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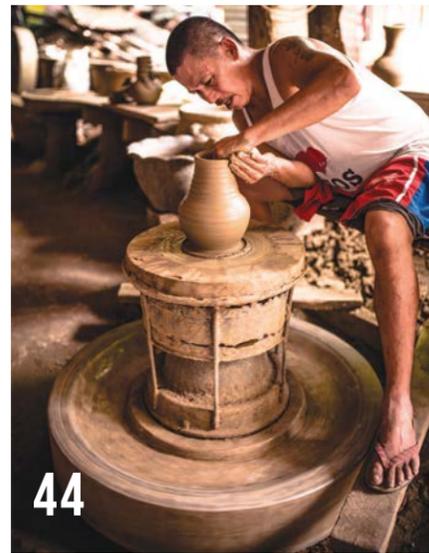


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**FIRST PACIFIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY**

ANATOMY OF A GLOBAL FILIPINO LEADER  
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INNOVATION CONGRESS  
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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

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## Editor's Note

The writers, editors, artists, and visionaries who have contributed to *League's* maiden issue have done so with the singular vision of giving you a positive, upbeat, and inspirational perspective of the workings of Philippine local government units.

We feature these noteworthy cities and municipalities, sharing their progress as well as their challenges. We delve into the private-public partnerships they have forged, their programs and projects, and other their other activities consistent with best practice principles. Most importantly, we listen to their leaders and relay their hopes and vision for the local governments that they lead.

For this issue, we train the spotlight on Davao City, now deemed the "Malacanang of the South." Lakambini Bautista shows us how Mayor Inday Sara Duterte-Carpio balances being tough and motherly in ensuring Davao's path to progress, which was first set forward by her father, now President Rodrigo Duterte. Lee Candelaria examines Laguna and its thriving ecotourism industry, while Kaydee dela Buena tracks the rise of the municipality of Santa Barbara, Iloilo to becoming No. 1 in Government Efficiency by the National Competitiveness Council. We also feature Vigan as it becomes a model for how cities can protect their past and maintain their cultural identity as they move forward into the future.

In GOVERNANCE, we also profile versatile actor Richard Gomez in a performance of a lifetime, in his role as Mayor of Ormoc City. He shares his vision and lays down his agenda, addressing tourism, poverty alleviation, education, and sports.

In GOVERNANCE as well, we feature the Secretary of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Mark Villar, who is tasked to execute President Duterte's ambitious infrastructure program.

In TALKING POINTS, we feature Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez as the latter discusses the priority bills of the House of Representatives.

Under SOLUTIONS and INNOVATIONS, we showcase the prospects of the country's bamboo industry and how it would boom with the proper support. We likewise feature the prospects of solar energy in the Philippines.

We hope that we at *League*, in our bid to chronicle the journey of the leaders and towns and cities, provide not just information but inspiration for others in mapping their own respective journeys. We remain always at ready in being your partners. Give us a call.

  
Lakambini Bautista

## Publisher's Note

We are thrilled to present the maiden issue of *League!* Serving as the premier political and local government units magazine, *League* reaches a dual audience of both the country's leaders and its citizenry, the Filipino people. After much research and documentation, we have gathered information to show a glimpse of the current state of our country—its people, leaders, local government units, as well as its culture and heritage.

The heart of *League* lies in its intelligent opinion and honest, investigative features on each aspect of its subjects. We publish the work of the country's leading opinion formers in the field of business, culture, politics, and society. In addition, the structure of the magazine has been thoughtfully sectioned to provide relevant, high-impact editorial content for both readers and advertisers.

*League* is slated to become the country's premier magazine, which serves both as an informative and entertaining resource. We look forward to your support in this endeavor. Let us help build and inspire a stronger republic through the sharing of best practices and through supporting progressive local government units!



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**Desire R7**  
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The advertisement features a white Cherry Mobile Desire R7 smartphone in the foreground, displaying the cherry mobile logo on its screen. The background is a scenic landscape with a large mountain peak under a blue sky with scattered clouds. A small group of people is visible on a grassy hill in the distance.



**Desire R7 PLUS**  
ANDROID 7.0 NOUGAT • 13MP REAR & 8MP FRONT CAMERA  
FINGERPRINT SENSOR • 700MHZ LTE-READY  
5.5" HD IPS SCREEN

The advertisement shows a white Cherry Mobile Desire R7 PLUS smartphone. The phone's screen displays the cherry mobile logo against a sunset background. The background of the entire advertisement is a vibrant sunset over a body of water, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm orange and yellow glow.



**Desire R8**  
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8MP FRONT CAMERA • FINGERPRINT SENSOR • 700MHZ LTE-READY  
5.5" FHD DISPLAY

The advertisement features a white Cherry Mobile Desire R8 smartphone. The phone's screen shows the cherry mobile logo over a scene of traditional colorful sailboats on a body of water. The background of the advertisement is a bright blue sky with white clouds over a calm sea with several sailboats.



**BASIL PROGRAM LAUNCHED AT LAGUNA DE BAY**

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), in partnership with the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), launched the BASIL (Balik Sigla sa Ilog at Lawa) Program at the Old Municipal Hall in Brgy. Baybayin, Los Baños, Laguna. BASIL is a national program, which aims to revive the dwindling population of fish in the country's coastal fishing grounds, and make food accessible to poor families living near the large bodies of water. The program will seed the country's lakes, rivers, and creeks with an estimated 200 million fingerlings of indigenous and non-invasive fish species such as *ayungin*, *biya*, *tilapia*, and *bangus*, among others. Laguna de Bay was chosen to pilot the groundbreaking program.



The LLDA team with LLDA GM Jaime "Joey" Medina and AGM Generoso Dungo



SSS President and CEO Emmanuel Dooc speaks with personnel

**SSS INCREASED COLLECTION IN FIRST QUARTER**

According to reports, the Social Security System (SSS) was able to collect an estimated P52.18 billion from members' contribution during the first four months of 2017. SSS President and CEO Emmanuel F. Dooc says this was an impressive 9.6% increase compared to last year's collected P47.59 billion. SSS saw a 13.9% increase (compared to last year's collection) in January 2017, amounting to P13.55 billion, and 12% increase in February, amounting to P12.86 billion. The increase in collection has been credited to aggressive campaigns like "Run After Contribution Evaders" (RACE), which penalizes delinquent employers. SSS is also proud to share that it has opened three new branches, 15 additional service offices, and two foreign offices to better serve its members.



**RED CROSS RECEIVES DONATIONS FROM ISRAEL FOR MARAWI**

A few weeks into the Marawi crisis, the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) received equipment, medicine, and supplies from Israel through the Israel Embassy. During the event, Chairman Richard Gordon stressed the urgent need for more support, donations, and volunteers. Responding to the crisis, PRC, together with the International Committee of the Red Cross Philippines, has since set up a health care unit in Baloi, Lanao del Norte to receive evacuees from Marawi. With 20 cot beds for patients, the PRC can serve up to 3,000 evacuees/patients in a month, and can accommodate medical consultations and minor surgery cases.

To participate and share donations, visit [redcross.ph/volunteer](http://redcross.ph/volunteer).

**ESTERO DE BINONDO GETS A NEW LOOK CARE OF PRRC**

The Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) inaugurated the newly rehabilitated Estero de Binondo Package 2 at Barangay 287, City of Manila. Helping to transform Pasig River and its environs, a 320-meter linear park was constructed from San Fernando Bridge to Alvarez Bridge. In line with its current programs, the PRRC also harvested the water hyacinths growing in the Pasig River to be used as raw material for the making of livelihood products such as table runners, bags, and accessories.



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**NCCA'S PANAKAYON: WESTERN VISAYAS CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

The National Commission for Culture and the Arts' Panakayon: Western Visayas Cultural Development Program culminated with the Culture & Arts Camp, held in Cuartero, Capiz, last June 30 to July 2.

The camp is the culminating activity of the Panakayon project, which was conducted in five towns of Western Visayas: Jordan, Guimaras; San Jose, Antique; Miag-ao, Iloilo; Balete, Aklan; and Cuartero, Capiz. The camp gathered over 150 students, teachers, and LGU officials, and treated guests to amazing performances of local dances and an exhibition of traditional crafts. There were also demos on *hablon*- and *pina*-weaving from Iloilo and Aklan,



**DEPED CONTINUES BRIGADA ESWELA IN CRISIS AREAS**

DepEd ARMM and DepEd Central Office continued Brigada Eskwela 2017 in the embattled city of Marawi and nearby affected areas, repairing the damaged schools and resuming education for the displaced students, teachers, and personnel.

As part of its rebuilding efforts, DepEd-Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Service (DepEd-DRRMS)—in cooperation with the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), Mindanao State University Sining Kambayoka, Teach Peace Build Peace Movement, Xavier University, and the Psychological Association of the Philippines—conducted Psychological First Aid for the teachers. The workshop, which entails storytelling sessions, book-making activities, and games, will also be conducted separately for children/students at school.

**DAR TURNS OVER P35.6M ROAD AND BRIDGE PROJECT**

Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Secretary Rafael Mariano turned over to the local government a P35.6 million road and bridge project as part of its efforts to improve the economic condition of farming communities in Apayao, Cordillera Administrative Region.

The road and bridge project benefits four barangays namely Allig, Sta. Maria, Balluyan, and Malayugan, and more than 500 farm households. After the project turnover, Sec. Mariano, DAR Undersecretary for Foreign Assisted Projects Sylvia Mallari, and Regional Director Atty. Marjorie Ayson distributed certificates of land ownership awards (CLOAS)—covering 770 hectares of agricultural lands located in Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga and Mt. Province—to 1,163 agrarian reform beneficiaries.



**DOH'S SURGICAL CARAVAN HEADS TO LUBAO, PAMPANGA**

The Department of Health (DOH) launched the Surgical Caravan in Lubao, Pampanga, fulfilling its commitment to further address the health needs of the poor. The Surgical Caravan offers free operations—minor and major—to indigent patients. Dubbed as “ToDOH Alaga, May TSeKaP na, May Operasyon Pa,” the Surgical Caravan is an offshoot of the Philippine Health Agenda (PHA)-Checkup program which, under the directive of President Rodrigo Duterte, addresses the need for surgical intervention for the poorer population. As the Surgical Caravan makes its way across the country, the identification and clearance of beneficiaries, implementation, and coordination will be managed by DOH regional offices and hospitals, PhilHealth, and LGUs (provincial and municipal), while other medical fees and laboratory procedures (pre- and post-op) will be covered by the DOH Medical Assistance Program Funds.



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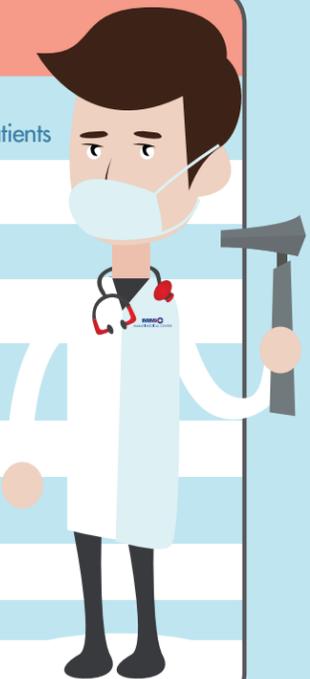
**Videolaryngostroboscopy**

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**

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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

# Primed for Progress

A look at the Top 10 Most Competitive Cities in the Philippines

BY DUSTIN O. IBAÑEZ

As the Philippines becomes recognized as one of the fastest growing economies in Asia, local cities and municipalities are expected to increase their productivity and enhance competitiveness to sustain the country's progress. Transforming the country into a resilient nation, cities must resolve major stumbling blocks in development and harness resources leading to people's improved quality of living.

In 2016, Quezon City ranked as the country's most progressive city according to the Annual Cities and Municipalities Competitiveness Index (CMCI). Developed by National Competitiveness Council (NCC) with the assistance of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), CMCI measures local competitiveness based on the following indicators: economic dynamism, government efficiency, and infrastructure.

CMCI defines "economic dynamism" as the stable expansion of business, industrial growth, and increase in job creation. "Government efficiency" refers to the availability of quality and reliable government services and support, while "infrastructure" refers to the physical structures that connect, expand, and sustain a locality and its surroundings to enable the provision of goods and services.

As building blocks of national development, cities are expected to continuously improve their services and effectively utilize their resources leading their citizens to a prosperous life.



Makati City ranked first in economic dynamism and is the second most competitive city in the country, in the fourth Regional Competitiveness Summit held last year.

Here are the top 10 progressive cities in the Philippines in 2016:

**QUEZON CITY** The City of Stars is considered as one of the largest service economies in the country. With around 60,000 registered businesses, it was declared the richest city in the country with a total income of P16.36 billion in 2015.

**MANILA** The capital city of the Philippines, Manila is the nation's economic, administrative, and social center. Home to more than 13 million people, it is considered as one of the country's highly populated cities.

**MAKATI** One of the 17 highly-urbanized cities in Metro Manila, Makati is dubbed as the Philippine's financial hub, where various commercial and professional centers are located. A top choice for expatriates, the city is also known as a major entertainment center.

**PASIG** A highly urbanized city, its economic growth is primarily attributed to the presence of Ortigas Center, where numerous high-rise commercial buildings, residential condominiums, malls, and schools find their home.

**DAVAO** is the largest city in the country in terms of land area, covering approximately 943 square miles. Also known as the country's capital in the south, the city posted 9.4% growth in 2016.

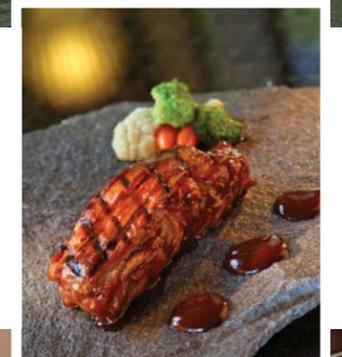
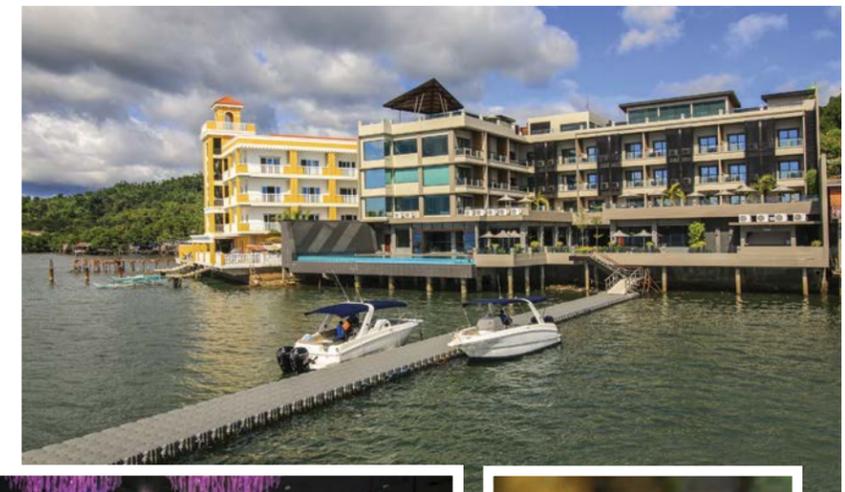
**CEBU** A popular destination in the country, the city's potential in terms of economy and infrastructure has captured the attention of foreign investors. This makes it deserving of the title, "Queen City of the South."

**CAGAYAN DE ORO** is poised to become the newest metropolitan center in the country. Named as the "Emerging City of Tomorrow," it has big potential in becoming an important business hub in Northern Mindanao, because of its strategic location and projected population growth.

**GENERAL SANTOS** The southernmost city in the Philippines, General Santos is home to boxing icon Manny Pacquiao. Agro-industry and fishing industry are two of the major economies in this highly urbanized city in Mindanao.

**CALOOCAN** City Mayor Oscar Malapitan attributes the growth to the administration's incessant promotions to attract businesses, creating more jobs for its people.

**MUNTINLUPA** One of the richest cities located in the southernmost part of Metro Manila, Muntinlupa has a population of more than 500,000. The city has also earned the title of "Emerald City of the Philippines," because of its steady growth and vibrant business environment. ▣



Two Seasons  
Coron Bayside Hotel

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Tropical tastes

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



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

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

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

### Island indulgence

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

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

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

## Which barangay program has made the biggest impact in your community?



Marikina residents can avail of free legal consultation care of the barangay headed by Chairman Mike Untalan.

"As part of our expanding services to the community, we launched a project wherein people could seek legal consultations and notary services for free at the barangay hall. Our partner lawyers, Atty. JP Nabua, J.D. and Atty. Rolly Erenio, CPA, offer their professional services every first Wednesday of the month at Sta. Lucia Brgy. Hall. These types of services are usually costly, which is why we saw the need for such a program. In addition, we also launched Operation Birth Right, where we assist new parents in the processing of their child's birth certificate and government documents for free."

**Barangay Chairman Mike Untalan**  
STA. LUCIA, MARIKINA



Numerous programs have been launched in Barangay Kasilawan to help children in need.

"One of the local programs that we're proudest to have launched was the 7K Program, which stands for "Kabataan, Kabarkada, Kapamilya at Kaagapay ang Kasilawan para sa Kanilang Kinabukasan." Launched in January 2014, this youth diversion program identifies children at risk (CAR), children in conflict with the law (CICL), and children in need of special protection, and aims to divert them from a future of crime. The program helps the youth go back to school through scholarships, educational assistance, and alternative learning systems. The program also extends help to the parents/family by offering family counseling and hosting livelihood programs conducted by TESDA and DOLE-Makati. Because of our concerted efforts, Barangay Kasilawan was awarded the 'Most Gender Responsive Barangay' for three consecutive years (2014-2016), and was recognized 'Most Child Friendly Barangay' (Category D) in 2016.

**Barangay Chairman Kim Casal-Reyes**  
BARANGAY KASILAWAN, MAKATI



The barangay of Los Baños is proud to have one of the most efficient emergency response teams.

"Our barangay is the only barangay that has rescue vehicles, so neighboring districts seek our assistance during calamities and emergencies. Because of this, our barangay rescue team undergoes regular training and is very active in the community. We host regular meetings with homeowners and school officials, and closely work with the fire department, police department, and the environmental department. Also, we share emergency numbers and other relevant info through sticker campaigns (instead of flyers) for faster, more effective dissemination. This has helped greatly in four particular cases of house fires."

**Barangay Chairman Budjong Balasoto**  
LOS BAÑOS, LAGUNA



In Barangay Kapitolyo, drug surrenderees participate in community projects such as the clean up drives.

"Following the directive of President Rodrigo Duterte, we complied with the stricter measures against drugs and encouraged drug users and drug pushers to surrender. Many of them surrendered and are being rehabilitated through our programs. From numerous cases of *basag kotse*, motorcycle theft, and other crimes reported every month, we have seen a significant drop to maybe one reported every three months. As part of the drug rehabilitation program, we have the surrenderees participate in community projects such as the recent Clean Up Drive in Pasig City. Since it's the rainy season, we're more vigilant in ensuring that the creeks are free from garbage that may cause flooding."

**Barangay Councilor Jaisen Pajara**  
BARANGAY KAPITOLYO, PASIG

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# STRAIGHT TALK

Senate President Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III’s family name connotes leadership, public service, and love of country, based on the life that he and his father, former Senator Aquilino “Nene” Pimentel Jr. have led and their contributions to Philippine society. In this Q&A, we get to know Senator Koko up close, how he was raised and guided by his veteran statesman-father, his values and philosophies, and how he is leading the 17th congress, promoting unity amidst diversity, to achieve its goals for the country.

## 1 Under your term as Senate President, what efforts did the Senate make to reorganize itself? How did this affect the senators’ working relationship?

We organized the Senate in the 17<sup>th</sup> Congress last July 25, 2016. At that time the “super majority” numbered 21 members, with only 3 in the minority.

But we needed to “re-organize” the Senate sometime after that since the feeling inside the “super majority” was that we were not a cohesive group.

After the re-organization, the majority now numbered 18, with 6 in the minority. We may now be a smaller majority, but now the feeling within our majority group is that “we are one team.”

The re-organization has actually helped the senators’ working relationships since we now know who truly belongs to the majority and who truly belongs to the minority.

All senators have the good of the country in their hearts. However, it is still the best arrangement in a legislative body to have a real opposition, called the “minority,” in order to “check” the majority and to prevent abuses (the “tyranny of numbers”), as well as to bring out all points of view in the public discussion of important issues.

## 2 What is your leadership style as Senate President?

I am a “consultative person.” I consult before making decisions.

I am not the kind of person who tells another senator, who is my equal, what to do or how to vote on a certain issue. I will encourage the development of a consensus or an agreement, but if that is not possible, then I am also willing to face the issue head on and for us to publicly vote on the issue so the people will know our individual positions on the matter at hand.

I am aware that the Filipino People expect their senators to vote according to his or her principles.

One consensus I was able to achieve even before my election as Senate President, was the development of

the Majority Agenda. In addition to our general expression of support for the Duterte Administration, the Senate majority agreed on an 11-point legislative agenda to guide us in our work, to wit:

1. We dedicate ourselves to the all-out search for Peace in our land.
2. We will move for the adoption of a Federal System of Government.
3. We support the all-out war against crime, drugs, and corruption.
4. We will reform our taxation system and make it more just and truly progressive.
5. We will strengthen the Rule of Law and make our justice system work.
6. We will reform the budget and declare a war on waste.
7. We call for sustainable and inclusive economic growth.
8. We will protect the environment.
9. We will deliver quality education and quality health care.
10. We will fight abuse and the abusive.
11. We will focus on the needs and the situation of the helpless and impoverished members of Philippine society, especially the sick, the elderly, and the children, because they need the help of government more than the others.

## 3 You and your father are the first father and son to be Senate President. How did your father inspire you to become a senator, and become Senate President? What are the life lessons that your father has taught you?

**I am a “consultative person.” I consult before making decisions. I am not the kind of person who tells another senator, who is my equal, what to do or how to vote on a certain issue.**



My father never told me to aspire to be a senator like him. He also never told me to be a lawyer like him. When my siblings and I were growing up, he showed us the work he was doing, his profession. He would bring us to court hearings. He would bring us to his office. When he entered politics, especially when he became Mayor of Cagayan de Oro City, we were exposed to the realities and pressures of political life.

My father’s works, struggles, and achievements are what actually inspired me first to become a lawyer like him and then to enter politics like him.

Looking at my father’s life and experiences, these are some of the lessons that one can easily identify:

1. Fighting for what is right is never easy.
2. To not lose your way in life, you must have a set of principles to guide you.
3. Follow your conscience.
4. If you are fighting for what is right, then never give up because there is vindication in the end.
5. Always have the Filipino People’s best interest in mind and you will never go wrong.
6. Prioritize the interests of the poorest of the poor.
7. You are not alone in your struggles because there is a God who is concerned about you.
8. Believe in the goodness of your fellowman.
9. Strengthen democracy and democratic values.



#### 4 Aside from name, what other similarities do you share with your father? How do you differ from each other?

Similarities are:

1. We are both born in Mindanao, both Ateneans (educated by Jesuits), both lawyers.
2. We have both been Senate President and PDP LABAN Party President.
3. We both believe in Theism, Humanism, Federalism, democratic values, enlightened nationalism (love for country), and equal opportunities for all, among others.
4. I, too, believe in the principles or lessons I have enumerated above. However, I must admit that I have a more “scientific approach” in life compared to my father. I am, after all, more of a mathematician than a lawyer or politician.

#### 5 What is the rationale for your intent to run for another Senate term in 2019? How do you intend to fight for it despite the constitutional limitation?

In the case of Abundo, Sr. v. COMELEC, G. R. No. 201716, dated January 8, 2013, the Supreme Court held that for a local elective official to be disqualified due to term limits, he or she must have fully served three consecutive terms.

The same principle should apply to national officials. As I was unable to serve my first term in full, serving less than two-years<sup>1</sup> of a six-year term that should have run from 2007 until 2013, my current term (2013-2019) is actually my first full term. Hence, I believe I can still run for another term in 2019.

We could also apply by analogy the rule found in Sec. 4, Art. VII of the 1987 Constitution which involves the Office of the President.<sup>2</sup> This provision suggests that the critical period of time for national officials with six-year terms is four years.

<sup>1</sup> Just one year and ten months.

<sup>2</sup> “xxx No person who has succeeded as President and has served as such for more than four years shall be qualified for election to the same office at any time.”



#### My father’s works, struggles, and achievements are what actually inspired me first to become a lawyer like him and then to enter politics like him.

Our country has many problems which we should fix. Since I believe that my science, legal, political, and family backgrounds, as well as my other attributes and love for problem-solving, can help us identify possible solutions to our long-standing, age-old, inter-generational problems, I have decided that I should submit myself to the electorate for possible consideration as Senator in the coming 2019 elections, so that the people will have more candidates to choose from.

#### 6 With all the issues hounding the Senate nowadays, would you say that the Senate is still productive in terms of its main role of legislation?

We definitely have a very productive Senate. By the close of the First Regular Session of the 17th Congress, we have approved or acted on 231 out of a total of 1,469 bills filed. This number does not include 387 resolutions filed in the same period, of which 48 were adopted. These resolutions included the accession of the Senate to treaties such as the Articles of Agreement of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the RP-Japan

Agreement on Social Security, and the landmark Paris Agreement.

I also have a very good working relationship with the Speaker of the House of Representatives, who, by the way, happens to be my party mate in PDP LABAN. Hence we can foresee a very productive Congress, not just the Senate.

Through close coordination, cooperation, and team work, we (the House of Representatives and the Senate) were able to pass on third reading almost all of the bills that we identified as important and urgent in the First Regular Session of the 17th Congress.

Don’t worry too much about “issues.” The Senate is a political institution. Hence there will always be “issues” thrown against the institution and even against its individual members. That is part of the terrain. That is part of political life here in the Philippines.

#### 7 What are the current priorities of the Senate now and why?

Our priority is to solve the long-standing, age-old, inter-

generational problems of our country, which have prevented the attainment of an improved or decent and comfortable standard of living for all our people.

Our woes may be caused by structures, institutions, policies, programs, or by the people themselves. We should be open to reviewing all of these and change them if necessary, especially when identified to be the culprit causing us our problems.

We are ready to review the current unitary system/structure of government and to adopt the Federal System of Government to replace it. This will achieve Peace in Mindanao.

We are ready to give tax relief to our compensation income earners who are currently paying an unrealistically too high and unfair rate because of the phenomenon called the “bracket creep.”

We will support the Duterte Administration’s program to build “strategic infrastructure projects” which boost trade and productivity and which will improve the people’s standard of living in the long run like railways, airports, seaports, bridges,

highways, hospitals, school buildings, tourism areas, transport terminals, ICT infrastructure, etc.

We know the importance of our Justice System and will work to find ways to make its workings faster, fairer, transparent, and in the end, believable and acceptable to the people and worthy of their respect and obedience.

All measures which would make Philippine Society fairer based on the concept of the Rule of Law will be supported like putting an end to “endo” or the illegal practice of labor-contracting and fighting smuggling especially of agricultural products.

Other priorities are the 1) free education at the tertiary level in our State Universities and Colleges; 2) free irrigation services for our farmers; 3) free health insurance coverage for all; 4) protection of the environment like the review of our mining policy and rules; and 5) all measures which will help the poorest of the poor like the unemployed, our marginal farmers and fisher folk, and the most in need of help like the children, the elderly, and the sick.

#### 8 How will the Senate be more relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

The Senate has to adapt to the times.

In this age of connectivity, the Senate has to stay connected with its constituents, the Filipino People. Hence, we will make information about the Senate and its works readily available to the people, digitally and in the traditional way.

The Senate also has to transfer to its own home because our present location can no longer conveniently service all those who are dealing with the Senate.

My party, the PDP Laban, has more plans to make the Senate more relevant in the future. Under the proposed new governmental setup under Federalism, we also intend to specify the work, tasks, and responsibilities of the Senate.

The Senate will still be part of the national legislation process but only for the most important of laws, like laws which affect the powers and structure of the states/regions.

The Senate’s main functions would be in determining our country’s foreign

“

All senators have the good of the country in their hearts. However, it is still the best arrangement in a legislative body to have a real opposition, called the “minority,” in order to “check” the majority and to prevent abuses (the “tyranny of numbers”), as well as to bring out all points of view in the public discussion of important issues.





I hope to achieve a Philippine society which is **JUST** and **FAIR**, which **SAVES** and **SHARES**, which is **SCIENTIFIC** and **OBJECTIVE**, which is **PEACEFUL** and **DEMOCRATIC**, which is **EDUCATED** and **HEALTHY**, and which is, most of all, **HAPPY** and **FREE**, with overflowing **LOVE OF GOD** and **COUNTRY**.



policy and international trade policy, concurrence in treaties and international agreements, confirming important appointments, and acting as the impeachment court.

The members of the Senate will be elected from the states/regions. Hence, all regions of the Philippines will now be represented by their own Senators.

**9** What legacy do you wish to leave as Senate President?

As the Senate President who worked to fix some of our country's problems.

I hope to achieve a Philippine society which is **JUST** and **FAIR**,

which **SAVES** and **SHARES**, which is **SCIENTIFIC** and **OBJECTIVE**, which is **PEACEFUL** and **DEMOCRATIC**, which is **EDUCATED** and **HEALTHY**, and which is, most of all, **HAPPY** and **FREE**, with overflowing **LOVE OF GOD** and **COUNTRY**.

**10** What are the philosophies or values that you hold dear in life?

1. Belief in a Supreme Being who is our Creator
2. Respect for human rights and the dignity of man
3. Love of country

4. Equal opportunities for all
5. Consultative and participatory democracy
6. Be fair and just
7. Be responsible for one's decisions and actions, hence, think and look before you leap.
8. *'Pag nasa tama ka*, never give up.
9. Prioritize the interests of the poorest of the poor.
10. Do not abuse and take advantage of your fellow man.
11. The people deserve the government they elect, hence, they must be educated about the issues and the electoral system must be honest.



PRIIB Photo by Cesar Tomambo

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# Legislative Report

With only four laws passed on its first year in office, the 17th Congress will have to work harder this second regular session

BY LEE CANDELARIA

The first year of the Duterte administration is nothing but interesting. President Rodrigo Duterte enjoys extreme popularity with record-high satisfaction surveys and sweeping support in both houses of the Congress. This would mean that the legislative agenda of the administration should breeze through the esteemed halls of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

But Duterte delivered his second State of the Nation Address in front of a Congress that only passed four bills into law (*see sidebar*). Congress seemed more occupied with investigations in aid of legislation such as Martial Law in Marawi, extrajudicial killings, and Senator Leila de Lima's association to illegal drug sale in Bilibid.

This is not new in the Philippines. Many important laws take a few congresses to pass; some even do not pass during the administration of those who proposed it. Legislation in the Philippines is designed to be slow. Imagine that a single proposed measure must to go through three readings in both houses of Congress—more than 300 legislators reading, researching, and deliberating—that must certainly take some time.

This characteristic of Philippine law making is aimed at making sure that everything has been ironed out before a law is enacted, especially because these laws will affect the lives of millions of Filipinos.

## LEGISLATING AMIDST CHALLENGES

House Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez admits to these challenges of legislation in the first year of the Duterte administration. In the opening of the second regular session of the House of Representatives last July 24, he delivered a speech marking the end

**The shift from a unitary to a federal form of government is one of the key priorities in the legislative agenda of the 17th Congress.**



of the first year of their work as legislators. He highlights that they have passed 210 legislative measures on the third reading, or an average of two bills per session day.

He also mentioned the 2017 budget that was passed in record time, the return of the death penalty for certain heinous crimes, and the tax reform bill, which is now on the third reading, as of press time.

But he admits much is to be done, and notes that their work with the Senate has been productive, after they have agreed to a common legislative agenda of Congress, identifying 40 nationally important bills that needed to be tackled by both houses.

## PRIORITY BILLS

One of the priorities elaborated by Speaker Alvarez in his speech is to focus on legislation that concerns the family. A law to allow the dissolution of marriage without the need for an extensively adversarial system will empower married persons to “mutually agree to end their marriage subject to the approval of the Court.”

Another law that the Speaker alludes to in his speech will allow the legal recognition and protection of Civil Partnerships, because “citizens should not be excluded from society just because of the person they love.” Both these proposed measures will surely pass through the eye of a needle before they become laws, seeing that these measures will certainly provoke the Catholic Church, a sector so rabidly against any measure that could lead to the legalization of divorce or gay marriage.

Another priority area Alvarez highlights in his speech is the reorganization of the government bureaucracy. He admits that the regulatory framework of the government is mired in chaos, overlaps, and conflicts. Some of the reorganization measures he identified are the merging of Land Transportation Office (LTO) and Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) into the Land Transportation Authority (LTA),

the creation of a Philippine Railways Authority, and the Philippine Airports Authority.

The final priority area he emphasizes in his speech is peace and prosperity, of which he identifies two important legislative measures. One is the Bangsamoro Basic Law, the basis for creating a homeland for the Bangsamoro, which has languished in Congress in the previous administration. The second measure is a law that will pave the way

for the shift from a unitary to a federal form of government, echoing one of Duterte's key campaign promises in the previous elections.

The legislative agenda for the second regular session of the 17th Congress reads like an impossible wish list that even a united Congress could only dream of achieving. But with only four laws passed on their first year, the Congress will have to work harder this second regular session. ■

## LAWS PASSED BY THE 17TH CONGRESS BEFORE SONA

2017 General Appropriations Act, the first budget to be enacted under the Duterte administration, amounting to P3.35 trillion.  
2017 General Appropriations Act, the first budget to be enacted under the Duterte administration, amounting to P3.35 trillion.

Postponement of Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections from October 21, 2016 to October 2017

Extension of the franchise of GMA Network to another 25 years

Extension of the franchise of Smart Communications to another 25 years

## NEW LAWS SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT IN 2017

Strengthening of Anti-Hospital Deposit Law, which would impose higher penalties on hospitals that refuse to administer treatment to emergency patients

Free Higher Education for All Act, which would provide for full tuition subsidies to students in state universities and colleges

Extension of validity of driver's licenses to five years

Philippine Passport Act, which would extend the validity of Philippine passports to 10 years

Free Internet Access in Public Places Act, which would provide free internet access in public places and government offices

## BILLS AWAITING THE PRESIDENT'S SIGNATURE

Amendments to the Revised Penal Code, which sought to adjust the amounts under the 87-year-old Revised Penal Code to prevent cruel and excessive punishment

Amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering Act, which would expand the coverage of the AMLA to include casinos

**BANGSAMORO** By giving representation to indigenous peoples, women, children, and sultanates, and key stakeholders in the drafting of the Bangsa[moro] Basic Law, we ensure a Bangsamoro government that truly reflects the aspirations of our Muslim brothers and sisters as well as our indigenous brethren.

**DEATH PENALTY** I therefore ask Congress to act on all pending legislations to reimpose the death penalty on heinous crimes—especially on the trafficking of illegal drugs. Capital punishment is not only about deterrence. It is also about retribution. Make no mistake about that.

**PUBLIC SAFETY.** In order to bring government services closer to the people, we established hotlines, government centers that receive public concerns, one of which is the Hotline 911, which allowed us to receive and immediately respond to emergencies.

**FOREIGN RELATIONS.** As an independent nation, we will uphold and promote our national interests in the international community. We will strengthen and seek partnership with those who share our values. We will engage nations with full respect for the rule of law, sovereign equality, and again, non-interference. These are the principles that we are upholding as we advance to this year for the meeting as the chair of the ASEAN.

**INFRASTRUCTURE.** We will make the next few years the Golden Age of Infrastructure in the Philippines to enhance our mobility and connectivity, and thereby spur development growth equitable in the country. In other words, we are going to build, build, and build.



**WOMEN'S RIGHTS.** I would like to reiterate my personal and this administration's commitment to fully implement the Magna Carta of Women to the barangay level *tapos na ito*. To this effect, an executive order will be issued to local government units institutionalizing gender and development programs and services.

# Highlights of SONA 2017

**SMOKING BAN.** I have signed Executive Order No. 26 imposing a ban on smoking in public places to mitigate its consequences. We want to minimize access to tobacco products, and provide a more supportive environment for those who are attempting to quit tobacco use.

**MARTIAL LAW.** I declared Martial Law in Mindanao because I believed that that was the fastest way to quell the rebellion at the least cost of lives and properties.

**GOOD GOVERNANCE.** Let the dismissal of several high-ranking officials—whom I myself appointed—serve as a warning to all that I will never back down on my commitment to cleanse this government and corporation.

League compiled some of the top issues tackled by President Rodrigo Duterte in his second State of the Nation Address.

**EFFICIENT PUBLIC SERVICE.** Now *ito ang deal ko sa public*. There is the 8888, I cannot stop corruption and wrongdoings if you do not cooperate. You text me. *Libre iyan: 8888*. You name the public official. Name his sins in that bulletin and I will take it from there. Do not be afraid about libel. I will take care of that.

**WAR ON ILLEGAL DRUGS.** The fight will be unremitting as it will be unrelenting. Despite international and local pressures, the fight will not stop until those who deal in it understand that they have to cease, they have to stop because the alternatives are either jail or hell.

**FOOD SECURITY.** I am appealing to all our legislators to immediately pass the National Land Use Act, or NALUA, to ensure the rational and sustainable use of our land and our physical resources, given the competing needs of food security, housing, businesses, and environmental conservation.

**TERRORISM.** To decisively address insurgency and terrorism, we are working doubly hard towards (achieving) a stronger and more credible national defense system for the country. We continue to strengthen the defense capability of the AFP as a deterrence against terrorists, lawless elements, and other threats.

**MINING.** To our employees and officials of the LGUs tasked with monitoring these mining operations within their territorial jurisdictions, do your job without fear or favor. I [hold] you absolutely responsible for any misdeed or failure [by] the mining entities to comply—do not comply or comply with the guidelines, rules and regulations governing mining operations and activities within your area of responsibility. I mean it. Do not try to test my resolve.

# BUILD, BUILD, BUILD!

DPWH Secretary Mark Villar ushers the nation into the Golden Age of Infrastructure

BY KRISTEL DACUMOS-LAGORZA



Opened in April, Runway Manila is a pedestrian bridge that directly connects Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 3 (T3) with Newport City.

**President Duterte has raised the budget of infra-spending to 5.4% (of GDP), more than double the average of 2.6% in the past six administrations in the past 50 years.**

Sec. Mark Villar's assumption into office as the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Secretary was met with a little hesitation as many believed that his being the son of incumbent Sen. Cynthia Villar and real estate mogul (and former Presidential hopeful) Manuel Villar would pose a conflict of interest.

But since taking office, Sec. Mark Villar is bearing his family name with pride, and has become the firm hand behind the boldest and most ambitious infrastructure program in history.

#### TAKING UP THE CHALLENGE

When President Rodrigo Duterte laid out his 10-point socioeconomic agenda called "DuterteNomics," many were impressed with his grand vision. It was an ambitious proposal, to say the least, and the Commander-in-Chief wants this all to be achieved during his term.

As part of his socioeconomic agenda, President Duterte aims to reduce poverty from 21.6% in 2015 to 13-15% by 2022. This would be achieved by driving reforms that would accelerate

infrastructure and the development of industries that would yield robust growth across the archipelago. Investing in key infrastructure projects would spur economic activity, welcoming foreign investments, creating jobs, and increasing incomes of Filipinos across the board.

This year alone, President Duterte has raised the budget of infra-spending to 5.4% (of GDP), more than double the average of 2.6% in the past six administrations in the past 50 years. His allotment of P8-9 trillion on big-ticket items such as railways and ports aims to "prime the pump" for progress. Sec. Villar is the man tasked with making sure that all of this is realized.

#### BUILDING FOUNDATIONS FOR PROGRESS

"Needless to say, we've been very busy, as we've been fast-tracking many of these projects. I'm excited because the projects that we'll be starting this year are very large scale, and you'll really feel the effects," shares Sec. Villar, the former congressman representing the lone district of Las

Sec. Villar closely monitors the projects, even visiting the sites several times throughout construction.



By next year, in terms of decongestion, according to Sec. Villar, DPWH will have built 128 bypass roads, doubling the number from last year. “Here in Manila, we’ve recently signed the NLEX-SLEX Connector Road. We’ve been fast-tracking existing projects, especially those that have been put on the back burner for the longest time.” When it comes to which projects to prioritize, Sec. Villar reveals, “The span of the project doesn’t matter. If it will take six months or six years, we will do it as long as it helps the people. Also, we make sure that it gets done, and it gets done quickly. We want people to see and feel the change sooner than later,” he adds. “No politics; no agenda. We just want to perform,” he says of his leadership.

**MAKING WAYS**

Within Metro Manila, citizens are already seeing the improvement. NAIA X (extension) and Runway Manila, a pedestrian bridge connecting Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 3 and Newport City, were opened earlier this year. In addition, the Harbor Link Project, which started in 2014, is set to be completed this December. More exciting are the Central Luzon Link Express, Cavite-Laguna Expressway (Cala-X), the Luzon Spine Expressway Network, Tarlac-Pangasinan Union Express (TPLEX) and NLEX-SLEX Connector projects, which are all underway and will see completion by 2018-2021.

In addition to building more roads and highways, DPWH is also pushing forward in protecting the environment

Piñas. (His wife, Rep. Emmeline Aglipay Villar, assumed to the post as interim congressman when Sec. Villar joined the Cabinet of the President last Aug. 1, 2016).

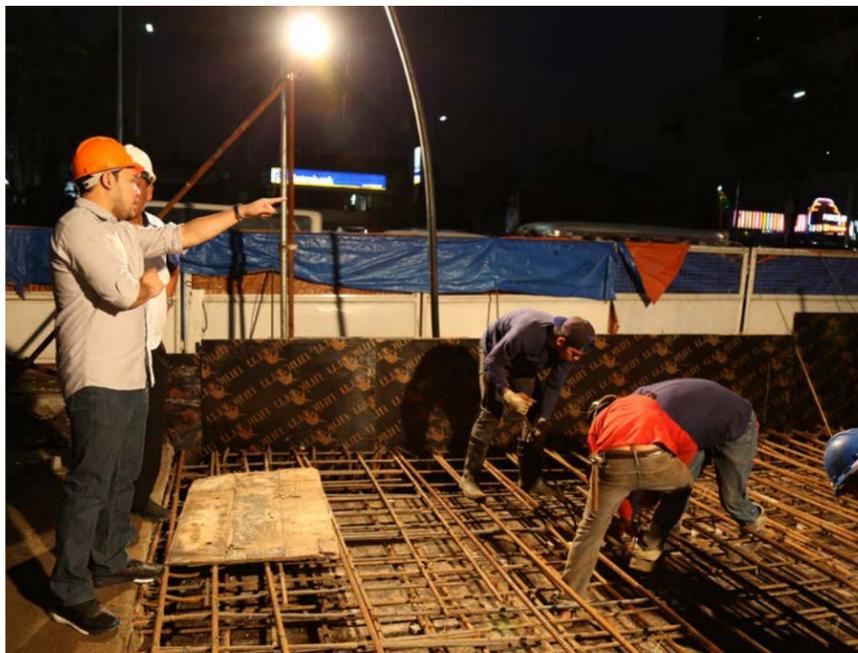
“The work so far has been tough, but manageable. Whenever you have to lead an organization as massive as this—we’re talking tens of thousands of people—there will be management challenges,” he reveals. “But I never assumed that it would be an easy job. It’s been tough, but equally fulfilling, too.”

While others would feel a sense of restlessness—or even dread—when confronted with such an immense responsibility, Sec. Mark remains confident, firm, and focused, giving truth to his image as a man of action.

As the thousands of infrastructure projects roll out in the coming months, Sec. Villar attends to each, poring over the details, ensuring that these are planned and executed swiftly and with urgency. In addition to projects that aim to decongest traffic and address flood control, DPWH also has “convergence” projects, which adhere to tourism, trade, and industry programs.



**The President has given me his full support and... that’s more than enough to accomplish what needs to be done.**



Following President Duterte’s marching orders, Sec. Villar is fast-tracking the high-impact infrastructure projects.



(FROM TOP)  
The CAVITEX and  
Tarlac-Pangasinan Expressway

through partner projects such as the 12 Pasig River, Marikina River, and Manggahan Floodway Bridges, which are set to start construction in 2018.

Simultaneously, DPWH is kicking off high-impact projects in key cities and regions across the country. The Bacolod Economic Highway, for example, along with the Mindanao Development Road Network, Davao City By-Pass, and the Panguil Bay Bridge, connecting Tangub City, Misami Occidental, and Tubod, Lanao Del Norte aim to improve the ease of movement in and around the major cities.

One of the most ambitious infrastructure projects in Cebu, the 74-km Metro Cebu Expressway, hopes to spur economic growth by cutting down travel time from Danao City to Naga City. From three hours, it will be halved to an hour and 30 minutes. Construction will also commence in 2018. There are many more in the pipeline, assures Sec. Villar and “these will effectively address the bottlenecks that hamper economic growth.”

Complementing the initiatives of the Department of Transportation (DOTr), DPWH has also taken on the billion-peso construction and renovation of airports, including Puerto Princesa Airport, which is now equipped to accommodate 1.9 million passengers annually (it opened May 2017); New Bohol Airport (completion June 2018); and the Mactan Cebu International Airport (June 2018), which can now accommodate 12 million passengers annually.

The P5-billion peso Bicol International Airport, scheduled to be finished by June



2018, will also significantly boost tourism arrival and decongest the crowded Legazpi airport, helping make Albay an economic powerhouse.

DPWH is also enhancing the night-landing capabilities of airports, which will enable carriers to accommodate flights after sunset. The night-rating will affect airports in Naga, Dumaguete, Dipolog, Cotabato, Tuguegarao, Cauayan, Pagadian, and Ozamiz. As of May 2017, 19 airports have been completed and nine more are set for completion.

**PUSHING FORWARD**

DPWH, under the leadership of Sec. Villar, is off to a good start. “But regardless of the good that you do, there will always be criticism,” shares Sec. Villar. However, he is unperturbed by these as he understands that it’s all part of the democracy. “That’s just how

it works. The critiques should drive you to do more and become better.”

There are those who may question Sec. Villar’s commitment as well as his capacity to lead such an enormous organization, but like a true statesman he takes it all in stride, allowing his work to speak for itself.

“The President has given me his full support and for that I’m very thankful. I think that’s more than enough to accomplish what needs to be done—to implement these projects, to eliminate corruption in the department, and to make sure that we are operating in a professional manner.

“As what I’ve learned from my parents, it’s not about what you say, but what you do. So for me, it doesn’t matter how people perceive me. What I accomplish by the end of my term will define that kind of leader I have always strived to be,” ends Sec. Mark Villar. ■



## Goma's Cup

Ormoc City Mayor Richard Gomez is out to prove that they can win the fight against drugs, corruption, and poverty

BY LAKAMBINI BAUTISTA  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RON MENDOZA  
GROOMING BY FLOE TAPAYAN

For Ormoc City Mayor Richard Gomez, the road to public service was a long, rough journey full of twists and turns. In 2001, he ran under the party list, Mamamayan Ayaw sa Droga (MAD). It earned 1.52 million votes, but it was disqualified by the Supreme Court because it did not belong to or represent the so-called “marginalized” sector, the ruling said. In 2007, he ran for senator, but lost. He tried for a seat in the House of Representatives in 2010, but was disqualified due to residency issues. His wife Lucy then ran as his substitute and won. In 2013, he lost the mayoralty race to Edward Codilla by a slim margin of

fewer than 3,000 votes. Finally, in the 2016 mayoralty race, he won against Liberal Party candidate Ondo Codilla.

Two things can be gleaned from his story: first, there is a time and place for everything; and second, being a showbiz personality does not preclude one from becoming a qualified public servant.

### SHOWBIZ TO POLITICS

Gomez's foray into public service began in 1998, shortly after he got married to Lucy Torres. “I was appointed by then President Erap Estrada as a member of his Cabinet. Eventually, I created MAD and started this anti-drug campaign. At the same time, I was also a member of

the national team, *at doon ko nakita na* if we don't do anything, *masisira talaga ang buhay ng* younger generation with the proliferation of drugs. Under my office, I got to do different sports programs and projects, and I saw the effects. I realized that I can help more people through government resources,” he says.

He admits that there were times when he felt frustrated—like when his partylist won but was not allowed to sit—but that only fired up his desire to do something more. “*Sabi ko*, even if we didn't get to sit, I will just continue to do what I know best, which is to fight drugs and promote sports,” he adds.

### LEARNING THE ROPES

Looking back on it now, Gomez believes that his past experiences and education have prepared him to become the mayor that Ormoc needs. “When Lucy became the congresswoman, I became her chief of staff. I was always in the district doing work,” he says. He also took three courses at UP National

College of Public Administration and Governance (UP-NCPAG), and finished his master's degree in Business Administration.

He used these as leverage to become a smarter candidate. “In 2013, I lost as mayor, but that did not discourage me. *Ganun talaga. 'Pag wala kang pera, ang laki ng chance na matalo, lalo na at* political family *ang kalaban namin*. I tried again in 2016. I did a little maneuvering, seed a little money, and *sinuwerte naman*. I won.”

The very thing that drives him to continue his public service career is the desire to help Ormoc. “I want to direct Ormoc City towards progress. My thinking is if we will not do something about Ormoc, we will go down the drain, the way it was before I sat as mayor. It was full of corruption. *Mali ang laws na ginagawa nila sa Ormoc*. They were, in fact, not implementing the law, they were running it like a household. So now that I'm mayor, I'm implementing a lot of changes in Ormoc City.”



Mayor Richard Gomez takes his oath, while his daughter Juliana holds the Bible and a copy of the oath for him to read. Also sworn in on the same ceremony was re-elected Leyte (Fourth District) Rep.; Lucy Torres-Gomez.

Ever since he was a kid, Mayor Richard has loved attending flag ceremonies. Until now, even as mayor, he still looks forward to the weekly routine, as an expression of patriotism.



“

If we want progress, we should not only be ready for change, we should be ready to change.

**TAKE-CHARGE LEADER**

Running a city with 220,000 population and 46,430 hectare land area is no easy feat. Thus, it's important to have a take-charge approach in addressing the city's needs by holding weekly meetings with the different department heads, the legislative team, as well as with the vice-mayor and councilors, whom he refers to as the Ormoc Development Team. "This is to ensure that they know our thrust and direction for that specific week, they know the ordinances that they need to prepare, and they know what to implement," says the mayor.

One year into his term as mayor, Gomez thinks the biggest change he has effected in the city is maintaining peace and order. "When I became mayor, *nakita ko ang malaking problema namin sa* drugs, so that became my priority. To improve the service of the police, we updated their firearms, allotted more funds to buy patrol cars and gasoline, and gave additional allowance to ensure that there are policemen patrolling the city 24/7. Ormoc City is so big—as big as Makati, Pasig, Mandaluyong, and Pasay combined."

This leads to his second priority, which is improving the city's tourism program. "Before I became mayor, there was no tourism program in Ormoc, so *ngayon lang nagkaroon ng* tourism office," he points out, adding that there are a lot of beautiful places to visit in Ormoc such as Lake Danao National Park; its eight majestic falls; and Alto Peak, the Eastern Visayas' highest mountain.

In addition to promoting the local sites, Ormoc is also converting the Old City Hall into a museum. "During the war, one of the biggest battles happened in Ormoc, so we'd like to capitalize on that. There are a lot of families who are willing to donate their artifacts for the museum," he adds.

**BIGGEST CHALLENGES**

Stopping corruption is another focus of Gomez's administration. As of press time, his legislative team has already created over 40 ordinances, many of which are an effort to curb corruption and "red tape." "I want Ormoc to be a business-friendly city. I always tell our investors, *kapag may nangotong sa inyo*, you tell me right away, because I am going to relieve that government official from his or her post," he says.

He considers alleviating poverty as one of the major challenges that his administration has to deal with. Today, he and his team are hard at work getting to the root of the problem by providing employment and affordable housing to the people of Ormoc. "Ormoc has about 10,000 informal settlers, who live mostly along riverbanks and coastal areas," Gomez points out. "So we're bringing in investors and coordinating with government agencies to give these people jobs. Our housing project can only provide for about 2,000 people, we still have 8,000 remaining settlers."

Gomez is also looking at agriculture as one of the prime economy builders of the city, so they've started to procure new trucks, tractors, and other farming equipment, and have started supporting cooperatives. He points out that the



**I want Ormoc to be a business-friendly city. I always tell our investors, *kapag may nangotong sa inyo*, you tell me right away, because I am going to relieve that government official from his or her post.**



past administration had several programs that were not implemented, so he will make sure that this will not happen under his leadership.

The Super Typhoon Yolanda in 2013, the flash flood in 1991, and the 6.5 magnitude earthquake last July 6 are just three of the most devastating disasters to have hit Ormoc City in recent decades. Gomez shares that they are all well aware of the effects of climate change and are doing all that they can to protect their natural resources, as well as prepare for the next natural disaster. "We're strictly implementing our waste management program. We're starting to practice 'No Plastic Day'. Also, we're prohibiting the burning of farm and crop wastes," he says.

**EDUCATION AND SPORTS**

Adjusting to the demands of the K to 12 program is another problem that their city needs to address. "We have 110 barangays, so we have about 60 schools and all are making the transition to K to 12. So that's an additional two grades, minimum of three to four classrooms each. *Ang laki ng backlog namin sa* classrooms, but slowly we're trying to fill in the gap," he says.

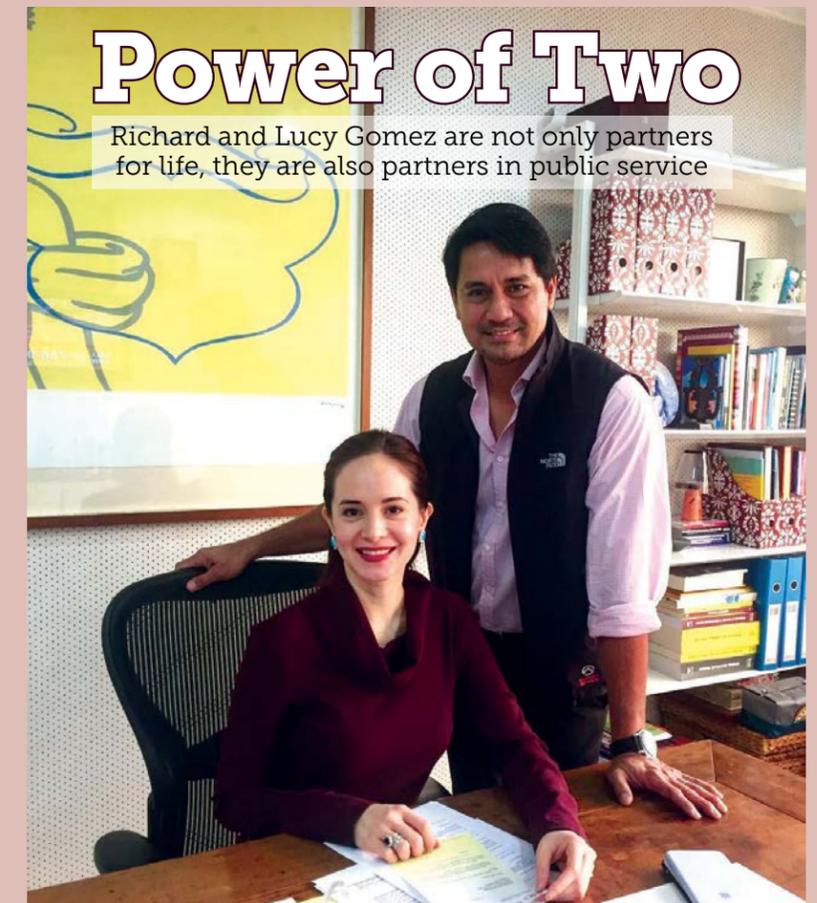
One of the ordinances that the mayor created is for subdivision developers to donate a classroom for every hectare of subdivision property that they will develop, to help address the shortage.

As for their sports programs, the mayor stresses the benefits of providing their athletes ample support. He proudly reports that their elementary and high school students performed well in the regional games, because they were provided with the right shoes for their sport.

Gomez knows that they still have a long way to go to achieve a better, more progressive Ormoc City. For this to happen, there should be a paradigm shift in Ormocanons' way of life. "If they want progress, *kailangan magsipag din sila. Kailangan magkaroon din sila ng disiplinang*. It will have to come from the people. *Kailangan baguhin natin ang kultura natin*. Also, we have to accept that if we want progress, we should not only be ready for change, we should be ready to change." ■

**Power of Two**

Richard and Lucy Gomez are not only partners for life, they are also partners in public service



The power couple behind Ormoc City

**T**hey may have contrasting leadership styles, but they perfectly complement each other. "Lucy has a very strong leadership, *pero mabait ang approach niya*. I'm very straightforward. There are some things that I'm very strict about, and that's how I appear to them. As a mayor, I really need to be strict—ready to scold a department head who's not effectively doing his or her job."

The mayor is thankful that he and Lucy are able to work hand-in-hand achieving progress in the city. "Before, when Ormoc was not yet handled by our family, *ang daming mga projects ni Lucy ang hindi nagagawa kasi hinaharangan ng* old mayor *namin*. Now that I'm mayor, we're able to direct the funds to where it should go. I list down the needs of the city—roads and infrastructure and programs coming from the national government, together with other municipalities around Ormoc City. *So mas maganda na ang planning namin ngayon, maganda na din ang implementation*," he says. ■



The Gomez family pose with President Duterte.



A winning tandem

# Redefining Public Service

7 lessons from Senator Bam Aquino that can teach us about working in government

BY KARL VENDELL SATINITIGAN  
AS TOLD TO KRISTEL DACUMOS-LAGORZA

**1 Listen in order to lead.** It's rare to find leaders that truly listen; that is one trait of Sen. Bam Aquino that inspires me the most. I learned the concept of active listening for our organization development work back in college, and so when I met the Senator, he struck me as someone who truly listened. He was a social entrepreneur then, and already had several other accomplishments. But he would always make sure there was time for us to share our thoughts, even if we were the least experienced stakeholders in the room. To this day, and even during the most difficult of times, he always maintains a listening and caring posture.

**2 Passion trickles down.** Aside from the ability to listen and empathize,

another set of traits I find inspiring in the Senator is his capacity for wonder, passion, and rigor. I know of dozens of leaders who have the capacity for wonder, especially for what is possible and meaningful. Many are also infectiously passionate about their work, but leaders with a sustained capacity for rigor are hard to find. All of us who work with Sen. Aquino can attest to his diligence, and his meticulous eye for detail. It can be intimidating (to live up to his expectations in the workplace), and to this day, I still struggle in keeping up. But how I wish we have more leaders who are as thorough.

**3 Ensure effective meetings.** Typical meetings are thorough and concise, but always with enough time for even the least confident persons in the room to share their thoughts. A favorite tip I learned from him is building a toolkit of techniques that you can deploy to make sure that meetings start and end on the right note. This has proved useful when facilitating meetings of our own with other offices.

**4 Challenge limitations.** I always had this misconception that if only government had more money for this or plowed more resources for that, then the problem would be solved. We often underestimate the size of government, and so we tend to forget that its sheer enormity is also its constraint. But if designed carefully, the government's size can be a force for good and there is nothing else out there that can compete against it in terms of scale. Working with Sen. Aquino has shown me that government can be designed more thoughtfully, even with limited resources.

**5 Know when to delegate, lead, and participate.** Back in 2014, we were able to pass the GoNegosyo Law to promote enterprise development in the Philippines. Sen. Aquino wanted to make sure this law was implemented as intended. So we formed a team and designed a series of activities with the

(FROM TOP)  
Sen. Bam Aquino addresses the Senate; Karl Satinitigan (THIRD, FROM RIGHT) and team members flank the senator.



Dozens of leaders have the capacity for wonder, especially for what is possible and meaningful... but leaders with a sustained capacity for rigor are hard to find.



Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and many others to oversee the rollout of this new policy. To my surprise, Senator would attend these activities himself and fully participate in the modules alongside entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, and others. His active presence during these events affirmed his commitment to the new law and inspired many others to commit as much. Today, there are now more than 500 Negosyo Centers established by DTI and its partners as mandated by the law, and servicing more than a million new and existing entrepreneurs.

**6 Public service, like leadership, is unique to the individual.** I've learned that not all politicians are alike, the same way that no two humans are alike. It is possible to find a public servant you can respect and willingly work for and still do some lasting good. I did not appreciate this before entering government. But there truly are more good people than bad. And that sometimes, all they need is permission to innovate. You will be amazed at the level of resourcefulness and passion many of our government workers have.

**7 Not every fight can be won, you must persevere.** Working in government can sometimes feel terrible and overwhelming, as we had experienced through numerous disappointments and challenges as a team, but Senator Aquino would always remind us that being part of something as big as this (working in government and public service) is a privilege. A recurring lesson from most of these challenges would be that "Lasting change takes time." And also, "Choose your battles." ▮

*Karl Vendell Satinitigan has been working with Sen. Bam Aquino for five years as Director II. He also heads the Senator's service design team that bridges key policy initiatives with assigned implementing agency and their partners.*

## SEN. BAM AQUINO: 2016 in Review

**CHAIRMAN** Committee on Education, Culture and the Arts  
Committee on Science and Technology

**VICE CHAIR** Committee on Finance

**17 LAWS PASSED** by the end of the 16th congress

**108 BILLS FILED** for the 17th Congress

**3 COMMITTEE REPORT SPONSORED** for the 17th Congress

**23 RESOLUTIONS FILED** for the 17th Congress

### LAWS PASSED by the end of the 16th congress

**RA 10644**  
Go Negosyo Act

**RA 10642**  
Philippine Lemon Law

**RA 10668**  
Foreign Ships Co-loading Act

**RA 10667**  
Philippine Competition Act

**RA 10679**  
Youth Entrepreneurship Act

**RA 10693**  
Microfinance NGOs Act

**RA 10742**  
SK Reform Law

**RA 10744**  
Credit Surety Fund  
Cooperative Act

**RA 10756**  
Election Service Reform Act

**RA 10754**  
An Act Expanding the  
Benefits of Persons with  
Disabilities

**RA 10755**  
An Act Authorizing Punong  
Brgy. To Administer Oath

**RA 10821**  
Children's Emergency Relief  
& Protection Act

Photos taken from the official Facebook page of Sen. Bam Aquino: @BenignoBamAquino

# DUTERTE NOMICS 101

The people behind the planned progress

BY MARCO NICANOR

President Rodrigo R. Duterte's rise to the presidency has been popularly hinged on his promise of eradicating corruption and declaring war on drugs. While it can be argued that he has been making good of his election promises on these aspects, it is surely not the only thrust and focus of the administration. For a nation to prosper, a conducive climate for economic development is a necessity. His economic governance style has been dubbed "Dutertenomics," a recently coined term associated with many things, but foremost, to usher in the "Golden Age of Infrastructure."

Why infrastructure? Because it is the single most problematic aspect of the economy that has been thoroughly neglected, and even compounded, by past presidents. Think: How can goods be transferred from one place to another with the traffic, problematic road systems, air traffic congestion, seaport problems, and many others? And that is just one aspect of infrastructure that needs a lot of attention, to say the least.

This vision can only be achieved by a team of economic managers that will serve as Duterte's main men. Let us take a look at the "who's who," the people responsible (and accountable) to the Filipino people in ensuring that in six years, all of the plans for the economy will come into fruition. ■

## Labor and Employment: Silvestro Bello III

Formerly President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Silvestre Bello III is now the Secretary of Labor and Employment. A lawyer by profession, Bello is now in the midst of finding a solution to end contractualization—a serious problem that has crippled Filipino masses and a campaign promise made by the president during the campaign.

## Trade and Industry: Ramon Lopez

"*Trabaho at negosyo*" is the rallying call of now Trade and Industry Secretary Ramon M. Lopez, who was formerly executive director of the entrepreneurship-advocacy group GoNegosyo. He intends to pursue further support for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), so that more jobs could be created, poverty will be reduced, and inclusive growth can be achieved.

## Transportation: Arthur Tugade

One of the toughest positions that has earned the boundless ire of Filipinos, especially in Metro Manila, has been given to one who seems to have enough experience to actually effect change. Arthur Tugade is part of the economic management team as Secretary of Transportation. Tugade is a corporate lawyer who seems to be cut for the job. He will be in charge of solving the traffic situation not just in Metro Manila, but in other urban areas of the country.

## Agriculture: Emmanuel Piñol

A very challenging position has been given to Emmanuel Piñol, former journalist, agriculturist, and long-time governor of North Cotabato. He is now Secretary of Agriculture—a post heavily riddled with controversies in the past administrations. The agricultural sector will certainly benefit with the "golden age of infrastructure," especially because the Philippines' vast lands are great for agriculture. Piñol has promised to give unending support to farmers to further their welfare and increase production in this sector.

## Budget and Management: Benjamin Diokno

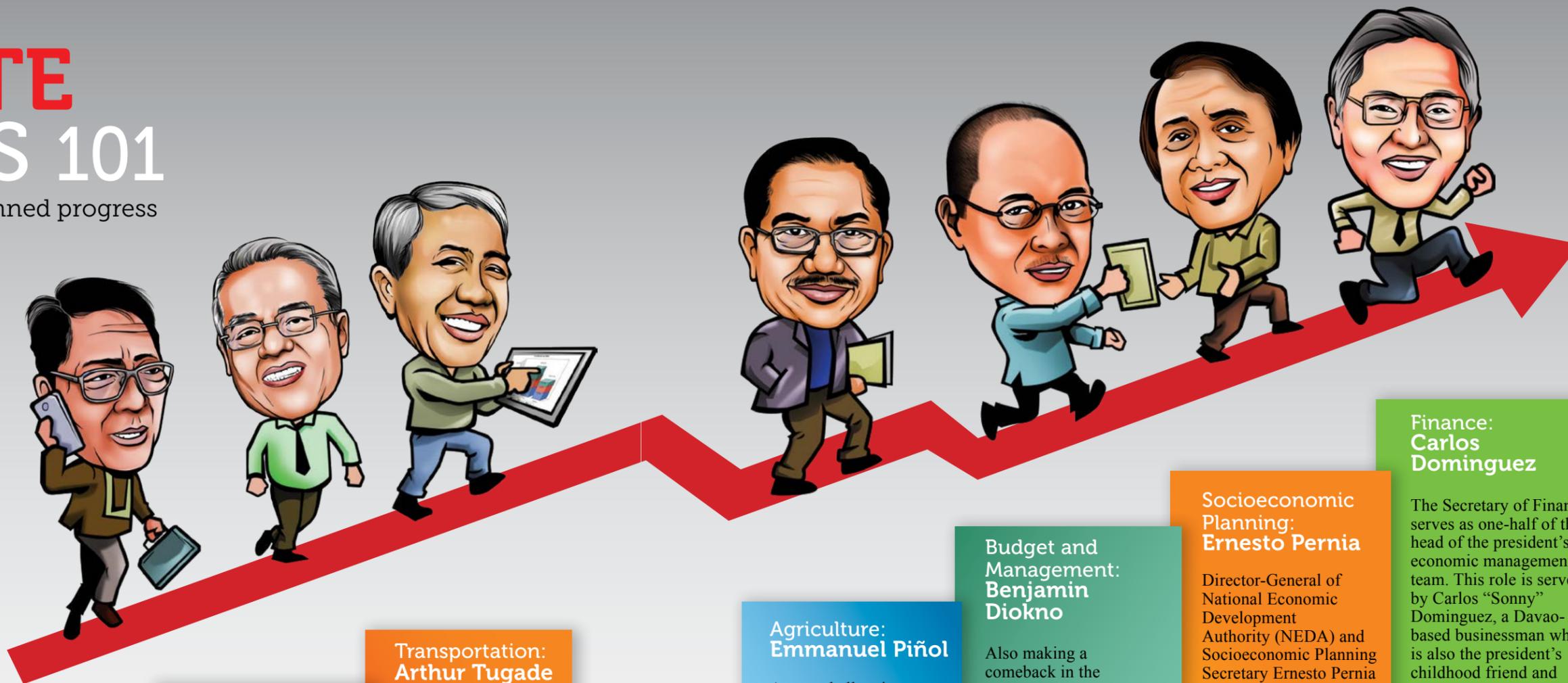
Also making a comeback in the cabinet (after serving in the same post under President Joseph Ejercito Estrada) is Benjamin Diokno, economics professor from the University of the Philippines and now the Secretary of Budget and Management, the other head of the president's economic managers. He promises to raise infrastructure spending to as much as 7% of GDP, something unprecedented in recent administrations. We seem to be in good hands under an academic and tried-and-tested public servant such as Diokno, who is staunchly anti-PDAF and DAP.

## Socioeconomic Planning: Ernesto Pernia

Director-General of National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) and Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia is a decorated academic, being a professor emeritus of economics from the University of the Philippines. He is also a high-ranking economist of the Asian Development Bank. His progressive stance in reproductive health and family planning has stood at odds with that of the Catholic Church, but Dr. Pernia remains unflinching. He has made it clear that population control will be one of the major priorities of this administration. With the increasing poverty rates, his role is of great significance to the economic management team.

## Finance: Carlos Dominguez

The Secretary of Finance serves as one-half of the head of the president's economic management team. This role is served by Carlos "Sonny" Dominguez, a Davao-based businessman who is also the president's childhood friend and classmate. He has been part of the cabinets of President Corazon Aquino and President Fidel Ramos, and was formerly the CEO of Philippine Airlines. With many infrastructure developments underway, government spending and revenue generation will have to be properly monitored, and it is in Dominguez's realm to manage this very important aspect of Dutertenomics. He is also leading the way towards reviewing the antiquated tax system of the country, and is keen on lowering income tax rates so Filipino workers can have more disposable income.



FEATURES

# REVOLUTION & EVOLUTION

Through the efforts of Mayor Dennis Superficial, his team, and their inspired citizenry, the 'Cry of Santa Barbara' can still be heard to this day, shaping a future that befits their proud history.

BY KAYDEE DELA BUENA

This Flagpole Park marks Santa Barbara as part of the Freedom Trail of the Philippine Independence from Spain and was constructed in time for the 1998 Philippine Centennial Celebration.



In 1898, as one of the most important turning points in the Revolution for Philippine Independence, Santa Barbara, Iloilo became the historic site where the Philippine flag was first raised outside of Luzon.

Under the leadership of General Martin Delgado, Filipinos took the municipal building from the Spanish authorities, formed and inaugurated the Revolutionary Government of the Visayas, and flew the country's colors for all to see. With the eventual surrender of Iloilo City by Governor-General de los Rios on Christmas Eve in 1898, Gen. Delgado completed his campaign to liberate the whole province from Spanish rule.

Today, Santa Barbara honors its rich legacy with yet another proud recognition. The town was named No. 1 in Government Efficiency by the National Competitiveness Council (NCC), besting 978 other municipalities in the country last 2016. The NCC developed the Cities and Municipalities Competitiveness Index, with the assistance of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to assess the competitiveness of a city/municipality and identify areas for improvement and collaboration.

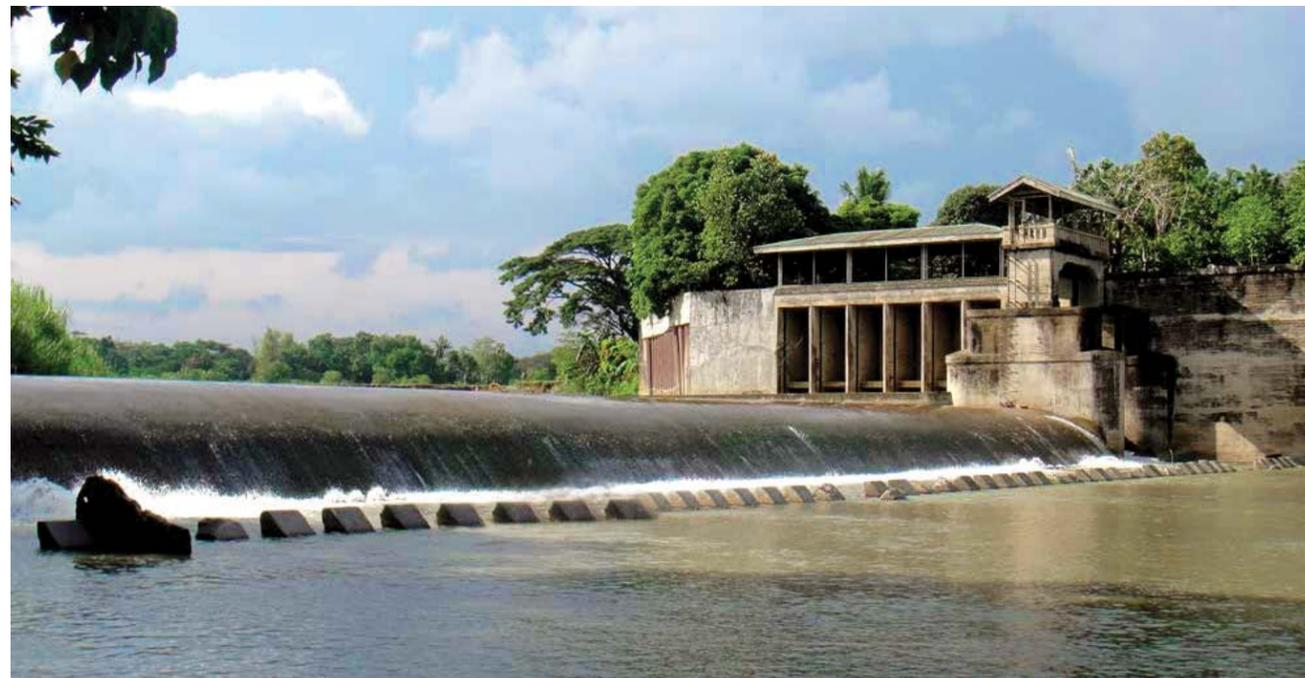
“We are very proud of the recognition as it was achieved through hard work. But there's more to be done,” shares Mayor Dennis Superficial. “Currently, our focus is to maintain the quality of service and standards of excellence that we have been delivering to our constituents. After establishing ourselves as a competitive and transparent local government, our overall mission and vision now is to make Santa Barbara an economically developed municipality—and eventually a city.”

A surgeon by profession, Mayor Superficial has made the successful transition from the operating room to the municipal hall, using his keen problem-solving skills and meticulous attention to detail to his advantage. For him, the orientation of a doctor has always been to “not sleep on a problem,” but “identify the problem and find the solution.” And this same principle he applies when developing resolutions for his city.

**A TOWN'S TRANSFORMATION**

When he was elected in 2010, one of the first orders of business was to update and upgrade systems, streamline processes, and establish efficiency in all arms of the local government. With

“  
Currently, our focus is to maintain the quality of service and standards of excellence that we have been delivering to our constituents.”



CONSTRUCTED IN 1926, THE SANTA BARBARA IRRIGATION DAM IS THE FIRST GRAVITY IRRIGATION SYSTEM IN THE VISAYAS. IT REVOLUTIONALIZED FARMING IN ILOILO PROVINCE AND IS THE OLDEST IRRIGATION SYSTEM IN THE COUNTRY. (PHOTO COURTESY OF WWW.SANTABARBARA.MYGUIDE.PH)



Santa Barbara Roman Catholic Church and Convent was constructed in 1849 and was declared a National Historical Landmark by the National Historical Institute in 1990.



Mayor Dennis Superficial is a doctor by training.

systems in their proper place, Mayor Superficial believed that they could better craft programs that would directly benefit the community and more accurately monitor their progress and productivity.

One of key efforts included updating financial documents, which allowed their office to manage funds better and pinpoint opportunities for growth. “Right now, our annual budget is more or less P150 million—that includes external and local income—which is almost double what we were earning in 2010 at P80 million. As an agricultural town, our income is mostly derived from the processing of agricultural products, and also tourism.”

This impressive growth has piqued the interest of many business owners and companies to invest in Santa Barbara. “We wanted to make Santa Barbara very enticing to investors as a business-friendly municipality,” shares the mayor. In order to build that positive environment, Santa Barbara also streamlined its business permit processes. “We were able to enhance the response of the Local Government Units here in our office with what we call the ‘one-stop lane’ for business applications,” the mayor shares. Their process is so efficient that a new applicant can complete the application and get a business permit within 15 minutes.

“But to make the municipality truly inviting, all aspects of governance should be improved,” stresses Mayor Superficial.

**Santa Barbara has invested heavily in infrastructure projects and the improvement of their roads and highways.**

Aligned with his vision of economic growth, Santa Barbara has invested heavily in infrastructure projects and the improvement of its roads and highways. Today, Santa Barbara has 117 roads that service 60 barangays, occupying over 15,000 hectares of land.

Improving highways had been a particular challenge for the administration in the past years as many of the roads were not concreted. This made it difficult for people to travel and do business especially during typhoon season. But the mayor has found a way to encourage local barangays to invest in the concreting road projects by matching the budget allotted for road repairs.

“So we were able to make a Memorandum of Agreement with the barangays, which states that they if they will allot a portion of the 20% (of their annual budget) to road concreting, the LGU will match the amount,” says Mayor Superficial. So if the barangay commits to P200,000, the LGU will also contribute P200,000 to the fund. “And we have been doing this since 2011, and we’re confident that in two years’ time, we’ll be finished,” proudly states Mayor Superficial.

The building and repair of roads and highways have been fast-tracked not only to aid in the economic development of the municipality, but also to ensure that Santa Barbara can better serve its neighbors as an Emergency Response Center.

“Though Santa Barbara is not prone to calamity and disaster due to its location, it does however heed to the call of its neighbors during emergencies,” shares Mayor Superficial. “Also, we are the only town in the whole Philippines that has a radio station that is also part of our early warning system.”

**A SMALL TOWN WITH A BIG VISION**

Santa Barbara enjoys a unique status as both a cultural-historical gem and modern municipality. And with its



The Victory Plaza serves as the town's central park with landscaped gardens and water fountains. It has two main historical features, which include the Bandstand and the Rizal Monument.

improved roads and highways and high competitiveness standing, Santa Barbara sees itself growing as a tourism destination. "We want to be a progressive municipality, but not by compromising our cultural landmarks. We take great effort in protecting and preserving our landmarks such as the Santa Barbara Roman Catholic Church and Convent (declared a national historical landmark by the National Historical Institute in 1990), Cry of Santa Barbara Marker, The Victory Plaza, and many more."

The city is home not just to a rich and proud history of Spanish influence and the revolutionary movement in the Visayas. It is also the site for colorful festivals (*Kahilwayan* and *Dampog*, for example) and various locally-made products. Santa Barbara was, in fact, recognized as a Hall of Fame Awardee in the 2014 Pearl Awards for its *Kahilwayan* Festival.

In addition to strengthening its economy and tourism, the mayor has dedicated a lot of time and effort in improving its public health administration. In Santa Barbara, an impressive 80% of the population is covered by PhilHealth, according to Mayor Superficial.

Their municipal health office is now accredited to render the DOTS Program (Directly Observed Treatment Short course, the internationally recommended strategy for TB control), and has its own Animal Bite Center. They also have primary care, maternal health services, and child screening. Says Mayor Superficial, "*Pag merong PhilHealth ang mga pasyente, ang PhilHealth ang nagbabayad sa municipal health office namin. 'Yung pasyente walang binabayaran na*

bill, PhilHealth *ang nagbabayad.*" The funds and income generated by the hospitals and health centers, therefore, go back to the doctors, the health personnel, and upkeep of the facilities.

As the city grows, the mayor tries to keep everything well-balanced. "We want to improve economically, but we want to preserve our environment, and, of course, our heritage," Mayor Superficial explains. "What is important as well is that we manage waste and protect the environment, because as the population of the town increases, there is a drawback: the volume of trash that we have to address everyday also increases." For Santa Barbara, the environment, its heritage, its people, and its economy go and grow together.

**THE FIRST CRY IN VISAYAS ECHOES TODAY**

Mayor Superficial is proud that just as there was a "first cry" of the revolution in Balintawak, Manila, there was also a "Cry of Santa Barbara" on November 17, 1898 to launch the Visayas leg of the revolution. He retells the story that every citizen of Santa Barbara knows by heart: "The first flag that was raised outside Luzon was first raised in Santa Barbara headed by our hero General Martin Delgado. They had Mass at the church and went out to the plaza. There, they raised the Philippine flag and declared revolution against Spain."

Through the efforts of Mayor Superficial, his team, and their inspired citizenry, the "Cry of Santa Barbara" can still be heard to this day. The people hear it, respond to it, and add to it, shaping a future that befits their proud history. ■

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CEBU • DAVAO • METRO MANILA • VIGAN

# VIGAN: A THRIVING HERITAGE CITY

Vigan's vision is to create a productive, investment-friendly, and safe heritage province that promotes industrial peace, green economy, employment generation, and poverty reduction

BY ATTY. JAVIER FLORES WITH MIO DELA CRUZ  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
ATTY. JAVIER FLORES AND PIE DAVID

VIGAN IS THE ONLY CITY IN THE COUNTRY THAT HAS BEEN DECLARED BY UNESCO AS A WORLD HERITAGE SITE, AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT IT IS A LIVING FABRIC OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE.



The Brightly Colored Vigan Conservation Complex

**B**agnet and longganisa—for some of us, these come to mind when we think of Vigan. For others, the mention of the city’s name evokes memories of walking along the cobblestoned-steps of Calle Crisologo, and snapping a “selfie” or two with its heritage buildings, or maybe buying an *abel iloko*, the famous handwoven fabric that the region is known for, from the souvenir shops that line the street.

Vigan, however, is an old soul. Vigan is the only city in the country that has been declared by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) as a world heritage site, an acknowledgment that it is a living fabric of historical significance.

Recently, Vigan also won a spot as one of the “New7Wonders Cities” campaign of the Swiss-registered nonprofit New7Wonders Foundation. The campaign allowed people from all over the world to nominate and vote for cities that they believe fit the title of being a wonder of the world. People voted via telephone and the internet. Since Filipinos are some of the most prolific internet users in the world,

Vigan garnered one of the seven coveted spots, alongside Beirut, a city founded in 3,000 BC.

Garnering those accolades guaranteed a steady stream of tourists for Vigan. But as any conservationist would know, tourism brings its own boons and burdens. According to Tourism Investment Promotion Officer Edgar de la Cruz, the city receives an estimated one million visitors per year, both in terms of day visitors and tourists who stay overnight. Hotels have been required to expand, and transient houses have sprung up to accommodate the influx of tourists. The volume of foot and vehicle traffic generates vibrations that threaten the age-old buildings that are the hallmarks of Vigan.

**A plan is already in place to develop a Metro Vigan, which includes the neighboring municipalities of Bantay, Caoayan, Sta. Catalina, San Idefonso, and San Vicente**



**KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES**

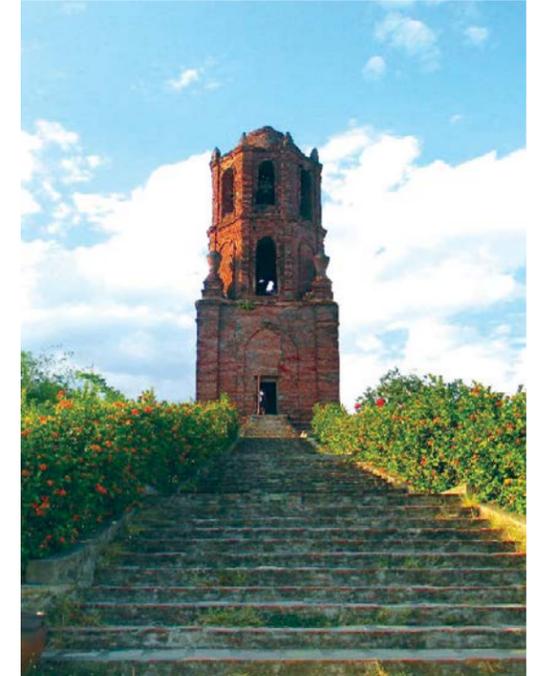
Vigan knew how to cope. In the early 2000s, under the steady leadership of Mayor Eva Marie Singson-Medina, the mother of the current Mayor, Juan Carlo Medina, the city saw the need to improve other tourism destinations so that people and trade would not be limited to Calle Crisologo. To that end, the city designated and upgraded the areas for the industries it is known for: loom weaving, jar- or burnay-making, preparation of native delicacies, and *damili*-making (or terracotta or red clay craft making), among a host of others. All these areas are reachable by horse-drawn carriages or *kalesas*.

Mayor Singson-Medina also laid the groundwork for the Vigan Conservation Complex, which is a vision that will see completion under the term of her son. The complex houses not only one museum, but three, featuring various periods of Vigan history—from the time of its early settlers, to the time of the Japanese occupation, and to the period of the *saka-saka*, that violent phase in Ilocos history defined by the bloody arch-rivalry between the Singson and the Crisologo clans.

The Conservation Complex also features an *Escuela Talyer* or school for restorers, a product development center for ceramics, and a research center that will house digitized materials regarding the history of the north culled from the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP). Once the complex is opened to the public, students will be able to use the interactive features of the museum such as the ability to build a digital house using traditional architectural features of doors, windows, and roof.

The city has also been a recipient of a convergence fund from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Department of Tourism (DOT) to develop Calle Ventura Delos Reyes and Plaridel Streets, which are streets parallel to Calle Crisologo, including all adjoining roads. Soon, these streets will also be paved with cobblestones sourced locally to ease the congestion at Calle Crisologo.

Considering the city’s focus on conservation of its heritage, it is but natural that the city adopted a Vigan Conservation Council, which reviews and approves applications for construction, renovation, restoration, and other works in the heritage district. It is composed of representatives from



(CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP) Vigan’s Gregoria M. Rivera Memorial Library; the Bantayan Watch Tower; Mayor Carlo Medina



The loom used for making *abel* was a common fixture in households during the Spanish era.

the local government, the academe, the homeowners association, non-government organizations, and the Church.

The accolades of the city do not end there. Under a competition held by the Council for the Welfare of Children, Vigan had won as the most child-friendly city under the component city category three years in a row, from 2009 to 2011. In 2011, Vigan was elevated into the Hall of Fame of the competition, and now spends a great deal of its efforts in teaching other local government units policies geared for the welfare of children in the community.

**A LOOK BACK AT VIGAN'S HISTORY**

Long before it was called Vigan and before the arrival of the Spaniards, the lands lying in the delta of the Abra River and hemmed in by the Mestizo and the Govantes rivers were known as "Samtoy," a contraction of the words "*sao mi ditoy*," meaning "our language." The area was already an important trading center for merchants from Japan, China, Malaya, India, and

the local inhabitants composed mostly of Dumagats and Tinguians.

Chinese junks laden with silk and porcelain regularly traded with the people from the Cordillera region, who brought with them gold and beeswax. As the goods brought by the Chinese junks were light, the Chinese would use *pedra china* or granite cobblestones as ballast, and would leave these stones in the Samtoy once they had the goods they needed. These *pedra china* became the flooring material of stone houses and churches that are seen around Vigan to this day.

When the Spaniards arrived on the islands, the trading post captured their attention. It was also at that time that the place began to be called Vigan. The name originated from an often-told tale of a Spaniard walking along the banks of the Mestizo River where he met a native. When the Spaniard asked for the name of the place in the Spanish language and pointed to the ground, the local inhabitant did not understand him. But seeing that Spaniard was pointing to giant taro plant called *Bigaa*, the

native exclaimed "Bigaa Apo." Hence, the name Vigan.

After the Spaniards established their colonial capital in Manila, Governor General Guido de Lavezares sent Captain Juan de Salcedo with 70 to 80 soldiers on a pacification or evangelization campaign to the north, beginning with Vigan (also spelled as Bigan). Salcedo arrived in Vigan on June 12, 1572.

Don Juan de Salcedo christened the place "Villa Fernandina de Vigan" in honor of King Philip II's son, Prince Ferdinand who died at the age of four. After Salcedo pacified Luzon, he was rewarded the province of Ylocos, then made up of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Abra, La Union, and some part of Mountain Province as his Encomienda, with Vigan as its capital.

It was the Spaniards who designed the grid of streets and buildings according to a pattern inscribed in *Ley de la Indias* for all new towns in the Spanish Empire.

A Papal Bull established the Nueva Segovia diocese in Cagayan's city of Lallo as the religious center of the North of Luzon. Due to the threat of flooding, the diocese was transferred to Vigan, which at the time was only a pueblo or town, and not yet a city, by virtue of the Royal Decree of Sept. 7, 1758. By this Royal Decree, the new seat of the diocese was automatically elevated to the status of a city.

Today, the City Government of Vigan is the repository of a certified true copy of the Royal Decree issued by King Fernando VI. It states, among others, that so long as the cathedral stands and the seat of the diocese is in Vigan, it will always remain as a city.

**FINDING ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE ON THE PHILIPPINE MAP**

"You can be out all night long in Vigan and we can guarantee your safety," Gov. Ryan and Mayor Carlo Medina of Vigan both say, and cite former Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson for laying the groundwork for their province's enviable peace and order today.

The strength of Singson's political dynasty in the province is viewed by his politically-inclined relatives and allies to signify peace and unity. Although Chavit

ran and won as municipal councilor last year in Narvacan, as token political participation after announcing he has had enough of politics, he continues to be the fulcrum from which politics in Ilocos Sur revolve. Many of his relatives and allies ran unopposed in the last 2016 elections, including Gov. Ryan (son), Vice Gov. Jerry Singson (brother), Vigan Mayor Carlo Medina (nephew), First District Rep. DV Savellano (partymate), and Second District Rep. Eric Singson (cousin).

The political clan attributes the sustained economic success of Ilocos Sur, specifically the cities of Vigan and Candon, to their collective political will and cooperation. Gov. Ryan notes that without the support and cooperation of elected leaders from various levels of governance in his province—from barangay officials and municipal council members to provincial board members and representatives in Congress—the task of rebuilding Vigan to its former glory days would have been impossible.

Mayor Eva, mother of incumbent Mayor Carlo, is recognized as the key architect of Vigan's transformation from a laid-back municipality to a vibrant city that attracts an average of a million



visitors a year. She is the daughter of the late former Ilocos Sur Gov. Evaristo "Toting" Singson, Chavit's brother, who served as mayor of Vigan at the same time when Chavit was governor of Ilocos Sur from 1972 to 1986.

**GETTING READY FOR METRO VIGAN**

If size and population were the only bases for cityhood, Vigan would not have qualified as a city even today. According to figures from the Philippine Statistics Authority, Vigan does not have the minimum land area and population required by the Local Government Code for cityhood.

This is why a plan is already in place to develop a Metro Vigan, which includes the neighboring municipalities of Bantay, Caoayan, Sta. Catalina, San Ildefonso, and San Vicente. With Vigan's growing popularity among tourists and investors, more economic growth is expected in the next 10 years. Economic expansion is also forecast to happen to Candon City in the Second District, with spillover economic benefits to neighboring towns: Santiago, San Esteban, Sta. Lucia, Sta. Cruz, Galimuyod, Salcedo, Tagudin, and Banayoyo.

The provincial government has both medium- and long-term plans to shepherd these developments. "We're closely working with NEDA (National Economic Development Authority) and DPWH (Department of Public Works and Highways) in identifying infrastructure projects to support our development

projects," he says. "While we wish to have more industries to hasten industrialization and generate more jobs for our people, we're also focused on supporting our farmers because our province is still basically an agricultural area."

**KEYS TO COMPETITIVENESS**

The first six years of Gov. Ryan's incumbency saw Ilocos Sur's steady rise in the competitiveness index as monitored by the National Competitiveness Council. The province now ranks 11th, just a notch behind Ilocos Norte, and is expected to be in the top 10 before his third and final term as governor, which ends in 2019.

The local government unit is in talks with potential investors from other countries—Malaysia, Indonesia, and China—for projects that qualify under the Public-Private Partnership Program of the government. "Most of these are outside Vigan so that we can continue to protect our cultural heritage and allow other towns to grow and prosper," says the governor. The province is particularly bullish about attracting business from China, the world's newest economic powerhouse, because of its relative proximity.

Gov. Ryan's vision is to "create a productive, investment-friendly, and safe heritage province," anchored on a 10-year (2010-2020) development plan that promotes industrial peace, green economy, employment generation, and poverty reduction. ■



Burnay pottery or red-clay craft is one of the traditional industries that has made Vigan famous.

FEATURES

# PROTECTING LAGUNA'S NATURAL WONDERS

The "Resort Province of the Philippines" moves to protect its natural resources through an Environment Code, ensuring sustainable growth for its ecotourism industry

BY JOHN LEE P. CANDELARIA



THE SERENE VIEW OF LAGUNA LAKE

**A**h, Laguna. That wondrous province steeped in history, filled with irresistible delicacies, and with such varied terrain and geographical features, is certainly a sight to behold for tourists who want to enjoy what the province can offer.

Its natural hot springs remain a strong attraction during summertime and have given rise to a tourism industry that's been growing year after year.

But Laguna is not only known for its hot springs. The name of the province itself, Laguna, means lake in Spanish, given by the Spaniards who noticed that the lands that embrace the Laguna de Bay must aptly be named after the said body of water. And with the lake present, many forms of water bodies exist in the province. The crater lakes of San Pablo, the lake reservoirs of Caliraya and Lumot, and the river tributaries of Pagsanjan, all offer a variety of opportunities for people to enjoy. The moniker "resort province of

the Philippines" is not baseless, after all.

**TOURISM IN LAGUNA**

Laguna's proximity to the National Capital Region makes it rich in history as well. Archaeological finds in Pila prove that the province has been one of the earliest settlements in the Philippines. It is the birthplace of the most prominent Filipino hero, Jose Rizal, and the Rizal Shrine in Calamba has always hosted students and tourists from all over the country. Historical markers during World War II are also present in the province, especially in the town of Los Baños, where the Japanese commanders Homma and Yamashita were executed.

The oldest churches from the Spanish colonial period, which date back to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, can also be found in Laguna. The Catholic Holy Week brings in a multitude of pilgrims taking part in the Visita Iglesia, visiting several churches to pray and hear mass.

THE HYDRO-ELECTRIC PLANT IN KALAYAAN, LAGUNA



FAMILIES ENJOY FEEDING THE CARP AT THE SOLENAD, NUVALI



(FROM TOP) LAGUNA GOVERNOR RAMIL HERNANDEZ; FUN AT ENCHANTED KINGDOM



**The crater lakes of San Pablo, the lake reservoirs of Caliraya and Lumot, and the river tributaries of Pagsanjan, all offer a variety of opportunities for people to enjoy.**

Aside from the natural and the historical, a variety of activities in the area also attract local tourists. The Enchanted Kingdom in Sta. Rosa is still the country's most popular and biggest theme park. The Solenad in Nuvali, also in Sta. Rosa, is a shopping and restaurant district that has all the city feels, giving Laguna the balance of the urban and rural appeal.

But what remains as Laguna's main draw is its natural heritage. "Laguna's rich natural resources have always been popular all year round," says Dr. Rosauro Sta. Maria, Chief of Laguna Tourism, Culture, Arts, and Trade Office (LTCATO). His office oversees the tourism policies and activities of Laguna, which is quite the task. He points out the difficulties he encounters in the tourism management of Laguna, "We have about more than 20 municipalities and six cities,

and not all have tourism offices; it is difficult, but we manage."

Dr. Sta. Maria cites the challenge of maintaining the ecotourism sites of Laguna in the age of social media. All it takes nowadays is for someone to go to a pristine natural site, take pictures, and post it on Facebook. As soon as it goes viral, tourists start coming in. "Without a policy or management measures in place, the ecology of the site could be damaged," he says.

Dr. Sta. Maria, a medical doctor by profession, maintains that there should be a balance between economic benefits and environmental protection when it comes to tourism activities. "Tourism allows the growth of industries in the area, but once the environment has been degraded, what used to be a beautiful destination could easily be ruined," he stresses.

It is in this context that the Provincial Government of Laguna

has been championing the strict implementation of Provincial Ordinance No. 4, series of 2015, "An Ordinance Establishing the Environmental Code of the Province of Laguna."

**THE ENVIRONMENT CODE OF LAGUNA**

Laguna provides more than 33 percent of power generation in Luzon, while the Laguna Lake is essential to the water supply of Metro Manila. Thirty percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings also originate from the province, due to the presence of the province's 30 industrial parks. Most of the food supply of Metro Manila also comes from Laguna. All these make the impetus to protect Laguna's natural resources crucial.

The Environment Code is being implemented by the Environmental and Natural Resources Office (ENRO) headed by Engr. David Rubio. "Our



(FROM TOP) LILIW, LAGUNA IS FAMOUS FOR ITS FOOTWEAR; MAKING URARO (ARROWROOT) COOKIES; UNDER THE MAJESTIC AMBON-AMBON FALLS

office has made the necessary preparation and we are well-equipped to realize our mandate, as it will help improve the lives of the people of Laguna,” he says.

The Environment Code has a big mandate that governs fisheries and aquatic resources, natural resources management and conservation, land use management, protection and improvement of water quality, air quality management, wildlife protection and conservation, forestry and soil conservation, flood control and natural calamities, energy development, conservation and utilization of surface and ground waters, mineral resources management, and waste management.

**“We empower the local communities to participate in ecotourism governance because at the end of the day, it is them who will benefit more.” —Dr. Rosaura Sta. Maria, Chief of Laguna Tourism, Culture, Arts, and Trade Office**

Ecotourism is an integral part of the code. It cites that Laguna is “home to diverse and abundant natural resources and cultural heritage,” which include “Laguna Lake, Tadalak Lake of Los Baños, Pagsanjan Falls, hot springs of Los Baños and Calamba in the slopes of Mount Makiling, cold springs in the slopes of Mount Banahaw, the Sierra Madre Mountain Range and the mystical twin mountains of Banahaw and San Cristobal, Taytay Falls in Majayjay, hidden valley springs of Calauan, Seven Lakes of San Pablo,” and many more.

These natural attractions are complemented by Laguna’s rich cultural heritage. And these must all be managed through sustainable tourism practices.

**HARNESSING ECOTOURISM POTENTIAL**

“Our office (LTCATO) complies with relevant laws such as RA 10066 (Natural Cultural Heritage Conservation Act), PD 1152 (Philippine Environment Code), and RA 9593 or the Tourism Act of 2009. Together with the ENRO, we are tasked to adopt measures to enhance the services and facilities to accommodate local and international visitors to our natural and cultural sites,” says Dr. Sta. Maria. But this tourism infrastructure must be balanced with sustainable ecotourism management strategies.

LTCATO particularly supports community-based ecotourism, or the co-management approach to establishing, operating, maintenance, and visitor marketing of the ecotourism sites. “We empower the local communities to participate in ecotourism governance because at the end of the day, it is them who will benefit more.”



SKILLED ARTISANS FROM LUMBAN, LAGUNA



COSTALES NATURE FARMS IN MAJAYJAY, LAGUNA

The Environment Code of Laguna specifically addresses the challenges of managing the Laguna Lake, a very important body of water in the province. According to Dr. Maria Victoria O. Espaldon of the School of Environmental Science and Management of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), real ecotourism can be good for Laguna Lake. Real in the sense that it “preserves the naturalness of the landscape or the seascape, and not about constructing dikes or buildings.”

“The idea of developing Laguna Lake, with ecotourism as a platform, can actually help bring in more jobs because old boats can engage in tours, while people can produce food and handicrafts,” she says.

The same model can be applied to other ecotourism sites. “The focus need not be on constructing hotels, lavish accommodations, and other infrastructure,” says Dr. Sta. Maria. “What we can highlight to the tourists is the natural activities that they can do to enjoy their surroundings, such as trekking, backpacking, camping, mountain biking, birding, photo safari, and other relevant activities.”

This holds true for the Mt. Makiling Forest Reserve, a mainstay in the Laguna tourist map and often the destination of educational trips for students. Under the management of the UPLB, the mountain has been utilized to promote sound environmental practices that relate to tourism activities. The Makiling Botanical Garden, for example, has been receiving tourists



(FROM LEFT) ONE OF THE OLDEST CHURCHES IN THE TOWN OF PAETE; SHOOTING THE RAPIDS AT PAGSANJAN FALLS



and guests for decades now, and still maintains its rich biodiversity despite the influx of visitors every day. It also helps that the forest reserve is the laboratory of the university’s College of Forestry and Natural Resources, the country’s premier educational institution for forestry.

**FOLLOWING LAGUNA’S LEAD IN ECOTOURISM**

Other provinces should follow Laguna’s model of promoting sustainable ecotourism activities through the Environment Code. The detailed provincial ordinance

will further enable relevant offices mandated to protect the environment while promoting different industries of the province such as tourism.

Laguna Governor Ramil Hernandez believes that the Environment Code of the province will ensure the balance of economic development and environmental protection and sustainability in Laguna. “It is our hope that the natural resources and environment of Laguna will be protected and preserved,” he says, “and with the thorough implementation of the code, we will make sure those who will not follow it will face the corresponding penalties.”

# WOMAN OF STEEL

A toughie with the heart for service, Davao City's first lady mayor Inday Sara Duterte-Carpio continues her father's legacy, proving that the "Crown Jewel of the South" deserves the global spotlight

BY LAKAMBINI BAUTISTA



Davao City Mayor Inday Sara Duterte-Carpio welcomes Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua and other high-ranking officials of the Chinese Navy as three Chinese Warships dock in Davao for a friendly visit.



Mayor Sara led the send-off ceremony for Indonesian President Joko Widodo after the successful launching of Davao-General Santos-Bitung ASEAN RoRo Shipping Services.

**F**eisty and “palaban” are terms easily associated with Davao City Mayor Inday Sara Duterte-Carpio. She’s not one to back down from any fight, and has a “don’t-mess with me attitude” especially on issues that are close to her heart, which include peace and order, the welfare of the poor, women, and children.

If you are historically the only lady mayor (not to mention, the youngest!) in the largest and most populous city in Mindanao and taking over the reins of a strong-willed leader that is your father, President Rody Duterte, people expect nothing less from you.

As Mayor Sara was busy attending to the urgent matters of the Marawi Crisis (with Davao City having been placed under Martial

Law), *League* asked people who work with her about her kind of leadership and governance, and how she is leading Davao towards progress.

#### FEISTY AND FEARLESS

To people who have only heard of her name, she was the gutsy mayor who punched a court sheriff over a demolition work back in 2011. But to people who know the story behind—such as Jefry Tupas, who was then a news reporter and now Davao City’s information officer, and the owner of the shanties that were demolished—Mayor Sara is the “Iron Lady” who vowed to defend the rights of her constituents.

In Tupas’ news report on *inquirer.net*, Mayor Sara, a lawyer by profession, admitted she was angered by the sheriff’s insistence on serving the notice of eviction when she was only asking for a two-hour reprieve until the residents’ lawyers got a ruling from the Court of Appeals. Proving her capacity to mediate, the incident ended with the mayor eventually convincing the people to relocate.



**Mayor Sara is the Iron Lady who vowed to defend the rights of her constituents.**

Fast forward to 2017, Inday Sara, as she prefers to be called by the people of Davao, is still the same unflinching mayor. “Mayor Sara is *palaban*,” quips City Legal Officer and Chief of Staff Atty. Raul Nadela, Jr. “She’s not meek at all. She speaks her mind, if she thinks this would help put forward an agenda. But if she thinks that doing so will just aggravate the situation, she would rather not speak about it.”

Mayor Sara can appear intimidating to people meeting her for the first time, not because she puts on airs and graces, but because she’s pretty and intelligent. “Unknown to many, she is actually kind of shy but very approachable,” says Atty. Nadela.

The lady mayor’s wisdom in public service, he says, comes from experience and maturity, as she has served one term as vice-mayor, and is now on her second term as mayor. “Sometimes, there’s a problem and we present possible solutions, and then she’ll give us an option that we never thought of. I get amazed by her insights,” he says.

#### HEART FOR THE MASA

One of the qualities that can be considered “*Tatak Duterte*” is the sincerity to serve—something that is clearly passed on from father to daughter. Their gauge to know if a project is worthy to spend money on: if the results can benefit the grassroots.

“Mayor Sara wants everything done fast! She wants tangible results,” says Tupas.

“She’s very result-oriented,” concurs Atty. Nadela. “If it is an anti-poverty program, the beneficiary must feel that her life has drastically changed. If it’s a livelihood project—say, we gave cattle and farm materials to residents in far-flung areas, or we provide capitalization to small businesses, we evaluate if the assistance given made their lives better. We do the evaluations during the last quarter of the year.”

All agencies under the city government of Davao are guided by the mayor’s ten-point agenda:

poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, solid waste management, education, health, agriculture, tourism, transportation planning and traffic management, peace and order, and disaster risk reduction and mitigation. “We make sure that all those projects get implemented, all the programs are felt by the people,” says Atty. Nadela.

**“**Mayor Sara wants everything done fast! She wants tangible results.  
—Jefry Tupas, Davao City Information



Mayor Sara was toured inside the Philippine Navy Ship, BRP Gregorio Del Pilar.



The mayor offers legal advice to a constituent in her office.



Mayor Sara speaks in front of the 911 Volunteer Auxiliary Police on their graduation at Camp Domingo Leonor.



Residents of a sitio of Barangay Malabog, Paquibato District consult Mayor Sara.

“Most Davaoños will agree: Mayor Sara got her father’s political will. ‘Si President Rody, if he wants things done, nangyayari talaga. Ganoon din si Mayor Sara.’ —Tupas

While it’s impossible to micromanage a city that’s composed of 182 barangays, the mayor makes sure that her instructions are clear, and that she makes follow-ups, based on the agreed timelines.

“As department heads, we meet every Monday, to discuss everything and make sure that what we’re doing is aligned with what the mayor envisions,” says Atty. Nadela. Mayor Sara makes herself accessible via group chats on Viber, WhatsApp, and Facebook messenger. “She’s very techie. She replies any time of the day, even at 2 a.m. when she’s breastfeeding.”

#### POLITICAL WILL AND MOTHERLY INSTINCT

Most Davaoños will agree: Mayor Sara got her father’s political will. “Si President Rody, if he wants things done, nangyayari talaga. Ganoon din si Mayor Sara,” says Tupas.

Proof: the ordinances on anti-smoking and prohibition of sale of liquors and cigarettes to minors, no liquor drinking after midnight, among others, are still in place and strictly implemented in the city. Adds Tupas,

“Mayor Sara reiterated the enforcement of smoking ban in public places. She called a meeting with bar and restaurant owners and told them, ‘If you are not going to follow our existing laws and ordinances, I will be forced to shut down your establishments.’”

But Mayor Sara balances it off with her motherly instinct, which is apparent in the way she cares for her constituents, especially the children. One of her key projects is the Kean Gabriel Hotline, which rescues and helps child abuse victims,” says Atty. Nadela. It was named in memory of Kean Gabriel Agustin, who was turning four when he died in the hands of his allegedly abusive stepfather in August 2016.

“Mayor Sara is very passionate about that project because she likes kids. *Ang gusto niya lahat ng bata ay pumapasok sa iskwela. Ayaw niya ng may batang nasasaktan o minamaltrato,*” Atty. Nadela adds. The mayor has three children of her own—Sharky, Stingray, and Stonefish.

According to Tupas, Mayor Sara goes to the communities every now and then to reach out to the residents, even personally giving lectures to the

mothers and the youth. A week before this interview, the mayor went to a far-flung barangay, where premarital sex and early pregnancy were found prevalent.

“One time, she was quick to spot a child sleeping in a crib beside the city hall without a guardian. *Pinatawag nya ang nanay ng bata,* and the lady received a mouthful from the mayor. *Sabi niya, kung nagtatrabaho ka, meron naman tayong child care center and social workers who can provide care for the child while you’re away,*” explains Tupas.

#### CHALLENGING TIME

The Roxas Night Market bombing can be considered as one of the major problems that challenged the administration of Mayor Sara. But armed with resilience and sheer Davaoño (or shall we say, Filipino) spirit, life simply goes on.

Business owner and Kadayawan Festival head Gatchie Gatchalian says, “The day after the Roxas Night Market bombing, she was there at the site telling everyone that yes, something happened, but we are on top of the situation. We are safe here. That shows leadership,” he says.

Maintaining peace and order in the city remains a top priority for Mayor Sara. But her foremost vision, according to Atty. Nadela, is to alleviate poverty. “All people in Davao should have homes to live in, all children should go to school, all families should enjoy three meals a day.”

From what we have observed, Davao is on its way there. ■

Mayor Sara likes kids. *Ang gusto niya lahat ng bata ay pumapasok sa iskwela. Ayaw niya ng may batang nasasaktan o minamaltrato.*

— Chief of Staff  
Atty. Raul Nadela, Jr.



Mayor Sara lights a candle during a mass offered to the victims of Roxas night market bombing.



Mayor Sara consoles the wife of Larry, a fish vendor who was killed by an NPA land mine.



Mayor Sara is welcomed by students of Malabog Elementary School. The mayor visits the school on its first day of classes.

# DEFINING DAVAO

From being one of the most-feared crime capitals in the country, Davao City now enjoys the highest confidence of its people and is regarded as one of the country's safest cities.

BY KRISTEL DACUMOS-LAGORZA

**W**hile it has seen itself become hot topic of numerous political discussions in the past, Davao City finds itself under a new type of scrutiny. With the assumption of their beloved Mayor Rodrigo Duterte as President of the Republic, Davao City is now back at the center of attention, being watched by leaders and people across the globe.

Rodrigo Duterte is, without a doubt, the pivotal figure and force who had turned the city around. He served as mayor for 22 years—though at different intervals due to the legal limitations of holding office for more than three consecutive terms—and cracked down on criminality. During his term, there was a significant drop in crime, and the city flourished under the sustained period of peace.

Today, Davao City is still being led by Duterte, but this time by his daughter Sara Duterte-Carpio, who continues the many programs of her father. She is Davao City's youngest and first woman mayor. And though she takes on after her strong-willed father when it comes to establishing peace and order in her city, she is exhibiting her own brand of leadership.

When Mayor Sara assumed office on June 30, 2016, her second term as mayor (she served her first from 2010 to 2013), she laid out a comprehensive 10-point agenda, which would serve as a guide for all the agencies under the city government. Her 10-point agenda encompasses the issues of poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, solid waste management, education, health, agriculture, tourism, transportation planning and traffic management,



A popular site in Davao, The Philippine Eagle Center primarily operates as a conservation breeding facility for the critically endangered Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) and other birds of prey.



peace and order, and disaster risk reduction and mitigation. Resources would be geared towards accomplishing the realistic targets anchored on these 10 priorities.

“My vision is simple,” the mayor shares. “I want our constituents to have gainful employment, decent housing, and educated and healthy children. I want them to be able to eat three meals a day, and to be safe and secure in their daily activities. The people of Davao must experience meaningful and sustainable change and development under my administration.”

*League* sits down with Mayor Sara’s key leaders as they share how the local government is realizing the mayor’s goals for the growing city of Davao.

#### PEACE AND ORDER

Mayor Rodrigo Duterte’s “transformative term” in Davao and his aggressive campaign against drugs and crime has fueled numerous stories, transforming the mayor into a man of myth, a legend. While others are divided when it comes to his methods, all agree that he has been able to deliver results. It was through political will and an iron fist that Duterte was able to bring back a state of “peace” to the city.

Mayor Sara, a woman after her own father, continues an equally strong campaign against drugs. But while her father relied on the strength of the police force, Mayor Sara uses technology in maintaining peace in Davao.

It was, in fact, her idea to install the city-wide closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance systems, which help to apprehend traffic violators, identify culprits, and assist emergency response teams. The management of the CCTV systems falls under the monitoring of the Public Safety and Security Command Center (PSSCC), a division under the Office of the City Mayor, which was created through Executive Order No. 18 Series of 2012. The PSSCC was established specifically to provide protection, security, safety, and risk management to the people of Davao City.

The PSSCC operates through a coordinative approach, addressing the different issues of safety and security relative to crime, terrorism, security, traffic, health and social services, emergency services, and disaster risk reduction by using information, people, technology, and intelligent solutions. The office also coordinates with the Davao City Police Office (DCPO), the



(CLOCKWISE, FROM RIGHT)  
The Davao Airport welcomes hundreds of visitors everyday; the Public Safety and Security Command Center HQ



**Davao’s CCTV surveillance security systems help in identifying suspects in crimes, assisting the medical response teams during emergencies, and encouraging citizens to follow the laws of the city.**

Task Force Davao (TFD), the Traffic Management Center (TMC), the Central 911, the Davao City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (DCDRMC), the barangay officials, and other law enforcement agencies daily to ensure peace within the city.

Comprised of 17 surveillance cameras, the CCTV Traffic System is manned by a team who are especially trained to monitor the city’s busiest traffic points. The live camera feeds are recorded and stored, making them an important tool for prosecution and the reporting of crimes and accidents. “With the election of President Rodrigo Duterte, we’ve seen a boom in the number of tourists and businessmen visiting Davao. And so it has only become more important to use these CCTV systems,” shares Khomieni Ainin, the Operations Assistant of PSSCC.

With Davao City welcoming more and more people every day, the CCTV system helps in traffic management by identifying choke points. “Traffic is bearable as of now, but the government is already anticipating possible, future aggravation of the situation,” shares Ivan Cortez, officer-in-charge of the Office of the City Planning and Development Coordinator.

“Addressing the issue as early as now, the local government is collaborating with other international

agencies to assist in its city planning development. Davao is working with the Asian Development (ADB) and National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) to build a high-density bus system to help ease traffic and offer better transportation services to the public. We have great confidence that this will be realized in the next five years,” he adds.

If one wants to check out the CCTV traffic operations, they can easily visit the PSSCC headquarters as it is open to the public.

Undoubtedly, the unique CCTV surveillance security systems of Davao is what interests many of those not from the city as it has proven its immediate benefit—helping to identify suspects in crimes, assisting the medical response teams during emergencies, and encouraging citizens to follow the laws of the city.

“Before the PSSCC was established, the respective agencies operated based on their own mandates, and there was very little coordination among them,” shares PSSCC chief, Retired General Benito de Leon. “There can be duplication or miscommunication, and so the city mayor and governor at that time saw that this was inefficient,” adds General de Leon. “The CCTV system is not only cost-efficient in the long run (versus employing hundreds of police and security personnel), but it

also instills confidence and the sense of security among the people. People learn to abide by the law because they know that they can be caught.”

At the time of the *League*’s trip to Davao, the threat of terrorism was very high and Martial Law was declared in Mindanao in response to the Marawi Crisis. In addition to the CCTV security systems, the local government amped up police and military presence, helping to ease any worry and build confidence in the local government to respond to threats of instability.

While the rest of the country debated whether this was the right decision, the citizens of Davao City believed in the wisdom of Mayor Sara to implement stricter security measures and to support Martial Law.

Within days, Cayamora Maute, the father of the Maute Brothers, Omar and Abdullah, key leaders of the terror group responsible for the Marawi Crisis, was apprehended in Davao. The mother, Omenta Romato Maute, was later arrested in Lanao del Sur. “It just comes to show that our coordinated efforts work,” underlines General de Leon. “The hotlines, the tarps that helped increase awareness about the suspects, the stricter check points, and such allowed us to do our job and protect not just the city but the rest of the country.”

As another anti-terrorism measure,



Davao pioneered the 911 hotline in the Philippines

for Davao citizens. “There are a lot of people coming to Davao City, because they consider it a sanctuary. Like what happened during the typhoon at Davao Oriental, when citizens fled to Davao City, seeking reprieve. That is what is happening now,” says General de Leon. “The Unified ID System, proposed by the city’s peace and order council, is a means to protect and profile people. We have to respond to the threats accordingly.” But it is still being studied, he admits. This is to ensure that the ID system becomes a tool in protecting people and not a means to violate civil liberties—i.e. used to discriminate, unlawfully apprehend others, etc.

#### EMERGENCY RESPONSE

With regard to being prepared for national disasters, Davao is unsurprisingly well-equipped as it was the first to launch the 911 hotline during President Rodrigo Duterte’s term as mayor. Since then, the sector has improved in terms of efficiency, cutting down its response time and furthering the training of its medical teams.

During the night market bombing in Davao City last Sept. 2, 2016, the emergency response team was able to reach the site in just seven minutes after the explosion, and was able to save lives and treat the wounded.

Because of the quick and impressive response of their medial teams, Davao City was recognized at the Kalasag Awards for having the “Best Response Team in the Philippines.” Many other local government units in the country have sought advice from Davao, patterning their central emergency units, public safety and security offices, and disaster management responses after Davao’s model.

“But there are still many ways we can improve our operations,” admits the general. “Protocols are still being studied and established. Currently, we are sending people abroad to learn about best business practices, and how to further expand our emergency response guidelines.”

In addition to fine-tuning the operations of the emergency response team and central 911, Davao City has launched other hotlines to help protect the vulnerable populations. One of the key projects of Mayor Sara Duterte is the Anti-Child Abuse Hotline, called the Kean Gabriel Hotline, named after the brave boy who was abused and died at the hands of family members. “This hotline is helping a lot of child abuse victims now. In fact, we have been able to rescue numerous kids from abusive families, with suspects already being prosecuted,” shares Jeffrey Tupas, the City Information Officer.

#### TOURISM’S ‘HAPPY PROBLEM’

With the attention Davao is receiving, the dynamics of the city in terms of tourism has definitely changed, with thousands flocking to the Southern capital. “We’re trying to take advantage of the opportunity especially now that all attention is on Davao,” shares the City Tourism Operations Office head Gene Rose Tecson.

“We have MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Events) venues here in Davao, and we have become a destination for conferences and such. But we want to strengthen the cultural tourism aspect as we offer the complete vacation experience,” she continues. “We have white water rafting, water tubing, and a wakeboard park. We’re the jump-off point also for island hopping and for scuba diving in the Samal Islands, and so much more.”

Tourist guide Jonathan Engbino agrees, “Davao is the perfect vacation destination for backpackers, *barkadas*, and families, because it’s safe and there’s an array of different activities for those who want to experience different kinds of thrills. We offer everything, from cultural museums, amazing cuisine, fun tourist sites, and much, much more.”

Admittedly, the city is having difficulty accommodating the number of visitors due to lack of rooms, hotels, and event venues, which is why the local government is fast tracking infrastructure projects and welcoming hotel chains and other investors.

Davao City is currently focused on building community-based ecotourism, especially since it is home to diverse cultures, with 11 tribes inhabiting the mainland. “Our approach to tourism is more holistic. We wish to build tourism not just as a means for livelihood for the community, but as a way and means to protect the culture and heritage of the tribes. The Mayor wants that the tourism growth be inclusive and be felt even at the grassroots level,” Tecson shares. Currently, the tourism department is working closely with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and City Environment and Natural Resources

Office (CENRO) to ensure the safe and sustainable growth of the communities.

In addition to the annual Kadayawan Festival, which brings in thousands of visitors every August, Davao hopes to welcome more tourists as it positions itself as the “Chocolate Capital of the Philippines.” It is by no means a hollow attempt at the title. Recently, Malagos Chocolates (produced by Malagos Agri-Ventures) was able to snag its third international award, with the Malagos 100% Unsweetened Chocolate winning Silver (Drinking Chocolate Category) at the 2016 Academy of Chocolate competition held in London, UK.

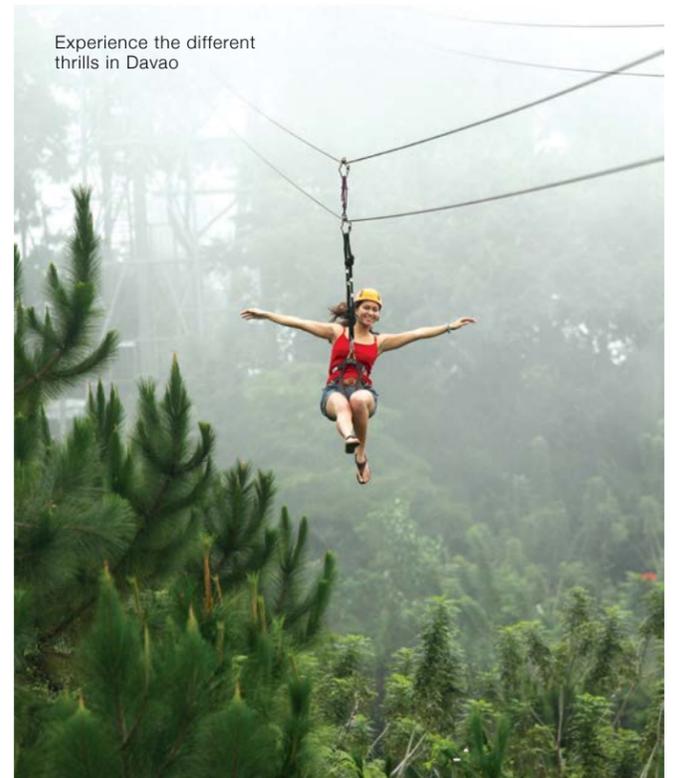
#### ECONOMY AND BUSINESS

Today, Davao enjoys a unique position, where conditions make it conducive for greater growth. Gatchie Gatchalian, the entrepreneur behind Saging Republic and many other successful enterprises in Davao, shares the optimism of other investors and businessmen like him. “Because of the greater confidence in Davao and the greater attention it’s been receiving, we will undoubtedly see a surge in the growth and development of other industries. There has never been a better time than now to start a business in Davao, because the city has become a gold mine of opportunity.”

Unlike other metro cities across the country, Davao is still relatively young, according to Gatchalian, so there’s so much room to grow—from infrastructure, BPOs (business process outsourcing), food and beverage, manufacturing, hospitality, and tourism. Gatchalian stresses, “Davao City is reputedly the largest city in the world, (covering an area of 244,000 hectares), and only 25% of which has been developed. We have a lot of space, which is why even foreign business especially the Japanese- and Chinese-owned corporations are studying the opportunities.” Davao City is, indeed, the perfect starting point. “Whatever business or industry you plan to put up in Davao City, you’re assured that it will flourish,” he ends. ■



**Our approach (to tourism) is more holistic. We wish to build tourism not just as a means for livelihood for the community, but as a way and means to protect the culture and heritage of the tribes.**  
— City Tourism Operations Office head Gene Rose Tecson



# The 'Tree to Bar' Story of Success



Could a Filipino chocolate brand compete among the world's best? Malagos Chocolate just proved that, yes, it is, indeed, possible



A true pride of Davao, Malagos Chocolate won an award from a prestigious international award-winning body, the Academy of Chocolate in 2016. Photos from the official Instagram of Malagos Chocolate: @malagoschocolate.

Chocolates are a decadent treat, and Filipinos love it—we go crazy over imported chocolates from Europe or the United States. In fact, the common impression is that chocolates that are branded as “imported” are more delicious and of premium quality. It used to be unthinkable that a locally made chocolate brand could be known and recognized in the global market. But chocolates have been in the Philippines since the time of the Spaniards, when the Manila-Acapulco Galleon trade brought the cacao trees to the Philippines from Mexico. It is during this time that the ubiquitous *tsokolate* and *tsamporado* would become popular.

The cacao trees (*Theobroma cacao*) are the source of cacao beans, which is processed to make chocolates. The best varieties are grown in the highlands, and in the Philippines, a particularly popular chocolate brand developed in Davao City.

Charita and Robert Puentespina, a mother-and-son tandem, saw that there was opportunity in cacao, which led them to lease a farm in Malagos, Baguio District, Davao City in 2003. This is where Charita harvested the cacao beans to process them into *tablea*, still a raw form of chocolate. In 2012, they established the Malagos Agri Ventures Corporation that started to produce premium single-origin cocoa liquor, an addition to their existing product line. The following year, they had a commercial launch.

But it seemed an insurmountable task to get into the market that is saturated by big commercial and imported brands, which Charita saw both as an inspiration and a challenge. How can a small business venture compare to the power of big corporations? This is when Charita sought the help of the government through the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

“The marketing began with DTI, which led to opportunities to participate in international shows,” says Charita. Through the help of the DTI, her company was able to join in more trade fairs all over the world. In the next five years, Malagos Agri Ventures Corporation will grow to rival the more established chocolate companies in the world, especially Switzerland.

What makes their chocolates special is the use of quality beans from the Trinitario hybrid, which is considered the best and finest cocoa beans in the world. These are fermented to enhance flavor, dried in solar driers, and sorted following international standards.

The quality of the Malagos brand of chocolates has been recognized internationally, with prestigious awards and commendations arriving one after the other. Recently, Malagos was recognized at the 2016 Great Taste Awards and 2016 Academy of Chocolate Awards from the United Kingdom.

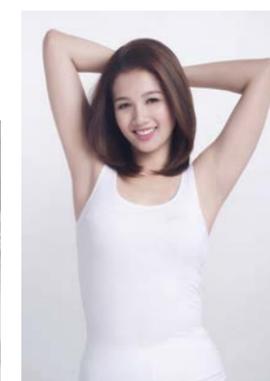
The story of Malagos Chocolate is testament to the fact that inspiration and expertise, together with government support, can lead any Filipino entrepreneur to success. ■

NINÉT specializes in whole body peeling and also offers Facial services, Acne Treatment, Led Light Therapy, Radio Frequency, non-invasive face lifting, Laser Hair removal, Under arm treatment and other whitening



Decades-worth of romantic comedies have re-enforced the idea that anyone, with the right amount of change, can be attractive. Who wouldn't be charmed by the ugly-duckling-turned-swan tropes found in movies like *My Fair Lady*, *Pretty Woman*, *Princess Diaries*, and *Miss Congeniality*? But in a world where whitening products, makeup tutorials, and trendy diets have become market and media staples, one may ask, is a change of outward appearance a prerequisite to true beauty?

According to DJ-turned-entrepreneur Monique Layno, a person's looks does not need to be changed. It just needs to be enhanced. Perhaps, that is the reason why she and her sister Nichole named their business “NINÉT” which stands for “Nikki's Naked Truth” a spa and peeling station found in Jacinto Extension which recently opened in March 16th 2015. Their business approach is to offer skincare not as a one-time treatment, but rather as a long-term plan to encourage clients to maintain the youthfulness of their skin.



### BLANQOS WHITENING SYSTEM (MACRO PEELING PROCESS)

Their body peeling package involves a deep, gentle, and painless method of exfoliating the skin to remove childhood scars, uneven skin tone, sun damaged, dead and dry skin to achieve younger, healthier, whiter, smoother and vibrant skin.

### BLANQOS DERMABRASION WHITENING SYSTEM

Discover a whitening System that works for you and it's within reach. See result in just ONE session.

Microdermabrasion, also referred to as mechanical exfoliation or micro resurfacing, is a method for skin rejuvenation that uses a mechanical medium for exfoliation along with adjustable suction to sweep away the outermost layer of dead skin cells from the epidermis. It is a non-invasive procedure. Candidates includes individuals struggling with sun damage, blotchy skin, fine scars, unfavorable skin texture.

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NINÉT Ultimate Whitening Spa: Soroptomist Bldg. Jacinto Extension Torres, Bajada Davao City; Tel no. (0995) 517 5198

# Wise Man's Timber

The Philippines is missing out on a great opportunity to be part of a billion dollar business, because we undervalue the potential of bamboo

BY LAKAMBINI BAUTISTA  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TEDDY PELAEZ

We can generate industries and employment if local government units will embrace the importance of bamboo



(FROM LEFT)  
Bamboo furniture remains a viable business in many parts of the world. Philippine Bamboo Foundation Inc. President Ed Manda proudly shows a veteran Ifugao carver's masterpiece, which won first prize in the first Philippine Bamboo Carving Competition.



To the common Filipino, a few things come to mind when the word bamboo is mentioned—raw material for home furniture and ornaments, skewer for *lechon* and barbecue, *alkansya* (coin bank), and *labong* (bamboo shoots).

While it is a thriving industry in many parts of the world, including Asian countries like China, Indonesia, and Vietnam, bamboo remains to be identified as the “poor man’s timber” in the Philippines.

## BAMBOO AS A MONEY-MAKING INDUSTRY

According to Ed Manda, President of the Philippine Bamboo Foundation Inc. (PBF), a non-governmental organization that aims to uplift the country’s bamboo industry, we are

missing out on a great opportunity to be part of a billion dollar business, because we undervalue the potential of bamboo. “The global market for bamboo is huge—50 to 60 billion US dollars annually,” notes Manda.

China remains a top manufacturer of bamboo products with its five million hectare plantation, but there is still a huge demand that China cannot supply because “bamboo products have gained worldwide recognition as a sustainable material,” he points out.

Engineered bamboo, one of the known byproducts, is now widely used as construction material. Bamboo also finds use in the making of bamboo fabric, bamboo oil used in medicine, and alcoholic drinks such as beer, which use the extract of bamboo leaves. With the Food and Drug Authority’s (FDA)

prohibition of using plastic beads, activated bamboo charcoal is now being used extensively in beauty products.

“As a livelihood and environment commodity, we can generate industries and employment if local government units (LGUs) will embrace the importance of bamboo,” says Manda. “This is the answer to what the government calls ‘inclusive growth.’ Unfortunately, unlike coffee, cacao, and rubber, there aren’t any top brands capitalizing on bamboo.”

Aside from its great potential as a source of livelihood, bamboo can also help mitigate the effects of climate change. “One hectare of bamboo plantation can capture 12 tons of pollution annually. It can maintain moisture content in watersheds, because its trunks store water, and its roots can prevent erosion and landslide,” Manda says.

## BRIDGING THE GAP

A strong belief in the socio-economic benefits of bamboo led a group of advocates to organize the PBF. But it was only in 2010, when it received fiscal support, albeit limited, from the office of former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. The Foundation



**We have better bamboo species than China. Lalo na 'yung kawayang tinik, maganda sa construction.**

(CLOCKWISE, FROM RIGHT) Filipinos are able to showcase artistry and craftsmanship through bamboo furniture making; The Philippine Bamboo Foundation Inc. is now working closely with the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) in developing a base in Calauan, Laguna that will serve as a one-stop shop for training bamboo growers.



focused its information and education campaign (IEC) on the relevance of bamboo as a commodity for climate change adaption and mitigation with livelihood component.

The Foundation was able to establish a sustained drive in promoting the bamboo industry, and gained membership in the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Council (PBDIC), which is led by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

What the PBDIC is currently lobbying is for the DTI and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to fund LGUs that are

interested in developing commercial large-scale bamboo plantations.

“Bamboo is abundant in many parts of the country, but the growth is sporadic. Bamboo grows in the Ilocos Region, Central Luzon, Region 4 (Calabarzon and Mimaropa), Central Visayas, Cebu, Bukidnon, Lake Sebu... *hindi sya* contiguous, *kalat-kalat*.”

Manda hopes that the government can bridge the gap and open up opportunities. The transport expense discourages investors, he explains. “The strategy to develop the industry is to make a contiguous plantation per province *para meron kang* economies of scale, or have every province specialize

on particular products. *Kung papasukin mo agad ang* manufacturing, that will fail because there are no raw materials.”

Bamboo can grow anywhere. It has no preferred soil or climate. It thrives in a volcanic country like the Philippines. Even Benguet grows special types of bamboo species. “We have better bamboo species than China. *Lalo na 'yung kawayang tinik, maganda sa* construction; it has great structural properties,” notes Manda.

**EDUCATION DISSEMINATION**

Another key element to the realization of this advocacy is an effective education dissemination campaign

especially among farmers, to make them understand bamboo’s economic value. The Foundation has been doing this in its own capacity. “I’m a forester. I give hands-on training in the production of planting materials. We have a training center in Baguio and a demo farm in Cubao,” says Manda.

Also being developed are demonstration sites/processing centers in Davao and Lubao, Pampanga. Their next step, says Manda, is to develop a base in Calauan, Laguna, for the production of bamboo seedlings. They are coordinating closely with the PBIDC who are working on centralizing the training of LGUs. “PBIDC wants to make it a one-stop shop for training—from propagation, nursery management, to plantation management and processing,” he says.

Manda stresses that the convergence of different government agencies such as the DTI, DENR, and the Department of Agriculture (DA) is necessary to realize the program. The revival of the PBIDC, created in 2010 through Executive Order 879, will thus be a big help. “There is now a Senate Bill supporting the program, allocating a P200 million budget for the council to function. Hopefully, this happens in 2019.”

With support now being given by the government, and the development of linkages, Manda is optimistic that the bamboo industry in the Philippines will grow in five years’ time. ■



An array of bamboo decor and furniture on display at the Lubao Bamboo Hub & Eco-Park





## Power Up with Solar Energy

Why it's a cleaner, cheaper, and more sustainable energy source

According to a recent report from Bloomberg New Energy Finance, solar energy outranks wind as the cheapest form of electricity generation. This only further convinced the energy sector to wean itself from coal dependence, and transition to more sustainable, cleaner solar power.

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In addition to offering communities a reliable source of energy, the Floating

Solar PV Systems provide greater environmental benefits, preserving valuable land and water for agriculture and other uses.

It conserves water by reducing evaporation, limits the growth of algae, rehabilitates contaminated water, and protects reservoir embankments from further erosion by reducing wave actions. Floating Solar PV Systems also seamlessly blend with the environment, presenting no risks to wildlife upon installment. In addition, Floating Solar PV Systems produce more energy compared to traditional ground-mounted grids as water helps to naturally cool down the panels, ensuring better efficiency.

"Increased government support for solar energy enables communities in far-flung areas to finally be electrified, something that coal, which relies heavily on large mega-grids for distribution, has failed to do," shares Gerry Arances, head convenor for the Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development. "Aside from cheaper electricity, solar energy that is gathered and distributed through community-managed 'mini-grids' can also solve the problem of energy's costliness and riskiness in the countryside."

For more information, visit [winnergy.ph](http://winnergy.ph)



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# Carmageddon

How do you solve a problem like Metro Manila traffic?

BY ENGR. ROBERTO RITO JR.

Before anything else, let us first look at some traffic management specifics. Combining several definitions from dictionaries and the internet, “traffic management” is basically the way to facilitate traffic in a safe, efficient, effective, and systematic manner.

There are three major phases in traffic management: planning, implementation, and feedback mechanism, which allows you to go back and forth between planning and implementation.

There are also several stages within these phases to facilitate the efficiency and effectiveness of the process. A certain stage can still be broken down into several specific activities. In addition, traffic management can be applied to land, air, or sea traffic. We will be talking about land traffic alone in this article.

## TRAFFIC SOLUTIONS

So, what have we been doing for the past years about traffic management?

From the government’s point of view, there has been a lot. Our government has been busy solving our land transport and traffic problems by fast tracking infrastructure, revamping policy, and tightening enforcement.

We’ve seen rather out-of-the-box solutions that are sometimes effective. A few examples: the elevated U-turn along C5, a truck route along a school zone with the lane right beside the innermost lane, and traffic enforcers who jump in to manage traffic when a stoplight is broken (instead of providing an adaptive signaling system).

Despite the efforts of the government, there seems to be no improvement. Solutions implemented only appear to make traffic worse. Traffic congestion has become like a disease; it has spread rapidly—no

longer just affecting Metro Manila and the central business districts. And unfortunately, the cure has yet to be discovered. Traffic congestion is one hell of an inconvenience. It suppresses productivity; it promotes social stress.

## TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND COMMON SENSE

It may seem that we can solve the traffic crisis with common sense, but let me tell you this: traffic management has scientific methods and processes for it to be efficient and effective. We do not implement what is planned and just take it back because it was ineffective. Common sense is following traffic rules and regulations. It is driving defensively. It is knowing how to change lanes without affecting other motorists. It is knowing which correct lane to drive on. It is knowing how to properly utilize pedestrian lanes and other infrastructure. It is considering the welfare of others, and not acting for one’s personal advantage alone. These basic, common sense examples are things that the public must know.

Let this be a wake-up call to our government and the public. When dealing with public traffic—whether motorists or pedestrians—we should not compromise. We must follow the law. We must always promote safety through traffic management. ■

*Next issue: Let us assess our current traffic situation and several traffic management solutions implemented by our government. And then, we can proceed to some pointers on efficient planning, systematic solutions implementations, and providing an effective feedback mechanism.*



Robert Rito Jr. is a licensed civil engineer and transport engineer with over 10 years of experience. He is a member of the Philippine Institute of Civil Engineers (PICE), Asian Professional Security Association (APSA), and Philippine

Society for Industrial Security (PSIS), and specializes in traffic management, traffic forecasting, transportation planning, modeling and engineering, and airport development and master planning.

# Sweet Smiles in Sugartown

Dubbed the ‘Mardi Gras of the Philippines,’ Bacolod City’s iconic MassKara Festival could rival the more prominent festivals of other countries

BY LEE CANDELARIA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ATTY. JAVIER FLORES

CNN and National Geographic never miss to include the MassKara Festival in their guides to visiting the Philippines, and for a good measure. This iconic “Festival of Smiles,” which is held every third week of October, is a feast for the eyes and a delight to the ears.

## A TALE OF SWEETNESS AND BITTERNESS

How the festival started is a story worth retelling for it reflects something that is truly Filipino—resilience. Life in Negros—the center of the country’s sugar industry—has seen difficult times. In the past, ironically, the sweetness of sugar has brought bitterness to the Negrenses, especially when harvests were not enough to sustain the people’s livelihood, and when the landlords exploited their workers.

Envisioned in 1980 after a series of crises, the festival was conceived with the name “MassKara,” coined from the words “mass,” which means “crowd,” and “kara,” from the Spanish word “cara” which means face. Together, “masskara” means “mask,” a way for people to cover their faces, and paint on a smile instead of a frown. While

seemingly an escapist way to deal with problems, Negrenses have used the “masskara” to persevere and remain positive.

Every year, on the weekend nearest to October 19, the public gathers at the city’s public plaza. The grand plaza transforms into a big drinking garden with participants donning colorful masks and shimmying to the Latin beats. Music and laughter fill the air, and the energy becomes infectious. Thousands flock to Bacolod every year, locals and foreigners alike, to join in on the festivities that last until sunrise the next day.

If you are planning to take part in the festivities, keep in mind that Bacolod is not just known for its MassKara Festival, it’s become known as a foodie capital. Negrense cooking is one of the reasons why the festival has maintained its popularity.

## FEASTS AND FESTIVALS

After partying hard, you need to sample Bacolod’s famous chicken *inasal*, with several restaurants devoting their entire menus to this char-grilled dish. Chicken *Inasal* is identifiable by its unique yellow-orange hue derived from using *istwitis* or annatto seeds, and its flavorful savory-sour notes that come from *langgaw* or pure coconut vinegar. Cooked and served on a stick, *inasal* is best paired with rice

(like most of Filipino dishes), and a dip of soy sauce and calamansi, spiced up with hot vinegar and chili. Don’t miss it, because it is more than just your usual barbecue.

After feasting on chicken, try a little more variety at the *pala-pala*, which is similar to the *dampa* in Metro Manila and *sutukil* in Cebu. Choose from a variety of fresh seafood and have it cooked according to your preference. *Paluto* is particularly more rewarding especially if you’re dining in groups, and *pala-pala* restaurants can accommodate larger parties.

After dining, look no further for a delicious sweet at the sugar capital. It’s a clear tragedy if you don’t try the famous desserts and sweets that Bacolod has to offer. Napoleones, a sweet pastry inspired by the Spanish *miljohas*, is a must try, as well as the sweet Negrense treat, Piaya. Cakes and pastries are also popular at Calea Cakes and Coffee, which is always packed with tourists hoping to get a sampling of their chocolate and cheesecakes. Some even hoard boxes to take home with them on their flights back.

Bacolod City is, indeed, the “City of Smiles,” and after partying at the MassKara Festival and indulging in Bacolod food, the biggest smile at the end of the day will be the one lingering on your face. ■



PHOTO BY TEDDY PELAEZ

# FESTIVALS in SEPTEMBER

CALENDAR OF EVENT

## LUZON

**SEPTEMBER 1**  
Baguio Tourism Day

**SEPTEMBER 1-9**  
Feast of Nuestra Señora Del Buensuceso – La Huerta Parañaque City



**SEPTEMBER 2**  
Victory Day – Kiangnan, Ifugao

## VISAYAS

**SEPTEMBER 1-5**  
Tinu-Om Festival – Cabatuan, Iloilo

**SEPTEMBER 7**  
Sarakiki-Hadang Festival – Calbayog City, Western Samar



**SEPTEMBER 7**  
Karatong Festival – Dulag, Leyte

## MINDANAO

**SEPTEMBER 3-5**  
Tuna Festival – General Santos City



**SEPTEMBER 9**  
Tambanipa – Bonbon, Cagayan de Oro

**SEPTEMBER 10**  
Langaran Festival – Plaridel, Misamis Occidental

**SEPTEMBER 7**  
Kawayan Festival – Maragondon, Cavite



**SEPTEMBER 7-16**  
Am-Among Festival – Bontoc, Mt. Province



**SEPTEMBER 10**  
Beachurero Festival – Tacloban City



**SEPTEMBER 18**  
(Third Sunday of the month)  
Kabuhian Festival - Ronda, Cebu,

**SEPTEMBER 20-26**  
Negros Occidental Provincial Tourism Week - Negros Occidental

**SEPTEMBER 14-21**  
Golden Harvest Festival (Rice and Corn Festival) – Public Plaza, Valencia City

**SEPTEMBER 15**  
Bungag Dagtabinal Festival – Misamis Occidental (Aloran),

**SEPTEMBER 17**  
Galaan Festival – Don Victoriano, Misamis Occidental



**SEPTEMBER 8-15**  
Linggo ng Bulacan

**SEPTEMBER 9**  
"Parada ng Kakanin" Festival of Nuestra Señora de Aranzazu – San Mateo, Rizal

**SEPTEMBER 10**  
Banhayan Festival / Feast of San Nicolas de Tolentino – Brgy. Cupang, Muntinlupa

**SEPTEMBER 27**  
Anihan Festival – Lobo, Batangas



**SEPTEMBER 28**  
Pagay Festival – Elicia, Isabela

**SEPTEMBER (4TH WEEK)**  
Kabankalan Tourism Week – Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental

**SEPTEMBER 28**  
Pitlagong Festival – Argao, Cebu



**SEPTEMBER 29**  
Sinu-Og Estokada Festival – Jagna, Bohol

**SEPTEMBER 29**  
Lapay, Bantigue Dance Festival – Masbate City, Bicol

**SEPTEMBER 20**  
Pagpakanaug - St. Michael's Cathedral, Iligan City

**SEPTEMBER 20-23**  
Coco Festival - Sanchez Mira, Cagayan



**SEPTEMBER 28**  
Komedyas De San Miguel – Rizal Park, Iligan City

**SEPTEMBER 29** (Month Long)  
Diyandi Festival – Iligan City

# FESTIVALS in OCTOBER

CALENDAR OF EVENT

## LUZON

**OCTOBER 1-31**  
Fiestang Culiati – Angeles City, Pampanga

**OCTOBER 1**  
Kawayanan Festival – Gloria, Oriental Mindoro



**OCTOBER 1-2**  
Tuao Patronal Festival – Tuao, Cagayan

## VISAYAS

**OCTOBER 1**  
Dilaab Festival – Siquijor

**OCTOBER 1-12**  
Parau Festival – Pilar, Sorsogon



**OCTOBER 1-31**  
Ibalong Festival (Epic Tale of Heroes) – Legazpi City, Albay

## MINDANAO

**OCTOBER 1-12**  
Zamboanga Hermosa Fest – Zamboanga City



**OCTOBER 1-5**  
Pasinayaan Festival – Hagonoy, Davao del Sur

**OCTOBER 2**  
Kinilaw Festival – Surigao City

**OCTOBER 4**  
Pagoda (Feast of St. Francis of Assisi) – Cardona, Rizal

**OCTOBER 6**  
Harana sa Makati – Makati City



**OCTOBER 8-12**  
Malampaya Festival – New Guinlo, Taytay, Palawan

**OCTOBER 12**  
Kaaldawan Iraya – Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro

**OCTOBER 4**  
Sinanggiyaw Festival – Dumanjug, Cebu

**OCTOBER 15**  
Inasal/Halad Festival – Talisay City, Cebu



**OCTOBER 19**  
Masskara/Bacolod Charter Day – Bacolod

**OCTOBER 5-10**  
Kidapawan Fruit Festival – Kidapawan City

**OCTOBER 8**  
Lubi-Lubi Festival – Glan, Sarangani Province



**OCTOBER 10**  
Ting'udo Fruit Harvest Festival – Makilala, Cotabato

**OCTOBER 10**  
Kanduli Festival – Lutayan, Sultan Kudarat

**OCTOBER 21**  
Coffee Festival – Lipa City, Batangas

**OCTOBER 23**  
Apo Iraya Festival – Abra De Ilog, Occidental Mindoro

**OCTOBER 27**  
Aeta Festival – Botolan, Zambales



**OCTOBER 14-23**  
Buglasan Festival – Dumaguete, Negros Oriental



**OCTOBER 22-24**  
Catandungan "Padayaw" Festival – Catanduanes, Bicol

**OCTOBER 29-30**  
Aswang Festival – Roxas City, Capiz

**OCTOBER 31**  
Hinugyaw Sa Anilao – Anilao, Iloilo

**OCTOBER 14**  
Inug-Og Festival – Oroquieta, Misamis



**OCTOBER 17**  
Sagingan Festival – Tubod, Lanao del Norte

**OCTOBER 24-31**  
Sambuokan Festival – Mati, Davao Oriental

SOURCE  
<http://www.tourism.gov.ph/>  
<http://www.aktivshow.com/sarakiki-hadang-festival/>  
<http://ethnicgroupsphilippines.com/images/luzon/>  
<http://philippinestravelsite.com/october-festivals-philippines/>

# Continuing Mandamus to clean up Manila Bay

A concerted effort among different government agencies is imperative to bring back its lost glory

BY ATTY. JAVIER FLORES



SHUBERT CIENGA / [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manila\\_Bay\\_Pasig\\_and\\_Pampanga\\_River\\_Basins\\_pollution\\_2008.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manila_Bay_Pasig_and_Pampanga_River_Basins_pollution_2008.jpg)

## What's the fuss about the sudden diligence in cleaning up Manila Bay?

In 1999, environmentalists, styling themselves as “Concerned Residents of Manila Bay,” and represented by legal luminary Antonio Oposa, sought a writ of mandamus to compel government agencies to restore Manila Bay to its former glory. They alleged that Manila Bay’s fecal coliform content was so high that the bay was already unsafe for bathing and other forms of recreational activities. The idea of seeking a continuing mandamus was inspired by the experience in India, where its Supreme Court ordered the cleanup of the Ganges River.

## It seems like a worthy endeavor. What seems to be the problem?

Generally, a writ of mandamus is available to compel the performance of a ministerial duty, meaning one that does not require the exercise of judgment or discretion. The government agencies said that they could not be compelled to

exercise judgment or discretion one way or the other.

The plaintiffs countered that government agencies do not have the discretion whether or not they should perform their duties. In the case of Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), for example, it was its ministerial duty to attend to solid waste disposal. It is not discretionary. It could choose where to set up landfills, but not whether or not to set them up.

## How did the court decide?

On Dec. 18, 2008, the Supreme Court, through Justice Presbiterio Velasco, decided in favor of the plaintiffs. The court ordered the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to coordinate with various agencies to fully implement its Operational Plan for the Manila Bay Coastal Strategy for the rehabilitation, restoration, and conservation of the Manila Bay at the earliest possible time.

The Department of Interior and

Local Government (DILG) and local government units (LGUs) were required to inspect all factories, commercial establishments, and private homes along the banks of the major river systems in their respective areas of jurisdiction to determine whether they had compliant wastewater treatment systems.

Other government agencies such as the MMDA, Department of Health (DOH), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Philippine National Police Maritime Group (PNP-MG), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and also of Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA), and Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), were also given marching orders. They have to submit to the court a quarterly progressive report of the activities undertaken in accordance with the decision. With no motion for reconsideration being filed, the decision became final and executory. The Manila Bay Advisory Committee was created to receive the reports of the agencies.

## What happened after the decision?

Subsequent to the decision, the Supreme Court in 2011 issued a resolution giving deadlines to various government agencies to comply with its 2008 decision. Several justices dissented stating that the court may be encroaching upon the powers of the executive department. In the main body of the resolution, the Supreme Court explained that execution of its own decision was an integral part of judicial function.

Whatever one may say against the decision of the Supreme Court, it is still a major step in raising people’s consciousness regarding environmental laws and their right to a balanced and healthful ecology. More than that, it has compelled and continues to compel the covered government agencies to perform their duties to protect the environment, not just Manila Bay. ■

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