

LEAGUE

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▶ **REUSE AND RECYCLE MORE WATER.**

We will optimize all our wastewater treatment facilities to further lessen our water footprint. We commit to make greater use of treated greywater for non-essential purposes.

▶ **REDUCE OUR USE OF GROUND AND SURFACE WATER AND PROTECT VITAL WATER SOURCES.**

We will continue to lessen our use of ground and surface water, protect these water sources, and empower our communities to do the same.

▶ **HARVEST RAINWATER.**

We will harvest rainwater and runoff water from creeks and rivers – collecting, filtering, and storing it for irrigation and for various other purposes. We hope that others will follow our example.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDING WATER-CHALLENGED COMMUNITIES NOT JUST ACCESS TO SAFE, POTABLE WATER, BUT ALSO THE ABILITY TO BE SELF-SUSTAINING WHEN IT COMES TO WATER MANAGEMENT.

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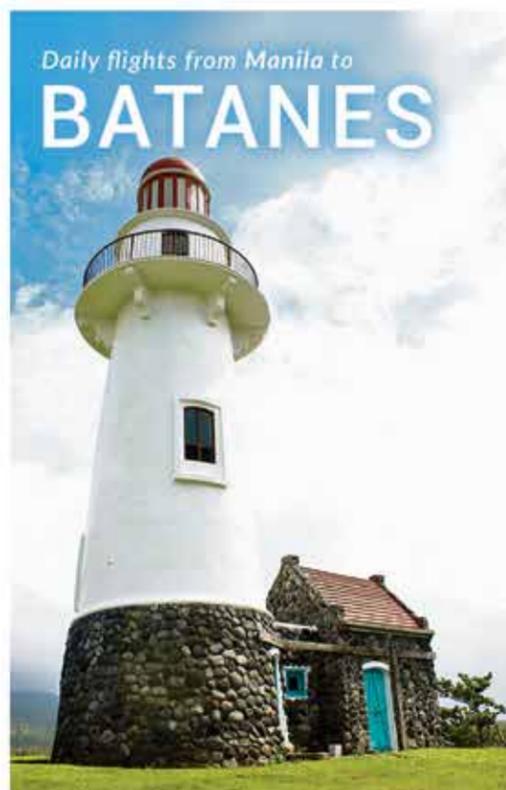
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Land of Plenty



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This issue, we take pride in being Filipinos through our government's achievements in the fields of agriculture, infrastructure, education, and transportation.

We head up North this time to see the progress in the province of Isabela, the rice and corn granary of Luzon. On page 54, Governor Bojie Dy talks about steps they are taking to achieve their goal of becoming the agro-industrial capital of the Philippines.

Mayor Fe Abunda's "Baysay Borongan" project, as well as the construction of roads, bridges, and public buildings, paved the way for a more disaster-resilient city (page 44).

Commissioner on Higher Education (CHED) Officer-in-Charge, Popoy de Vera, reveals the bigger plans of the government to make quality education accessible to more Filipinos (page 66).

Transportation Secretary, Arthur Tugade also presents the recent developments in the transportation sector (page 34).

In need of some empowering words of wisdom? Hear it from the country's youngest senator, Bam Aquino, who gave insightful answers to our Top 10 Questions (page 28).

We hope you learn new things from this issue, that will inspire and motivate you to serve our country better.

Lakambini
Lakambini Bautista



Discover Plenty at Marco Paulo

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

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

Discover Delicious

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

Discover Comfort

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

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

Discover Elegance

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

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



LGUS PARTICIPATE IN 35TH AIDS CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL

The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial (IAMC) is held annually every third Sunday of May to raise awareness on human immune deficiency virus (HIV) and remember those who have died of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Since 1983, it has been in 115 countries. In the Philippines, the event is on its 35th year with the theme “Reflecting on our past, Preparing for our future.”

Several local governments and local health offices joined the activities by conducting free HIV testing and participated in the candlelight memorial by lighting a giant HIV symbol ribbon. In Bataan, 1,500 people joined the PIAMC at the Bataan People’s Center in Balanga City on May 18. In Baguio, the Outreach HIV screening was conducted on May 19. The city of Iloilo had the culminating event on May 20 at the University of San Agustin, Iloilo. The city government of Calamba held theirs on May 25, while Imus, Cavite and Bacolod City on May 21. Zamboanga City also joined the PIAMC, advocating prevention programs and offering treatment of anti-retroviral drugs at the Zamboanga City Medical Center.



JAPAN SIGNS 2-BILLION YEN GRANT FOR MARAWI REHAB

Yoshio Wada, the chief representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in the Philippines, signed an agreement granting 2 billion yen financial assistance for the ongoing rehabilitation and reconstruction of the city of Marawi. Wada signed on behalf of Japan, while Finance secretary Carlos Dominguez III signed on behalf of the Philippines at the DOF main office in Manila. The ‘Grant Agreement for the Programme for the Support for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Marawi City and its Surrounding Areas’ covers infrastructure projects to be implemented by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH). Dominguez claims that there are 902 priority projects under the Bangon Marawi Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Recover Plan, amounting to almost PHP55 billion. He adds that the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Project Fund will supply half of the said amount, while other sources will come from the regional government of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), the city government of Marawi, other NGOs and private partners. The grant from Japan is the fourth aid package to a total of US\$36 million provided by Japan to the Philippines. A prior 1.5 billion yen grant was signed last November 2017 during the 31st ASEAN Summit.

DPWH undersecretary, Emil Sadain, attended the signing, along with Task Force Bangon Marawi chairperson, Eduardo del Rosario, and Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines, Koji Haneda. The DPWH is also the vice-chair of the interagency Task Force Bangon Marawi. JICA is also conducting a feasibility study on the construction of road networks in conflicted areas in Mindanao, particularly in Marawi City.



MAYOR INITIATES COASTAL CLEAN-UP IN CRESTA DE GALLO

Mayor Salem R. Tansingco and members of the Sangguniang Bayan personally led the coastal clean-up in the island of Cresta de Gallo, Brgy. Azagra, San Fernando, Romblon. They were able to fill up more than 20 large garbage bags of trash collected from the shoreline. Mayor Tansingco warned locals and tourists alike about the strict enforcement of the Anti-Littering Ordinance in their municipality, including Cresta de Gallo, in keeping with their goal of maintaining the picturesque natural beauty of the island. Declared as a marine sanctuary by virtue of Municipal Ordinance No.108 series of 2017, the local government also aims to regulate fishing and tourist activity in the island after reports of destroyed red corals were seen in the area due to illegal dynamite fishing.

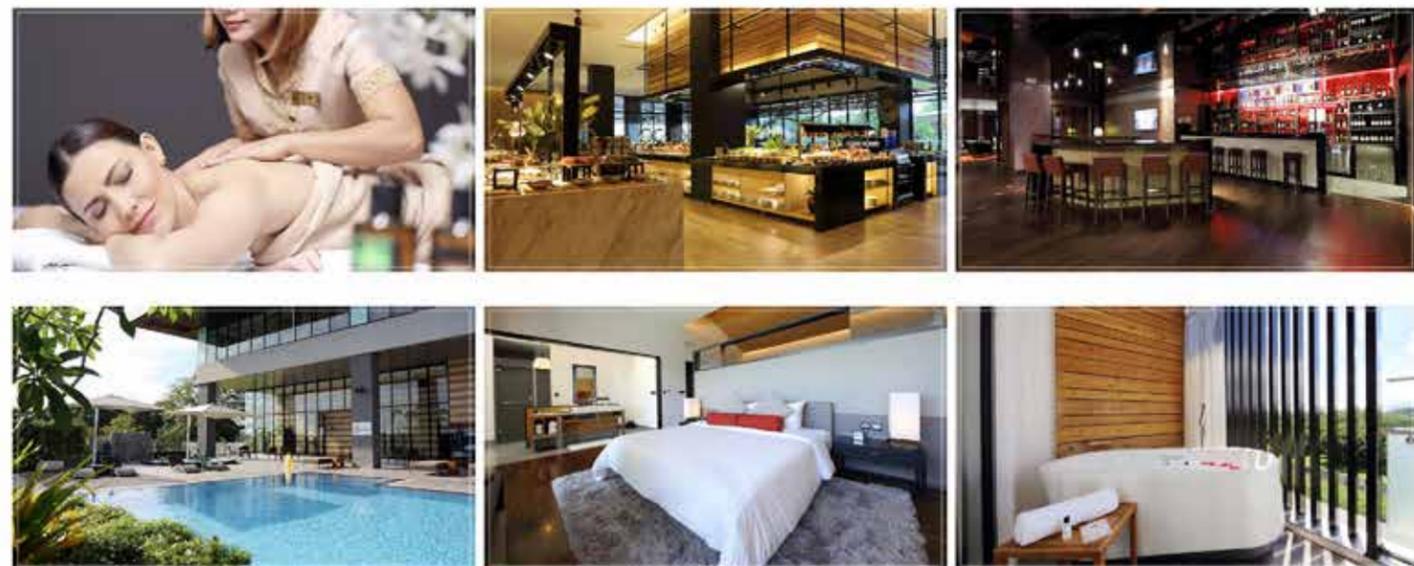
EASTERN VISAYAS UNVEILS NEW MEDICAL FACILITY

The Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center (EVRMC), the premier health and wellness facility in the region, unveiled newly constructed six-storey building. Madame Cielito Avanceña, Duterte’s common-law wife; presidential assistant for Visayas, Mike Dino; Special Assistant to the President (SAP), Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go, graced the unveiling ceremony.

Department of Health asst. secretary, Abdullah Dumama, former DOH secretaries Paulyn Ubial and Janet



Garin, Southern Leyte governor, Christopherson Yap, and DOH-8 regional director, Dr. Minerva Molon, were also present. The new building is enhanced with a Malasakit Center, open 24 hours and seven days a week to better render health and medical services to the residents of Eastern Visayas. This is the second Malasakit Center; the first was installed at the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center in Cebu City. Avanceña also gave a PHP15 million check to Dr. John Edward Coloma, medical chief of EVRMC.



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MTRCB PROMOTES RESPONSIBLE VIEWERSHIP IN ILOCOS NORTE

Together with the Provincial Government of Ilocos Norte (PGIN), the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) conducted an information caravan at the Northwestern University of Laoag (NWU) and at the Provincial Capital Auditorium last May 11-12. Entitled “Matalinong Panonood Para sa Pamilya nina Juan at Juana,” the nationwide info caravan seeks to educate the public regarding responsible viewership. This specifically targets parents and guardians to regulate the media and entertainment programs children are exposed to at home. Likewise, the MTRCB aims for the public to understand the revised ratings and classification system for film and television.

The event began with an orientation on the MTRCB, followed by discussions on the MTRCB’s revised ratings, reviewing process, and monitoring guidelines. The speakers for the event were MTRCB board members Paolo Santos, who emphasized the social responsibility of viewers; Pablo “Bogie” Reyes; Atty. Marites Candido; and former chairperson Marisa Laguardia, who encouraged the cooperation and vigilance of the public. There were around 300 participants from NWU and the Sirib Ilokano Kabataan Association.



US-PH ARMED FORCES OFFICIALLY CLOSE 34TH BALIKATAN EXERCISES

The United States Army and the Armed Forces of the Philippines conducted the Balikatan exercises, now on its 34th year, from May 7-18. Five thousand AFP soldiers joined 3,000 U.S. service members, with the participation of the Australian Defense Forces and Japan Self-Defense Force. The annual military exercises focused

on mutual defense, counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response with the purpose of ensuring rapid response to natural disasters and manmade crises. There were a series of training events, such as combined arms live-fire exercise in Tarlac, amphibious raid in Zambales, search and rescue operations in Nueva Ecija, close air support operations, artillery training, and small unit tactics operations. There were also construction and renovation engineering projects as well as health and medical activities.

The closing ceremony was held at the AFP Commissioned Officers Club in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City with Michael S. Klecheski, the U.S. Embassy Charge d’Affairs, as guest of honor and speaker. Lt. Gen. Emmanuel B. Salamat of the AFP Northern Luzon Command was the exercise director for this year. Also in attendance were National Defense undersecretary Cardoza M. Luna, AFP chief of staff Gen. Carlito G. Galvez Jr., and U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Thomas D. Weidley.

DOLE CONDUCTS MASSIVE JOB FAIR IN CENTRAL LUZON

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) conducted simultaneous job and business fairs around Central Luzon last May 1, resulting in 4,397 ‘near-hires,’ or job applicants considered hired but still need to submit additional documents. The fairs were held at Robinsons Starmills in Pampanga; Nicanor V. Guillermo Convention Center in Marilao, Bulacan; Rizal Triangle in Olongapo City; Sentro Baler Dr. Juan C. Angara Memorial Hall in Aurora; Cabanatuan City Hall grounds in Nueva Ecija; and Bulwagan ng mga Gobernador in Provincial Capitol, Tarlac City.

The Labor Day job and business fairs continued to adopt the Trabaho, Negosyo, Kabuhayan (TNK) concept forged by the DOLE and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The DTI, with the help of the National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWS), also gave a lecture to returning OFWS on possible business opportunities in entrepreneurship. The DOLE also gave PHP10.5 million as livelihood assistance for 1,138 beneficiaries scattered around Central Luzon.



DENR-BMB CELEBRATES MONTH OF THE OCEAN

Last May 4, the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) headed to Apo Island Protected Landscape and Seascape (AIPLS) in Dauin, Negros Oriental to officially launch the annual celebration of the Month of the Ocean (MOO). In 1999, May was declared as the MOO by virtue of Presidential Proclamation No. 57. The event is spearheaded by the DENR-BMB and the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

On its 16th year, the theme is “Together for our Reefs” (“Sama-sama para sa Bahura”), coinciding with the International Year of the Reef. DENR secretary, Roy A. Cimatu, delivered the opening remarks. Other attendees included mayor of Dauin, Neil Credo; congressman Arnie Teves; Negros Oriental governor, Roel R. Degamo; DENR 7 regional director, Gilbert Gonzales; DENR-BMB director Crisanta Rodriguez; and ocean ambassador Noel Guevara. AIPLS, home to 400 species of corals and around 650 species of marine animals, is one of the 24 protected areas in Central Visayas under Republic Act No. 7586.



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26 YEARS OF LINKING NATION, EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

One of the keys towards sustained public patronage of public service is a credible image based on honest, effective and efficient service. This however, should be complemented with support not only from the government but also from different sectors of society who view postal communications as a major tool towards ensuring national unity and development, linking the life of the Filipino with his Countryman and the rest of the world.

This is the view of the Philippine Postmaster General Joel L. Otarra, appointed to head country's public postal services by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte.

In its 26 years as a Government Owned and Controlled Corporation (GOCC), the Philippine Postal Corporation (PHLPost) is now strengthening its partnership with government and private institutions not only to deliver mail services, parcels and various goods but also to serve as the catalyst towards alleviating the economic conditions of the people in the countryside.

BRINGING CASH ASSISTANCE TO FAR FLUNG AREAS

Government and private humanitarian agencies recognize the role of the postal service to distribute cash grants and payout services using its facilities in far flung areas especially during calamities and disasters.

Recently, PHLPost was tapped to deliver financial services and conditional cash transfer for the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) to families hit by Typhoon Ferdie (Meranti) in far-flung town of Itbayat, province of Batanes.

With the vast network and familiarity of our postal workers, PHLPost can be an effective partner of public and private stakeholders to provide financial services and well being of low-income households', Postmaster General Joel L. Otarra said.

Aside from PNRC, financial inclusion stakeholders such as the International Red Cross, United Nations (UN)-World Food Program, the DSWD -Door-to-Door Delivery of Social Pension for the Indigent Senior Citizens Program, Save the Children, Inc. in the southern part of the Philippines and the international non-profit organization Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM) has partnered with PHLPost to deliver cash assistance.



FASTER AND EASIER GOVERNMENT TRANSACTION VIA POST OFFICE

While PHLPost continues to maintain its traditional mail delivery services to serve communities who are not yet linked electronically, it has gone beyond tradition to stay relevant, competitive and still serving the postal needs of every Filipino.

PHLPost is set to redefine service delivery by bringing it closer to the public and widening its business territory.

PHLPost has started to implement government partnerships on agencies that offer vital services on application processes and in obtaining clearances for employment, gun licensing, travel abroad and many others.

Recently, the Philippine Postal Corporation (PHLPost) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has forged a Memorandum of Agreement pertaining to the establishment of NBI Satellite Office at Manila Central Post Office Building to serve as NBI Clearance processing site.

The NBI-PHLPost project is the first step towards de-clogging the long lines, obtained clearances and government documents faster for the convenience of the public.



"Philippine Postal Corporation (PHLPost) is now strengthening its partnership with government and private institutions not only to deliver mail services, parcels and various goods but also to serve as the catalyst towards alleviating the economic conditions of the people in the countryside."

— PMG Joel L. Otarra

PHLPOST OFFERS COMMUNITY LIVELIHOOD PROGRAM

To provide viable and alternative source of income, PHLPost has engaged in the operation of the Postal Station in partnership with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). This noble and sustainable program caters to areas in dire need of postal and financial services and facilities for community development among Local Government Units (LGU's).

Postal station is a facility established and operated by a private individual, entity or local government unit to perform postal business and sale of any related products and services specifically authorized in its accreditation issued by PHLPost.

LGUs may start their income generating venture by simply applying for a postal station in respective areas. Hence, private individuals may start their business for as low as Php 25,000 start-up capital, with the right location and a stable market. Included in the start-up package are marketing equipment, initial stocks, and training of employees.

There will be a 20% rebate on total sales of postage stamps and other merchandise supplied by PHLPost.

PHLPost will not only proliferate in every corner of the country but will also be able to help many individuals establish a stable business to stimulate economic growth.



LGU-assisted Post Office Counter. A Postal Extension Office was established inside the City Hall with the support of the Local Government Unit (LGU) in the City of Candon, Province of Ilocos Sur.

GOOD



GOVERNANCE

ulong, kabataan!

INTERVIEWS BY
SHIMICO DIANNE NAKAMURA

Youth leaders tell us how they wish to make a difference in their barangay



JUSTINE ARON R. MERCADO
SK KAGAWAD, BARANGAY PASO DE BLAS
VALENZUELA CITY

I have various platforms for the youth in our *barangay* and education is my top priority. The Valenzuela City local government now offers free education for its residents, from elementary to college. This has inspired me to contribute something for the education of the students in our place—that is, provide the underprivileged students with school supplies and monthly allowance. This would be a big help, not only to the students, but also to their parents. As a youth leader in Paso de Blas, I will do my best to help provide the youth in our place the right to education that they deserve.

TRISHA MARIE CALLO
SK KAGAWAD, BARANGAY 77, ZONE 10
PASAY CITY

I am fully aware of the common issues that our *barangay* is experiencing especially those concerning the youth. Some of my childhood friends became parents at an early age, some got involved in the use of illegal drugs, and the others stopped going to school because they needed to work for their families.

I decided to run for SK Kagawad because I wanted to make a difference and inspire the youth. I want to share my knowledge and experiences. I want to raise awareness on teenage pregnancy, depression, drug abuse and addiction, and other social issues in our community. Recently, we had our first mandatory SK Training and I've learned many things about good governance and being a Kagawad. I hope to make a difference in our community by implementing not only the *paliga* or sports activities, which are the common projects of SK officials, but also conducting interactive and engaging seminars that will raise awareness on social issues.

GELLI R. DACUBA
SK KAGAWAD, BARANGAY BANABA
SAN MATEO RIZAL

I believe that serving as SK Kagawad is one way of inspiring and influencing the younger generation. Our team wants to focus not only on education, but also on personal development, that is why we want to conduct leadership trainings and workshops where the youth can show, share, and improve not only their skills but also their personality. I believe that this program will help them be more confident, and allow them to share their thoughts and ideas as members of our community.



DEIDRA NICOLE LEDDA ERPELO
SK KAGAWAD, BARANGAY 516 ZONE 51
SAMPALOC
MANILA

I decided to run as SK Kagawad so that I'll be able to represent the youth in our community and help the Youth Council in their projects like "How to Become a Young Entrepreneur." I am also excited to meet other leaders who are passionate in their service. From them, I hope to learn different leadership styles and improve my leadership skills.

I wish to make a difference by engaging the youth in our projects. This way, we, as leaders, can address their situation and then take action to improve their quality of life.

PAULO D. TUMLOS
SK CHAIRMAN, BARANGAY ORANBO, PASIG CITY

I never expected that public service will come into my life. It all started when I joined the Fire and Rescue Volunteer of Brgy. Oranbo. Although it was dangerous, it was part of the job to put our life at risk to save lives and properties. Then, I was appointed by the Barangay Council to become a member of the Task Force on Youth Development (TFYD). As a member of TFYD for a brief period of time, I had a great experience serving the youth. I also had the opportunity to hear the voices of those who were not given a chance to speak.

What inspired me to take a stand for the youth and run for SK Chairmanship is the conviction that the voice of the youth should be heard. Our youth also need to trust and respect the people of the New Sangguniang Kabataan. I will do so by implementing projects and programs that will benefit the whole community.



JUSTINE GARAY
SK KAGAWAD, BARANGAY MERVILLE, PARAÑAQUE

Running for SK Kagawad is a way for me to make a difference. This position is not for fame; it's me responding to the call of public service. I decided to run as SK Kagawad because I wanted to help the youth in enhancing their skills and inspire them to pursue their education. From what I've observed, there's a lot of out-of-school youth in our *barangay*. I have a lot of proposals and ideas that can improve the community. Making a difference is not about always doing the big things, change can be achieved by doing the small, simple tasks.



JOY DACUMOS
SK KAGAWAD, BARANGAY MERVILLE
PARAÑAQUE

I ran for Sk Kagawad because I grew up in a depressed area. Most of the youth there preferred loitering around than focusing on what can be done for their future. But it's not entirely their fault, as their parents, more often than not, could not send them to school. Most need the financial assistance from religious and non-government organizations to support their studies.

I want to encourage the youth by making them realize the value of education. We hope that through the SK and *barangay*, we can provide the youth more opportunities to study, as well as provide part time jobs so that they can support themselves as they study. We also hope to introduce more livelihood projects that the youth and parents can benefit from.

I believe that if we work together, nothing is impossible. I also want to push the cleanliness of our *sitio* by conducting seminars about correct garbage disposal and keeping the homes clean so that it does not invite pests and disease, and we can live happy and healthy.

For the Service of the People



Last March 19 and 20, the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP), a formal organization that unites all the municipalities in the country, gathered together for a two-day forum, to address the major current issues facing local government units.

The forum tackled “federalism and the fate of LGUs,” grant assistance for grassroots human security projects, the Build, Build, Build campaign and its role in federalism, IRA, and many more.

In attendance were some of the government’s top executives including LMP National President Mayor Maria Fe “Bubut” Villar Brondial, Sen. Koko Pimentel, Sen. Cynthia Villar, Sen. Sonny Angara, Sen. JV Ejercito, Sen. Nancy Binay, Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque, DOLE USec Jing Paras, DA Sec. Manny Piñol, DPWH Sec. Mark Villar, DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu, DILG Sec. Eduardo Año, Mayor Joseph Estrada, and President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, who closed the event with an inspiring speech.



MANGROVE NURSERY FARM



BEFORE



AFTER

The Pasig River of Our Dreams

PRRC's goal: make the river a source of livelihood, recreation, and pride for us Filipinos

BY MARIDOL RANO-A-BISMARCK

Rivers are part of a country's history, and essential to its growth. They connect one region to another, facilitating the exchange of goods and services, and making the economy grow.

Eco-warrior and former Environment secretary, Gina Lopez, compared the river to the body's veins. If blood can't flow as freely as it should through the veins, the country gets sick. It can't get the nutrients it needs to stay healthy and fight diseases.

The Pasig River, long immortalized in various stories, is one such important part of our country's economic, social, and environmental health. Back when people can still take a bath in the crystal-clear river, the Pasig was crucial in ferrying goods and services from one part of the country to the other.

Legend has it that two star-crossed lovers who eloped one night rode a boat that capsized in the river. As the man fell into the river, he called out to Paz, his lover, and cried, "Paz *sigueme* (Paz, help me)!" over and over until he went down to his watery grave.

His last words were "Paz *sig...*"

Today, that tragic story has been replaced with equally sad accounts of a river steeped in pollution and filth. Smokey Mountain's song, "Anak ng Pasig," laments the legendary river's mountain of garbage, its foul smell, and inky black water.

Informal settlers, who built makeshift homes along its banks, have dumped garbage into the river. Factories that throw their waste into the river have turned it into a giant sewer system. That's why Executive Order 54, as amended by Executive Order 65, created the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) in 1999.

THE 'CLEAN UP' AGENCY

The PRRC, headed by Jose Antonio Goitia, aims to restore the Pasig River to its pristine condition and make it fit for fish and other aquatic life to thrive in once more. The office also aims to make the river a means of transporting goods and services, and a source of recreation and pride for us as Filipinos.

So far, the PRRC has done what it could. It has deployed river warriors and river patrols to demolish makeshift houses and other structures

along the Pasig. It has also installed rows upon rows of plants that fight pollution.

What used to be stinking strips of land covered with thick piles of garbage have given way to free-flowing, crystal-clear rivulets, winding around mini-parks with brick walkways and adorned with plant-covered archways. People can walk leisurely around these places and bond with friends and loved ones.

Since the *esteros* (estuaries or inlets) around the Pasig have been cleaned and cleared, the value of the land in and around the area has increased by as much as P2,100,000 after 20 years. In addition, the local government was able to raise real estate taxes in the area.

Goitia shares, "The PRRC has been taking huge steps in making the public aware of the importance of the Pasig River and our waterways through its different information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns. The IECs are conducted on the field by Community Officers on project sites, catering to the adults, youth, and senior citizens of the communities.

"We believe in the active participation and involvement of the communities in the maintenance and sustainability of our rehabilitation projects since they should take part in the care of their environment."

A HAPPY HOME

The effective communication campaign has been able to raise awareness and even boost the "happiness meter" of communities living along the river. A survey showed that a cleaner river helped residents in the areas of happiness, environment, health, economics, and peace and order.

Due as well to the absence of flooding, families along Estero de Paco in Manila are able to save P180 a month for recreation. They don't have to go far to relax and enjoy themselves, especially on weekends. Eighty five percent of the families reported saving as much as P819 a month on health expenses. In addition, the area saw a 40 percent decline in crime rate.

All of the Paco residents in the survey said that they can now exercise. As much as 97 percent felt theirs is a happier community. The same percentage became more inspired to clean their surroundings.

The PRRC has been taking huge steps in making the public aware of the importance of the Pasig River and our waterways through its different information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns.



Jose Antonio Goitia, PRRC Chairman



ESTERO DE LA REINA MASSIVE CLEANUP



BEFORE



AFTER

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ESTERO DE SAMPALOC



BEFORE



AFTER

ESTERO DE BINONDO



BEFORE



AFTER

They also enjoy greater peace of mind, with 89 percent of the residents feeling safer.

The situation has repeated itself in Estero de Aviles, Estero de Santibanez, Estero de Concordia, Estero de San Miguel, Estero de Valencia, Estero de Sampaloc, and Estero de Uli-Uli.

Cleanup efforts for the 27-kilometer river, which runs through Manila, Makati, Mandaluyong, Pasig, Taguig, and Taytay, Rizal also covered Estero de Pandacan, Estero de Binondo in Manila phases 1 and 2, Pasong Tamo Creek and San Francisco Creek in Quezon City, Maytunas Creek in Mandaluyong, Ermitaño Creek and Poblacion Linear Park in Makati City, and Estero de la Reina in Manila.

Families that were relocated from the banks of the Pasig to other areas learned livelihood skills like handicrafts, handloom weaving, and water hyacinth crafts.

But the new and beautiful parks and the cleaner river come with a price. A PRRC officer told *LEAGUE* that he and his team have had to deal with numerous challenges and roadblocks within the government system itself.

Local government units themselves find it challenging to keep residents and factories from dumping their debris in the Pasig. Others uproot the plants that fight pollution in the river.

This is happening, even after various government representatives have pledged to join hands in cleaning the Pasig.

Because it sees the Pasig as a solution to the Metro Manila traffic crisis, it is planning to put up



a river ferry system connecting Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay by 2022.

Budget Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno revealed plans to add 17 stations to boost the 12 existing ones in The Pasig River Ferry Convergence Program (PRFCP). His timeline for the same project is four years.

The Department of Budget and Management's Julia Nebrija, project director of "Green, Green, Green" said the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) has pledged to put up three more ferry stations at Ayala Circuit, Quinta Market, and Pasig City.

MAYTUNAS CREEK, MANDALUYONG CITY



BEFORE



AFTER

ESTERO DE PACO



BEFORE



AFTER



PRRC was recognized in Brisbane, Australia for its best river restoration and management practices. From left, Ian Atkinson, CEO of the International River Foundation, George de la Rama, PRRC PR Head; and Jose Antonio Goitia, PRRC Chairman.

Diokno revealed that these affordable stations will open by yearend, in time for the Christmas holidays.

“PRRC is keen to spearhead the ferry system since it used to be managed by the PRRC several years ago,” adds Goitia. “We were also responsible for the construction of the existing ferry stations in the Pasig River and Marikina River lines.”

Meantime, the PRRC has joined hands with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for watershed reforestation. The Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) has deputized the PRRC to conduct joint inspections of industries violating environmental laws along the Pasig River.

These efforts are putting the Philippines on the map for river restoration practices. Goitia reports that last year, the International River Foundation, made up of world water leaders, gathered in Brisbane, Australia, and recognized PRRC for its best river restoration and management practices.

He added that the Pasig River emerged runner-up to USA’s San Antonio River in Texas in the Thies International River Prize for best river restoration and management practices. The other finalists are the Tweed River of the United Kingdom, and the Nushagak and Kvichak Rivers of Alaska. Thirty-one entries around the world competed against each other.

“Through the rehabilitation of these waterways, we expect to reduce, if not eliminate, millions of tons of waste illegally



Through the rehabilitation of these waterways, we expect to reduce, if not eliminate, millions of tons of waste illegally dumped or drained into the rivers, save thousands of families, and get an inch closer to that dream of a clean and alive Pasig River system.



dumped or drained into the rivers, save thousands of families, and get an inch closer to that dream of a clean and alive Pasig River system. With a clean and healthy river that can support and sustain aquatic life and resources, we can build a system that’s conducive for transport, recreation, and tourism,” shares Goitia.

These encouraging developments can only enhance city life if efforts to clean the Pasig continue. And they can only continue if local government officials penalize residents and big businessmen who pollute the river.

Otherwise, the river our ancestors romanticized in song and poetry might not regain its old glory. And those ambitious plans that look good on the drawing board may remain a dream.■



With a clean and healthy river that can support and sustain aquatic life and resources, we can build a system that’s conducive for transport, recreation, and tourism.



The People's Hospital

Ospital ng Makati pioneers systems and services to provide more free healthcare services

BY MAAN D'ASIS PAMARAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAR CONCENCO



The structure itself is not as imposing as the big private hospitals, but the services offered at the Ospital ng Makati, or OsMak, are surprisingly up to par. Compared to other government hospitals, though, there is one thing that is lacking—the long line of patients waiting for treatment outside. This is due to the upgrades that the hospital administration, with the support of the local government, has implemented towards their vision of providing the highest quality of subsidized healthcare for Makati residents.

From the original 200-bed hospital that was inaugurated by then Mayor Jejomar Binay in 2001, it has expanded to 300 beds, with more subsidized services delivered in a systematic

manner. The qualified or bonafide residents of Makati can apply for a Yellow Card, which entitles them to benefits such as free consultations with specialists, diagnostics, hospitalization, medication, and even treatments such as dialysis and chemotherapy.

“Our mission is to become a world-class hospital through the delivery of efficient quality and affordable healthcare, served in a humane and compassionate manner that ensures client satisfaction,” explains OsMak head for Program Planning and Management, Ana Concepcion C. Biligan, RN. She adds that in order to achieve this, they have put several systems in place, in accordance to world-class certification standards such as the ISO. It has also received the PhilHealth Certification of Excellence in 2012, the first local government hospital to do so.



Despite attending to almost one million people every day, OsMak has built-in systems and processes that ensure fast, efficient service.

GATEKEEPING MECHANISM

Biligan discloses that they receive a high volume of patients on a daily basis, with their specialist consultations reaching up to 500 to 600 patients across all clinics. In other government hospitals, there would be long lines outside as early as 4 a.m., because patients are seen on a first-come, first-served basis.

To streamline operations, OsMak has turned to technology via an electronic registration and appointment system to mitigate the volume of patients coming in. “Patients are given appointments, as to the date and time of their consultations. They do not have to line up, because they are already aware of the time when they need to come in. There is a comfortable room with benches and a television, where they can come in to wait for their turn to be called,” Biligan explains.

Those who have been referred to OsMak by the healthcare centers or walk-in patients who do not have appointments yet are directed to a triage team that assesses their condition, and are offered recommendations as to whether they are in need of immediate care or can be scheduled for an appointment. This, Biligan says, has greatly lessened the chaos and confrontations that one encounters in other healthcare facilities. She says, “They do not even have to come in hours before they are due for their check-up. Why would you come in at 4 a.m., when your schedule is at 8 or 9?



To streamline operations, OsMak has turned to technology via an electronic registration and appointment system to mitigate the volume of patients coming in.

This helps them to come in comfort, and it helps keep our procedures organized.”

A lot of people ask whether only Yellow Card holders will be given treatment at OsMak, and Biligan says that it is on an “as-needed” basis. “Our night-time population is at 500,000 to 600,000 thousand, but during the daytime, it

Despite the high ratings we have achieved, we are constantly striving for improvement, says OsMak head for Program Planning and Management Ana Concepcion Biligan, RN.

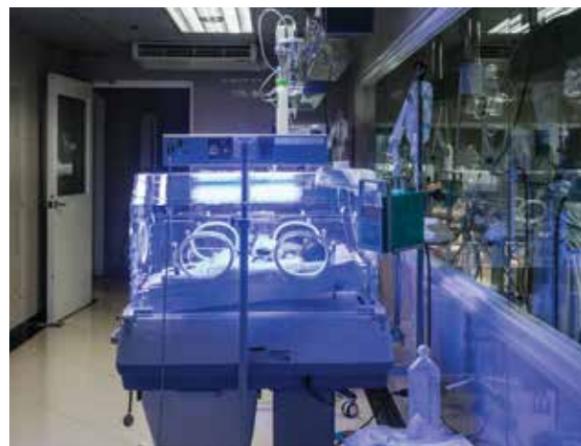


The local government has earmarked a budget of P12.79 billion for additional upgrading and expansion of OsMak.

could swell to one million. This is due to the people who work here and the area covered by Makati on EDSA. If it were an emergency situation, we are mandated to attend to it; we cannot say that since there is no Yellow Card, we are not going to respond," she clarifies. Non-emergency patients, however, have to be card holders, which one can apply for with proper documentation such as Voter's ID and *barangay* certificates.

PAPERLESS DOCUMENTATION

Another interesting feature of the hospital is the computerization of its patients' charts. This effectively addressed the huge volume of papers that its staff previously had to struggle with. "We simply did not have enough space to keep all the charts, given the large volume of patients we see every day," she shares.



The hospital's solution was to find a secure documentation program and to apply it to its patients in the ambulatory or outpatient division. It started implementing the processes through certain modules by 2006 and full deployment came in 2011. "It was a challenge at first, because our doctors were used to the traditional way of making their charts, but everyone realized how much more efficient it was later on," she says. She laughs when recounting patient complaints about how the doctors were on the computer while doing their consultations, without knowing that the doctor was actually making their charts.

OsMak is now looking into integrating a system with the *barangay* health offices, by which it can network patient information through its patient identification numbers within a secure computerized program in order to further streamline its services.

FEEDBACK SYSTEM

As an institution that adheres to world-class standards, feedback is important to OsMak. Instead of the usual customer satisfaction forms that are handed out, the hospital has dedicated patient experience management officers who are on hand to assist patients coming in and to ask them about their experience.

"This helps to provide management a clear picture through a feedback system so we can implement an action plan as necessary. Despite the high ratings we have achieved, we are constantly



From an original 200-bed hospital, OsMak has expanded to 300 beds.



striving for improvement," she explains.

SUBSIDIZED SERVICES AND OUTSOURCING

Not everything is free at OsMak, but the fees the patients have to pay are very minimal. Biligan gives an example. "If your diagnostic services, your hospitalization, or your treatment exceeds P5,000, you have to pay P500, which is not really that bad. This fee is regardless of the treatment you receive—even if it is dialysis or chemotherapy." She then adds that the catheter used for dialysis patients already runs up a cost of P5,000 to P6,000 and OsMak patients can get it for free; all they need are the Yellow Card and their PhilHealth membership.

The treatments are expensive, she admits, but the delivery of these for free was born out of the frustration of OsMak's doctors who have tried to offer the best care only to discover that they are losing patients simply because these patients cannot afford the treatments, which can run up to several years. "We have a patient who has now been undergoing dialysis for seven years," she says.

She discloses that the local government has allotted a P2 billion budget for the hospital, and it has enabled them to acquire equipment that are at the same level with private hospitals. To accommodate the number of dialysis patients, OsMak has partnered with private centers, where they can avail of the treatments upon an OsMak doctor's recommendation. "This will minimize our need to buy more machines, and solve the problem we have with space," she adds. OsMak has likewise outsourced other aspects of running the hospital, such

as the pharmacy, along with janitorial and security services.

HEALTHCARE AS A PRIORITY

OsMak is one of the priorities of the local government under Mayor Abby Binay, says Biligan. Former Vice President Jejomar Binay calls it a "People's Hospital," and recently revealed that local government has earmarked a budget of P12.79 billion for its additional upgrading and expansion. "There is a continuous improvement of services, and we are still looking to expand after we inaugurated our new wing. Aside from offering chemotherapy to our patients starting in 2017, we have also opened a state-of-the-art Eye Center last year," says Biligan.

The attention that the government hospital merits from the local government is proof of its commitment to taking care of its constituents. She says, "We want them to be proud of being from Makati because of the level of services that they receive, not only in healthcare but in the other programs as well. These kinds of programs help give our residents that feeling that they are valued and they are taken care of." ■

Carrying on the Legacy of Democracy

BY MAAN D'ASIS PAMARAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAR CONCENCO



In his two terms as a senator, Paolo Benigno "Bam" Aquino IV has already passed 19 laws. Most of these focus on entrepreneurship and empowerment. His platform is based on his passion to uplift the Filipino's way of living through inclusive growth. Through his programs, which are based on his background with working in the grassroots sector, he aims to provide a government and private sector framework to replace poverty with prosperity in a country that will rise to become globally competitive through education.

This Q&A reveals more about the man who carries with him the promise of a name and his action plan for making those promises come true.



1 Did you always know that you would go into politics?

No, I didn't think I would go into politics, but I wanted to be in public service, so I thought of going into media. Of course, I was in social enterprise for a long time, and I also served in the National Youth Commission before. There was a long time that I felt I was in public service, but not necessarily in politics.

I made the jump into politics in 2013, and I entered kind of late at 35. Getting into public service was something I always thought about, especially with my being exposed to my relatives doing that kind of work. But you can say that I resisted getting into politics as much as I could.

2 What was the deciding factor that led you to run for a Senate seat?

We had social enterprise projects like Hapinoy, which empowered *sari-sari* store (neighborhood store) owners; Rags2Riches, which gave livelihood to women through weaving upcycled materials into bags and other accessories; and Gawad Kalinga (GK), which gave livelihood opportunities to those living in GK communities. They would end up doing well, but in very limited communities. We realized that if we wanted to expand and scale up, we needed some more government support or policies behind what we were doing.

At the time, in 2007, we were cutting-edge. It was so new to be using business models to develop communities and we were helping about two

or three communities, and with Hapinoy, about 11 provinces. But with no policy or program in place, you would never get past that scale. One of the challenges was finding people in government who understood what we were trying to do. GK's Tony Meloto and I were at a conference together and during our four-hour breakfast, he said, "You should think about running." And I said, "Okay." Then, things just fell into place.

My name was floated around in the surveys a year before the election and it showed me at around number 20. So, two weeks after I got married, they asked me if I still wanted to run because they have a slot. Thankfully, I won and a lot of the things we wanted to do we were able to fulfill. In the past four or five years, we were able to build a framework or ecosystem where your micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), community enterprises, and startups get more support from the government through *negosyo* (business) centers or better financing opportunities.

3 What was your idea of politics before you entered it and what was your goal?

I was not new to politics because my family has been there for quite some time. I went into it because I wanted to make a change for something. With my years in social enterprise, I saw that with a good solution, so many lives can be improved. A number of us Filipinos have a defeatist mentality where they think nothing will change. Those of us who go into politics should have a reformist mindset. If you are in

Those of us who go into politics should have a reformist mindset. If you are in the legislative branch, you bring change through laws, policies, and budgets. You try to create those avenues where your countrymen will be able to do better.



the legislative branch, you bring change through laws, policies, and budgets. You try to create those avenues where your countrymen will be able to do better.

The problem with us is that there are politicians who win, but do not have plans or have no idea what they want to do. They end up just wasting time. In our office, we knew what we needed to accomplish,

so we hit the ground running. I think we have 20 laws already and these were created to open more opportunities for our countrymen through education, entrepreneurship, and financing. All those things that are lacking for the people to improve their lives, we try to unlock them.

4 How did you get ideas for what to prioritize?

It goes back to my years with social enterprise. I worked in the National Youth Commission with my friend, Mark Ruiz, who was with Unilever at the time, and we looked at microbusinesses such as the *sari-sari* stores, while at the same time we were exposed to the other side of the fence, which are the large supermarkets and big manufacturers. We saw that the store owners often got the worse end of the deals, but they somehow helped to move the economy along. We worked to band together the *sari-sari* store owners so they could get better deals because their larger groups held inherent power. It became sort



We all have that equal opportunity in the Senate, to pass laws that we think are important. That said, *dapat masipag ka, persistent ka*. Your team members should also know what they are doing.

of a People Power in that sense, and with the right interventions, they were able to move up and grow their business. That was why the first bill we had was the GoNegosyo Act.

We look into areas where people should be getting but don't get, such as Free Education, which is why one of our latest bills is the free tuition in state universities and colleges (SUCs). By giving more Filipinos the opportunity to study, they can have better jobs and hopefully lift themselves out of poverty.

5 You are one of the most prolific senators when it comes to passing laws. What is needed to ensure that a bill gets passed?

Persistence and perspiration. We all have that equal opportunity in the Senate, to pass laws that we think are important. That said, *dapat masipag ka, persistent ka* (You should be hardworking and persistent). Your team members should also know what they are doing.

We are confident to push for those reforms because we convince not only our congressmen and senators to support us, but also the stakeholders as well. The sectors we are supporting are also supporting the bill, so when we put it forth, people

agree on it already. For the GoNegosyo Act, we consulted with MSME groups, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce, GoNegosyo, and a lot of other groups who thought it was a good idea. For the Education Bill, the students and their parents, the school heads, the SUCs, and even private sector were all in support.

6 It seems that you and the other senators in your political party are beleaguered by negative comments. How do you handle those?

Trabaho lang (Just keep working). Honestly, if you dwell on negative comments you will do exactly what they want you to do, and that is nothing. Because, when you get barraged with negativity, the tendency is that if you do nothing, someone will get angry; if you do something, someone will get angry, too. It is a "Damned if you do, damned if you don't" situation. I think the best way to rile them up is to work hard to get your stuff passed. I think that is what riles them up the most—if you pass your law and it works so well that so many people benefit from it.

I have accepted that politics, especially in the modern day, is like that. If you let the trolls get to

you, you won't do anything or say anything. If you want to make them angry, speak your mind even if you don't know how people will react. Do your work and execute your plans to help as many people as you can. I think that is the best way to move forward.

7 How would you describe your management style?

Leading by example. I think I was stricter before, but after five years, I trust my team a lot to be able to do the work with me. I tell them that it is my name outside, but the office is more than just Bam Aquino. It is every single person that works here. The staff knows how important our work is and we are all invested in the things we espouse



and advocate, and our office is inclusive and empowering. We pride ourselves in doing excellent work. I do not accept mediocrity; we strive for excellence and to be as inclusive as possible. If we can have fun along the way, we also do it.

8 What do you think the government should focus on right now?

It should focus on what it should have focused on ever since, which is on what every Filipino family needs. You look at the common Filipino family and you find the blueprint of what we need to do. They find the prices of commodities too high; then don't raise prices. Their children want to finish school; help them by offering free tuition. They want job security; remove contractualization and give them regular jobs. The reverse is to not pass laws that will make things more expensive, which is why I opposed the TRAIN Law.

If you think about it, our job is not rocket science. If you look at our bills, it goes down to the needs of every Filipino family, regardless of whether they live in the city or anywhere in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. What is difficult is to have the wherewithal to pass those reforms, because none of them are simple reforms. We live in a complicated world where we need to determine what policies and reforms should be done to help the most number of people. In order to do that, we study a lot, we consult a lot.

9 What comes to mind when you hear the term "public trust?"

I don't know how much the public still trusts politicians. For me, I always go back to the Jessie Robredo line of "Matino and Mahusay." For you to get the trust of people, you need to be both. You need to be not only free from corruption—which is what people were looking for 20 years ago; you also need to be effective—which is what people are also looking for now. You need to come up with proposals that are cutting edge, not ones that have been around since 1965 or 1975. If we really want people to trust politicians again, we need to show them that we can get things done. It is not enough to say you will pass a law. You need to make sure it is funded, implemented, and refined across the years. I think our countrymen are looking beyond good intentions, but really try to see how their lives will be affected and improved.



10 What is your dream for the Philippines?

My dream for Filipinos is simple, where if you are ready to work and ready to apply yourself, you should be able to achieve success. Unfortunately, there are so many who are willing to work and are intelligent, but still have a difficult life because they don't have enough opportunities. When we live in a country where the family can be comfortable, can have their children finish school, have some leisure, live in a decent place and have certainty in their jobs because they are willing to work hard and give of themselves, that is the dream. We are not there yet, but hopefully with measures like supporting MSMEs, better education, and being able to find better jobs by also attracting investments, then we can unlock the potentials of the Filipinos.

As such, we are willing to work with all segments, all political parties, all persuasions, public and private sector, to be able to provide these opportunities to our countrymen for them to lift themselves up. No matter where they come from and no matter what circumstances they had when they were born, they will have opportunities if they are willing to work well. It may take one or two generations; Singapore was able to achieve a development ladder based on meritocracy in a span of 30 to 40 years. Hopefully in our lifetime, *makita natin iyan* (we will be able to see that). | ■



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



Chair Alice delivers her speech at the 2016 Honor Awards Program, an annual event spearheaded by the Civil Service Commission that seeks to recognize public servants who have excelled in public service.



Civil Service Commission Chairperson Alicia dela Rosa-Bala

Lingkod Bayani

Lessons from the lady chief of the Civil Service Commission

BY ATTY. CARLO BALA AS TOLD TO LAKAMBINI BAUTISTA

Leading by example is one of the main leadership principles of Civil Service Commission (CSC) Chairperson, Alicia dela Rosa-Bala. And rightfully so, as she heads the central human resource agency of the government. The Commission is constitutionally mandated to promote morale, efficiency, integrity, responsiveness, progressiveness, and courtesy in the Civil Service.

“Chair Alice,” as she is fondly called by colleagues, has dedicated her life to public service. Prior to her appointment in CSC, she has served the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) for 39 years in various capacities—from being a training officer to becoming the Department’s Undersecretary for Policy and Programs. She was also Deputy Secretary General for Socio-Political affairs of the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) from 2012-2015.

Her life is clearly a depiction of a model public servant. Take it from her son and close aide, Atty. Carlo Bala.

PATRIOTISM. Public service is selfless service. Being a social worker by profession, the Chairperson would always emphasize that when you work in the government, you do not ask what benefit you would derive from the services you have rendered. Instead, you ask what more you can do to improve the lives of the Filipino people.

When you serve your countrymen, you do so with utmost sincerity and without any qualifications. You serve them equally and fairly, with no prejudice or bias. Coming from the private practice of law, I have been trained to advocate my client’s case, but in public service, you serve everyone.

INTEGRITY. It’s doing the right thing even when no one is watching. You exercise authority without fear or favor; you decide based on merits and not on popular decision. Decision-making will always be the toughest part of the job.

EXCELLENCE. Do everything with utmost quality and passion. Mediocrity is what makes people

complacent. Always aim to achieve better goals, never settle for anything less. Ditch the “*pwede na yan*” attitude. It is better to submit one proficient paper than to submit 10 ineffectual ones. Always recognize a job well done, even in the simplest manner, like saying “Thank you.”

SPIRITUALITY. Everything that we do should be dedicated to the greater glory of the Lord, the Supreme Being, to whom we owe all that we have. Breathe and take a good look at the beautiful things that the Lord has blessed us. Take time to feed your soul by having a healthy relationship with the Lord.

COMPASSION. We have a natural tendency to be indifferent to the plight of others, especially if their situation doesn’t affect us. But we should keep in mind that one simple act of compassion and kindness can make a big impact on the lives of others. Public servants should always seek to extend a helping hand, especially to those who are in need. For instance, if your office closes at 5 p.m. and the client got there before the said time, the person’s transaction should be facilitated, even if this means working beyond 5 p.m. We should always think: a small act of kindness can go a long way.

THE GIFT OF FAMILY. Your relationship with your family—whether it be the ones you were born into or your coworkers—is dependent on you. How you’ll establish and strengthen this relationship is up to you. The biggest challenge in my relationship with Chair Alice, is the fact that she is not only my boss, but she is also my mother. Throughout my life, she has looked after my welfare. Now that we serve the country together, it is incumbent upon me to do the same, which is to look out for her well-being while holding one of the critical positions in our government. Doing so is not an easy task. There are times we have conflicting views, since we come from different professional backgrounds. As with all families, it’s not always smooth sailing, but it is through compromise and understanding that we are able to achieve a harmonious relationship. |

Atty. Carlo D. Bala earned his Bachelor of Arts, Major in Legal Management and Bachelor of Laws from the University of Santo Tomas. He was an Associate Lawyer in the Rodolfo G. Palattao Law Office, where he was engaged in the practice of Corporate, Criminal and Civil law. Atty. Carlo is a member of Nilad Lodge No. 12 of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines and an Adopted member of PNPA Bagsay Lahi Class of 2006.



Chair Alice, the 2018 Ulirang Ina Awardee for Government & Public Service



The Commission on Audit (COA), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and Civil Service Commission (CSC) sign Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1 s. 2017



At the 2017 Anti-Red Tape Act (ARTA) anniversary in Luneta Park



Mactan International Airport



Panglao Airport



San Vicente Airport



The construction of the Manila Subway project will start before the end of the year, said Secretary Tugade.

Photos by DOTr

FULL SPEED AHEAD

From air, land, and sea, Department of Transportation (DOTr) Secretary, Arthur Tugade, lays down the plans—and the progress—of this administration's priority projects

BY RHODA OSALVO
PHOTOS BY MEL CORTEZ

Standing tall onstage at the Asia CEO Breakfast Forum, in front of some 250 business people from local and international companies, including a handful of local government heads and journalists, DOTr Secretary, Arthur Tugade presented the latest on President Duterte's ambitious Build, Build, Build program worth P7 trillion. The Secretary reported with much bravado what the department has accomplished over the past two years. "To achieve connectivity and mobility and thus, develop and sustain economic growth, our four areas of focus are airport, rail, road, and maritime," the lawyer-businessman turned transport chief said.

AIRPORT: FROM WORST TO BEST

The Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), once named one of the worst international gateways, landed on the top 10 in the most improved airport category based on the 2018 Skytrax survey of airline passengers. By decongesting NAIA, its punctuality rate rose from a poor 50% to a current 74%, which is better than the international average of below 70%. This was

brought about by night-rating five commercial airports. Four more are lined up for this purpose so that by end of the year, there will be a total of 24 airports that are 24-hour operational in the country, and all 42 by 2022. Night-rating allows airports to operate 15 minutes after sunset and 15 minutes before sunrise.

The President inaugurated the country's satellite-based air traffic management technology in January this year. Along with this, the government purchased 10 new radars. A total of 13 radars and one satellite radar are now in place to make air travel safer and more secure. It also allows proper aircraft and overflight identification. With this, the government can collect accurate payment from those flying within Philippine airspace.

Aside from the rehabilitation of NAIA, which started during the time of President Benigno Aquino III, a simple change in policy ended *laglag-bala* or the bullet-planting extortion scheme of some airport personnel. "I told them there is no need to detain someone found with a bullet or two, just leave the bullet behind and let them fly," Secretary Tugade explained.

The transport head also announced the different new airports that opened and will open, confirmed plans for the construction of an international airport in Bulacan which was already approved by NEDA, a possible general aviation hub and operational airport in Sangley Point, Cavite, and the improvement of NAIA's four terminals.

NEWLY OPENED AND PROPOSED AIRPORTS:

- San Vicente, Palawan (inaugurated May 10)
- Terminal 2 of Mactan International Airport (June 7)
- Panglao (August)
- Bicol International Airport
- Dumaguete (2022)
- Bulacan International Airport
- Sangley Point
- NAIA's four terminals (for improvement)

RAILWAY: ON TRACK

For many years, many dreamed of a subway in the metro. But many also said it cannot be done. Being earthquake-prone, the country needs technology that can withstand the tremors, such technology and infrastructure it could not afford yet.

For many years, a train running in Mindanao has been in the hearts of lawmakers and so, in the hope of such, they filed and re-filed bills pertaining to this every year. Nothing happened until the mayor from Mindanao took over Malacañang and his buddy from Cagayan got to work.

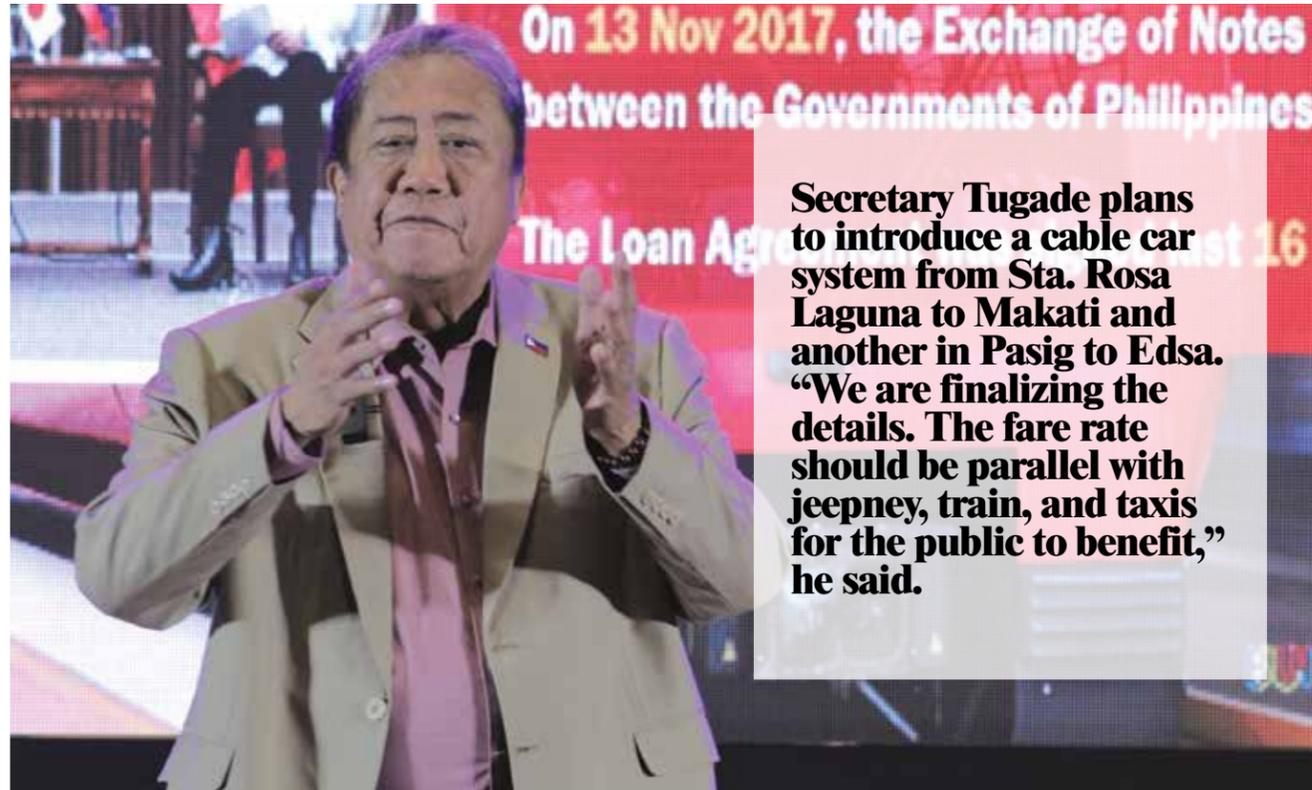


DOTr Secretary Arthur Tugade

The Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), once named one of the worst international gateways, landed on the top 10 in the most improved airport category based on the 2018 Skytrax survey of airline passengers.

"The president said, start with the most difficult project. Get it done right away," Secretary Tugade told the business community when he announced that the Manila Subway project is ahead of schedule—actual construction to start before end of the year and that the Mindanao Railway project is on track (bidding is happening this June). The Manila Subway project will run from Mindanao Avenue in Quezon City to NAIA in Pasay City.

Right now, the country has 77 kms. of railways only through LRT1, LRT2, MRT3, and the PNR; down from 900 kms. in the '70s when lines used to run from La Union to Albay. This administration's target is to finish 1,900 out of the planned 2,555 kms. of railway by 2022.



Secretary Tugade plans to introduce a cable car system from Sta. Rosa Laguna to Makati and another in Pasig to Edsa. “We are finalizing the details. The fare rate should be parallel with jeepney, train, and taxis for the public to benefit,” he said.

With the PNR Clark running from Tutuban to the Clark International Airport, travel time will be reduced to less than an hour for the express rail.

Other than the infrastructure, the Secretary plans to put up a Philippine Railway Institute in Valenzuela, in partnership with Metro Tokyo, to help develop and improve the skills of Filipinos in operations and equipment maintenance of the train system.

COMPLETED BY 2022

- PNR Clark
- PNR LB
- LRT 1 Extension
- LRT 2 Extension
- MRT 7 (Quezon City to San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan)
- Mindanao Railway (Partial with eight stations running from Tagum-Davao-Digos)
- PNR Bicol (Partial)
- Cebu (Partial)
- Manila Subway (Partial with three stations)

What the previous DOTr men failed to roll out in six years, the septuagenarian chief says, he and his team are managing to get done because of their hard work and diligence and the President’s high trust rating resulting into confidence and natural desire of businesses to help the administration. As such, he acknowledged and threw heaps of praise to the two businesses—Ayala Group and Megawide Corporation—for waiving the fees due them from the government and encouraged the other companies to do the same.

The Secretary boasted of how, through their mediation, the taipans agreed to withdraw the cases in high courts regarding the controversial Common Station—a depot for LRT, MRT, and Manila Subway with buses and jeepneys underneath—the construction of which was derailed during the previous administration. Construction is currently ongoing between SM North Edsa and Trinoma malls.

ROAD: WORLD-CLASS TERMINALS AND HI-TECH TRANSPORTS

An excellent speaker, Secretary Tugade managed to captivate the crowd’s attention. Like his buddy, President Duterte, his language is also peppered with unsavory cursing. Yet he managed to get



This administration’s target is to finish 1,900 out of the planned 2,555 kms. of railway by 2022.

away with it and even elicited a few laughs. He said that traffic is not the DOTr’s responsibility but to help ease heavy traffic, the plan is to remove the bus terminals along EDSA and put up transport terminals. “This July, we will open a world-class integrated transport terminal system in Parañaque and another one soon at FTI,” the transport head disclosed. This technology-based, automated, and world-class facility will provide commuters from Cavite easy connectivity to Metro Manila.

“We’re not against employment but the smoke belchers, colorums, and road accidents have got to stop. *Maghanapbuhay ka, ‘wag kang pumatay,*” the man who hails from Cagayan said, as he talked about the PUV modernization program and those against it. “Jeepneys and trains are not just for the poor. Modernized public transport means efficiency and an equalizer for the common man and those wearing suits,” Secretary Tugade said, and added that there’s no stopping the department from implementing the program in three years’ time, especially since it is backed by the President himself. The government will help the operators to sell their old units and shift to a new one with subsidy from the bank.

Other than the existing forms of transportation, Secretary Tugade also



Bidding for Mindanao Railway project will take place this June, said Secretary Tugade.



Parañaque Integrated Terminal Exchange is scheduled to open this July.

Photos by DOTr

For maritime modernization, the emphasis is on policy and people, acquiring equipment, and fast-moving vehicles.



Modern E-bus as part of the PUV modernization program

plans to introduce a cable car system from Sta. Rosa Laguna to Makati and another in Pasig to Edsa. “We are finalizing the details. The fare rate should be parallel with jeepney, train, and taxis for the public to benefit,” he said.

MARITIME: UPGRADE AND MODERNIZE

“On June 17, we will inaugurate the first barge terminal in Tanza, Cavite,” the transport chief said. The Cavite Gateway Terminal will be the country’s first roll-on-roll-off (RORO) terminal dedicated to containers. This will reduce truck movement on the roads of Metro Manila and container movement will no longer be limited. According to Secretary Tugade, this was in partnership with the International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI), who absorbed all costs for its construction.

Other than this development, DOTr is pushing for port modernization to encourage people to use RORO as a mode of transport. As for maritime modernization, the emphasis is on policy and people and acquiring equipment and fast-moving vehicles.

ALL IN DUE TIME

All the project proposals—gargantuan and ambitious as they are—look good on paper and have a nice timbre to the ears that can lull us to dream of the good life that’s to come. But given our experience with previous administrations, even the hopeful Filipinos, businessmen or otherwise, cannot be faulted to doubt, convinced

not to be swayed by just rhetorics. There has got to be proof. How can this administration fulfill what the others in the past failed to deliver? Does it help to know that like the President, the transport chief swears to abhor corruption? But then, we remember the past administration’s Daang Matuwid and yet nothing much was accomplished by DOTr. Sounds like the same tune, the skeptics say.

Is it an assurance that DOTr is led by the former president and CEO of the Clark Development Corporation (CDC) during whose term this government corporation was cited for good governance? Or that this guy has new strategies like betting not just on one project but numerous ones, i.e. proposing several airports at the same time— Sangley, Bulacan and expanding Clark— then see or choose in the end which is or are most viable? His plan: “If one doesn’t work in the end, there’s always a fallback.”

The Secretary asked for trust in the President and his men to deliver these elusive infrastructure projects, which will no longer be a dream but a reality in due time. Don’t we all want that? With all that was presented—timelines, status of projects, and stories behind them—it seems our dream of connectivity and mobility that has long been dangled before our eyes seems attainable in the next several years if things go as planned. Yet again, as much as we want to believe, the jaded in us holds us back, not wanting to be disappointed in the end. In the meantime, we’ll just wait and hope we get to see these projects up and serving us as promised.■

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A PUBLIC SERVANT FOR ALL SEASONS

SBMA Senior Deputy Ambassador Ramon Agregado talks about leadership lessons he has learned and wish to pass on to the new breed of public servants

BY MARTIN SARMENTA

A leader's life is filled with changes and challenges. But despite all these tests and shifting seasons, how can a leader remain focused on serving and supporting the people?

Ramon Agregado, Senior Deputy Administrator for the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA), has not only weathered the storms that confront leaders. In fact, he has used these trials as growth opportunities to help serve others even more.

BUILDING ON CURRENT STRENGTH

Before joining SBMA, Agregado already had a thriving private practice in Makati, taking on litigation work involving civil, criminal, labor, and corporate cases.

In 2005, however, he was recruited by then SBMA Administrator, Armand Arreza, to head its Support Services Group which included the Legal, Administration, and Finance departments. He was hesitant at first due to his lack of finance experience. Yet Agregado took on the challenge, learning the ropes and persevering until he not only proved that he was equal to the task, but how he actually surpassed all expectations.

The sterling results of his efforts are much appreciated by the SBMA community, who are grateful for his accomplishments.

This inspires Agregado to persevere with government work, even if at first, he thought he would not last. He shares, "You actually see how your work affects the community."

MERGING DIFFERENT STYLES

Judging from his lengthy stint in government, Agregado is doing well, indeed.

He has served under two presidents (Macapagal-Arroyo and Aquino from 2005 to 2016) and is currently serving under the Duterte administration.

Likewise, he has worked with former SBMA Chairmen and Administrators—Chairman Feliciano



Atty. Ramon Agregado with SBMA chairperson Wilma Eisma

Salonga and Administrator Armand Arreza (2005-2011), Chairman and Administrator Roberto Garcia (2011-2016), Chairman Martin Diño (2016-2017) and OIC-Administrator Randy Escolango (2016)—and is now working with Chairperson and Administrator Wilma T. Eisma.

Agregado remarks that he did not only learn from his bosses, but used these lessons to make him a better leader himself.

From Chairman Feliciano Salonga, who was educated at Kings Point, the United States Merchant Marine Academy in New York and served in the Navy, he saw the maritime potential of Subic Bay. Salonga was "very cool and practical." Thus, Agregado learned to face problems head on. "He wanted things given to him straight, no sugar coating," Agregado recalls.

Then there was Administrator Armand Arreza, who was a finance expert educated at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. From him, Agregado learned the financial strategies and aspects of running an operation. And since Arreza was also a former Undersecretary of Tourism under then Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, Agregado also learned not just the potential of the tourism industry, but its complexities as well.



Then, Agregado worked with Chairman Roberto Garcia, who was a professional manager educated at AIM. He recalls, "From him I learned a lot about operations, managing operations with a very lean budget, and building up financial strength and manpower capabilities." He would learn to prioritize achieving the "low-hanging fruits," and tackle the solvable issues before going after the more complex ones.

Today, he is serving under Wilma T. Eisma, the first female chairperson of SBMA. They have been working together for a little over a year, and from her, Agregado is already learning the value of building relationships. "Building relationships goes a long way in solving problems and getting things done and in building consensus," he says.

"From each (boss) I discovered an equally valuable lesson which I felt made me a better official, a better leader," Agregado declares.

However, he also says that the most valuable leadership lesson he learned was from his father, and this is "knowing when to stop." This can be applied to all things: when disciplining employees; giving contributions, benefits, and bonuses; and yes, even when giving a speech.

LETTING HIS OWN STRENGTHS SHINE

Agregado's ability to not just adapt, but learn and grow using the different environments and people around him, has allowed him to serve his constituents.

However, he also has his own leadership style that he now imparts to those serving under him. One of these is leading by example. He says, "That means that as much as possible, whatever work I delegate, I make sure I can do it myself, and do it better than everybody else. Then I always make it a point to be, also as much as possible, the most hard-working person in the team, or at least one of the most hardworking persons in the team!"

Another one is cutting out the drama. He continues, "Office politics, favoritism, infighting—I try to cut them out...these are very unproductive and unhealthy."

These principles have allowed him to create lasting programs, one of which is the scholarship program that

SBMA funds internally. He explains, "We focused this scholarship program on our own employees. We have some employees who have not finished college, some who want to pursue further studies, or those who want to take a board or bar exam."

This, he believes, is a cause that "pays forward," not just in some vague, sentimental, or altruistic sense, but rather in a concrete way, even for the organization. As a result of this assistance, employees tend to display increased loyalty and a desire to give their best.

A moral renewal program for the employees has also been established. He says that it is "multi-faceted and non-religious, but it goes back to basically living the core values of *malasakit*, excellence, and integrity."

FUELED BY A LOVE FOR SUBIC

One cannot emphasize enough how, for Agregado, seeing the effects of his work on the community is what has made him stay in service. This passion for the people and the land of Subic is what has fueled him all these years.

The beauty of Subic was also a big factor. He states, "Of course, I fell in love with Subic Bay as a place and as a community." It is safe. The very vibe of the area is friendly. It is also perfect for someone who loves outdoor activities as much as Agregado does. Plus, "it's a wonderful place to raise a family."

His years of service have not gone without its own share of challenges, but the perseverance continues to pay off. "There are ups and downs, but since 2012, SBMA has experienced continued growth in terms of revenue and profitability," Agregado explains.

The greatest challenge SBMA faces now is the fact that a big part of its work force is aging; many have been volunteers since 1992. SBMA has to make sure that its older employees are transitioned well into retirement, and that the new blood it brings in will maintain the core values that the pioneers have installed.

With Agregado at the helm, there is no doubt that everything he has learned from his seasons of service will be passed on to those who are now emerging as the new SBMA work force. ■

THE RISE

BY HERMAN JOSEPH S. KRAFT

Prof. Herman Joseph S. Kraft tackles the controversies surrounding the coveted Benham Rise



Illustration by
Luciano Sardea
Ramirez

I'm going to set sail to Benham Rise and I will make a statement there that nobody but nobody owns this place, including the continental shelf.
—President Rodrigo R. Duterte

Reports of sightings of Chinese surveillance ships caused quite a bit of fuss in the Philippines early during the year. The assurances made by President Rodrigo R. Duterte that they were there with his blessings did not really make Philippine hearts feel more at peace. The funny thing about the whole affair, however, was that those Chinese ships were discovered away from the usual spot where Philippine hackles are normally raised regarding Philippine territory and China. No, this was not about the West Philippine Sea on the western coastline of the island of Luzon. This was a report about Chinese ships on waters off the east coast of Luzon. This was in Benham Rise.

BENHAM WHAT?

Benham Rise is an undersea plateau of approximately 13 million hectares around 135 miles east of the province of Aurora. It was discovered in 1933 by US geologist Andrew Benham (after whom it was obviously named). While extensive exploration of the Rise still needs to be conducted, it is believed to be rich in marine resources, natural gas, oil, and mineral resources. (Now where have we heard that before?) The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf of the United Nations had awarded it to the Philippines as an extension of its continental shelf in 2012. The ruling grants the country “sovereign rights” over Benham Rise, which means the Philippines has exclusive rights to explore and exploit resources there—much like an exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

The “fuss” regarding Benham Rise was further exacerbated by the revelation that

China had proposed names to five features located in the undersea plateau, which were approved by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) in 2017. All of these features were “discovered” in a survey conducted by a Chinese survey ship in 2004. Three of the names were proposed in 2014, and the other two submitted in 2016. Considering that the “sovereign rights” of the Philippines to Benham Rise were awarded in 2012, the issue over naming rights is very much connected to perceptions of what “sovereign rights” mean. The Philippines should be the ones naming these features because Benham Rise is ours.

BUT IS IT? WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SAY IT IS OURS?

A spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry of China, Geng Shuang, noted in 2017 that the Philippines cannot claim Benham Rise as its own territory. This was in response to a declaration from the Secretary of National Defense of the Philippines, Delfin Lorenzana, that a structure would be built somewhere in Benham Rise to signify the country’s taking possession of the geological feature (much like what China did initially with those fishermen’s shelter in Mischief Reef in 1995, which eventually became one of the artificial islands it constructed in 2016). While the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson did not win any *pogi* points with the Filipino people (this was probably furthest from the minds of people at the Chinese Foreign Ministry since it was clear to them that they were not out to win a popularity contest after all, much less one with Filipinos), it is nonetheless accurate.

From a legal standpoint, being granted “sovereign rights” is not the same as having sovereignty over Benham Rise, and, more importantly, as current acting Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Antonio Carpio pointed out, the award does not make Benham Rise part of the national territory of the Philippines. Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), having “sovereign rights” grants us exclusive rights to explore for and exploit oil, gas, and mineral resources in Benham Rise. We even have exclusive rights to whatever sedentary species might be harvested from there. This, however, does not mean it is “ours.”

Which brings us back to the question of naming rights. Does it matter? Jay Batongbacal, the Director of the Institute for Maritime and Law of the Sea Studies (IMLOS) at the University of the Philippines, raised this issue of Chinese names for those features in Benham Rise in a blog post. He points out, however, that the IHO



To go back to the quote from President Duterte about going to Benham Rise to assert Philippine rights there, his insistence on asserting these rights shows his heart is in the right place and is clearly the correct path. But he has also asserted his willingness to go to war if anyone claims ownership of Benham Rise.

has its own protocols for naming undersea features. This is probably similar to how previously unknown comets or planets are recognized and given names. In the end, it is not about who was responsible for naming them, but rather how it happened that something that was previously unknown got to be known so that it could be given a name. And in this context, the Chinese have claimed that the survey ship from which the discovery was made was involved in a perfectly legal act of innocent passage.

Under the UNCLOS, “innocent passage” applies to the passage of a ship along the territorial sea of a coastal state that does not compromise (roughly speaking) the coastal state’s “peace, good order, or security.” The conduct of research or survey activities is, in fact, not considered to be “innocent” and requires permission from the coastal state. This is, however, on waters where coastal states exercise sovereignty over. In areas where “sovereign rights” apply, like the EEZ of a coastal state or its extended continental shelf, it is presumed that freedom of navigation applies, that is, ships can pass as long as they are not engaged in activities that violate the exclusive rights of the coastal state to explore for and exploit resources.

Those features that have been named are well within the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines, not just the extended continental shelf—an area in which any foreign ship should not be doing any exploration or surveying in the first place. To go by what has been claimed by the Chinese government, how long were these ships passing by “innocently” that they were able to locate and identify undersea features accurately enough for them to propose names to the IHO? Batongbacal believes that Filipinos should expect more proposals to name features resulting from this particular “innocent passage.” The question is if they were well within the EEZ of the Philippines (and not just the extended continental shelf), how long were they there? What exactly were they doing? Could an innocent passage really lead to “discoveries” of undersea features?

If the passage was apparently not so innocent, was the survey ship given permission by the Philippine government to conduct the exploration that led to these discoveries? If not, how was the survey ship able to do this without being monitored by Philippine authorities?

It would be unfair to raise these questions of the Duterte administration since most of these developments took place before President Duterte came to power. Only with the announcement in 2017 of the approval of the proposed names of the undersea features in Benham Rise is the Duterte administration somehow caught up in this issue. The discovery of Chinese ships once again in the area in early 2018, and the declaration from President Duterte that he had given permission for them to be there of course did not help assuage Filipinos that everything is in order in Benham Rise. In other words, the issues arising from the IHO’s approval of the names proposed by the Chinese and the implications of having a Chinese survey ship meandering around the EEZ of the Philippines are a collective failure of past and present presidential administrations.

To go back to the quote from President Duterte about going to Benham Rise to assert Philippine rights there, his insistence on asserting these rights shows his heart is in the right place and is clearly the correct path. But he has also asserted his willingness to go to war if anyone claims ownership of Benham Rise. This might already be overstating the case. Not just the idea of going to war—after all even if nobody really wants to go to war, it is right to recognize the obligation of the government and the people to defend the nation, its people, national sovereignty, and its territory.

But that is the point. The declaration, while sounding rightly nationalistic, does not mean much because there is little likelihood of a conflict erupting over Benham Rise. It is after all not disputed territory. Even if China rightly questions the idea of Philippine “sovereignty” over Benham Rise, it does not question the “sovereign rights” that the Philippines can exercise by virtue of the UN award. And even more confusing is the contrast in his willingness to go to war over something that is not part of the national territory of the Philippines (and something we don’t claim to be part of the national territory of the Philippines), and his reticence to defend our territorial claims in the West Philippine Sea.

It can be difficult having to pander to domestic sentiments even as you navigate across international diplomacy and its minefields. Clarity and consistency, however, in policy pronouncements go a long way towards making Filipinos understand where we stand on issues. If we are to debate and discuss these issues as a people, we should at least know basic facts about what we are discussing and debating. ■

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

HER HEART BEATS FOR BORONGAN

Mayor Maria Fe Abunda on driving Borongan City, Eastern Samar to become a self-sustaining, safe, and disaster-resilient city

BY MALOU E. ROSAL

If her surname rings a bell, that is because Borongan City, Eastern Samar mayor, Maria Fe Abunda, has a famous brother. None other than Filipino television host, publicist, talent manager, and celebrity endorser, local show business' "King of Talk" himself, Boy Abunda.

"Somehow as her sister, I am occasionally and sometimes unwillingly able to share a little of the spotlight because of his public persona," Mayor Abunda shares. "When I attend meetings or seminars, I would often be asked how I am related to him. They simply would say, 'Sister po ba kayo ni Boy Abunda? We're glad to meet you, Ma'am.' And then sometimes the expectations soar higher...I get to be compared to him. But he is the multi-awarded talk show host. And I am the local chief executive of Borongan."

Quite a role-reversal from their childhood days. Growing up in Borongan, she was very sporty and athletic as a child, playing *nuru-singkulay* and *luksong-tinik* with kids her age. "I was quite competitive and decisive. I matured quickly," she recalls. "Maybe because as the only older sibling to my brother Boy, I had been trained early by my parents to assume the role of a grown-up sister and from that, I came out very authoritative. But don't get me wrong. I am also very protective of my family, especially of my younger brother."

Mayor Abunda extends this same care and concern for family to her constituents in Borongan. Her parents' example was also pivotal to her calling for public service. She recounts how her mother, known to many as Nanay Lesing, was a former elementary school teacher, who later became a member of the then Sangguniang Bayan of Borongan, then went on to be elected as the town's vice mayor. On the other hand, her father, who was fondly called Totoy Enyong, was a former *barangay* official before becoming a councilor of their town. Despite the power and influence associated with such positions, the Abunda family lived humbly and quietly. She says, "We led a modest and simple life, largely because our parents taught us that way."

Working as a nurse before she was elected into public office, Mayor Abunda draws from her family's values as she now shows her care and concern for her constituents in Borongan.

WORKING FOR THE PEOPLE

Closest to the mayor's heart is her pet project, "Baysay Borongan" or "Beautiful Borongan," designed to make Borongan a *mabaysay* or beautiful place. As an advocate for the environment, Mayor Abunda pushed for this clean and green program, assigning street cleaners to maintain the cleanliness of roads, streets, and alleys on Baybay Boulevard. They were also tasked with planting flowering plants and trees along the roads and in parks, as well as proper garbage disposal. While very strict with the implementation of this program (even checking on the work in progress while jogging on the streets at three o'clock in the morning), she also displays a soft and nurturing side when she eats with the workers or remembering them first come Christmas and other occasions.

"Not only did I encourage them to participate in cleaning our roads and streets, I was also able to integrate an exceptional work ethic to our employees and to our people, in general. And we also see to it that when they prove worthy, they can be elevated to a higher position, should there be a necessity for hiring that would arise,"



Bato Seawall

Borongan Bliss

Borongan, the capital of Eastern Samar, is an adventurer's dream. For there can be found such natural bounties like unspoiled islands and beaches, primeval forests, spectacular rivers and streams, amazing waterfalls, and wondrous caves that dazzle and challenge intrepid lovers of nature. Here are some of Borongan's attractions.

SURFING

With Eastern Samar being the surfing capital of the Visayas, surfing spots dot the Borongan shoreline. During the *amihan* season from November to April, surfers flock to catch the perfect wave in spots like Boulevard (Borongan Bay), Pirate Cove Beach and Surf Resort, Sulangan Beach, Lalawigan, and Guintagican Beach.

ISLANDS AND ISLAND BEACHES

White sand beaches can be found in Divinubo Island and Ando Island, which are surrounded by corals and marine life that make these perfect spots for diving and snorkeling.

RIVERS

From the picturesque to the mighty, Borongan's rivers are a sight to behold. Both refreshing and enthralling are the rivers of Balacdas, Sabang, Can-obing, Lo-om, Maypangdan, Palanas, Salog, Suribao, and the Naghahagong, which is an underground river, the rushing waters of which sound like deep snoring.

she says. “I knew this project and my efforts were gratefully acknowledged because you see the joy in the people’s faces as they enjoy walking on these streets, as well as in the boulevard areas.”

Apart from “Baysay Borongan,” Mayor Abunda has a list of accomplishments that she can truly be proud of. She shares some of the details:

Renovation, including painting, of the whole Borongan City Hall building – A clean and well-kept house speaks much about the people living in it. That was the idea that guided the renovation of the Borongan City Hall. We built extensions on otherwise dark and unutilized areas and corners and we were able to house additional offices complete with fixtures in it. Of this renovation project, our greatest accomplishment was giving



(Top)
Oathtaking as mayor; (right)
Arbor Day



the whole city government building a new and fresh facelift.

Strict implementation of office hours – The city government purchased sets of biometric machines to aid in the strict implementation of government office hours. This helped our employees to be watchful and conscious in their everyday attendance.

Improvement of frontline services at the City Hall – Considered as one of the effects of the renovation project, it inspired City Hall employees to come to the office earlier than usual. The strict imposition of a dress code followed. Employees became motivated to stay inside the office and give prompt service to the clients. Early this year, the city government, along with other LGUs, was awarded the “ARTAnized” Plaque of Recognition by the Civil Service Commission for its faithful adherence to the implementation of the Anti-Red Tape Act.

Streamlining of the business permits and licensing system – With guidance from the DTI and the DILG, the city government of Borongan was able to establish a more efficient system for business permits and licensing. We trimmed down the procedure and time spent on processing of business permits and licenses by implementing a Business One-Stop-Shop within the City Hall, wherein all agencies involved in signing the business permits are gathered at the “shop” to provide fast and efficient public service. The result led the city to receive the Seal of Excellence.

Opening of new roads – This is the answer to the immediate need and clamor of our constituents for easy access to main roads, public houses and structures, and to ease the traffic and congestion on main streets and highways.

Construction of evacuation centers – The city of Borongan is geographically situated in a disaster-prone location. As part of our adaptation to the lingering effects of climate change, we have prioritized the construction of evacuation centers to serve as shelter for our constituents in times of disasters and calamities.



The construction of roads and public buildings is among the top priorities of Mayor Fe Abunda.



Construction of school buildings – The city government provided assistance for the construction of classrooms and school buildings as part of its support to the education program of the community.

Construction of health centers – The city government coordinated with *barangays* for the provision of conducive health centers/*barangay* health stations where the constituents can avail of free consultations and receive free medicines from qualified and accredited health personnel.

Livelihood projects and assistance – The city government also focused on charitable programs such as providing livelihood projects to poor but deserving families, either through city government funds or through assistance received from other agencies. Lately, with assistance received from the Department of Labor and Employment, the city was able to be a partner in distributing sewing machines to some qualified 4Ps members. In the previous years, the Make Your Nanay Proud Foundation, through Mr. Boy Abunda, has provided financial assistance to senior citizens organizations to be able to start a small project in their respective areas. Other means of livelihood for our constituents are continuously availed of through the Department of Agriculture offices. Our women have also availed of some livelihood assistance which are ongoing until now.

Construction of farm-to-market roads (FMRs) – Our farmers have relatively progressed from incurring too much cost in bringing their fresh produce to the market. With the construction of new FMRs, farm products are transported with little or minimal transportation cost.

Construction/rehabilitation of roads and bridges – Roads and bridges were included in the rehabilitation program to make these correspond to the needs of the present time.

Construction of public buildings, including covered courts – Public buildings and structures were constructed to house the other offices that will give public service to our constituents. Covered courts were also constructed in *barangays* to allow them to have a common place for *barangay* and community gatherings and assemblies. It also served as a place for the youth to spend their leisure hours playing basketball and other sports.

To be in public service, you have to get to love more and expect less. Your continued existence in the political scene is determined to a large extent by how far you forget yourself and think of the welfare of the greater majority. And more importantly, you should have a particularly exceptional drive and energy to excel in your craft and to get things done.



I hope to retire gracefully from public office. If I would not be serving the people, I would continue my dream of doing business and living a peaceful and quiet domestic life with my family. Meantime, if God would still allow me, and if my brother will still support me, I hope to go on serving my people in the best way I can.

Construction of water systems – The provision of clean water for use of households has been one of the continuing programs of the city government.

Construction of seawall and river control – The City of Borongan is located along the coastline and oftentimes experiences flooding; hence, we constructed seawall and river control along these vulnerable areas.

Implementation of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act – In faithful adherence to Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, and the Solid Waste Management Ordinance of the city, we have started implementing proper waste management and segregation of garbage in all households and business establishments in the city.

Strengthening of the City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Campaign – The city government is keen to continuously intensify its adaptation measures to lessen the impact of climate change. It has a working CDRRM Office that is central to this program working actively under the city’s CDRRM Council led by the City Mayor.

In times of calamity, there is a 24-hour available ambulance complete with search and rescue equipment manned by trained personnel of the City of Borongan Search and Rescue Team (COBSART).

BEYOND PUBLIC SERVICE

In spite of all these accomplishments, Mayor Abunda has nonetheless encountered challenges



With younger brother Boy Abunda and nanay Lesing



Visit of Ambassador Jaroslav Osla Jr of Czech Republic



Visit of U.S. Internal Political Unit Chief, Joshua Morris and political specialist Marj Gaddi

and accusations while exercising her duties. She confesses to being very sensitive and emotional at first. But now, she has adapted. She says, “I have learned to accept the fact that when you are a public official, you are always susceptible to criticisms or reproach from people who do not like you or did not like your kind of management, in the first place. When the challenge becomes almost too hard to bear, I am not one to be upset or be miserable. I just take it in stride and fill my mind with more positive thoughts. I pray to God and I pray to our *patrona*, Nuestra Senora dela Natividad.”

And for those who want to be a public servant, she shares this sage advice, “You’ve got to have what it takes to be one; otherwise, survival would just be a delusion. To be in public service, you have to get to love more and expect less. Your continued existence in the political scene is determined to a large extent by how far you forget yourself and think of the welfare of the greater majority. And more importantly, you should have a particularly exceptional drive and energy to excel in your craft and to get things done.”

Further down the road, Mayor Abunda dreams of a Borongan that will be “self-providing and self-sustaining,” drawing from its rich natural resources, with its people living “in a continuously clean and green environment.”



“Moreover,” she continues, “I hope that the efforts we have started in making Borongan a safe and disaster-resilient city will be sustained by the future mayors of Borongan.”

When the time comes for her to hang her mayor’s hat, she reflects, “I still would want to be able to shake hands with my *kababayans* perhaps in a manner as recalling or reliving the old days when I still connected with them. Maybe one day, somebody would point to a landmark or place and would say, ‘Mayor, do you remember this? This was your project. It is still very useful until this time.’”

At the ceremonial turnover of evacuation center, Arayangan, Borongan

You've got to have what it takes to be one; otherwise, survival would just be a delusion. To be in public service, you have to get to love more and expect less. Your continued existence in the political scene is determined to a large extent by how far you forget yourself and think of the welfare of the greater majority.

"I wish to be remembered, perhaps not much with fondness, but with genuine and sincere respect that my being strict has made me manage a huge organization such as the city government with healthy and productive changes that the people and the employees can relate to over time.

"I hope to retire gracefully from public office. If I would not be serving the people, I would continue my dream of doing business and living a peaceful and quiet domestic life with my family. Meantime, if God would still allow me, and if my brother will still support me, I hope to go on serving my people in the best way I can."



Getlong, Punta Maria, Borongan



San Saturnino Covered Court 2013



Coastal clean up

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Gifts from the Sea

LEAGUE caught up with GenSan one morning to get a good glimpse of port life in this part of the country

BY LEONILA R. GARCIA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TEDDY PELAEZ

The famous fish port complex in Barangay Tambler has a 750-meter quay and a 300-meter wharf for 2,000 GT reefer carriers, equipped with modern facilities that comply with international standards for fish catch handling.



The fishing industry in GenSan yields a total daily capacity of 750 metric tons of fish and employs about 7,800 workers, which is why General Santos City is home to seven tuna processing plants in the country. Locals in the city boast that fish and seafood do not come fresher than what are found in their locality.



Member of Manila's media were given a tour of the fish port complex. They were made to wear white boots for sanitation purposes.



At 6 a.m., fishing boats from Japan, Indonesia, and Malaysia arrived to sell their catch after a month of fishing on the high seas. Local fishermen said they joined a group of foreign fisher folks because they could no longer find tuna along Philippine waters.



Fish were transported from the boat to the port, weighed and measured, graded, then laid out on tables to be checked by discerning buyers. The port also serves as venue for the marketing of fish and other seafood which are much cheaper there than in local markets.

Formerly known as Dadiangas, the city of GenSan was named after Gen. Paulino Santos, a former Commanding General of the Philippine Army, and the settlement's leading pioneer. Since the '70s, GenSan has been known as "The Tuna Capital of the Philippines," being the largest producer of sashimi-grade tuna in the country.



GRAIN & GRIT

Unpretentious and easily overlooked, the bucolic province of Isabela holds more than just a bounty of agricultural achievements

BY MAIELLE MONTAYRE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TEDDY PELAEZ



Tucked away almost at the northeast corner of the Philippines, nestled among the rolling plains of the Cagayan Valley Region, and guarded by the towering mountain ranges of the Sierra Madre and Central Cordillera, sits a humble titan that is the province of Isabela.

As the second largest province of the Philippines with a land area of 1,066,456 hectares, Isabela is widely known as the “Rice Bowl of the North” and the Corn Capital of the Philippines.”

Founded in May 1, 1856, the province was named after Queen Isabela II of Spain, thereby also earning the moniker “Queen Province of the Philippines.” Initially part of La Provincia del Valle de Cagayan, the province was created by royal decree with towns separated from Cagayan and Nueva Vizcaya. Today, Isabela has 1,018 *barangays* and 34 municipalities. The province has two component cities, namely, Cauayan City and the provincial capital of Ilagan City. It has one independent city, which is Santiago City.

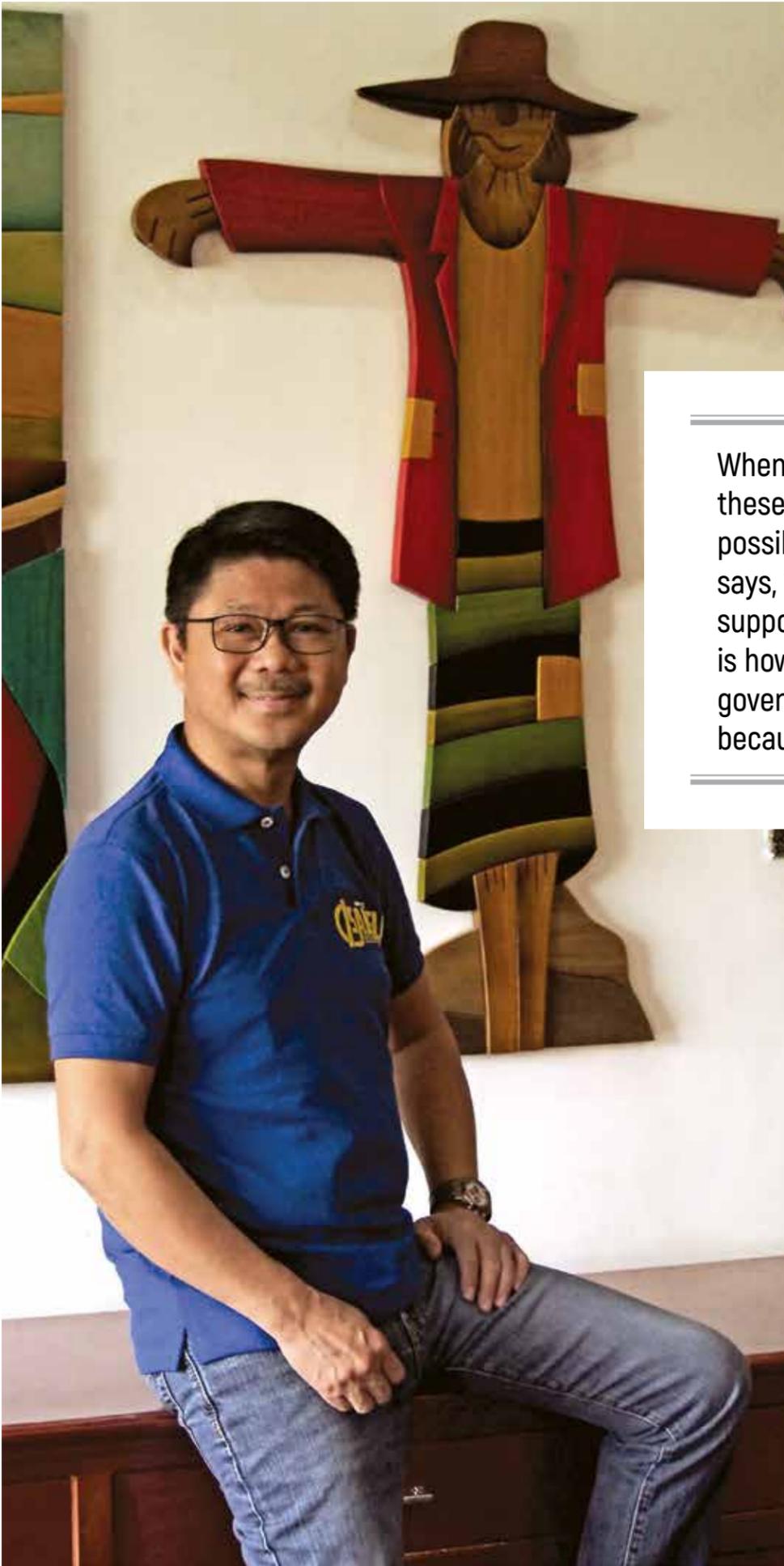
Faustino “Bojie” G. Dy III is the current governor of Isabela. Governor Dy began his political career in 1980 as an action officer of the Kabataang Barangay, Region II before becoming director to the Kapisanan ng mga Barangay ng Pilipinas in 1989. He was then appointed vice mayor of Cauayan, Isabela in February, serving until March 1992. He became the mayor of Cauayan from 1992 to 2001.

At the beginning of his term, Cauayan was only a third-class municipality. Owing to the efforts of Governor Dy, Cauayan, thereafter, became a city. After his stint as mayor, he became the Representative of the Third District of Isabela from 2001 to 2010. Since then, he has served as governor and is now on his third term.

A SURGE OF CHALLENGES

Isabela’s economy relies largely on agriculture, which is 80% the source of its income. The province supplies rice to Jollibee, Chowking, and SM malls. Metro Manila also obtains 20% of its food sources from Isabela. “This is why if Isabela gets sick, Manila might not be able to eat,” Governor Dy says. When the clouds gather and a storm approaches, the primary trade and industry of the province is threatened.

Isabela is surrounded by the provinces of Cagayan, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Ifugao and Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino and Aurora on its northern, western, and southern fronts. However, the Philippine Sea borders the east of Isabela, facing the west of the Pacific Ocean. Governor Dy recounts that of the 27 total storms in 2017, around 20 passed through Isabela. “That’s how nice we are here in Isabela; we welcome the typhoons with open arms,” he jokes.



When asked how earning these awards was made possible, Governor Dy says, "It is because of the support of the people. That is how lucky we are; my governorship was made easy because of the people."

The Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI) has been awarded as the Best Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (PDRRMC) in the Philippines Hall of Fame at the 19th Annual Gawad Kalasag by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC). Through experience and training, the Isabela PDRRMC has fine-tuned its services and purpose to serve the Isabeleños and even other provinces.

"When I became governor, I was immediately faced with super typhoon Juan on October 18, 2010. I will never forget that day, and that is why we became all the more prepared for typhoons," Governor Dy recounts. He says the first storm surge in the Philippines occurred in the coastal town of Maconacon, during super typhoon Juan. The inlands are shielded by the Sierra Madre Mountains, but the coastal towns are not.

"All forms of communication were down. There were no roads. The only way to get there was by air or sea. We were assisted by US Armed Forces that brought 13 Chinooks and two C-130s because they saw the magnitude and impact of the storm, considering the municipality of Maconacon was covered by 20-feet of water. So that was an eye-opener for us. We realized what we had to do."

Though the inlands are protected from the force of typhoons, it could not escape the flooding afterwards.

It becomes a catch basin, flooded by waters from the surrounding mountains and waters converging on the rivers. Magat Dam, located in Isabela, also causes floods in the province's valleys whenever water overflows from it during typhoons.

So, Governor Dy worked on improving the PDRRMC, equipping the office with efficient "foldable" bulletproof boats from the US, portable water filters from Germany, and skilled staff members. The solar-powered water purifiers can produce up to 300 gallons an hour, because potable water is the first thing needed after a storm. Every time there is a calamity, they send aid to other provinces, such as the province of Albay recently; Tacloban, Leyte during Typhoon Yolanda; and Davao during Typhoon Pablo. "We don't like the publicity," he says. "We'll just show up much to their surprise and render aid where we can. *Mas gusto naming tumulong kaysa kami ang tinutulungan.* (We would rather help others than be a burden to them.)"

The PGI also began the development of a coastal road for more access to the remote communities in the coastal areas. Through proper cooperation and coordination, many provincial agencies work together during typhoons, particularly concerning Magat Dam. The release of water before typhoons is coordinated, making sure the locals are aware of the situation. In case of approaching storms, residents in flood-prone or landslide-prone areas would have been relocated beforehand. Households are also equipped with whistles and typhoons kits.



Governor Dy worked on improving the PDRRMC, equipping the office with efficient "foldable" bulletproof boats from the US, portable water filters from Germany, and skilled staff members.



"When former President Benigno Aquino III mandated the surrender of car sirens, we collected those and used them as early warning devices for *barangays* and other prone areas," Governor Dy states. It is worth noting that Isabela is also the only province that has a liquor ban on the day of and the day after a typhoon to avoid unruly behavior of people during ongoing relief efforts. He adds, "Sometimes, they're the ones who end up being the casualties because they are drunk. So we learned from that."

A VALLEY OF BRO-PROGRAMS

Each year, the PGI lends financial support to the 1,018 *barangays* for their priority development projects. In 2011, the PGI launched the Bojie Rodito Opportunities (BRO) Programs to aid the local farmers in case of typhoons. "Because of the many typhoons that pass through our province, my

The PGI has been awarded as the Best PDRRMC in the Philippines Hall of Fame at the 19th Annual Gawad Kalasag by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC). Through experience and training, the Isabela PDRRMC has honed its craft and purpose to serve the Isabeleños and even other provinces.



farmers suffer the brunt of the loss,” he laments. The BRO Ayuda sa Presyo (BRO-ASAP) and BRO Pantawid Pamasaha Program (BRO-PPP) is a partnership with NFA, providing subsidies on the price of rice per kilo.

There are also the BRO Loan Assistance for Marginalized Farmers Program (BRO- LAMFP) and the BRO Opportunities for Livelihood Development (BRO-Livelihood) for co-operatives, associations, and indigent individuals, which provide a zero loan interest. An amount of almost P400 million has been loaned to cooperatives and individual borrowers, especially farmers. Only 6% are unable to pay. “Our system is once we give a loan of 10,000 and they pay it back at zero interest after a year, the next time they borrow, we will increase the amount to P15,000 to 20,000 to encourage them to borrow,” Governor Dy explains.

Crop insurance per hectare is also provided under the BRO Paneguro sa Pananim (BRO-PSP), covering calamities such as typhoons, floods, droughts, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. The

program also insures against pests on corn and rice crops. “While the Department of Agriculture (DA) allocates for seed subsidy, sometimes it is not suitable for the soil of the farmer because it doesn’t grow. One cavan or one pack is not sufficient for the farmer to recoup his losses, especially if he has two hectares of land,” Governor Dy further explains.

The BRO Sapat na Seguridad para sa Magsasaka (BRO-SSSM) has marginalized farmers enrolled as members with SSS, a first of its kind. They are therefore entitled to sickness, disability, maternity, and funeral benefits. Governor Dy says, “The President was pleased when he learned that more than 10,000 are enrolled.” Isabela also provides their farmers with PhilHealth under the BRO PhilHealth para sa Magsasaka (BRO-PHM) and BRO Insurance in case of death or permanent disability. Isabeleños are also entitled to the BRO Healthcare program, providing medical and hospitalization benefits to all permanent residents of Isabela.

Celebrating Isabela’s rich agricultural heritage through song and dance



“We govern by deeds, not by publicity. We endeavor to serve, not to be served.”



Under the BRO for Education (BRO-Ed), Isabela also has more than 15,000 non-academic scholars, resulting in a high literacy rate of 97%. They are enrolled in different schools and universities all over Isabela, including the Isabela State University (ISU) and the Philippine Normal University (PNU)-Isabela. Others are enrolled at the Cagayan State University, Central Luzon State University, and University of the Philippines. The program is aimed mostly at children of farmers and marginalized folk, in the hopes of having one college graduate for each Isabeleño family.

A WATERSHED OF POSSIBILITIES

“We want to be the agro-industrial capital of the Philippines. We have 177,000 hectares of corn, 160,000 hectares of rice, and almost 12,000 hectares of *monggo*. We also aim to host the National Mango Congress. We also want to have processing plants set up in the province such as corn-oil processing, corn starch processing, and the like,” Governor Dy states.

Apart from this, Isabela launched a convergence project to improve flood control, hydroelectric generation, and water irrigation of 40,000 hectares of land to benefit more Isabeleños. “Having studied the typhoons, we know which areas are flood-prone, so we plan to set up four more dams in the Sierra Madre area,” he explains. Work on proper irrigation covering 16,000 hectares in Tumauni is already underway in Northern Isabela. Through these measures, Isabela will be able to supply even further the demands of Metro Manila and Luzon.



Aside from watering the crops, drying the grains is also a necessity. At the start of his term, Governor Dy required the *barangays* to finish road concreting because farmers would often dry the grains on the National Highway. After having allocated P100 million for the construction of drying facilities, Governor Dy also requested aid from the DA. This serves as a solution to the problem of incessant rains affecting the industry of Isabela. “We are targeting the five large facilities at strategic locations near NFA to help the farmers since the prices went down during the last quarter of 2017,” he says.

Through coastal development projects, the PGI aims to establish a major road network from the inlands to the coastal areas. This, in turn, will boost trading relations among the different communities as well as strengthen tourism in the province. Isabela promotes agri-ecotourism but it still has untapped tourist spots owing to the inaccessibility of coastal areas, which can be reached only by plane or by boat.

The poverty incidence in the province has gradually decreased from 26% in 2009, to 21% in 2012, to a continuous decline over the



Our Lady of Atocha church

years. When SM City Cauayan opened, its first day sale record was broken with up to P15.2 million sales in one day. What was even more surprising was that credit card purchases made up only 10% of the sales figures; the rest were in cash. According to Governor Dy, this shows that the purchasing power of the local residents is very high.

Agro-tourism is now one of the prime movers of Isabela's economy.



Man-made river at the provincial capitol

A BOUNTY OF UNIFIED ISABELEÑOS

The PGI boasts of a multitude of awards and accomplishments over the years. They have been awarded the Seal of Good Local Governance Hall of Fame by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) in 2017. The PGI also received the following awards in 2017: the 14th Kapit Bisig Award; the 18th Gawad Kalasag, Hall of Fame, Best Early Learning Center in the Philippines; Outstanding Governorship Award; Most Business-Friendly Province in Luzon; CDA Gawad Parangal, Best Performing LGU Cooperative Development Office in the Philippines; and Award of Excellence in Recognition of the Provincial Government of Isabela's Outstanding Performance and Commitment in the Attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals on Health.

When asked how earning these awards was made possible, Governor Dy resolutely states, "It is because of the support of the people. That is how lucky we are; my governorship was made easy because of the people." Isabela has been



"We want to be the agro-industrial capital of the Philippines. We have 177,000 hectares of corn, 160,000 hectares of rice, and almost 12,000 hectares of *monggo*. We also aim to host the National Mango Congress."

recognized as the Volunteerism Capital, beating out Subic. Governor Dy further explains that after a typhoon, while he would be coordinating with the Department of Public Works, Isabela Electric Cooperative (ISELCO), and local enforcement agencies, the residents are also out helping clearing the roads to make them accessible. He also says, "They send text brigades because not the whole of Isabela is affected. They pray for the safety of everyone and recovery of the affected areas. *Nakataba ng puso ang kanilang suporta*. (Their show of support is very heart-warming.)"

Governor Dy says he never chose to become a politician. He was merely appointed to the position. But he recalls, "When I started in politics, my father told me, *hindi dahil anak ka ng governor, paglilingkuran ka; ikaw dapat ang maglingkod sa tao*. (Just because you are the son of the governor, does not mean you should be served; rather, it is you who should serve

the people.)" He continues explaining that the PGI owes it to the Isabeleños because they are the reason behind the elected position. "Almost everyone here knows my personal number. They can directly text me their concerns," Governor Dy affirms.

Isabela has four districts and the PGI has satellite offices in each district to serve the Isabeleños directly, rather than have them travel long distances to reach the capitol. Governor Dy concludes with, "We govern by deeds, not by publicity. We endeavor to serve, not to be served."

Governing a territory endowed with vast tracts of land is no easy feat. In the far-flung areas of Isabela, each *barangay*, municipality, and city administers its own affairs. But through the harvests, the storms, and the festivities, the province of Isabela never fails to come together as one united front in the northeast region of the Philippines. ■

Aromatic Rituals



FEATURES



Bergamot Oil dispels anxious feelings as it purifies the skin and provides a calming effect. For a bitter fruit, it produces sweet oil that brightens the mood. Known to build confidence, this refreshing oil can help stop the growth of bacteria, minimize marks, lessen skin irritations, and relax tensed muscles.



Chamomile Oil is one of the gentlest essential oils on the planet. Its unique floral scent was often used in Ancient Rome for its ability to calm the raging nerves of soldiers. This natural mood-booster is also known for its soothing abilities. It improves skin condition, relieves tired muscles, mollifies flaring pores, and helps slow down the aging process.



Eucalyptus Oil has a cooling fragrance that freshens up the air and keeps stench away. It has anti-acne, antiseptic, and antibacterial properties that help detoxify and purify the skin. It also helps tone the hair and give a refreshing feeling that creates a soothing massage experience.



Frankincense Oil is considered the king of essential oils. Its balsamic aroma offers comfort, helps relieve stress and anxiety, and naturally induces sleep. It also works to detoxify skin and reduce muscle pain. It also helps diminish the appearance of dark spots, acne blemishes, and reduce signs of aging by helping tighten the skin and firm pores.



Lavender Oil is on the most coveted essential oil today because of its powerful antioxidant, mood-boosting, and antibacterial properties. A quick whiff of its floral aroma naturally calms and relaxes the mind. It also helps fight aging, reduce acne, and revitalize complexion.



Lemongrass Oil has a stress-relieving herbaceous aroma commonly used in massage oils for its muscle-relaxing abilities. Rejuvenating, this famous oil detoxifies, deodorizes, and tones the skin. It has natural antibacterial, antiseptic, and astringent properties that help protect and promote healthy skin.



Orange Oil has a delicately fresh, citrus aroma that uplifts the mood and promotes mental activity. Its calming and soothing effect actively firms, strengthens, softens, and moisturizes your skin. Orange Oil also effectively combats noxious elements to keep acne at bay.



Peppermint Oil has refreshing mint aroma that drives bugs away while its calming effect enlivens the senses and allows you to focus more while relaxing sore muscles. Its cooling sensation has natural astringent, antiseptic, antibacterial and anti-acne effects that helps balance, tone, soothe, and detoxify skin and promote healthy hair.



Tea Tree Oil is best known for its ability to purify and cleanse the skin and stimulate healthy complexion. Its aromatic scent helps freshen the air and offer natural protection while its cooling effect relaxes tired muscles, soothes dry and flaking skin, and eliminates odor-causing bacteria. It also helps get rid of dandruff to promote healthy hair growth.



Ylang-Ylang Oil is highly sought for its healthy hair growth boosting and calming properties that drive away stress and relax the body. This soothing oil softens, moisturizes, and firms the epidermis while keeping oiliness under control. It has a rich, sweet and flowery scent that promotes a positive outlook as it invigorates your overall appearance.





Better Education for More

Commission on Higher Education OIC, Commissioner Prospero “Popoy” de Vera III, talks about the historic developments in Philippine education

BY JOYCE REYES-AGUILA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAR CONCENCO

The education journey of many students—including young Filipinos who are off to college with the goal of earning a degree—culminates this month.

The new school year may seem like business as usual, except that some families did not have to shell out tuition fees for higher-education scholars. A new piece of legislation known as Republic Act (RA) 10931, or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (UAQTEA), now makes the government responsible for the tuition in state-run universities, colleges, and technical-vocational institutions. If learning is a right, then it’s time to do things right.

It is a “historic development,” according to Commissioner Prospero “Popoy” de Vera III, officer-in-charge (OIC) of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). “This has never been tried in our country or, for that matter, in any developing country. We’re entering uncharted waters, so to speak.”

RA 10931 is pillared on four programs: free higher education to students admitted in state universities and colleges (SUCs) and CHED-recognized local universities and colleges (LUCs), free technical-vocational education and training in state-run technical-vocational institutions (TVIs), tertiary education subsidy (TES) or grants-in-aid, and a national student loan program (SLP). The Unified Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST), along with other government agencies, will implement the law, while CHED is the central agency because the network of public higher education institutions are under the commission.

INVESTING IN THE YOUTH

According to De Vera, who has been with the agency since 2016 and was appointed OIC at the beginning of the year, this means overseeing P41 billion in funding for quality higher education. This makes him and his office accountable for over 1.3 million young people. “If we invest in them, we give them the opportunity to complete their education and develop the skills needed,” he tells *LEAGUE Magazine*. “We’ve always looked at population as a problem, or the fact that we have a lot of young people as burden to this country. The impact of this (law) is not just going to be felt during the Duterte administration when students will not have the heavy burden of paying for tuition and miscellaneous fees. It will be felt maybe 10, 20 years from now when you see we have produced a bigger number of more educated, better-trained young people who will be the engines of growth in the country.”

De Vera shares that CHED and some education institutions have warmed up to the recent changes since last year when President Rodrigo Duterte and the House of Representatives realigned P8.3 billion in funds to assist at least 900,000 students in 112 SUCs with their tuition fees. This means that these educational facilities already have experience in reimbursing from, and reporting to, the national government. The only change RA10931 brings is that aside from tuition fees, miscellaneous fees will be paid for by the government as well. Now CHED has to transfer knowledge to 78 local universities and colleges created by local governments.

“We have to make sure that SUCs created by local government efficiently implement the law,” continues De Vera, former vice president for public affairs of the University of the Philippines. “That is non-negotiable and we have to help them because they don’t have the experience. They have to learn fast and catch up.”

If we invest in them, we give them the opportunity to complete their education and develop the skills needed.



De Vera recognizes the autonomy of local governments and has met with groups like the Association of Local Universities and Colleges, heads of colleges and universities to build relationships. In these dialogues, he said he has always stressed the role of CHED as they work together to help improve the quality and standards in schools.

“Essentially, what the law provides is that it tells the SUCs that they have to join us in providing free and quality education,” the CHED lead and public administration professor at the University of the Philippines explains. “If the local government has all resources and does not want to be part of the law, that’s perfectly fine. They can continue providing educational services. The role of the Commission in that case is to make sure that the standards are met in the programs and degree programs they deliver so that

the graduates, especially those who will be taking licensure exams, are vetted by CHED. If they want to be part of the law, the role of CHED is increased because they will be getting national government money.

“The role of CHED will be developmental, not regulatory (when it comes to the work with local governments). To assist them so their programs become compliant, and provide training for faculty and administrators so they can prepare for evaluation. The role of CHED is working with them to see how we can develop quality education for our young people. (The Commission) will determine, in many respects, how the program will move forward and how will it succeed.”

This year also sees a spike in the number of indigent students receiving allowances from the government from 40,000 to 300,000. A big challenge, describes De Vera, because CHED has to make sure that they get their subsidies regularly.

De Vera points out that the President’s experience as a local government executive is key to the access to free public higher education. “For local governments, this is the affirmation that (they) know what is happening in the ground because (the president, former) Mayor Duterte understood and really felt the need of families and young people at the ground level.

“What many people don’t realize or recognize is that it had to take a local government executive to make public higher education free. This demand for free public education is not a new issue. Every student, every family is asking help from government to reduce the burden of studying in terms of cost. There were oppositions, but the President signed it anyway because his heart is in the right place.”

This is the reason, according to the education executive, that local government units (LGUs)



“should be an integral part for this government to succeed. It’s not just the job of the Commission or TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority) or SUCs. Local governments have to be active participants in many ways because they run local universities and colleges.”

De Vera adds that LGUs should proactively inform SUCs of their needs to ensure that financial assistance is given to students. It is especially crucial for LGUs with strong financial capability that they increase their investment in higher education.

BUT FIRST, K TO 12

Another milestone for Philippine education this year is the graduation of the first batch of students covered by the so-called K to 12 program. The 13-year basic education strategy, according to the Department of Education (DepEd) website, “is found to be the best period for learning” and “is also the recognized standard for students and professionals globally.”

The education department estimates that 1.5 million senior high school students will graduate this year—50 percent of whom will try to enroll into higher education. De Vera continues, “But we’re anticipating that because higher education is free, a bigger number will try... Maybe 70 percent of the graduates will try to go to higher ed. That translates to a little over 400,000 potential young people.”

To encourage more students to continue studying after high school, CHED and UniFAST have made admission tests in all public universities free. “We recognize that P200 to P300 in (entrance fees) is still a burden for students coming from poor families. We are anticipating a bigger number and therefore, we are anticipating that the admission tests in public universities will be tougher because there will be more takers. But we will not increase the number of students that will be accepted because we want to maintain the standards of quality. We are taking out the barriers for their access to higher education. We have to send a signal to young people that you must try to go for higher education.”

De Vera, a Fulbright-Hays Visiting Scholar at the University of Southern California and the California State University-Sacramento, adds that an affirmative action program is being institutionalized to increase the number of students from indigent households, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and indigenous communities. “Even if you take out tuition, miscellaneous fees, and the cost of the admission test, sometimes the students coming from these sectors by virtue of where they study, where they live, what their economic circumstances are, will still not pass the admission test. So we have to help them,” he maintains.

CHED is working with schools to offer free review classes for entrance examinations, and even guidance counseling—all to enable more students to pass admission tests. The K to 12 transition fund has also sent 9,000 faculty members to finish their masters or doctorate degrees or obtain professional training to have better credentials and skills, according to De Vera. CHED’s K to 12 five-year transition program is comprised of developmental strategies to mitigate impact on labor and strengthen and ensure sustainability of higher education institutions beyond the prescribed period.

CULMINATION

As a government official, De Vera considers his mandate in CHED as a “logical continuation” of his work in public service and education. At the age of 19, he became an instructor and has since taught at the University of the Philippines and De La Salle University. He has also worked under the House of Representatives and the Senate with the offices of Senate presidents Aquilino Pimentel, Jr. and Koko Pimentel, Senate presidents protempore Sotero Laurel, Leticia Ramos-Shahani, and Juan Flavio, and senators Gregorio Honasan and Ramon Magsaysay, Jr.

“I’ve been in education my whole life,” he says. “CHED is in a sense a culmination... It’s not really something new to me. A lot of the issues in higher education that we’re talking about now and those that we are deciding in the Commission en banc are issues that I have been studying since the 1990s.

“The only difference is the transition... into a policy maker. Now we deal with national policies on higher education. We run programs that affect more than a million young people across 112 state universities and colleges, across 78 local universities and colleges, and more than 1,000 private universities and colleges. The scope is bigger, the impact is greater, (as well as) the overall contribution of efforts to national development.”

Along with the changes, he has learned to complement his patience with his drive to be able to contribute. “The two are quite difficult to bring together because when you’re driven, you become very impatient. But working in a bureaucracy, sometimes, there are things you cannot change overnight. So, you do a lot of forward planning, a lot of strategic planning. And you have to be patient at working on details to make sure that things are moving. But if we do it well, we do it correctly.”

And for Popoy de Vera III and CHED, realizing the goal of reducing poverty in the country begins with increasing the capability of its youth and the nation’s future. ■



On Republic Act (RA) 10931: “The impact of this (law) is not just going to be felt during the Duterte administration when students will not have the heavy burden of paying for tuition and miscellaneous fees. It will be felt maybe 10, 20 years from now when you see we have produced a bigger number of more educated, better-trained young people who will be the engines of growth in the country.”

Much Ado About Independence

June 12 or July 4?
Some lesser known facts about Philippine Independence Day

BY JOHN LEE CANDELARIA



This year, we celebrate the 120th anniversary of Philippine independence from Spain on June 12, by virtue of Republic Act No. 4166 which transferred the official date of independence from July 4. Then president Diosdado Macapagal signed said law at the behest of his advisors for a myriad of reasons, main one including the aim of extolling the values and heroism of the heroes of the Philippine Revolution. Here are some little known facts about the Philippines and Independence Day(s).

June 12, 1898, the date we commemorate, is the date of the proclamation made by Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo in Kawit, Cavite, which is regarded then as invalid because few months later, on December 10, 1898, the Treaty of Paris was ratified. As a result, Spain ceded several of its possessions, such as Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, to the United States.

The Philippine flag was first unfurled on the same date, but it was first presented to Aguinaldo on May 28, 1898. Thus, every year, from May 28 to June 12, the flag must be displayed prominently in government buildings, agencies, and official residences, as these days were declared Flag Days by Executive Order 179 of President Fidel Ramos.

The three stars of the Philippine flag represent Luzon, Panay, and Mindanao. Aguinaldo referred to these three as the three principal islands of the archipelago. Today, we recognize the stars to represent our three main island regions of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

The three main colors of the flag—blue, red, and white—were chosen to commemorate the flag of the United States of America, as “debt of gratitude” to its disinterested protection of the Philippines.

The shade of blue used in the flag varied throughout time. It was navy blue according to Aguinaldo, sky blue according to Apolinario Mabini; the dictator Ferdinand Marcos, decreed it to be sky blue, only to revert to navy blue later on.

The Philippine National Anthem “Lupang Hinirang” was not the first Filipino national anthem—the Katipunan had an anthem composed by Julio Nakpil entitled “Marangal na Dalit ng Katagalugan” (Honorably Hymn of the Katagalugan), which was later on retitled “Salve Patria” (Hail, Fatherland). Bonifacio converted the Katipunan into a revolutionary government, and the arrangement by Nakpil, later on retitled as “Himno Nacional” was not adopted by Aguinaldo.

“Lupang Hinirang” was composed by Julian Felipe in 1898, while the lyrics were adopted from the Spanish poem “Filipinas” written by Jose Palma in 1899. The lyrics were first translated into Tagalog in the 1940s, while the current version in Filipino version underwent slight changes from the ‘50s to the ‘60s. In 1998, the official lyrics were codified into law, by virtue of Republic Act No. 8491.

The first anniversary of Independence Day was celebrated in Angeles, Pampanga.

There are several declarations of Philippine independence: April 12, 1895 by Andres Bonifacio inside Pamitinan Cave in Montalban (now Rodriguez, Rizal); a day in August 1896 in Pugad Lawin coinciding with the first cry of the revolution; October 31, 1896 by Emilio Aguinaldo, also in Kawit, Cavite; October 14, 1943 during World War II when the Japanese “sponsored” Philippine independence from the United States, and July 4, 1946 in a ceremony held in Luneta.

The Philippines was declared independent by the United States President Harry S. Truman on July 4, 1946, as a commitment to the Tydings-McDuffie Law that established the American Commonwealth in the Philippines and lasted 10 years. Since 1947 until 1962, Philippine Independence Day was celebrated on July 4.



TERTIARY GENERAL EDUCATION TITLES



SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

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



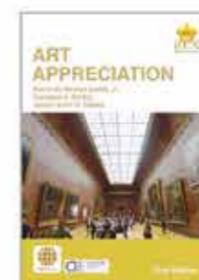
JOSE RIZAL, SOCIAL REFORMER AND PATRIOT

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



READINGS IN THE PHILIPPINE HISTORY

John Candelaria & Veronica C. Alporha



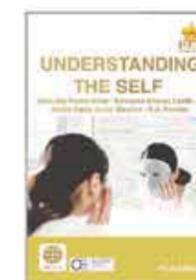
ART APPRECIATION

Bernardo Nicolas Caslib, Jr.
Thea Garing
Jezreel Anne Casaul



FOUNDATION OF MORAL EVALUATION (ETHICS)

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



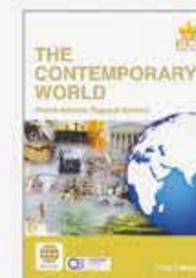
UNDERSTANDING THE SELF

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



COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIETY

Marikit Tara Alto Uychocho & Maria Lorena Santos



THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Prince Kennex R. Aidama



MATHEMATICS IN THE MODERN WORLD

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



ALIGNED WITH CHED'S CMO NO. 20 SERIES OF 2013



INTERDISCIPLINARY

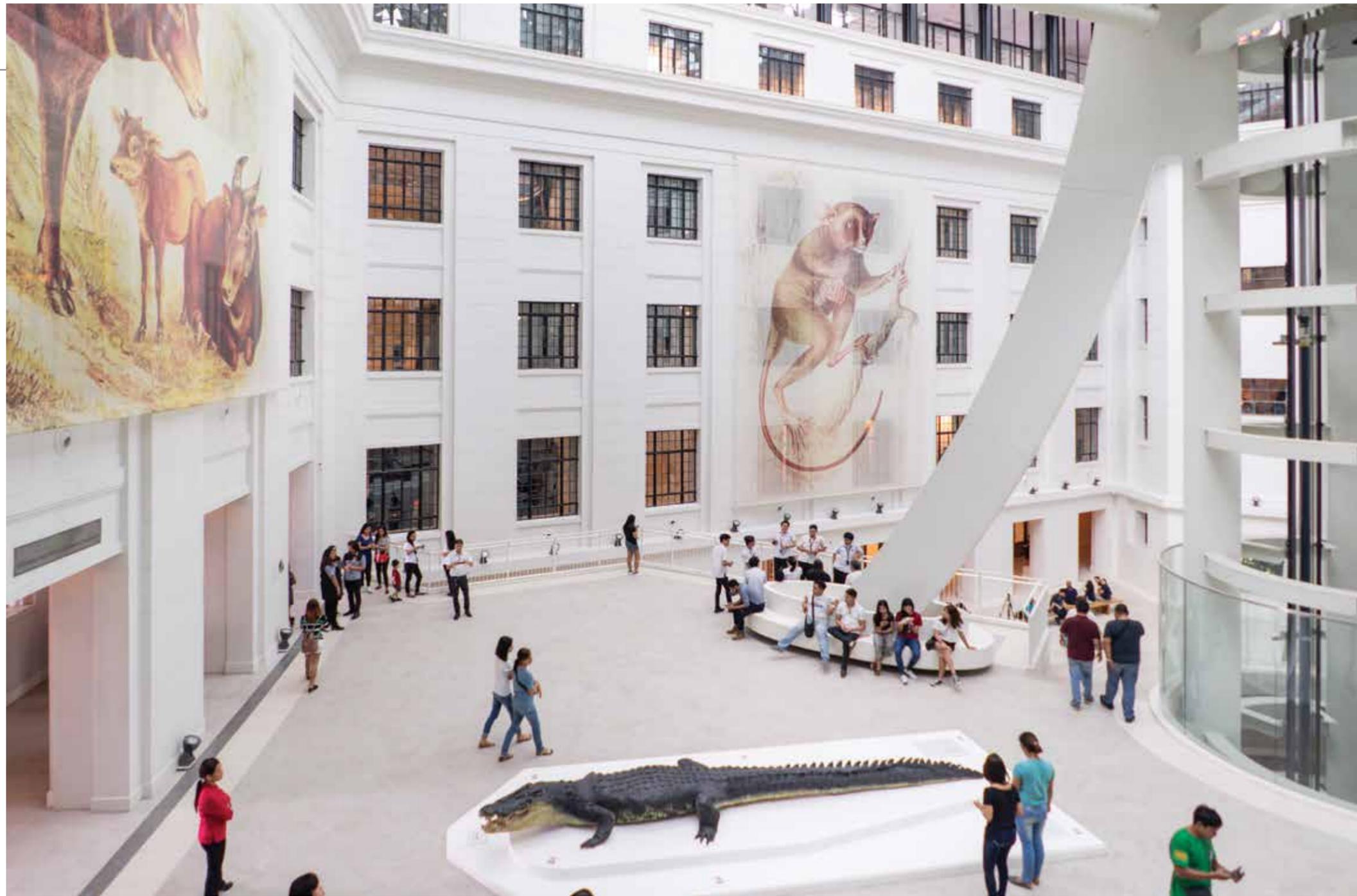


OUTCOMES BASED

Where Science, Art, and History Converge

A visit to the National Museum of Natural History is not just an educational experience, but also an awakening of the artistic soul

BY ROSY MINA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL SORIANO



Going to the science museum is an activity commonly reserved for educational purposes for students, as well as natural science aficionados. Those whose interests lie elsewhere (like spending the day in a mall) may find a science museum, or any museum for that matter, quite boring. But these days, modern museums have evolved with the times and now offer unique experiences that can cater to every persuasion.

One notable science museum in the country is the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH). It features botanical, zoological, and geological collections that are meant to inform and astound. Among the species that are featured include those that are endemic, meaning they can be found only in the Philippines.

“Your National Museum is one of the leading centers of education, science, and culture,” says National Museum Board of Trustees chairman Ramon del Rosario, Jr.

Del Rosario made this remark at the opening of the NMNH on International Museum Day last May 18. “We are promoting to Filipinos and visitors from all around the world our National Museum in the Philippines. Here can be found knowledge, appreciation, and love for our heritage as Filipinos and as people, in the fields of fine arts, anthropology, the natural world, and their historical contexts.”

THIS WORLD-CLASS MUSEUM FACILITY WILL BENEFIT ALL FILIPINOS BY HELPING US ALL TO KNOW BETTER AND DEVELOP A GREATER APPRECIATION FOR THE GIFTS OF NATURE WITH WHICH OUR COUNTRY IS SO RICHLY ENDOWED.

NOT A REGULAR SCIENCE MUSEUM

Since the NMNH opened on International Museum Day, admission was free on that day. But what makes the NMNH stand out among other science museums is that its admission will be free as mandated by the government in 2016.

In fact, admission is free to all museums in the National Museum Complex in Manila, which include the National Museum of Anthropology and National Museum of Fine Arts. The free admission, adds del Rosario, covers all national museums nationwide, “from Batanes to Jolo, which is made possible by the strong support for this institution from the national government and our partners in the private and other sectors.”

The waived entrance fee is surely a breather for those who are interested in trooping to a science

museum but are quite hesitant to shell out steep fees. This means that even groups of friends and families can try going to the museum for a different kind of weekend activity. What is more, the NMNH has other aspects that will certainly draw visitors in.

STUNNING ARTISTIC ELEMENTS

The National Museum of Natural History may be one that focuses on nature and science but its building is already something to marvel at because it is a work of art itself. It used to be the Department of Tourism Building, which was originally the Agriculture and Commerce Building built in 1940. The five-storey structure can be found near the Agrifina Circle in the Rizal Park complex at T.M. Kalaw Street corner General Luna Street in Manila.

The historic government structure has gone through retrofitting and renovation and has been fully restored. It boasts of intricate neoclassical



AT THE CENTER OF THE DOME IS AN ELEVATOR THAT MAKES UP THE TRUNK OF THE TREE OF LIFE. THE ELEVATOR'S SPIRAL STEEL STRUCTURE DESIGN IS REMINISCENT OF A HUMAN DNA.

details on the façade, main entrance hall, walls, and ceilings. Taking a closer look at the extensive architecture and interior design of the museum will already require a great deal of time.

Add to that the design highlight of the museum, which is called The Tree of Life. The structure features a dome made of white-painted aluminum and glass that covers the courtyard. It lets in natural light and enhances the white interiors. At the center of the dome is an elevator that makes up the trunk of The Tree of Life. The elevator's spiral steel structure design is reminiscent of a human DNA.

DISTINCTLY FILIPINO

The elevator leads to the 12 galleries which house various exhibits on flora and fauna. Visitors are welcomed near the entrance by a life-size replica of Lolong, once known as the world's largest crocodile in captivity as recognized by the Guinness World Records. The replica measures more than six meters long. The skeleton of Lolong, meanwhile, is suspended from the ceiling. The taxidermied specimen of Lolong will be put on display soon.





Replicas of other creatures found only in the Philippines, such as those of the spot-billed pelican and Philippine eagle, are also on display. The sad reality, however, is that most of these endemic species have become endangered or extinct. This is what the museum would also like to impart to visitors, notes del Rosario. He says, “This world-class museum facility will benefit all Filipinos by helping us all to know better and develop a greater appreciation for the gifts of nature with which our country is so richly endowed.”

Another exhibition that reminds visitors about the beauty of nature is the collection of illustrations and paintings of plants and flowers. This botanical exhibit aims to bring out the details of the seemingly unimportant flowers and plants in the vast ecosystem. The beauty of nature is brought to the forefront through this exhibit.

DIRE NEED TO CARE FOR NATURE

Other collections in the museum take a step further by bringing up the urgent need for people to take care of the environment and the country’s natural resources. One example is the replica of mangrove forests and the beach. The museum does not only highlight the beauty of such landscapes but more importantly, it makes known the importance of mangroves and beaches in the ecosystem.

In addition, there are various collections which feature endemic fish, as well other marine creatures such as starfish, manta rays, whale sharks, and the massive sperm whale. This exhibit proves the beauty and diversity of Philippine marine life. It also shows that such marine creatures are unfortunately under the threats of poaching, plastic pollution, and cyanide fishing.

ONE EXHIBIT PROVES THE BEAUTY AND DIVERSITY OF PHILIPPINE MARINE LIFE. IT ALSO SHOWS THAT SUCH MARINE CREATURES ARE UNFORTUNATELY UNDER THE THREATS OF POACHING, PLASTIC POLLUTION, AND CYANIDE FISHING.

Another exhibit, meanwhile, features a globe which exhibits the various changes that the atmosphere has gone through over the decades. It also demonstrates the grave effects of climate change. These visuals make things more concrete for visitors, in hopes that they will be more enlightened about the risks of climate change and will hopefully help save the environment in their own little ways. This important message appeals to both Filipino and foreign visitors because it is a universal call to be better stewards of nature.

LONG TIME COMING

The opening of the ambitious National Museum of Natural History has been a long time coming. In 1998, the National Museum Act mandated for the National Museums of Natural History, Anthropology, and Fine Arts to be opened. The Act was authored by the late Senator Edgardo Angara and approved by former President Fidel V. Ramos. Former President Joseph Estrada and former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo paved the way for the initial implementation of the National Museum Act.

Things started rolling in 2012 during the term of former President Benigno Aquino III. The conversion of the Tourism Building into the Natural History Building was launched as an Aquino project under the Department of Education. The museum project officially commenced in 2014. The completion of the project, together with the scrapping of entrance fees, was realized during the current administration of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte.

“The National Museum of Natural History now stands as a remarkable example of what can be achieved through persistence and a spirit of cooperation and generosity, in line with an established vision that can be appreciated by every Filipino,” comments del Rosario. He adds that the National Museum Board of Trustees is grateful for the warm reception of the public when the National Museum of Natural History was finally opened.

SERVICE TO THE FILIPINO PEOPLE

The National Museum Board is also thankful to everyone who was part of the museum’s journey throughout the various administrations: Senator Loren Legarda, ex-officio Trustees from the Senate especially Senator Pia Cayetano and Senator Francis “Chiz” Escudero, and ex-officio Trustees from the House of Representatives especially Rep. Evelina Escudero, Rep. Ramon Durano VI, and Rep. Sandy Ocampo.

Several cabinet secretaries have also been cited for making this project possible. The former secretaries are Bro. Armin Luistro of Department Education (DepEd), Florencio Abad of Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Ramon Jimenez of Department Tourism (DOT), and Ramon Paje of Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); while the current secretaries are Leonor Briones of DepEd, Benjamin Diokno of DBM, and Roy Cimatu of DENR.

The private sector has also played a vital role in the museum’s completion. The museum board extends its gratitude to Ayala Corporation, Pilipinas Shell Foundation, First Philippine Holdings, PLDT-Smart Foundation, The Museum Foundation of the Philippines, BDO Unibank, Bloomberry Cultural Foundation, Sun Life Philippines Foundation, Megaworld Foundation, The PHINMA Group, Hyundai Asia Resources, Mercury Drug Corporation, SGV Foundation, the Zuellig family, Jesus V. del Rosario Foundation, the family of Ramon and Milagros del Rosario, and Larry and Pat Gotuaco and family.

“Thanks to these eminent persons, these civically and socially conscious organizations,

and to everyone who has contributed and donated towards our shared goals relative to the National Museum’s mission and service to the Filipino people,” concludes del Rosario as chairman of the National Museum Board.

The National Museum of Natural History is open from Tuesdays to Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free.



Ramon del Rosario, Jr., National Museum Board of Trustees chairman





Lessons from the Past to Inspire the Young

Project Saysay brings lessons from great Filipino heroes to the classroom, and beyond

BY JOHN LEE CANDELARIA

It all started in 2013, when Ian Christopher Alfonso, Senior History Researcher at the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), noticed something in a Gawad Kalinga school in Tarlac where he usually volunteers. “Most of the visual educational materials they have are alien to the pupils—not even American, for a Filipino to easily recognize,” he says. The charts that teach the ABCs and the basic shapes, colors, posted on classroom walls, are foreign.

He also noticed in other Philippine schools that the quotations usually posted in the classroom, at the very front where the teacher usually stands to teach, is oftentimes an easily googled proverb or an adage from “anonymous” or “unknown”. “Such classroom displays—products of the labor of love by those who prepared them, the teachers—must encourage and help students to understand the world,” he explains.

So the next time he went to the school, instead of the usual chalk, eraser, maps, and other schools supplies, he made posters with quotes by Filipino heroes like Jose Rizal, Apolinario Mabini, Andres Bonifacio, Gregoria de Jesus, and others. He gave it out to the school to be posted on the classroom walls.

And thus, Project Saysay was born.

FINDING MEANING THROUGH HISTORY

Saysay is Filipino for “meaning,” “sense,” “value,” or “relevance,” the root word of *kasaysayan* or history. This is Alfonso’s inspiration for creating posters of Filipino heroes with quotes which he personally researched and designed.

“Project Saysay wants to utilize the visualization of Philippine history for schools and offices,” he explains, “it strives to democratize history in its practical purpose: be appreciated and be inspired to take action through it.”

Indeed, these visual representations in the form of educational instructional materials are always in the presence of the students, and Project Saysay wants to turn

this presence into a worthwhile experience. “We use rare illustrations of a particular historical figure or even lesser known personalities... and to further appreciate them, their words of wisdom are superimposed on their profile—and presto! A poster worth appreciating,” he elaborates.

Project Saysay started with nothing but an idea. “It started with everything coming from my own pocket. I would ask for used illustration boards, with the black backing serving as background and the posters would be printed and stuck to the illustration boards,” Alfonso recalls. It’s a process which is cumbersome and costly, but he did it because he believed in the cause, which is his personal advocacy.

[Project Saysay] strives to democratize history in its practical purpose: be appreciated and be inspired to take action through it.



In 2016, Alfonso established the Project Saysay Creatives Team, composed of friends, officemates, and colleagues who shared the common mission and vision with him. He understands understands that for his advocacy to grow further, he needs the help of educators, artists, and other professionals since visual communication involving children needs technical knowledge. “The quotes we choose must be appropriate to the competencies of the students,” he notes.



Representatives of Project Saysay and Ibarra Watches present to NCCA and DFA the token posters for 33 foreign service posts abroad.

STROKE OF LUCK

Alfonso did not know that this small project of his would grow to something like this today. He says people first got interested when the project, still in its infancy, was featured in an article in one of the country's newspapers. "Volunteers learned about my small project through that feature, and since then, the project has evolved and grown," he reminisces.

What used to be paper posters are now printed in Sintra PVC boards, which, according to Alfonso, was necessary. "Some schools that were struck by typhoons and flooding lost most of their posters, and since these are made of paper, they were easily destroyed," he laments. The move to Sintra was ideal but costly, and at the time, everything still came out of his own pocket. Fortunately, Alfonso met a printer who gave him a big discount. "[Printing in Sintra] is still more expensive than printing in paper, but the durability with this printing format assured the team that what we give out to schools will stand the test of time," he beams.

Alfonso also lauds the NHCP for the support it has given Project Saysay. He notes that the commission supports the project by allowing him and his team to use the NHCP library and materials for research.

Many of those who support the project do so by being benefactors that commission Project



A pupil looks at the new generation posters exhibited in San Antonio, Zambales.



Directors and heads of Project Saysay at Fort Santiago in Intramuros, Manila.

Saysay to print posters for distribution to schools and other institutions.

It is also fortunate that Project Saysay was already established when President Rodrigo R. Duterte signed Memorandum Circular No. 25, which directed all government agencies, government corporations, state universities and colleges, and public schools to display or exhibit photographs, paintings, or other forms of visual representations of Philippine heroes.

Project Saysay also has a strong presence online (www.psaysay.org; www.facebook.com/psaysay). "We know how important social media is as a platform for the project, so we regularly post materials online, mostly to correspond to certain historical dates, anniversaries, and sometimes, inspired by whatever the issue of the

day is so that our posts are relevant and reach a wider audience," he explains.

PROJECT SAYSAY MOVING FORWARD

On its fifth year, Project Saysay gears up to modernize its posters. The idea is to improve the elements by creating a harmonized, consistent look. Fifty great Filipino men and women were identified to be featured, each with their own hand-drawn portrait.

"We partnered with Ibarra Manila to undergo this modernization. They will raise funds for the project so we may be able to redesign and print new posters," Alfonso shares. As to the beneficiaries of these posters, Alfonso says these will be distributed to the thirty three Sentro Rizal (SR) centers all over the world. SR is an office under the jurisdiction of Philippine Foreign Service posts that maintain a rich collection of materials on the Philippines.

Moving forward, the project has certainly grown, and is aiming for more. "Project Saysay's original commitment is to bring to every classroom the words of wisdom of great Filipinos, but we realized we need to change that to make it cover a bigger objective," says Alfonso. Today, Project Saysay's mission is to "spread the ideals and values of great Filipinos."

With advocacies like Project Saysay, the lessons and wisdom of great Filipino men and women will not be confined to books and classrooms anymore. "The things we can learn from the past abound: we need not look far," Alfonso says. ▮



Prototype of the new Project Saysay poster design featuring Jose Rizal, unveiled last May 22 at the DFA.



Project Saysay Founder and Executive Director Ian Christopher Alfonso delivering a message during an event hosted by the NHCP.



Descendants of heroes, Project Saysay volunteers, and DFA staff during Project Saysay's 5th anniversary held last 22 May

"May pa-sapatos si Mayor!"

Taking a look at the emerging LGU-sneaker culture

BY MARCO NICANOR



Illustration by Luciano Sardea Ramirez

When we think about sneaker culture, we instinctively associate it with popular sports icons like Kobe Bryant, famous musicians and rappers like Kanye West, or top fashion and lifestyle trends. However, major cities of Metro Manila are inadvertently creating a sneaker culture of their own and turning heads on their custom kicks. While shoes or other footwear sponsored by the local government and given to their constituents is nothing new, Makati has upped the ante by producing its own city-branded sneakers. Not to be outdone, Mandaluyong followed suit and Manila joined thereafter. From the looks of it, this trend is only just beginning.

However, unlike other iconic shoe trends, one need not spend copious amounts of money nor fall in long lines to get them. No, these LGU branded kicks are distributed and given free to hundreds of thousands of public school students and underprivileged youth.

While others may question the gesture, passing off the sneakers as mere publicity stunts just to gain media mileage, it cannot be denied that a decent pair of sneakers is a luxury to those who have very little. In a way, it helps them engage in sports and an active lifestyle; or, at the very least, it gives them something comfortable to wear on their feet.

AIR JEJOMAR 1 (AKA BIG BINAY BRAND, AIR BINAY) RELEASED: DECEMBER 2017 MAYOR ABIGAIL BINAY, MAKATI CITY

It is not surprising that Makati, a city known for its generosity toward its constituents with giveaways such as free birthday cakes and allowances to senior citizens, was the first to come up with their signature shoe. Released sometime around December of 2017, the "Lungsod ng Makati" sneakers were well received by its constituents as a Christmas gift from their generous mayor.

The fashionable white running sneakers with blue linings and laces and logo of Makati became more popularly dubbed as "Air Jejomar 1," referencing the patriarch of the Binay political family who has ruled over Makati for decades. It has been noted to familiarly resemble the

TechLoom Pro running shoes made by Athletic Propulsion Labs, but others also see similarities with more popular shoe brands like Nike and Adidas.



ERAP ALL STARS (AKA AIR-RAP) RELEASED: APRIL 2018 MAYOR EJERCITO ESTRADA, MANILA CITY

While other LGU-branded sneakers are more modern and trendy, the City of Manila went a different design path for its sneakers. Nothing beats a classic, so they say. And so, Mayor Erap Estrada went old school, and drew inspiration for his city's signature shoe from the iconic and immortal Chuck Taylor All-Stars by Converse. The mayor was also seen wearing blue sneakers with the Manila logo which was similar to the design of Vans, with both sneakers sporting a colorway of dominant blue with an orange accent, and, of course, the logo of Manila.

The first lucky ones to own a pair were the 1,500 honor students, who were also given cash rewards, as a way of incentivizing the excellence they've showcased. Mayor Estrada has promised to give around 280,000 pairs more to elementary and high school students in Manila. ■

MANDA MENTALITY (AKA AIR ABALOS 1, JUMPMAN-DALUYONG) RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2018 MAYOR CARMELITA ABALOS, MANDALUYONG CITY

Mandaluyong City launched its own signature kicks two months after Makati's release. The shoes were also made available to public school students of Mandaluyong.

Also carrying the logo of its city, it boasts of a more colorful design when compared to Air Jejomar, with its colorway being likened to that of the Golden State Warriors, the reigning NBA champions. The Manda sneakers also have more cutouts, which in theory, should enhance the shoes' range and flexibility, compared to the stiffer and singularly designed Makati kicks.



Rekindling Clamor for Rice-Husk Gas Stoves

BY ANNA V. CHATO

In 2008, Alexis T. Belonio became the first Filipino to receive the international Rolex Award for Enterprise by creating a stove, which converts rice-husk waste into fuel. Because he was conducting his research without exposure to outside research and influences, inventor Belonio was, for a long time, blissfully unaware that he had done what many had decided was impossible to do—“turn agricultural waste into purified gas for domestic cooking in a top-lit, updraft, biomass gas stove,” according to the Rolex Award report.



Alexis T. Belonio

Belonio, a long-time professor of agricultural engineering, had already designed over 30 machines—from paddy dryers to rice pumps—for poor farmers when he decided to focus his energies on finding a solution to the roughly two million metric tons (as of 2005 study, *Rice Husk Gas Stove Handbook*) annual collected rice husks in the Philippines, potential energy going to waste, and the continuous increase of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) prices becoming especially burdensome on the poor. “I saw rice mills throw husks into the rivers. I started thinking about using them as fuel [to power gas stoves for cooking],” he says in a 2008 interview with *The Christian Science Monitor*. Most stoves burning biomass, such as wood or charcoal, emit soot, smoke, and toxic fumes. So Belonio envisioned a cleaner energy by producing a smokeless blue flame, according to *The CS Monitor* report.

ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS

According to the 2008 Rolex Award report, “A ton of rice husks contains the same energy as 415 liters of petrol or 378 liters of kerosene. A few handfuls of rice husks can boil water in six to nine minutes. Best of all, the husks are usually free, either on the farm or from the waste dumps that surround rice mills. Furthermore, by being far more efficient than ordinary cookers, Belonio’s stoves reduce greenhouse gas emissions.” Even the leftover char after burning can be used as soil fertilizer or as a component in making bricks for buildings.

In a television news feature by “Bandila” aired by ABS-CBN News on October 22, 2015, one consumer/user of the Rice Husk Gas Stove reported liking the efficiency in cooking of the Rice Husk Gasifier, cutting cooking time due to the strong blue flame. The user, who



had been using the stove for three years at the time of interview, claimed to saved P30,000 annually from switching from an LPG stove to a Rice Husk Gas Stove.

With the intent of sharing technology that will benefit others, Belonio makes his technical manuals available online free of charge to anyone and everyone interested in ordering to encourage people to build stoves using materials available to them, such as scrap metal, and keep the door open to improving the technology. As a result of the publicity of his 2008 Rolex Award for his invention, the technology is now being used in over a dozen countries, including Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, to name a few.



A TON OF RICE HUSKS CONTAINS THE SAME ENERGY AS 415 LITERS OF PETROL OR 378 LITERS OF KEROSENE. A FEW HANDFULS OF RICE HUSKS CAN BOIL WATER IN SIX TO NINE MINUTES. BEST OF ALL, THE HUSKS ARE USUALLY FREE, EITHER ON THE FARM OR FROM THE WASTE DUMPS THAT SURROUND RICE MILLS.

According to the online manual open to all, the stove is safe to use “with no danger of explosion since it operates at a normal atmospheric pressure.” It does, however, require electricity to run a small fan necessary for gasification. The manual also cautions that the stove should only be operated in a well-ventilated place to avoid suffocation and deleterious effects.

After conceiving, innovating, and sharing with the world his Rice Husk Gas Stove technology, Engr. Alexis T. Belonio continues on his noble mission to invent technologies that help save the environment and improve the lives of the poor. In a *National Geographic* article published Oct. 16, 2016, Belonio shared, “If you can have a device that can provide power for lighting so children can study at night, to charge a cell phone battery or run a motorbike, you have no idea what that could mean to some people,” Belonio says. “That is my dream.”

For more information, visit the Biolexis Facebook page: @RiceHuskGasStove. |

SALt of the Earth, Light of the World



All it takes is a small glass of water and two tablespoons of salt for the Sustainable Alternative Lighting (SALt) lamp to run for up to eight hours straight

BY ANNA V. CHATO

In 2015, Aisa Mijeno became a household name when she was invited to speak in a panel discussion with then US President Barack Obama and Alibaba CEO Jack Ma at the APEC Summit held in Manila. The discussion revolved around Climate Change; in Aisa's case, her SALt Lamp innovation, which utilizes the mix of salt and water as an electrolyte and leaves a smaller carbon footprint than the traditional kerosene lamp used by a number of rural communities.

Referring to her innovation and why she was chosen to be a panelist, President Obama says, "I think Aisa's a perfect example of what we're seeing in a lot of countries: young entrepreneurs coming up with leapfrog technology." He then goes on to ask Jack Ma, "How can both government and larger companies be assisting in creating the climate for innovation that encourages young entrepreneurs like Aisa?" To which question Jack Ma replies, "Reduce the tax or no tax for these [young entrepreneurs]." The question today seems a legitimate one still to be answered.

GRASSROOTS INNOVATION, LEAPFROG TECHNOLOGY

It all began in what Aisa refers to as the "majestic mountains of Northern Philippines." While volunteering for Greenpeace Philippines, she was assigned to live for a month with the Butbut tribe in Kalinga. In an interview with the design publication Core77.com, she relates that prior to her stay in Kalinga, she had already noted that marginalized island communities all over the country had salt, water, and rice as staples. "I just hadn't figured out what type of application I should create out of it, until I did a personal immersion with the tribe in the northern Philippines. There I learned that people had to go down the mountain and continue on their journey to the nearest town about 30km away on foot because they do not have the financial capacity to ride public transportation just to get kerosene for lamps," she said.

In the same interview, she ploughed down to the root of the problem, "The practice of using such light sources had been passed on from generations... The method of refilling kerosene in lamps (according to a native southwest of the Philippines) brings about emotional security despite many cases of fire accidents caused by tipped over lamps and candles... The link and conceptualization of the lamp is very personal and deep... I connected the dots between salt and water and the act of filling liquid into the lamp... These encouraged me to develop a lighting system that runs on the very basic items seen in every household—water and salt, or for the islanders—seawater."



Aisa Mijeno joins former US President Barack Obama and Alibaba CEO Jack Ma at the panel discussion during the 2015 APEC Summit.



Raphael Mijeno, Aisa's brother and business partner, shakes hands with former US President Barack Obama.

SALT - SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE LIGHTING

In a demo, Aisa's brother and business partner, Raphael, shows that all it takes is a small glass of water and two tablespoons of salt for the Sustainable Alternative Lighting (SALt) lamp to run for up to eight hours straight. Much brighter than the average flashlight, the lamp features eight ultra-bright LEDs.

According to the SALt website, the lamp is based on metal-air battery technology, where the electrodes are of a patent-pending technology and design, which is SALt's core technology; the salt-water solution then acts as an electrolyte for the system to generate electricity. "We have developed an efficient combination of elements and design that lasts thrice as much as the current technology available in the market," the sibling tandem states in the website. Although the lamp has a metal anode component, which must be replaced every six months, the SALt team is looking at ways to have it locally produced and readily purchasable, possibly recyclable as well, to make the SALt lamp more sustainable.

It is important to state, however, that SALt presents its innovation as an alternative light source. In a November 2015 feature by ABS-CBN, Mijeno made it clear that they do not aim to compete with other alternative light sources, especially not solar powered ones, though solar panels are still pricey at the moment. She clarifies that it makes her happy when people use renewable energy. Her "main mission," according to the feature, is "to change the habit of Filipinos living in remote communities of using kerosene lamps and candles," as those carry fire hazards, health risks, and larger environmental consequences.

LIGHTING UP COMMUNITIES

According to SALt's official website, through partnerships with NGOs, foundations, and LGUs, communities all over the country using SALt lamps. Since it was an immersion in the northern mountains of Kalinga that planted the seed of the idea for the SALt lamps, it is no surprise that after establishing the SALt team and brand, Mijeno returned to distribute 100 sponsored lanterns to the community in the seedbed of Buscalan, Tinglayan, Kalinga Province.

Among the Hanunuo Mangyan Tribe of Brgy. Bulalacao, in the southern part of the island of Oriental Mindoro, the SALt team distributed 100 units to light the community not connected to the power grid. In Brgy. Gabi, in the island of Carles in Iloilo, 500 lanterns were also donated. In Calayan Island, Cagayan, the furthest island the SALt team has been to, 100 lanterns were brought to people receiving only three hours of electricity per day "to help extend school hours for children."

The SALt team is likewise looking for more sponsors to help achieve lamp donation goals. The target number of 700 lanterns, for instance, is expected to be donated to the families of Brgy. Laiban in Tanay, Rizal "to help the mothers with their house chores," where rural areas surrounded by mountains still lack access to electricity. In the middle of the city of Lipa, Batangas, 100 sponsored lanterns will be delivered to informal settlers of Brgy. Pamintahan who "have not been able to gain access to electricity for more than 11 years of living under the city bridge." While, in the island of Masbate, the projected donation of a whopping 1,000 lanterns to provide the residents with a system effective in cost and in lighting their world, was discussed with the support of the city mayor.

For more information, visit www.saltph.strikingly.com.

JUNE FESTIVALS



NALIGAYAN FESTIVAL (Second week of June)

This week-long festival in Agusan del Norte features socio-cultural shows and fairs involving indigenous groups. The highlight of the festival is the climb to the top of the waterfalls of Agusan del Sur.

PAGDAYAO FESTIVAL (June 11 to 12)

This is a two-day affair, which serves as a thanksgiving feast in honor of the Lord.



ARAW NG COTABATO (June 12 to 20)

The city of Cotabato in Mindanao celebrates its founding with special events, such as the *layang-layang* or giant kite festival, fluvial parades, banca races, and sports competitions.



PARADA NG MGALECHON (Parade of Roast Pigs) (June 24)

Crisp, golden-brown roast pigs are paraded through the streets. As soon as the best decorated roasted pig is announced, the eating commences.



HIBOK-HIBOK FESTIVAL (June 24)

The event is held in honor of St. John the Baptist and is marked with fluvial processions, parades, and water sports.

NATIONAL ARBOR DAY (June 25)

Arbor Day in the Philippines has been institutionalized to be observed throughout the nation every June 25 by planting trees and ornamental plants and other forms of relevant activities.

DAET PINEAPPLE FESTIVAL

(Third week of June)

This is a festival showcasing the famous and sweetest of all pineapples—the Formosa variety—abundantly growing in Daet, Camarines Norte. The week-long celebration features sports events, talent and skills competition, an investment forum, cultural shows and concerts, a food fair, an agro-industrial and trade fair, the search for Bicolandia Queen, and street dancing contests.



TACLOBAN FESTIVAL

(Last week of June)

The festival consists of three major activities: (1) Subiran Regatta—a sailboat race held at the eastern entrance of San Juanico Strait; (2) Balyuan—a pageant reenacting the historic exchange of images between Basey, Samar, and Tacloban City; and (3) Pintados Festival, where participants paint their bodies and dance to the rhythm of bamboo sticks.



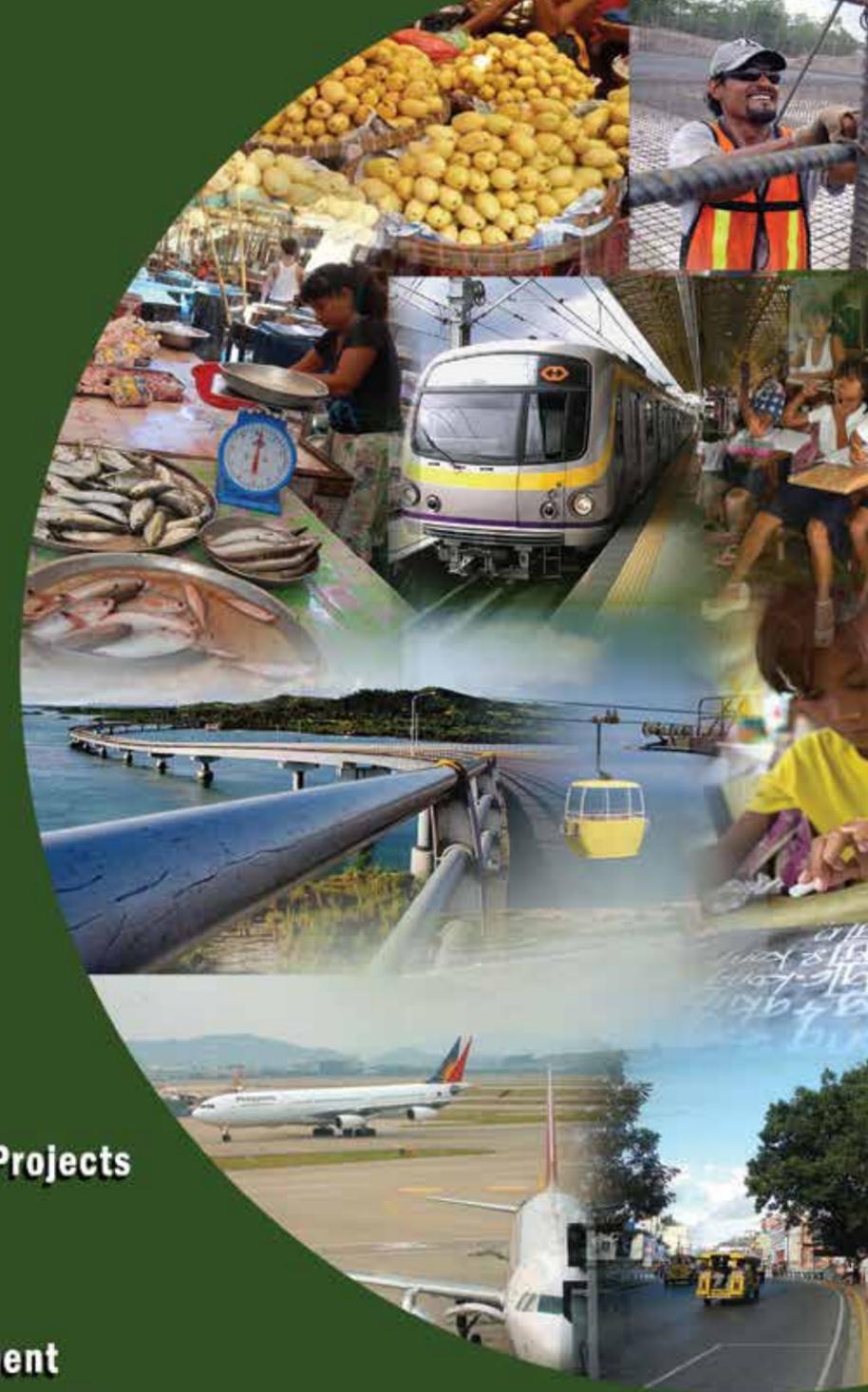
PIAT SAMBALI FESTIVAL

(Last week of June)

In Piat, Cagayan, the colorful celebration is highlighted by street dancing, cultural shows, and a beauty pageant. This festival commemorates the Christianization of the Ytawes region of Cagayan.



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JULY FESTIVALS



SINULOG AND KINABAYO FESTIVAL (July 24 to 25)
The event honors Dapitan, Zamboanga del Norte's patron saint, St. James.



SAGAYAN FESTIVAL TUBOD
(First week of July)

This is a festival with a Maranao war dance as a main event. The dance is performed during the Araw ng Lanao del Norte and is participated in by all the municipalities in the province. The war dance is complemented by a fan dance performed by Maranao maidens wearing colorful dresses.



PAGODA FESTIVAL (July 4 to 7)

In Bocaue, Bulacan, a feast is held in honor of the Holy Cross of Wawa found in the Bocaue River. The main attraction of the event is the fluvial parade of the pagoda, or decorated barge, and colorful small boats.



SUBLIAN SA BATANGAS (July 23)

This coincides with the Foundation Day of Batangas City. It revives the tradition of dancing the *subli*, which is indigenous to the province.

SINULOG DE TANJAY FESTIVAL (Last week of July)

Residents of Tanjay, Negros Oriental celebrate this 10-day *fiesta* that features the origin of the old *sinulog* culture. A parade showcases the clothes locals wear, while the horse-fighting presentation re-enacts the battle between the Spaniards and the Muslims.



KAHIMOAN ABAYAN FESTIVAL (Last week of July)

In Butuan City, Agusan del Norte, the feast is held in honor of Santa Ana (St. Anne), believed to protect the residents along the Agusan River from man-eating crocodiles. The celebration includes the holding of a prayer on boats for safe passage and prosperity.



SANDUGO FESTIVAL (Last week of July)

Celebrated in Bohol, this festival commemorates the blood compact between Spaniard Legaspi and Filipino Sikatuna. It includes an agro-industrial exhibit, a trade fair, a beauty contest, street dancing, and a re-enactment of the blood compact.

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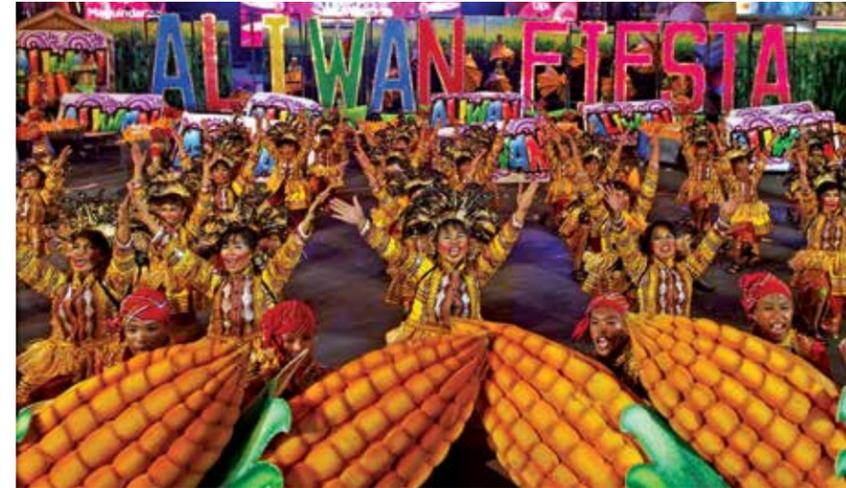


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Photo by Rossini Calabig



Photos by Teddy Pelaez



Pageantry ON PARADE

Leyte sweeps 2018 Aliwan Fiesta championships

It was a “Waray-Waray” day for the Aliwan Fiesta as Leyte swept the festival queen, float design, and streetdance championships.

Chelsea Fernandez of the Sangyaw festival of Tacloban was crowned 2018 Reyna ng Aliwan, “Tarakluban” was deemed the most fabulously crafted float, and Tribu Buraburon of Burauen, which represented the provincial Kasadyaan Festival, combined precision, verve, choreographic mastery, and production design to capture the million-peso festival dance championship. It was the first time that a single province captured top honors in all three Aliwan derbies of the same year.

Sinilatan of Cotabato City and Kapisiti from Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao took second and third places respectively in the float championships, with runner-up honors going to Singkaban from Malolos, Bulacan; Biton from Upi, Maguindanao; Bangsa Maguiranun from Mother Kabuntalan, Maguindanao; Tagultol from Atimonan, Quezon; Abra New Day from the Province of Abra; Catanauan from Catanauan, Quezon; and IPI-Sinulog from Cebu City.

In the tightly-contested streetdance championships, Hubong Mangunguma for the Manggahan festival of Guimaras landed second place, with Tribu Panayanon for Iloilo Dinagyang taking



Photo by Eddie Boy Escudero

third. Bugabungan National High School of Upi, Maguindanao for the Meguyaya festival was in fourth place, with Tribu Tatusan of Caluya, Antique, representing the Binirayan Festival, ending up fifth over-all. Runner-up positions went to Tribu Dangdang-ay for the Abrenian-Kawayan Festival of Abra; St. Louis University for the Panagbenga Festival of Baguio; Tribu Pandan for the Pandan Festival of Pangasinan; Tribu Antatet for the Bato Art Festival of Isabela; and the Municipality of Baco for the Pandang Gitab



Photo by Rossini Calabig

Festival of Oriental Mindoro. Abra also brought home the award for Best Folkloric Performance (Pride of Place), with Best Costume going to the Guimaras contingent, and Best Musical Accompaniment also going to the Leyteños.

Aliwan Fiesta is the annual cultural extravaganza produced by Manila Broadcasting Company and Star City, in cooperation with the Cultural center of the Philippines, and the cities of Manila and Pasay. It gathers champion festivals from north to south of the archipelago in a massive convergence of creativity and culture, alongside the Pinoy’s *joie de vivre* in its many incarnations, and attuned to the demands of popular entertainment today. ■

(Clockwise, from left) Chelsea Fernandez of the Sangyaw festival of Tacloban was crowned 2018 Reyna; “Tarakluban” deemed the most fabulously crafted float; Bugabungan National High School for the Meguyaya Festival of Upi, Maguindanao; Tribu Panayanon for the Iloilo Dinagyang Festival; Tribu Buraburon of Burauen who captured the million-peso festival dance championship.



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The Carmen Hotel
 Comfort, Flexibility, Taste

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

Modern and contemporary architecture

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

Location, location, location

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

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

Flexible meetings and events arrangements

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

International-standard amenities

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

For your dining pleasure

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

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



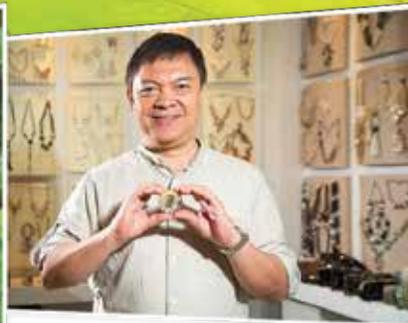
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