about enacting much-needed reforms for genuine change. It is a delicate balance between decisive and calculated actions, between long-term and immediate results.”

PHILOSOPHIES AND CONVICTIONS

“From the very beginning, I have often said that ‘leadership is action, not position.’ I wake up each day and ask myself, ‘How can I make the most out of the time I have today?’ This puts everything that I do for that day in proper perspective. I learn to prioritize the most pressing, most crucial things

that can impact the most number of people. Granted, not everyone will be supportive of your initiatives. Not everyone will understand the logic and reason behind decisions that we make. Some of these decisions may not necessarily yield instant results but they will pay off in the long run.

“Behind every decision is a long journey of discernment, discussion, and engagement. Public service demands that government officials be prudent in spending any resource and act solely for public interest. We also have to act judiciously on urgent matters that affect the physical safety of constituents. Hence, the need for decisive action. Again, I can only emphasize that local leadership is a delicate balancing act, which requires ample knowledge of government functions and transforming that knowledge and information into effective and efficient actions.

“Local leadership is like a relay race where you can sprint as fast as you can or leap through hurdles as they come and do



Local leadership is a delicate balancing act, requiring knowledge of government functions and transforming that information into effective and efficient actions

your best to give the next racer the best head start. From the time you start, you need to have the mindset that we are given a finite amount of time to make efficient use of resources to address current and future challenges before setting the precedent for the next local leaders to build their leadership model on.”

DEALING WITH DETRACTORS

“It’s often said that you can please all of the people some of the time, some of the people all of the time, but not all of the people all of the time. No matter how hard you work, or how much you devote your time and effort, it will never be enough for some people. You have to enter politics with your eyes open and understand that as public officials, we can only do so much.

“I am a firm believer that there are no conflicts that cannot be resolved by simply talking it out among yourselves. The first step, then, would be to acknowledge the validity of any opposing views. Engaging the

opposition would at least open the possibility of making allies out of adversaries and reduce the amount of political hostility and animosity.

“I have always emphasized to my colleagues at City Hall that the best defense is always good performance. When the city government functions properly and effectively, we satisfy the people’s demand for an accountable government and efficient delivery of services. When there is consistency in fulfilling and following through on promises, there is less frustration on the part of constituents and less opportunities for detractors to take advantage of situations.”

A DAY IN THE LIFE

“One must lead by example and lead from the front. That is why I make it a point to arrive at city hall by 8a.m. in our regular uniform to show to fellow government employees that there is value and dignity in reporting for duty on time. By the time I enter my office, I can already expect a handful

of constituents waiting for me with a variety of concerns. After going through each and every client, I either have briefings with department and office heads regarding pending projects or programs, or entertain official guests from different organizations and agencies.

“By mid-morning, I am most likely on my way to attend formal functions or visit ongoing projects in any of Naga’s 27 *barangays*. I often have working lunches or lunch meetings with different executive bodies or civic organizations to identify and establish possible partnerships. In the afternoon, I continue with briefings and meetings with department and office heads to discuss plans or to receive updates and reports on ongoing programs. By mid-afternoon, I’m back outside attending official functions, visiting the city’s many *sitios* and communities before meeting with visiting national government officials or investors before evening. Sometimes these pocket meetings would become



dinner meetings and the number of attendees would increase with more topics discussed.

“After dinner, I would normally go on social calls and visit wakes. In tightly knit communities, almost everyone can be related and your presence in their times of need can go a long way in providing bereaved families with much needed comfort. Even when I arrive home later in the evening, work does not stop. During especially hectic days, I would often hold meetings in the evening with my staff to accomplish pending documents and deliverables. If not, then I spend some time responding to inquiries and complaints sent to me directly by text message, email, or private message on social media. I then relay these to the appropriate department and offices.

“Of course, I spend the most important hours of my day with my family.”

AT HOME WITH THE BONGATS

“My family is my one constant source of happiness and contentment. No matter how taxing or exhausting my day is, going home to my wife Farah, daughter Jade, and son Chan-Chan relieves any stress or strain. I always make it a point to find time, even during the busiest of days, to sneak a phone call or two to my family just to let them know that they are still my foremost priority in life. You cannot serve the people well if you do not comprehend the importance of having a supportive and loving family.

“Oftentimes, I have the pleasure and the delight of having my wife or children surprise me with a visit at City Hall. Moments like these take a great deal of the pressure off my back even if for just a while.

“I have also found time to indulge in an old hobby, composing music. And it makes me so proud to listen to my daughter singing my original compositions over the radio.” ■■



The many facets of Mayor John Bongat: as a people’s man, a leader, a servant, and a man of action



“

I would like to leave behind a city which can take on new economic opportunities and is on its way to becoming one of the country’s economic powerhouses; is better-prepared for and can weather calamities; and where the poorest of the poor have a better quality of life

The province of Cavite, led by Governor Jesus Crispin “Boying” Remulla, signs in to the digital age with its priority project of providing fast Internet service for the entire population of Cavite. Its aim: to purchase its own fiber optic backbone for the province and expand the free WiFi available to constituents.

Cavite currently has the best LTE (4G mobile communications standard) in the country, according to its governor. With the cooperation of 4G providers Globe and Smart Communications, “Most of Cavite is under LTE already,” he says. Remulla is a forward-looking policymaker not to be left behind by the millennials, already tweeting public service announcements, and sharing his projects in an interactive manner on Facebook.

Cavite’s fiber optic plan is set for implementation in July 2018. “Because (the fiber optic project) will be our own backbone and we will have our own bandwidth, we will be capable of supplying Internet as a third player, as an Internet provider in Cavite, as a public enterprise. We are allowed by the local government code, our charter, to run a public enterprise,” Remulla explains.

The fiber optic plan is geared at targeting a number of the province’s priorities. It can provide greater productivity, improve access to online jobs, assist in traffic management, and help maintain peace and order.

BETTER WORK FOR CAVITEÑOS

The local government of Cavite will be providing Internet for the use of schools, free WiFi during break time, and for teachers, though there will be a number of filters to ban certain dangerous or distracting sites. “The main resource of Cavite is people, and the only way to make use of this resource is to make them productive,” says Remulla.

A staunch supporter of the “Work from Home” movement, he says, “Most of the thinking jobs do not require you to leave your home [in our experience]. Especially writing jobs. Even in government, you can lessen the number of government personnel doing duty for the day by putting people online to be able to process requests. Give workers/employees two days working from

The main resource of Cavite is people, and the only way to make use of this resource is to make them productive



CAVITE'S DIGITAL EVOLUTION

Governor Boying Remulla's goal is to make Cavite the first digital province in the country

BY ANNA V. CHATO
INTERVIEW BY JUAN MIGUEL TUMPALAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MANUEL GENEROSO



The fiber optic plan is geared at targeting a number of the province's priorities. It can provide greater productivity, improve access to online jobs, assist in traffic management, and help maintain peace and order



home and three days working in the place, or vice-versa, depending on the needs of every department. For the writing jobs, it's more important really to maximize the time of the people to be more efficient."

Beyond this, Cavite's governor points out another advantage of the fiber optic plan: less people on the road. Giving people the capability to work from home will help address the traffic situation, in tandem with ride-sharing and the development of motorcycle lanes with 30kmph speed limit.

The benefits of the fiber optic plan do not end there. "It's meant to assist professionals, like doctors, engineers, lawyers, architects, accountants, writers, entrepreneurs... As long as they are all duly registered, we will put a discounted plan in order for them to have a secondary, alternative option for Internet in the whole province," says Remulla.

"For me, if we are able to attain a level of use by 100,000 households, then we have already achieved our objective," he adds.

IMPROVE PEACE AND ORDER

Throughout 2017, the provincial government of Cavite, led by Governor Boying Remulla, has distributed over 200 units of closed circuit television (CCTV) to *barangays*, subdivisions, schools, markets, and offices in the province to aid the local authorities in monitoring criminal activities and

ensure the safety and security of its constituents.

In line with this, Cavite, in purchasing its own fiber optic backbone for the province, also aims for greater economy and efficiency in the use of these security measures set in place. Remulla explains, "Because we will be spending on security (CCTV) anyway, if we hire the service, it's better to own the network as long as you have the bandwidth. And because we will be given a bandwidth by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) we can use it for that."

Trash management is also one of Cavite's priorities, which digital technology can help address, since the presence of security cameras can also aid in monitoring proper waste disposal, helping them catch violators of the Solid Waste Management Law

who create new dumpsites.

FROM INDUSTRIAL PARKS TO ROBOTICS

Although Cavite is also currently being recognized for its industrial parks, Remulla admits that manufacturing will take a shift towards robotics in the near future. He cites trends around the world where robotics and mechatronics (technology combining electronics and mechanical engineering) have taken over production. "What is left now here will not be here 10 years from now. But the intellectual process never stops and the productivity online never stops," he projects.

Still, he is hopeful for the workforce and their ability to keep up with the rapidly changing times.

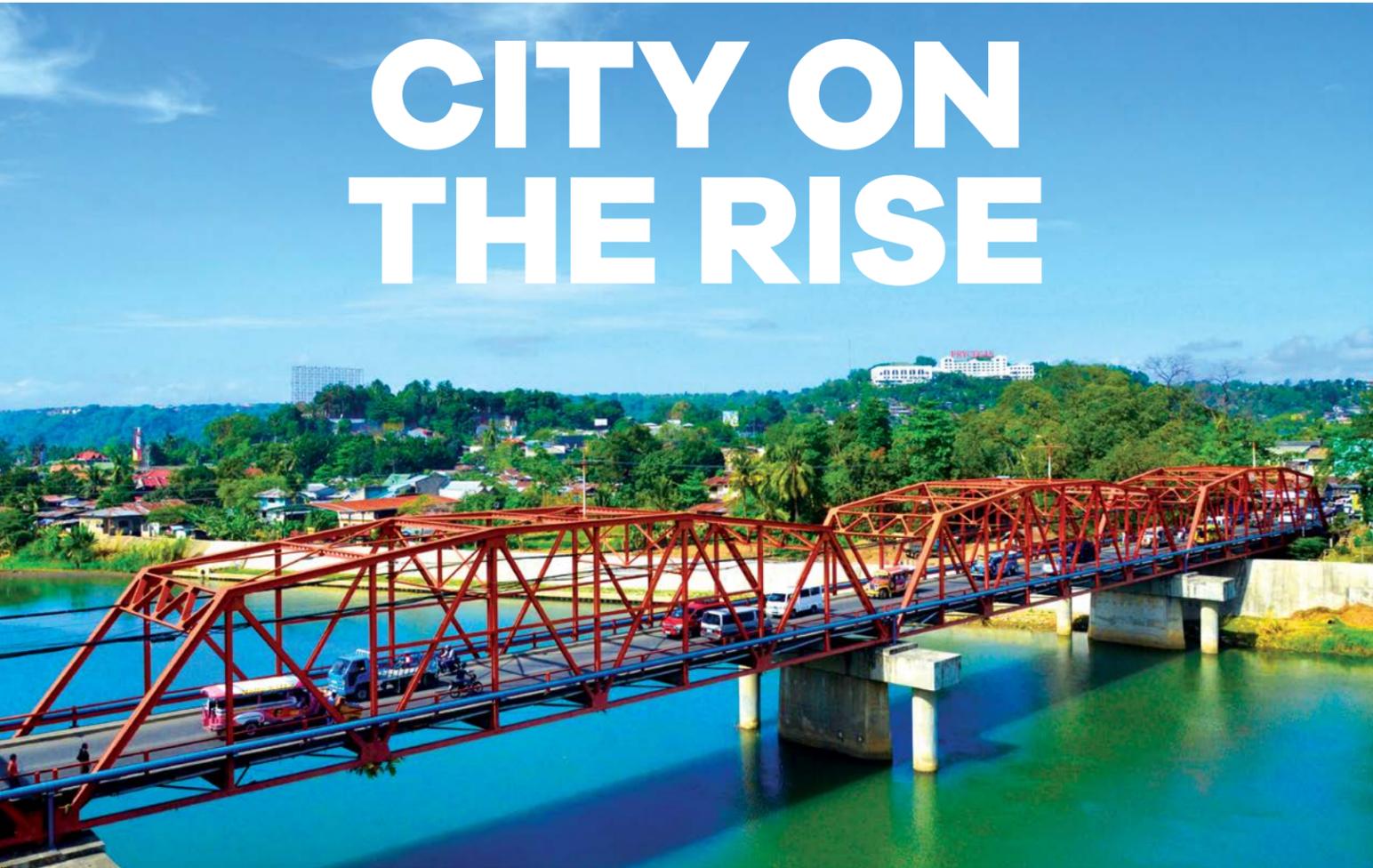
"We have finally laid the groundwork, and in 10 years' time, we hope to see and reap the success," Cavite Governor Boying Remulla declares. ■■



Gov. Remulla signs the MOA setting into motion the installation of fiber optic cables in Cavite, which will help realize its vision of becoming the first digital province



CITY ON THE RISE



With his reforms for security, healthcare, education, and disaster responsiveness, Cagayan de Oro Mayor Oscar “Oca” Moreno bridges the Northern Mindanao region for collective progress

BY MARCO NICANO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BON ASERIOS OF ONE HAPPY STORY
ADDITIONAL PHOTOS COURTESY OF
CITY TOURISM OFFICE OF CAGAYAN DE ORO

Cagayan de Oro City is located right at the heart of Northern Mindanao, and is considered by many as the gateway to the second largest island in the Philippines. Known as the “City of Golden Friendship,” it is no wonder that the rising metropolis is a melting pot of religion, ethnicities, and culture in the region. With the city being easily accessible to its neighboring regions, Cagayan de Oro has become a convergence point, which explains it being among the top 10 most populated cities in the country.

At the helm of this bustling and vibrant first-class, highly urbanized city is Mayor Oscar Moreno, or more fondly called as “Oca” by his constituents. When asked to describe his city and its people, he proudly declares that Cagayan de Oro is a resilient and friendly city. Its citizens embody generally-shared traits of Filipinos, particularly openness and hospitality, even to strangers.

With Cagayan de Oro being the face and centerpiece of development in the region, Moreno saw that he can further impact on positive change in that part of the country at the city government level. He knows that what orderly and good governance he can achieve in the city will reverberate and be felt across the region and throughout

the whole of Mindanao and even the country. “There are many things that are without boundaries—peace, health, education, disaster. It would be wrong to assume that they have defined territorial basis,” says Moreno as he shares his insight about seeing the broader and bigger picture in serving Cagayan de Oro City.

Through this belief, he concludes that bringing Cagayan de Oro to greater heights and harnessing its full potential will also effect greater change in the region. As he notably impacts the city with his reforms for security, healthcare, education, and disaster responsiveness, the region will symbiotically and immediately feel the results as well.

THE NOBILITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Having been elected mayor of Cagayan de Oro since 2013 and now on his second term, Moreno was relatively late in joining the public sector. He enjoyed considerable success in the corporate world, having served as vice president for prominent banking institutions such as Citibank and BPI, as well as being an associate director for the Ayala Group. He laughingly shares that even his

wife could not understand why he left the private sector.

However, he shifts to a more serious demeanor as he recites from memory a quote by one of the most respected public servants from Cagayan de Oro, the late Vice President Emmanuel Pelaez, “Public service is an apostleship of sacrifice and service. You must use it to give of yourself unsparingly in the service of your people, not to make something of yourself.” Adjacent to his office table is a framed picture hanging on the wall with these same words, perhaps to serve as a constant reminder to the good mayor. He then chronicles how he was fortunate enough to have assisted Senate President Nene Pimentel, another highly respected public servant from Cagayan de Oro, for a couple of years during the early ’90s for a political and legal matter. During that time, he learned a lot from the brilliant legislator and that was when he saw the nobility in public service.

On his first stint in public office, he was elected and served two terms as the Representative of the First District of Misamis Oriental, when he was recognized by media organizations as one



(Opposite page) Ysalina Bridge is a piece of heritage; (This page, from left) CDO is the second city in the country to adopt a 911 24/7 response center; Mayor Oca Moreno



From empowering the youth, to seeking assistance from other government agencies, to collaboration with academic institutions, and emulating the best practices of other local government agencies, Mayor Oca Moreno knows how to lead and get everyone involved



of the Top 10 Outstanding Congressmen and he also became a recipient of the Ramon V. Mitra Award. He then proceeded to serve three terms as the Governor of Misamis Oriental before his tenure as mayor, where he vastly expanded the road network, unprecedented in the history of the province, and notably improved the hospital system.

HEART FOR HEALTHCARE

Moreno understands the role that Cagayan de Oro plays in its region when it comes to healthcare. He takes it as a challenge to level up this aspect in his local government as he advocates the improvement of hospitals and access to healthcare of the general public.

Raised by a father who chose to be a rural doctor instead of making it big in the city, Moreno grew up assisting patients and witnessed how life was so difficult for poor provincial folk who needed medical care. “I saw patients (coming down) from mountains just to seek medical care and bringing with them eggs and chicken and vegetables because they had no money to pay. My father served his patients with passion,” the mayor recalls. But, as if that was not enough, he shares an even bitter memory of the tragic consequences brought about by lack of proper

healthcare. He remembers how he was holding his father in his arms, the older man gasping for breath. “I had to shout and shout, but there was no answer. I realized the chief of hospital was behind me, and she couldn’t do anything but just cry,” he recounts. Because of this traumatic experience, Moreno vowed to advocate reliable healthcare for all.

Even as governor of Misamis Oriental, he had pushed for reforms and innovation in its healthcare system. His efforts garnered the province one of the two Galing Pook Awards during his term. When he became mayor of Cagayan de Oro, he upgraded the quality and capacity of the lone city public hospital, the J.R. Borja Memorial City Hospital. After years of neglect, the hospital was in such a dismal state that the Borja family even tried to remove their name so as not to be associated with the hospital anymore.

Through proper focus and determined management, Moreno successfully resuscitated the hospital and paved the way for its expansion. Now furnished with new and modern facilities, the hospital is once more earning the confidence of the public. In fact, it will soon gain the stature of a medical center.

The city hospital has since then eclipsed its annual revenue of a paltry P19M in 2013, to posting more than P200M in revenues for 2017. Through effective utilization of the PhilHealth proceeds, the Health Facilities Enhancement Program of the DOH, and other external medical assistance programs, the revenues are able to fuel more improvements and have contributed to the general wellbeing of the city and its neighbors.

The mayor further shares that two more city government-owned hospitals are about to begin construction in Lumbia and Tablon. “The idea is that the health services must be brought closer to the people,” he says, stressing that the underprivileged should gain access to medical services.

EDUCATION IS A KEY FOUNDATION

Being a proud product of the public school system for his primary education, Moreno points out that the history of Cagayan de Oro mentions how the first public high school in the city was established in 1909. Today, that school is called the Misamis Oriental General Comprehensive High School.

But recent history also shows how far the state of its public school infrastructure has deteriorated. When Moreno took

over the city, the classrooms were so overcrowded that the schools had to conduct two shifts of classes per day, conditions that were not conducive to learning. Aghast at this sorry circumstance, he initiated rehabilitation efforts and improvements not just through the local government but likewise, with the Department of Education.

He is very pleased to report that these efforts have birthed significant results. “We have managed to build more than 400 classrooms all over the city in different *barangays*,” he shares. These facilities come complete with dedicated comfort rooms and roof decks, enhanced conditions that help the youth develop their potential in school.

The city boasts of a number of major universities and colleges, like Xavier University-Ateneo De Cagayan (recognized as among the top performing universities in the country), Liceo de Cagayan University, Capitol University, University of Science and Technology Southern Philippines, and Lourdes College, among others.

LEARNING LESSONS FROM THE DISASTER

In 2011, Typhoon Sendong devastated Cagayan de Oro, leaving thousands dead and almost 100,000 people displaced from their homes.

Learning from this tragic calamity, Moreno exerted efforts to bolster the city’s capability for disaster management. One of these undertakings was to institutionalize the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Department (CDRRMD).

Allan Porcadilla, the current head of CDRRMD, recalls that previous to Moreno’s term, the department’s functions were accomplished by volunteers from various sections. “Mayor Oca issued a memorandum converging

all the volunteers and eventually regularized and hired additional employees and personnel dedicated to the disaster response team. After his first year as mayor, the office has already become a department,” Porcadilla attests. The department has since then developed its own early disaster warning system, as well as flood risk mitigation programs in partnership with academic institutions to ensure that such catastrophes can be better addressed. Porcadilla adds that Mayor Oca empowers them to decide

suppression, urban search and rescue, and even possible terrorist attacks. Enhancing the response team’s capabilities is the recently launched computer-aided emergency dispatch system. Cagayan de Oro is the second city in the country to have adopted a 911 24-7 response center. The system is patterned after the successful implementation of Davao City’s Central Communications and Emergency Response Center, as the city was fortunate enough to have invited Colonel Mario Monsanto to oversee the CRRMD and learn from the best practices of Davao.



Mayor Moreno’s advocacy is to bring quality healthcare to his constituents. Two more city government hospitals are to begin construction soon

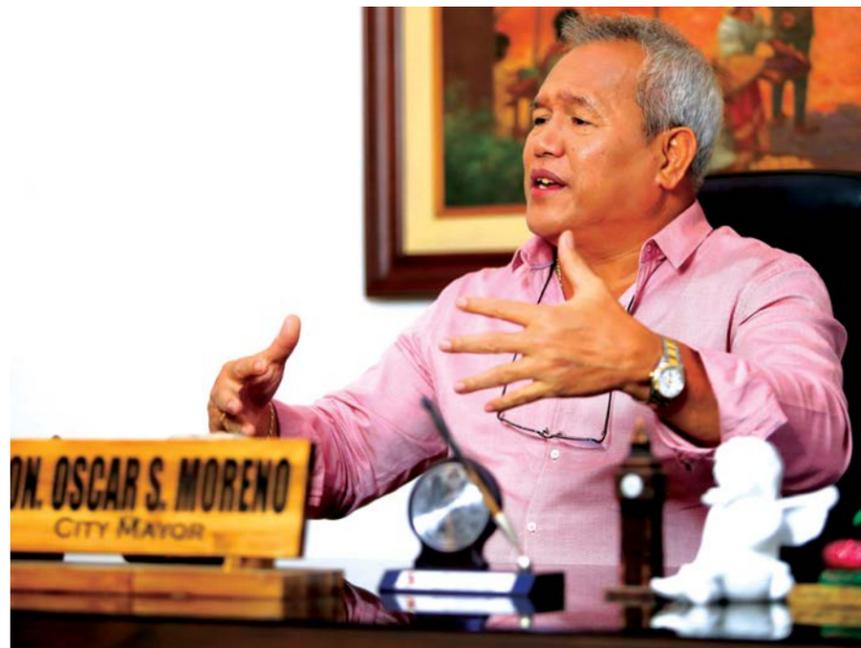
on the properly use of the 5% budget for disaster management earmarked from the Internal Revenue Allotment, enabling them to reinforce their vehicles, equipment, and training in order to respond more effectively to emergencies.

The mayor proudly declares that his CDRRMD team is one of the best in the country. Today, the department has a complement of over 200 dedicated and round-the-clock manpower, who can be readily dispatched to respond to emergencies, distress calls, vehicular accidents, fire

SUPPORTING ACTIVE YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

It has been said that the youth is the future of the nation. While it is fundamentally true, reality is far from ideal as the youth sector is often disengaged or glaringly disconnected from the local government. However, Atty. Ernesto Neri, the first-ever chairman of the Oro Youth Development Council in 2014 when he was still a law student, shares that “for the youth, we scroll our newsfeeds and stand satisfied that we rant our complaints about government

Aside from the people who are resilient and friendly, Cagayan de Oro is one city where you can enjoy the luxuries of a metropolitan area and still be able to savor the beauty of provincial life





in our statuses and nestle in our concept of activism by simply sharing the link of an advocacy page.”

With the goal of having a proactive form of political engagement, Neri’s group, the Kagayanon for Good Governance-Youth (KGG), which initially banded together as volunteers to conduct voters’ education seminars and youth consultations, strongly lobbied for a more tangible involvement in local governance.

Mayor Moreno was not indifferent to their vigor and youthful exuberance and welcomed their participation in helping create a better Cagayan de Oro. He signed Executive Order 072-14 which established the CDO Youth Development Council (OYDC), with the City Social Welfare and Development Office as secretariat.

Neri proudly says, “The unique feature of the OYDC is the institution of youth representatives in various local bodies of the city. I sit as youth representative in the local school board, while my colleagues also sit in other city bodies such as the

Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, among others.”

Although Neri acknowledges that the OYDC has a long way to go, it is no doubt a step in the right direction in enabling and empowering the next generation to better handle the future of the nation.

EVEN KEELED AND INCLUSIVE IN SUCCESS

While the seasoned mayor acknowledges his achievements and breakthroughs, and is also proud of them, it is evident in his tone that he is not one to rest on his laurels. “With more success, comes more challenges and expectations,” he says. Not that he complains, but rather, he looks forward to tackling these new challenges in serving his constituents as best as he could. He remains modest and unassuming, confessing that there is still much to be done until the potential of Cagayan de Oro City is fully realized. He is hopeful, now that he is on his second term as mayor and that he has a more cooperative city council.



(Clockwise, from left) The pride of CDO: Xavier University, Miss Universe 2015 Pia Wurtzbach, and a fully capable disaster management team

What is evident in Moreno’s style of leadership is his humility in involving the community, whether private sector or the citizenry, realizing that everyone’s joint efforts will produce greater success. From empowering the youth, to seeking assistance from other government agencies, to collaborating with academic institutions, and emulating the best practices of other local government agencies,

he knows how to lead and get everyone involved. His governance style is perceived to be more inclusive and is widely appreciated.

When asked about what he believes is the best about Cagayan de Oro, the mayor declares, “Aside from the people who are resilient and friendly, this is one city where you can enjoy the luxuries of a metropolitan area and still be able to savor the beauty of provincial life.” ■

CDO offers a variety of fun activities through festivals, heritage and adventure



LINGAYEN'S QUEST: Be as Ubiquitous as *Bagoong*

Councilor Judy de Leon-Vargas of Lingayen shares how this town, known as Pangasinan's provincial capital, strives to be known for something else

BY JOHN LEE CANDELARIA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE CORTEZ

If there is one condiment that could be identified as truly Filipino, it has got to be *bagoong*. That salty, fishy paste we love to put on mangoes and which serves as a base for many of our beloved Filipino dishes is popular everywhere in the Philippines. The smell may put some people off, but its unique taste deepens and enhances the flavor of our favorite vegetables, meats, and even fruits.

There is one town in the Philippines vying for the title of "Bagoong Capital." Lingayen, the provincial capital of Pangasinan, is known for this thriving industry. The town has 56 *bagoong* processors, wholesalers, and retailers that each produce at least 1,500 boxes of bottled *bagoong* every month.



"We want to be known as the Bagoong Capital, not just of the Philippines, but of the world," says Judy de Leon-Vargas, the young and energetic municipal councilor of Lingayen responsible for the town's branding using Bagoong, when she authored the resolution to designate *bagoong* as the "one town, one product" (OTOP) of Lingayen. "For years, people have been recognizing Lingayen as the *kapitolyo* of Pangasinan, and nothing else. With *bagoong*, which we call Pasig, we contend that we do not just have the best *bagoong* in the country, but it is also the foundation of our identity as a town."

LINGAYEN AND BAGOONG A HISTORICAL PAIR

Lingayen's name came from the Pangasinan word "lingawen" which means "to look back," since the people of the town in the early days developed the habit of constantly looking back at a big tamarind tree growing in what is now the town's plaza.

The town is also historically significant, being the birthplace of Former President Fidel V. Ramos. It also played an important role during World War II, as it was where the Allied forces landed its amphibious operation in 1945 to commence the liberation of the Philippines from the Japanese.



For years, people have been recognizing Lingayen as the *kapitolyo* of Pangasinan, and nothing else. With *bagoong*, which we call Pasig, we contend that we do not just have the best *bagoong* in the country, but it is also the foundation of our identity as a town



Councilor Judy de Leon-Vargas

Lingayen's product of pride, *bagoong* is also special in Philippine history, since the Spanish colonizers were never accustomed to the smell or taste of *bagoong*, and even described it as "fish which has started to rot and stink." To which, Rizal reacted with "this fish, that cannot be good until it begins to rot, is *bagoong*, and those who have eaten it and tasted it know that it neither is, nor should be, rotten."

BAGOONG FESTIVAL

Councilor Vargas relates the story of how the *bagoong* festival was conceived. Lingayen, she notes, is popular for three Bs: *bangus*, *bocayo* (sweet candied coconut), and *bagoong*. "Those who process *bagoong* in our town source the fish such as *dilis*, *galunggong*, *caballas*, *terong*, and *padas* from the Lingayen gulf. Those who sell *bagoong* would usually claim that it is Lingayen *bagoong*, to further boost their sales." With

this in mind, she endeavored to have Lingayen's OTOP as *bagoong*. Then, in early 2011, they decided to hold a *bagoong* festival.

"We wanted to honor our *bagoong* makers. Some of them have been part of this industry for generations, and without them, this product would not be an identifier of Lingayen," she clarifies. True enough, the makers and processors are front and center in the festival. She adds that the festival is also a way to surely identify Lingayen's *bagoong* as the finest. "There is competition in the *bagoong* industry since *bagoong* makers are all over the country. But we contend, and we are sure, that Lingayen's *bagoong* is certainly the best," she declares.

Since 2012, the festival has been held annually in January to coincide with the town's *fiesta* celebration. In 2015, the town, through the efforts of Councilor Vargas, also erected two 10-foot-tall jars of Pasig at the town's main entry points. This is to further boost the identity of Lingayen as a town known for its *bagoong*.

BEYOND BAGOONG

Aside from Lingayen's identity boost, Councilor Vargas is also hopeful about the prospects for progress of the town, citing the small but sure steps that they have been taking to ensure the town's development. She continues, "Other municipalities in Pangasinan have now entered cityhood; yet Lingayen, the capital, is still a municipality." A lot of work needs to be done, and surely, Councilor Vargas shares she is not one to shirk from a challenge.

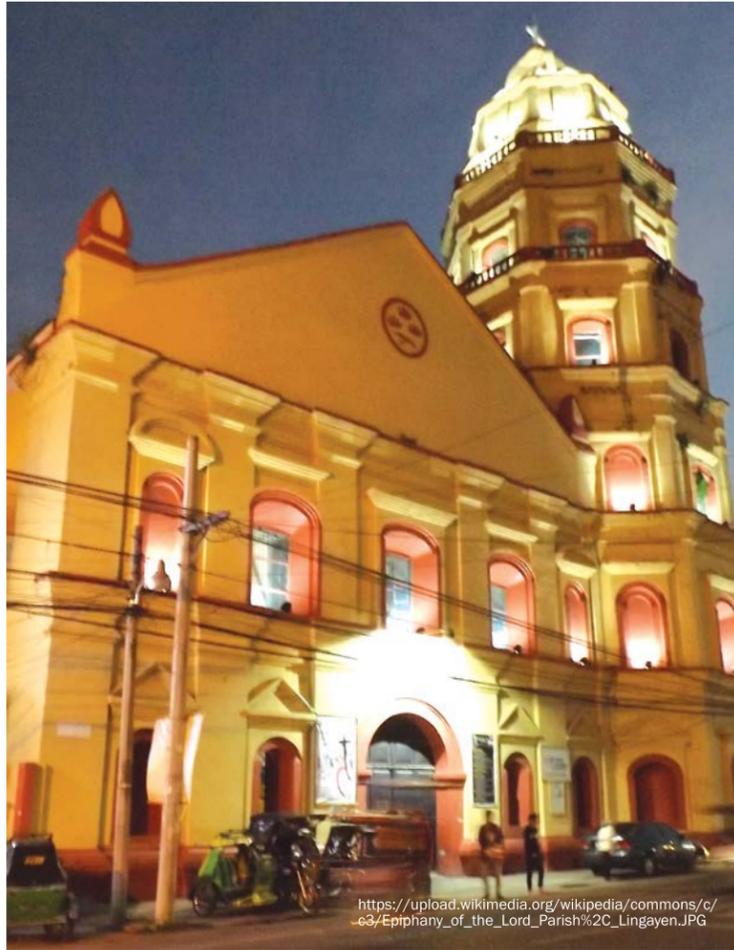
She recounts the time when she was first elected as councilor in 2010 and the challenges she faced as a fledgling public servant. "I was 20 years old at that time, still fresh from college. Immediately after graduation, I started campaigning." She also cites the

time she spent at the University of the Philippines in Los Baños, Laguna, which influenced her ordinances and resolutions, as well as her platform in office. "One of my advocacies was to create the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO), which, I am happy to announce, will be established this 2018 since budget has already been allocated," she shares.

She emphasizes that the environment is dear to her heart, a passion that drove her to push for a comprehensive plastic bag policy in the town, the first in Pangasinan. "It almost cost me my re-election, since I am definitely affecting the way people handle their businesses," she recalls. Now, she happily relays that other towns and cities are looking at Lingayen as a model to emulate because of this environment-friendly ordinance.



(From top) Lingayen Capitol Building; old church bells



Epiphany of the Lord Parish, right; The Governor's Mansion, known as the "Urduja House" on the Pangasinan Provincial Capitol Grounds (below).

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/-c3/Epiphany_of_the_Lord_Parish%2C_Lingayen.JPG

Aside from the environment, she is also a youth advocate, since she is still young and would love to see more of Lingayen's youth participating in local government initiatives. She also seeks to develop the town's athletes, an initiative that she sees as achievable since budget has already been allocated for it this year. Councilor Vargas was also recently elected as president of the Girl Scouts of the Philippines council in Pangasinan, proof of her desire to utilize existing avenues of leadership training for the youth of the province.

She also supports the town's disaster risk reduction program, since the town faces the West Philippine Sea and it has to be ready for any eventuality. She says that the benefits of the projects resulting from her advocacies are not short term, unlike projects of other local politicians. "Like *bagoong* that takes time to ferment, some of the benefits of my advocacies and projects might take time, but the people are sure to gain from these," she conveys. "Others may dismiss some aspects of local governance leadership as not urgent or pressing, but it is this attention to detail that defines my own brand of service."

The things that other people consider small and insignificant, things that affect the town on a daily basis, became her obsession. "Cleanliness and sanitation, the traffic situation, urban planning... these aspects of the town need attention, and the local government is definitely up to the task," she shares.

One of these projects that she is set to focus on is an alternate road to the Lingayen town center through the Balincaging bridge, augmenting the single road that leads to where the town delivers majority of its public service to the citizens.



Like *bagoong* that takes time to ferment, some of the benefits of my advocacies and projects might take time, but the people are sure to gain from these.

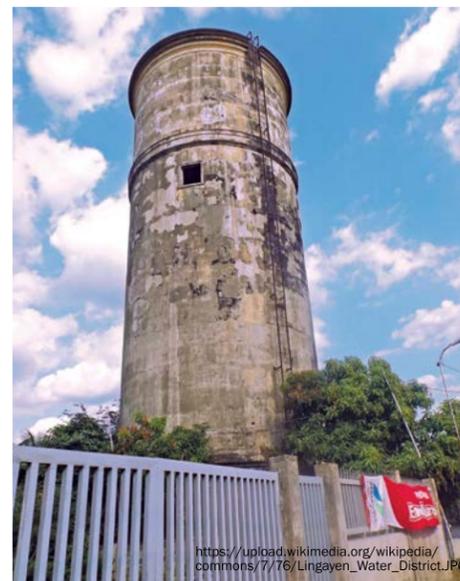
LOOKING FORWARD

For 2018, the local government of Lingayen aims to attract more tourists and investors. "Much of the budget of the town is allocated for building infrastructure, such as farm to market roads, and develop areas for investment," she shares. "There is also opportunity for tourism, so we are developing our Baywalk, which offers scenic views of the gulf and the West Philippine Sea."

Councilor Vargas is adamant that all the work they have been putting in will result in gains that in the end, the people of Lingayen will reap. While *bagoong* takes time to achieve its singular and distinct flavor, the holistic development of the town also takes time, especially its journey to become a city. And with good governance champions like Councilor Vargas, Lingayen's identifier, aside from *bagoong*, may also be the word "success." ■



Governor's office in the Capitol Building



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/76/Lingayen_Water_District.JPG

Lingayen's oldest water district

Brgy. San Antonio, Pasig: Unshakeable

Though situated in a disaster-prone zone (600 meters away from the fault line), Barangay San Antonio, Pasig, under the leadership of Chairman Joselito Dela Merced, is more than ready to take on the 'Big One'

BY KRISTEL DACUMOS-LAGORZA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
RENJIE TOLENTINO



I've learned that *kung walang peace and order, walang uusad. Gusto ko talaga tahimik at mapayapa ang barangay*



With thousands of Filipinos in its fold and under its protection, Barangay San Antonio (BSA) positions itself as a small yet powerful unit. It encompasses much of the Ortigas Center Business District, including the Philippine Stock Exchange, University of Asia & the Pacific, Discovery Suites, Astoria Plaza, and various high-rise condominium and office buildings. Thanks to its unique location, smack in the middle of a thriving business district and tight-knit community, BSA has been able to reap success and build for itself a strong foundation. But is it unshakeable?

Here is where BSA finds itself in another predicament. Situated just 600 meters from the fault line, is BSA ready to take on the "Big One," the impending earthquake, which scientists have for years been warning the metro to brace itself for? And Barangay Chairman Joselito P. Dela Merced proudly and confidently says yes!

"Since the very beginning, my program has always been focused on disaster preparedness and protection, as well as peace and order. From the ambulances to the drills and our emergency response teams, we are fully equipped. We also regularly host seminars in different condos and residential villages to inform, educate, and train," says Dela Merced proudly, adding that during these seminars they've also given away emergency kits.

PROUD TO SERVE

Since 1967, the chairman has been serving the local government, first working as a kagawad at 20 years old. "Even then, the committee that I always handled was Peace and Order," he says proudly.

His father was a colonel in the military who later joined the security team responsible for the late Senator Jose Zulueta. Dela Merced would follow in his father's footsteps – not becoming a colonel – but serving the same senator as security detail. He later joined the Criminal Investigation Services group under Zulueta, who became governor of Iloilo. Continuing his line of work under former president, Ferdinand Marcos, Dela Merced was chosen to be part of the elite force of police and military men known as the Metrocom, before continuing to work under Congressman Roquito Ablan in Ilocos Norte.

Looking back on his past, Dela Merced says, "From working in those different roles and duties, I've learned that *kung walang peace and order, walang uusad. Gusto ko talaga tahimik at mapayapa ang barangay.*"

ROAD TO PEACE

In 2007, Dela Merced was elected as *barangay* chairman and his first order of business was cleaning up his turf. To quell the issue of drugs and criminality, the *barangay* initiated community drug rehab, offered financial assistance for education to out-of-school youth, and established the Kooperatiba ng Pagpapautang ng San Antonio, Pasig, or KPSAP. "The BSA-KPSAP aims to provide employment opportunities for members of the *barangay* through micro and small business options. The KPSAP initiative was primarily intended to promote a sustainable environment where people can make a decent source of income that will afford them a higher standard of living," he explains. As part of the program, the *barangay* has allotted prime space for entrepreneurs for free to sell their wares. "To date, we have helped over 200 members," he says, beaming with pride. "By giving them an opportunity to better their lives, many of the members are able to keep themselves and their families out of trouble."

BATTLE READY

In addition to keeping peace and order, one of the major tenets and pillars of Dela Merced's leadership is equipping the *barangay* with an Emergency Response and Rescue Program (ERRP). "I had noticed, after living so long in the community, that there were a lot of people getting into accidents but no one would respond," he observes.

So upon assuming office, Dela Merced quickly put to motion his plan. He would purchase an ambulance, fix the fire truck, and set up a well-trained fire brigade and rescue group, who would also serve in disaster preparations.

“There was nothing of its kind at that time, and our ERRP team became one of the most notable in the country,” he nods. Chairman Dela Merced created the ERRP by merging the Fire and Medical Teams under the Barangay Disaster Coordinating Council. Grounded on the Philippine and International Standards on Emergency Response Management, the ERRP would provide vital services such as basic and advanced emergency medical services, fire suppression, and search and rescue. The program is also planned with mechanisms that help facilitate consultation and coordination between the *barangay* and participating organizations and response agencies, at all levels. This aimed to further promote teamwork, accountability, and a keener sense of community ownership among everyone engaged in operations.

The chairman is proud that the ERRP has not only been able to successfully serve the *barangay*, but also communities in need out of their jurisdiction. In fact, in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan, the BSA-ERRP team became one of the first responders to Guiuan, Samar.

For BSA’s excellence in Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness, they were awarded by no less than former President, Noynoy Aquino, with two recognitions during the Galing Pook Awards on March 17, 2011. These awards were for “Excellent Governance” by Chairman Dela Merced and the outstanding delivery of the *barangay*’s Emergency Response Program.

FINE TUNING

Humbled and inspired, but not one to rest on his laurels, Chairman Dela Merced, over the years, continued to

strengthen BSA, and is now leading it to become one of the strongest local government units.

In 2010, the BSA set up its Command Center, which is patterned after Davao’s Public Safety Security Command Center (PSSCC). Like the PSSCC, BSA’s Command Center boasts of a sophisticated network of closed circuit cameras (CCTV) for security. It utilizes 16 strategically located cameras, manned by 12 personnel, which provide round-the clock surveillance. The system has helped greatly in the apprehension of criminals and the immediate and prompt response to calls for help. The Command Center provides real-time visibility, a most important benefit especially in the monitoring of emergency and disaster situations such as fire, flood, accidents, traffic, and other serious incidents. The



Barangay San Antonio has its own command center which utilizes 16 closed circuit cameras for security

Command Center also operates as the *barangay* dispatch center for ambulances, fire trucks, and security vehicles.

Up to this day, BSA continues to be recognized as a leader in the field. It was lauded as the best *barangay* in Disaster Risk Reduction Management at the Galing Pasig Awards, and was also awarded the Gawad Kalasag Hall of Fame by the Metro Manila Disaster and Risk Reduction Management Council under the Office of the Civil Defense.

“When you are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of residents and businesses located in a city prone to disasters and accidents, you make every effort to be

prepared for the worst possible scenario. ‘Bahala na’ should never been an option,” he reiterates.

BRACING FOR THE ‘BIG ONE’ Recently, calls for disaster preparedness have intensified, with government agencies such as the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHILVOCS) urging LGUs to initiate programs to further help the public become more informed and better prepared for national emergencies, particularly earthquakes.

“We take the matter very seriously. We may have trained and run through all the scenarios, and have done our best in preparing the emergency response teams, but there is still a factor of

When you are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of residents and businesses located in a city prone to disasters and accidents, you make every effort to be prepared for the worst possible scenario. ‘Bahala na’ should never been an option



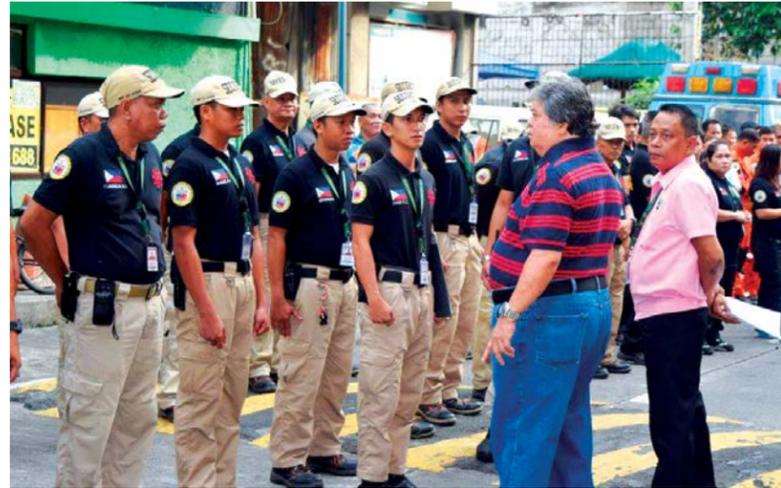
unpredictability. We should always keep our guard up,” he says.

The safety of an entire *barangay* is a task no man can do alone, and Dela Merced relies greatly on his partner, chairperson of Gender and Development (GAD), Josie Macapagal, who has been the right hand of the chairman from the very beginning.

Today, the dynamic duo continues to lead the *barangay* to success, ensuring all basic needs – both the short term and long term – are met, and that the residents of BSA can sleep soundly, knowing that the *barangay* is on watch and on call.

As a *barangay* situated right in the emergency zone of the fault line, BSA continues to hold regular earthquake drills wherein realistic scenarios are simulated for an impactful survival demo.

“Even before the talks of the ‘Big One’ were even raised to the public, we were already anticipating, preparing, and equipping ourselves. Our overzealousness in preparing for disasters is not about being pessimistic – it’s preparing for the worst, while hoping for the best,” he ends.▮



Disciplinary training for BSA Security Force



A successful earthquake drill



Our overzealousness in preparing for disasters is not about being pessimistic – it’s preparing for the worst, while hoping for the best



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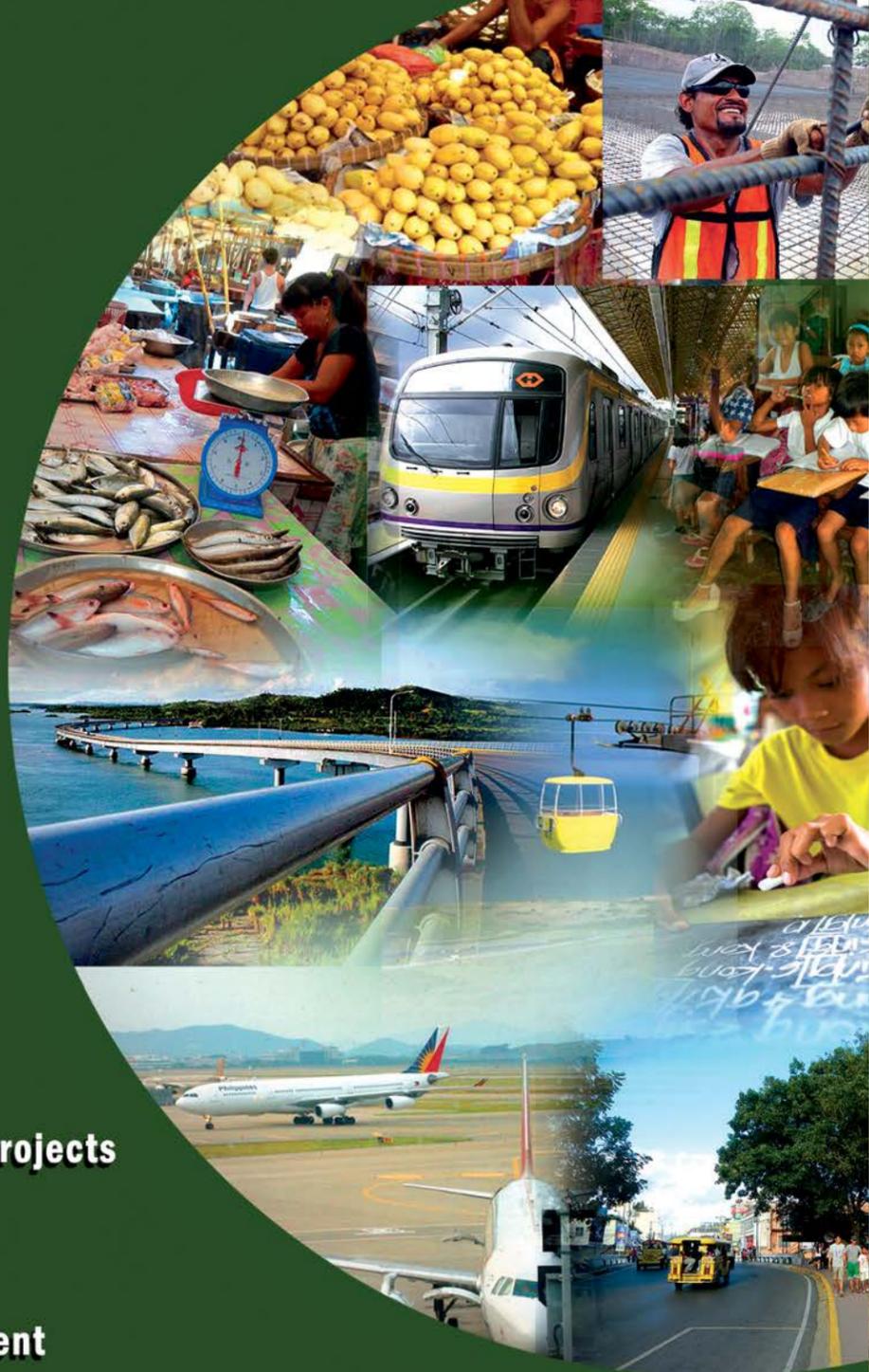
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Sweet Treats From the Mountain High



Divine inspiration paved the way for the success of this social enterprise

BY MAIELLE MONTAYRE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE CORTEZ

Perched on top of a mountain, surrounded by verdant pine trees and chilled by cooler temperatures, is the growing vibrant city of Baguio. Dubbed as the Summer Capital of the Philippines, there is no shortage of things to do in Baguio – bask in the fresh mountain air, visit tourist sites, go on food trips, and take endless selfies with breathtaking views. Of course, don't forget to squeeze in some time to grab a bottle or two – or three! – of the famous Good Shepherd strawberry and *ube* jam.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, NOBLE PURPOSE

The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, also known as the Religious of the Good Shepherd (RGS) or Good Shepherd Sisters, is an international congregation of religious women in the Roman Catholic Church. Good Shepherd Philippines was established on October 12, 1912; the Good Shepherd convent in Baguio City was founded on Nov. 10, 1952. At the time, the special apostolate of the RGS was aimed towards the Cordillera youth from the provinces of Apayao, Abra, Mountain Province, Kalinga, Ifugao, and Benguet. Their charges were orphans from the war, army dropouts, delinquent children, and troubled teens. Feeding the children under their care was a big

concern, and divine inspiration struck thanks to the abundance of strawberries in Baguio. Mother Mary John of the Cross Kroner, the provincial leader from Los Angeles, California, had a recipe for strawberry jam; Sr. Mary Carmel Medalla learned this recipe during her Novitiate training in L.A. This paved the way for a social enterprise that would go on for decades to come.

In the beginning, selling the jam was only by word of mouth. In time, however, owing largely to the tourists visiting the nearby Mines View Park, a captive market was born. During

the 1970s, Sr. Rosary Bonifacio created a singing group called the “Mountain Maids.” The name caught on and the sisters named their products after the underprivileged mountain maidens in their charge. A production house was rebuilt after the 1990 Luzon earthquake destroyed the old one.

The Mountain Maid Training Center (MMTC) is now a three-storey building housing semi-mechanized production with a large ground floor storefront to address the long queues

expanded their product line with recipes using less sugar such as sweet and sour pickles, *sayote* pickles, chutney, *santol champoy*, and local fruit candies. The strawberry jam is the second bestseller with the peanut brittle coming in third. Sr. Ann Fiel developed the *alfajor* cookies.

Having no plans for expansion, RGS has successfully evaded offers from business tycoons to buy their brand, offers for exportation, online sales, authorized outlets, and wholesale of their products. The sisters are



The Mountain Maid Training Center's large ground floor accommodates the long queues of shoppers.

of shoppers. Symbolically, it stands for the Good Shepherd sisters, the lay staff, student workers, and local farmers striving to produce Mountain Maid products all for a good cause. The MMTC employs 400 local girls and boys who are also sent to school and earn their way to college. Thousands have graduated from college and vocational courses to become agriculturists, doctors, nurses, engineers, nuns, priests, policemen, and teachers. RGS accepts scholars only from the Cordilleras and nearby areas, and none from the lowlands.

MANMADE, DIVINE GOODNESS

Today, Mountain Maid has over 90 products with *ube* jam as the bestseller. Sr. Fidelis Atienza first introduced the *ube* jam but Sr. Mary Assumption Ocampo, the first Filipina RGS, perfected the recipe. When there was a sugar shortage in the 1980s, Sr. Mary Assumption inadvertently

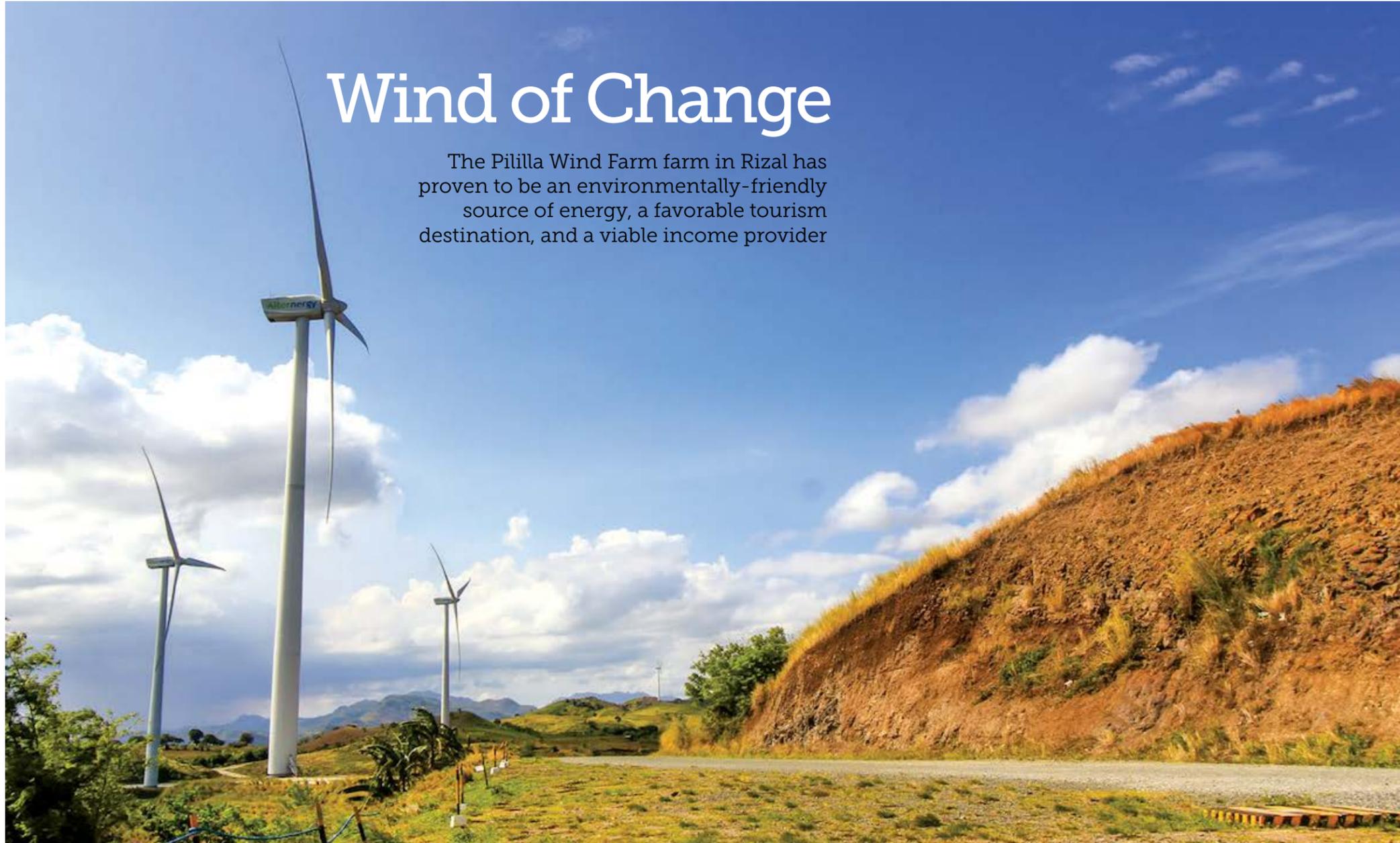


still dedicated to their religious activities, and also wish to grant their student-workers their time to study. They do not want to become “slaves” of market demands.

The next time you dig into that scrumptious bottle of jam, remember that all these products began from humble beginnings and were made with a prayer. And while you're at it, why not buy some peanut brittle, *lengua de gato*, and chocolate crinkles to round up all the divine goodness from the Mountain Maid by the Good Shepherd Sisters.■

Wind of Change

The Pililla Wind Farm farm in Rizal has proven to be an environmentally-friendly source of energy, a favorable tourism destination, and a viable income provider



BY MELISSA BAGAMASBAD

The Pililla Wind Farm has done a great job of providing a renewable energy source for the people of Rizal. It supplies cheaper, more efficient, and natural power to Manila Electric Co.'s (Meralco) distribution network using a 10-kilometer transmission line, which delivers electricity to 66,000 households in Rizal.

In a 2017 UNTV News interview, Vince Perez, chief executive officer of the renewable energy company, Alternergy, says the use of renewable energy sources reduces the effects of climate change. "We all know that coal and crude oil are a lot dirtier, and in the advent of awareness of climate change, we want to reduce the emission of carbon into the atmosphere. Wind power doesn't produce any carbon emissions. If anything, it produces only clean energy for the country," he explains.

Unfortunately, the Department of Energy (DOE) has said that only one percent of the country's energy production in 2015 came from wind farms. Renewable energy sources are mainly focused on geothermal and hydro-power plants.

AFTER BANGUI WIND MILL

Finished in June 2015 and inaugurated in January 2016, the Pililla Wind Farm is the second wind project of Perez and his management team. They are also the ones responsible for the famous Bangui Bay wind farm in Ilocos Norte, which is the first wind farm in Southeast Asia, now owned by the Ayala Group.

The farm has 27 windmills or turbines, with each producing two megawatts of electricity. The tower was given by Gamesa, a renewable energy company based in Pamplona, Spain. It measures 125 meters tall and is as high as a 33-storey building.

The Pililla Wind Farm already has a certificate of compliance within the feed-in-tariff (FIT) scheme. This means that the project is allowed to receive a current fixed rate of P7.40 per kilowatt hour for 20 years, which may be subject to adjustments.

Perez says they plan to expand the Pililla Wind Farm by producing an additional 72 megawatts of electricity. This augmentation of new wind turbines will most likely happen after the current administration.

PROVIDING JOBS FOR FILIPINOS

The Pililla Wind Farm also provides extra job and revenue opportunities. "Through an agreement with DOE, for every kilowatt the wind farm contributes to the national grid, the company pays one centavo in royalties to the provincial and municipal government," the 2017 UNTV report continues. Last 2016, Alternergy earned P1.5 million for producing 150 million kilowatts and the money was later used for social projects. The company has also set up three souvenir-making cooperatives, which employ 45 Pililla residents.

"Because of our work, Pililla, Rizal is slowly becoming known; for every tourist who buys our souvenirs, the name of Pililla, Rizal is seen. We are proud of it because they are buying our own products," souvenir cooperative president, Mianel Abejero shared with UNTV.

A CONVENIENT TOURIST DESTINATION

Aside from providing renewable energy, the Pililla Wind Farm is also a tourist attraction of sorts. The farm was used by participants of the ASEAN founding anniversary celebration last year. Since 2017, 340,000 visitors have already been to the farm. Dindo Abueg, tourism officer, has said that the Pililla Wind Farm is a way to educate people, for them to see renewable energy and to see the beauty that the place has to offer.

Only two hours away from Manila, the windmills stand tall against verdant hills, and are a delight to the eyes. Sweet-tasting pineapples are also planted on these hills which can be picked by visitors.

In fact, the Department of Agrarian Reform has recognized and awarded Pililla's pineapples in 2008 and 2009 for being the sweetest in the region and the country. The pineapples are also said to contain less sugar due to Pililla's less acidic soil, especially during the summer months. ■■



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chennai_damage_5.jpg

Detect tremors and save lives with the GP-888 Halex seismic accelerograph

BY MELISSA BAGAMASBAD

The Japanese eat earthquakes for breakfast,” says Myla Mestiola, chief operating officer of Filipinas Tectonic Safety Systems Corporation. “They are more prepared when it comes to this field because their country is more earthquake-prone.”

In their quest for more dependable technology to address concerns regarding seismic activity, Japanese company Takamisawa Seismic Machines developed the GP888 Halex, which has proven to be reliable for detecting and measuring earthquakes. Using this machine, a hospital in Manila was able to evacuate occupants of its building, including surgeons who were operating on patients, just in time before an earthquake occurred.

BUILT TO ENDURE

In Feb. 21, 2015, a law was passed stating that buildings should be equipped with the technology to determine how prone these are to the effects of earthquakes. This law implemented rules requiring buildings to install earthquake recording instrumentation. It also says that unless waived by the building official, every building in Seismic Zone 4 over 50 meters in height

shall be provided with not less than three approved recording accelerographs. Anything less than 50 meters had to have a minimum of one recording accelerograph, or seismograph. This rule includes public or government buildings. “This is because when earthquakes strike, these government buildings are one of the places that people can go to for safety,” explains Mestiola. These guidelines are also meant to determine the health of the building and safeguard the lives of the people in that building.

MEASURING EARTHQUAKES

Mestiola says that when the ground shakes and the buildings move, earthwaves are formed. It is through these movements that earthquakes are calculated. Three factors are measured upon calculation of the earthquakes: the intensity, velocity, and the acceleration, which is the increase of the earthquake’s velocity over a period of time.

Mestiola adds that awareness of these factors is important when constructing a building, because engineers can take note of the number of accelerations that the building can withstand. The greater the acceleration, the stronger the building should be.

MODERN AND USEFUL FEATURES

The GP888 Halex has two major components: the accelerograph, a square object with a screen and printer (the processor); and the accelerometer, a round, black object, bolted to the ground (the sensor). The accelerometer is the one that can detect the earthquakes, which is then “translated” on the accelerograph processor, to get the readings.

The accelerograph is compact in size and wall-mounted. It has fault detection, so it can note the earth’s movements on its own. When it has reached its limit in vibrations (for example, 3.5), it sounds off the alarm; at which point, it can shut down other equipment to reduce human error. The accelerograph can work on its own and with no human intervention, as long as it is connected to its power source. The accelerograph also has a battery for power back-up.

It is also the only one of its kind in the world that has a printer, and prints earthquake

measurements seconds after the earthquake. “The moment the ground shakes, this instrument can show you results on-screen right away,” Mestiola adds.

Accurate information regarding the intensity of an earthquake via the accelerograph is crucial to determine when it is time to evacuate the building, and if and when it is safe to go back inside it.

“Anyone can read and understand these results; one doesn’t have to be a licensed engineer,” Mestiola explains further, saying that the instrument is also useful when aftershocks occur, during which people also need to evacuate.

“Per PHIVOLCS (Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology), there are 80 felt and unfelt earthquakes in a day. The accelerograph is perfect for companies that need to send reports of earthquakes to regulating bodies every quarter or so. Just in case the measuring of earthquakes stops during the actual incident, the accelerograph has been equipped with a back-up memory card as well,” Mestiola remarks.

COMPLIANT WITH PHILIPPINE LAW

Mestiola says that they made sure the instrument is compliant with the law in the Philippines. After the law was passed in 2015, they brought a copy of it to Japan and tailor-fitted the accelerograph according to Philippine law. “So this instrument is



The GP-888 Halex is comprised of two parts: the accelerometer (left) and the accelerograph

customized for the Philippine market,” she affirms.

Aside from government buildings, the accelerograph is also useful for hospitals, schools, condominiums, and other high-rise structures. ■

For more information about the GP-8888 accelerograph, visit www.filipinastectonic.com

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: EARTHQUAKE SAFETY

From the Disaster Risk Reduction Resource Manual
of the Department of Education

WHAT TO DO WHEN AN EARTHQUAKE HITS?

DROP, COVER, AND HOLD

The “Drop, Cover and Hold” protocol (drop to the floor, cover your head, and hold on to a solid object), when performed correctly with an awareness of your surroundings, remains the most effective way to protect yourself when an earthquake occurs.



WHAT TO DO DURING AN EARTHQUAKE

1. Stay inside a structurally sound building.
2. Protect your body from falling debris by bracing yourself in a doorway or by getting under a sturdy desk or table.
3. When inside a vehicle, pull to the side of the road and stop. Do not attempt to cross bridges or overpasses which may have been damaged.
4. Move to an open area if you are outside a building or any structure.
5. Stay away from power lines, posts, walls, and other structures that may fall or collapse. Stay away from buildings with large glass panes.
6. Move away from steep escarpments which may be affected by landslides particularly if they are on a mountain or near steep hill slopes.

WHAT TO DO AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE

1. Take the fastest and safest way out if caught in an old or weak building.
2. Get out calmly and in an orderly manner.
3. Do not use elevators, but instead use the stairs.
4. Check yourself for cuts and for injuries, seek medical help.
5. Call the authority to clean up chemical spills, toxic and flammable materials since this is hazardous to untrained people.
6. Check for fire and if any, have it controlled.

7. Check the water and electrical lines for defects. If any damage is suspected, turn the system off in the main valve or switch.
8. Do not enter partially damaged school buildings, as strong aftershocks may cause these to collapse.
9. Do not use the telephone to call relatives and friends. Disaster prevention authorities may need the lines for emergency calls and communications.
10. Do not drive into damaged areas. Rescue and relief operations need the roads for mobility.
11. Take with you your Earthquake Survival Kit, which contains all the necessary items for your protection and comfort.



EMERGENCY HOTLINES

National Disaster and Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC)
Trunklines: 911-5061 to 65

Operations Center: (02) 911-1406, (02) 912-2665, (02) 912-5668, (02) 911-187

Philippine National Police (PNP)
Hotline: 117
722-0650
Text hotline: 0917-847-5757

Bureau of Fire Protection (NCR)
Direct line: (02) 426-0219, (02) 426-3812, (02) 426-0246

Philippine Coast Guard
Trunkline: (02) 527-8481 to 89
Action center: (02) 527-3877
0917-PCG-DOTC 0917-724-3682 (Globe)
0918-967-4697

Red Cross
Hotline: (02) 527-0000, (02) 527-8385 to 95



THE Carmen DOWNTOWN NAGA'S BOUTIQUE HOTEL COMFORT, CONVENIENCE, CLASS

The Carmen Hotel – Downtown Naga's Boutique Hotel – opened its doors in September 2016, and it has changed the Naga City landscape for good.

The Carmen boasts modern and contemporary architecture that features extensive exterior cladding designed to embody the ebb and flow of the Naga River. The structure, properly set back from the street, dominates the landscape with its towering presence. Its tall and wide lobby draws the eyes with its clean and modern lines, accentuated by the abundance of natural light, thanks to its floor-to-ceiling glass walls.

The Carmen is located on Peñafrancia Avenue, in the less busy part of Downtown Naga. Its location in the center of Naga's commercial and cultural district gives guests a fair number of advantages. It is close to shops and dining destinations, particularly Naga People's Mall where native goods are sold. It is also but a short walk away to notable tourist spots such as the Naga Metropolitan Cathedral, Plaza Quince Martires, and the Bell Tower of the San Francisco Church, among others.

And if guests want to experience the busy nightlife of Magsaysay Avenue or visit the big malls, a short jeepney or tricycle ride is all it takes to do so.

Naga is easily accessible thanks to the variety of public transportation options, available right from The Carmen.

Two of the town's major events during the Peñafrancia festivities, the *Translacion* and the *Fluvial* Procession, are best experienced right from The Carmen. Naga City has a lot to offer its guests, but The Carmen – equipped with international-standard amenities – makes sure guests will enjoy staying in as much as they do going out.

The guest rooms have a unique and pleasant scent, and they echo the hotel lobby's minimalist but functional aesthetics. They look and feel new. The beds are relaxing with fluffy and soft lines, and the air-conditioning effectively cools you from the tropical heat. Each room is also outfitted with all the modern conveniences guests can expect from a hotel of this caliber.

The Carmen is also the only hotel in Downtown Naga with a swimming pool, which has a kiddie and an adult section, and plenty of lounge seats on the poolside, perfect for families. Guests are also sure to enjoy the buffet at Baba Social Dining, the hotel's flagship restaurant. At dusk, go up to the top floor and just kick back and relax at the Sky Lounge as the cityscape turns a gorgeous hue thanks to the setting sun.

The Carmen Hotel is operated by enable Hospitality Inc. Hotel Trunk line: +63 54 4725888 / +63 917 570 2791 +63 919 648 9143 cc@thecarmenhotel.com.ph/www.thecarmenhotel.com.ph



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