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Message from the Publisher

Philippines The New Reality



The reality is that the Philippines is a bona fide on-going success story that is happening right under our noses. And it's time that we wake up to the fresh opportunities that this dynamic country presents. With its growth opportunities and its pool of talented people, Philippines, as a whole, can contribute greatly to ASEAN and the Asian Pacific region.

Coming in the wake of the recent visit by President Rodrigo Duterte, the ascent of the nation to the ASEAN Chair this year, as well as the 50th Anniversary of the 10-member regional assemblage, the timing for the country's economic Renaissance seems perfect. The confluence of events mark 2017 as a milestone year for The Philippines. In addition, the President's visit heralds a new beginning between our leaders as they re-affirm and strengthen their ties.

The new Philippines President has shown what can be achieved when a vision is matched to well thought-out programmes, *and* is accompanied by an **unstoppable will to implement**. The promise of the Republic of Philippines fulfilling its full potential is well underway.

In this issue of **Partner Philippines**, through many of the interviews and articles, we get a better insight of what is being done to bring the Philippine's economy up to speed and how it has spread the benefits of growth over as wide a spectrum of the country's population as possible. This principle, of extending the efforts to areas outside Manila and to a much wider populace, is a recurrent theme in many of the discussions we have had with the Philippine's government authorities.

For this, we would like to thank His Excellency Antonio A Morales and the Philippine Trade & Investment Centre in Singapore for arranging many of the meetings here and in Manila for us to learn first hand the plans and potential in store for the future of the country.

Singapore, on the other hand, would be wise to sit up and learn what that blueprint for development can achieve. The articles contained herein will give some hint of this progress, however, nothing beats going over and seeing for oneself the rate at which the country is advancing, both socially and economically.

Singapore can also benefit greatly. An example, cited by one of the interviewers featured in this issue, is that Singapore has critical manpower requirements and can benefit from working closer with the Republic of Philippines in the supply and use of skilled and knowledge-powered workers, executives and professionals. The island-republic will find that the Philippines has grown in sophistication as Asia's leading BPO hub.

We hope you will discover and be as excited as we are for the return of the 'Pearl of the Orient Seas.' Mabuhay!

- Nomita Dhar, Publisher & Editor in Chief

Partner Philippines

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H.E. Antonio A. Morales: Foreign Policy Priorities and Focus Areas of Investment

The Philippine Ambassador to Singapore H.E. Antonio A Morales reveals the highlights of the past year including President Duterte's visit; engagement in the island republic; PH tourism and investment destinations for Singapore travellers and investors, in conversation with Mrs Nomita Dhar, Editor-in-Chief of Partner Philippines

COULD you brief us on the visit of President Rodrigo R. Duterte?

The visit was probably the major highlight for the Filipino community here in 2016. President Duterte's State Visit was held on 15-16 December 2016. It was preceded by similar visits to other ASEAN countries, such as Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, and Vietnam, which is the protocol for any new ASEAN Head of State. During his short visit here, the President met with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, President Tony Tan Keng Yam, various business leaders as well as a large number of the Filipino community in Singapore.

The bilateral ties between Singapore and The Philippines have always been good. What are the new areas of cooperation that were explored during the visit?

Since the holding of the 3rd Informal Consultations on the Philippines-Singapore Action Plan (PSAP) here in Singapore in 2015, we are now in the process of coordinating with the concerned agencies on the status of our cooperative projects. We hopefully then can go on to an agreement at the 4th informal consultations to be held in Manila in the near future.

Could you also brief our readers on the thrust of your foreign policy and any new focus areas?

Since assuming office, President Duterte has espoused the pursuit of an 'independent foreign policy'. As the 1987 Philippine Constitution already mandates it, the President aims to pursue a foreign policy that is not subject to any outside pressure and interference, while striking a balance among our international partners.

The Philippines has also assumed the chairmanship of the ASEAN this year. Hence, much of the focus of our foreign policy in 2017 will be to ensure that the core message of Philippine's ASEAN chairmanship is effectively conveyed, which is "to champion positive change in the community and produce a unified voice in the world." This core message has six thematic priorities, namely: a people-oriented and people-centered ASEAN; peace and stability in the region; maritime security and cooperation; inclusive, innovation-led growth; a resilient ASEAN and ASEAN a model of regionalism, a global player.

The Philippine Economy is the fastest growing in Asia, at 7.1%, how would you like to leverage on this growth factor and attract investors?

Our country's high growth rate sends a positive signal to would-be investors that the Philippines is an attractive investment destination. But other than that, we also like to emphasize other factors that show a positive investment climate in the Philippines, such as its young demographics that provide a rich talent pool, the country suffers less from strikes/lockouts as compared to

other countries, competitive labour costs that are relatively lower compared to others, a geographic location that serves as a critical entry point to the ASEAN market and the East Asian economies, and competitive investment incentives.

The Philippines is a positive contributor to the collective growth of ASEAN. Please brief us on any new initiatives?

As mentioned earlier, the Philippines is the current chairperson of the ASEAN. Through this chairmanship, apart from the pursuit of our core message and thematic priorities, we fervently hope that the Philippines could be a catalyst to bring the ASEAN to an even higher level.

Of course, foremost in our goal of achieving collective growth in the ASEAN is ensuring that the ASEAN Economic Community continues to provide greater equality among the member states.

Given the fact that the Philippines' chairmanship coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the ASEAN it should make our efforts more meaningful.

The Philippines is a very beautiful country - what initiatives are being taken to attract more tourists?

Here in ASEAN, particularly in Singapore, we are continuously improving the access of tourists to the Philippines by increasing the number of direct flights, not just to Manila but also to other entry points, such as Cebu. In fact, our flag-carrier Philippine Airlines launched its Singapore-Cebu flight last 13 December, while other airline companies are also following suit.

Budget carriers, such as Cebu Pacific, also provide a cheaper alternative that will attract younger travellers on a budget.

The Philippine Department of Tourism also has a tourism marketing representative in Singapore. Coming from the local travel/tourism industry, our tourism marketing representative understands the pulse of the local market to better promote PH tourism here.

Your work force has been contributing to Singapore and around the world with their skills. How does the Embassy engage them and enhance opportunities for them?

Among the Three Pillars of Philippine Foreign Policy is the protection of the rights and the promotion of the welfare and interest of all Filipinos overseas. Hence it is already enshrined in our mandate to continuously engage with our Overseas Filipinos to make sure that they are given the utmost care and professional consular service by the Embassy.

But more than just protecting them and looking after their welfare, the President also wants to further strengthen the reintegration programme for Overseas Filipinos in recognition

“The Philippines has also assumed the chairmanship of the ASEAN this year. Hence, much of the focus of our foreign policy in 2017 will be to ensure that the core message of Philippine’s ASEAN chairmanship is effectively conveyed and that is to champion positive change in the community to produce a unified voice in the world.”



of the reality that working overseas is not a long term prospect for them. At some point, they would have to go back home and be with their loved ones.

That is why we have also been conducting financial management and entrepreneurship trainings for Overseas Filipinos, to encourage them to be wise investors and businessmen in our country. In partnership with other government agencies, such as the Department of Trade and Industry, and various civil society organizations, we have produced Overseas Filipinos who are empowered enough to go back home and transform themselves into entrepreneurs who actively contribute to our nation’s development... not just through remittances.

Please share the names of some Philippines companies that have been doing exceptional work and generating opportunities between the two countries?

Among the Philippine companies doing exceptionally well here are Ayala International Pte Ltd (investment management); BDO Unibank and the Philippine National Bank (banking) ; iREMIT, Metro Remittance, and LBC Express (remittance and logistics); Megaworld Land (property) Philippine Airlines, our flag-carrier; PLDT (telecommunications) ; Jollibee, San Miguel Beer, Gerry’s Grill and, the Yellow Cab Pizza chain (food and beverage).

Which are the favourable sectors for investors currently?

The following are the priority sectors for Singapore investments in the Philippines:

- **Food.** Food processing and trading, food production zone (particularly in Mindanao), halal
- **Infrastructure, Construction and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Projects.** This also includes logistics for movement of people and goods and linkages with regional markets.
- **Clark Green City** for Singaporean investors looking for expansion opportunities outside Metro Manila. This is being developed as the country’s first green and intelligent global metropolis, and is adjacent to Clark International Airport and Subic Bay Seaport, which are linked by Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway. These make for convenient import and export transactions.
- **Shipbuilding**
- **IT and Business Process Management Services**
- **Tourism Facilities**
- **Start-up**
- **PH as viable option for setting up Regional Headquarters and Regional Operating Headquarters (RHQs and ROHQs)**

PRESIDENT RODRIGO DUTERTE COMES A-CALLING IN THE LION CITY

The Philippines and Singapore will commemorate the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations in 2019. In the interim Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte journeyed to his ASEAN co-founding partner to further cement the long standing ties that bind the two nations on several critical issues

HARD on the heels of Philippines' President Rodrigo Duterte visit to Cambodia, came his 2-day state visit to Singapore on an invitation from President Tony Tan Keng Yam. Prior to this the Philippines President's whistle-stop tour of the ASEAN countries took him to Laos, Indonesia, Brunei, Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia.

From December 15-16, 2016, President Rodrigo Duterte's hectic schedule included meetings with the city-state's President Tony Tan and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. Imperative to the ties that bind the two countries are matters of economic cooperation, people-to-people ties and the regional partnership within ASEAN. At the heart of the visit were matters related to bilateral trade and investments, strengthening defence and security cooperation.

President Rodrigo Duterte's tightly-packed agenda included interactions with the leading lights of Singapore's business community, a visit to the National Botanic Gardens and addressing a 7,000-strong gathering of Singapore's Filipino community at the Singapore Expo. Well known for his plain speak, President Rodrigo Duterte made no apologies for his tough stance on drugs, which was the central plank of his election campaign. The President who enjoys a huge following, amongst the people, found ample support for his war on drugs amongst Singapore's Filipino community who turned out in droves on his last day at the cavernous Expo Centre Halls.

Moving On

The visit, an important step in strengthening bilateral ties between the two nations, was launched with a ceremonial welcome for President Duterte at the Istana, followed by meetings with



Singapore's President Tony Tan and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. As revealed by Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay Jr, President Duterte had a "very engaging meeting" with President Tan and PM Lee. According to sources in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) "President Tan and President Duterte agreed that there was room to further broaden and deepen bilateral relations, including strengthening security cooperation."

In his speech, the Filipino President said, "Indeed we have done much and we can do more,"...further adding: "I came to Singapore with a singular purpose: to renew and reaffirm the friendship and cooperation between our nations and people." He also pointed out at the banquet that, "We have reason to celebrate. Over nearly five decades, we have seen our ties develop as we add more facets



of cooperation to what is now a multi-dimensional relationship." Throwing some light on the mutual interests of the two nations on the economic front President Duterte pointed out that the two nations are further intensifying two-way trade and commerce, and expanding opportunities for investments to flourish.

ASEAN Matters

Discussion between the leaders also touched upon the matter of ASEAN, the Chair of which passed on from Vietnam to the Philippines in 2017. Both Singapore and the Philippines have been founding members of ASEAN, and regional matters will continue to figure significantly in the matters of state for both countries.

According to a statement by the MFA, Mr Duterte and Mr Lee

(Top & next page): President Duterte received an enthusiastic welcome from the Filipino community in Singapore on 15 December 2017 (2nd row): President Duterte with President Tony Tan (first photo) and meeting the heads of foreign missions in Singapore (third photo) at the State Banquet. (Middle photo): In discussions with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Istana

had a "fruitful exchange". "Both leaders agreed that ASEAN should work together to deal with transboundary challenges such as human and drug trafficking and terrorism." Mr Yasay shared the fact that: "We had defined areas of our cooperation and this trip was really intended for the President to really get to know our Asian leaders and to relate to them especially since we (the Philippines) will be having our ASEAN chairmanship in 2017."



At a lunch hosted by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (in red shirt) at the Coconut Club. On President Duterte's left is Dr Vivian Balakrishnan Singapore's Minister of Foreign Affairs

Deeper Bilateral Relations for Mutual Gains

Talks also revolved around the aspect of expanding business linkages between Singapore and the Philippines. The Philippines-Singapore Business Council plays a lively role in strengthening ties between the two nations and also is pivotal for exploring commercial opportunities. It should be noted that though the Lion City is a small island-nation it is the top ASEAN investor and the fourth largest trading partner, for the Philippines—after majors US, China and Japan. For Singapore, the Philippines is its 15th largest trading partner.

President Tan, at a dinner banquet hosted at the Istana by him for President Duterte and his entourage (which included six of his Cabinet secretaries, associated with foreign affairs, national defence, and trade and industry etc) reflected that Singaporean firms were keenly looking forward to invest in the Philippines, but he also felt that they should look at investments outside of the Philippines capital Manila. In fact the buzzing hubs of Cebu and Davao have been projected as cities of great investment prospects in the future, by none other than by International Enterprise (IE) Singapore—tasked with promoting international trade and partners Singapore firms in their globalization endeavours). The Philippines is one of Asia's fastest-growing economies and President Tan was quick to share that IE Singapore itself is slated to enhance its presence in the Philippines economic scenario in 2017.

Elaborating on the economic ties that bind the two nations President Tan pointed out that IE Singapore had assisted some Singaporean firms in the renewable energy and consumer sector to get their first projects in the Philippines. He gave the example too of SIA Engineering and Singtel, both of which have operations in the Philippines, while urging Singapore firms to be partners in the Philippine's development of quality infrastructure, urban planning and information and communications technology services.

Shared History

Dr Tan also brought home the point that the strong economic ties are further complemented by warm people-to-people relations. While annually Singapore receives about 70,000 Filipino tourists who imbibe of the cultural delights of the city-state—including visiting Universal Studios and Gardens by the Bay, as well as eating satay, chili crab and chicken rice, Singaporeans too enjoy

the allurements on offer in the Philippines, especially its natural beauty— from high mountain grandeur to its pristine beaches— to its culinary marvels. They are also familiar with the Filipino art world, reflected amply in the abundant displays of Filipino art in the Singapore Art Museum and National Gallery. According to Dr Tan: "Such exchanges enrich our societies and enhance mutual understanding of our cultures." Furthermore, he pointed out, with better connectivity between the two nations— and to the regions beyond — people-to-people exchanges can continue to grow apace.



Memorial of Dr Jose Rizal in front of the Asian Civilisations Museum

Dr Tan also took the opportunity to remind his audience of the shared history that binds the two nations together. He spoke of Dr Jose Rizal, Philippines much-revered national hero who, when he left the Philippines in the late 19th century, made Singapore his first port of call. In fact, he revealed, Dr Rizal made four visits to the city-state between 1882 and 1896, leaving behind an invaluable record of his findings of the sights and sounds of pre-independent Singapore. The city-state has set up a memorial of Dr Rizal in the grounds of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

Getting Down to Business

Lunch was followed by a closed-door meeting with top Singaporean businessmen led by Chairman Teo Siong Seng of the Singapore Business Federation (SBF). Discussions on matters related to the economic outlook of both countries, and potential trade and investment opportunities were some of the issues touched upon in the meeting with Mr Duterte and his aide Ramon Lopez, secretary of Trade and Industry. Chariman Teo pointed out to the importance of Philippines as one of Asia's fastest-growing economies and a newly industrialised country, and its relevance as an important overseas destination for Singapore businesses. He saw a lot of potential in furthering the two-way trade and investment process through the steady bilateral relations with the Philippines

A statement put out by SBF said it would organise activities in the coming year for Singapore firms with an interest in chasing business opportunities in the Philippines. Plans included business missions, in partnership with IE Singapore, to Manila and cities such as Davao and Cebu.



The Philippines-Singapore Business Council plays a lively role in strengthening ties between the two nations and also is pivotal for exploring commercial opportunities.

President Duterte and members of his delegation pose with the members of Singapore Business Federation led by its Chairman Teo Siong Seng during a meeting at the Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore

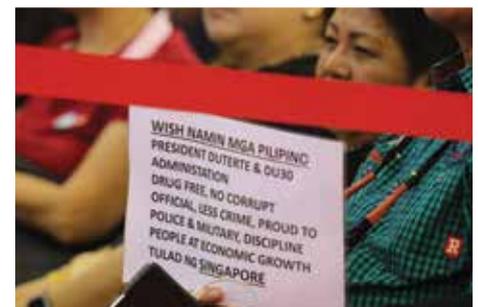
Filipino Community Comes Out in Full Force to Greet their President



Photos by Michael Ozaki



BEFORE his departure for home on Friday night, the President visited the Singapore EXPO Convention and Exhibition Centre, where he addressed a 7,000-strong gathering of the 180,000 Filipinos living in Singapore. The venue hall at the Expo Centre was packed to capacity. Snaking lines outside the Max Pavilion and Hall 9 were witness to the high popularity of the President - 80% of Filipino voters in Singapore chose him in the May 2016 elections. They believe in his sincerity and his vision for the Philippines. Even his tough stand on illegal drugs is seen as an important mission for the next generation of Filipinos. The festive spirit was enhanced by performances by the San Lorenzo Choir. Philippine Ambassador to Singapore Antonio Morales on the occasion said, "We believe that this is the biggest crowd ever in Singapore among Filipinos, the biggest Filipino gathering."





Photos by Jerrick Asinas

Love, Light and Living Festival

(Above): A gift from the Filipino community to Singapore - the 4-metre high parol - traditionally a lantern made from bamboo sticks and covered by coloured pieces of paper, symbolising the victory of light over darkness. (Below left): Honoured guests posing in front of the Parol 2016

The estimated 180,000-strong Filipinos in Singapore have notched up many opportunities to come together to bond over shared memories and experiences of their home country. Partner Philippines presents a selection of these lively events that have opened up the casement to the rich and varied profusion of the people’s religious, cultural and artistic outpourings. Singaporeans too look forward to these events, which have turned out to be great learning experiences on many fronts

HELD from September 3-11, 2016, this joyful festival is very significant for Filipinos living in Singapore as it’s also an important message of inclusivity of the Philippines in the Asian culture. An explosion of cultural delights unfolds over the festival days at Singapore’s Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) showcasing the wondrous history, heritage and diversity of the Philippines to Singaporeans. The dance forms, culled from the different regions of the Philippines celebrate the rich repertoire of its dance culture. Costumes too play a pivotal role in interpreting this dazzling celebration of a people and its traditions.

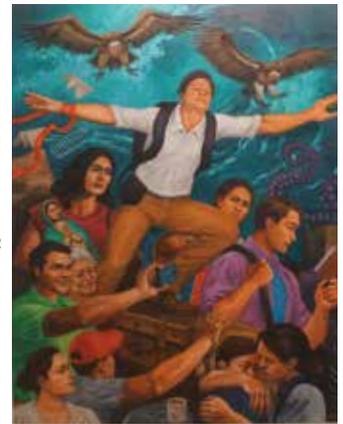
A highlight was the gift from the Filipino community in Singapore - a giant Parol. This marks the first time the country is exhibiting the lantern (made of fibreglass) on a large scale, 4-meter high, outside the Philippines. The Parol was presented to the museum by Ambassador HE Antonio A. Morales, and he was accompanied by Hon. Felipe de Leon, Jr., Chairman of the National Commission for Culture and Arts, Philippines, and Mr Edwin D. Santiago, Mayor for the City of San Fernando, Pampanga.

Christmas Cheer

On 2nd December 2016, Singapore’s Filipino community gathered together at Singapore’s Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) for an early Christmas celebration. Presided over by HE Ambassador to Singapore, Antonio Morales, the event was attended by officials of the Philippine embassy as well. This annual event is scheduled before the Yuletide holiday break. Prayers by leaders of the different faiths and welcome remarks by the ambassador kickstarted the programme. A lively selection of Christmas carols was performed singers in the Filipino community. Pinoy dishes, arranged by the community and some Filipino firms, were part of the dinner menu. A highlight of the well-attended do was the lucky draw.



Paskong Pinoy 2016 - one of the world’s longest running Christmas celebrations



(Left): Official opening ribbon-cutting ceremony (standing from left): Chairman Felipe de Leon Jr, Chairman and Commissioner for the Arts of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, HE Antonio Morales and Alan Goh, SMU Vice President (Corporate Communications and Marketing)

Philippine Art Trek

A range of emotions gripped the gathering of the Filipino diaspora who attended the art exhibition— titled *Bagahe: Art as Remittance*, at the De Suantio Gallery at the SMU School of economics/School of Social Sciences from 2-16 September showcasing the work of a group of Filipino artists based in Singapore. This is the 10th year that the Philippine art Trek, has been organized here in Singapore under the auspices of the Embassy of the Philippines in Singapore. The 31 works, largely paintings created by 19 members of *ShininGapor*, a collation of Filipino painters living in the city-state. Mr Alan Goh SMU Vice President (Corporate Communications and Marketing) in his address said that SMU's championing of the growth of the arts was in line with Singapore's vision to be a distinctive global city for the arts where artistic talents are nurtured. He felt that the collection had beautifully captured "the spontaneous ingenuity, sheer tenacity and unrivalled optimism of the Filipino community."



(Right): President Duterte looks at the orchid that was named after him during the orchid-naming session at the Singapore Botanic Gardens. (Below): Close up of the *Dendrobium Rodrigo Roa Duterte*



Orchid-Diplomacy

Smiles and laughter accompanied the special event held at the beautiful National Botanical Garden, for the christening ceremony of an orchid to carry on the name of Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte, who was on a 2-day state visit to the city-state. "Orchid Diplomacy" has been an old custom (since 1956) of Singapore to bond more closely with its allies and friendly neighbours and also serves as an important brick in the wall of bilateral ties. For those of the Filipino community who were privileged to attend the ceremony it was a delightful affair. The flower chosen for this momentous occasion was the violet-red orchid, a new hybrid which is a cross between a *Dendrobium Sonia Beauty* and *Dendrobium Urmila Nandey* and now goes by the name of '*Dendrobium Rodrigo Roa Duterte*'.

Going Solo with Ceramist Pablo Capati III

Noted Filipino ceramist pulled out all stops for his first solo exhibition in Singapore. The display was part of One East Asia held from 7th - 30th December 2016. The ceramist is well-renowned for his excellent nature-inspired, anagama-fired works, 'which move fluidly between functional and sculptural forms' and enjoy a huge fan-following back home. Ambassador Antonio Morales was guest of honour at the opening. The Philippines embassy has been pivotal in promoting Filipino art in Singapore. Capati studied pottery in Japan as a teenager and in the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, where he studied for a business degree. He took to pottery full-time in 2003 and has exhibited his works in China, Thailand and Australia. He came on board as a director of PUTIK Association of Philippine Potters, and was the founder of Tropical Blaze, a bi-annual international wood-firing workshop (supported by the University of the Philippines) held at his studio in Batangas, as reported by Rappler.com.



(Top right photo): (Standing from left): From left to right: First Secretary and Consul Gonaranao B. Musor; Filipino Ceramic Artist Pablo K. Capati III; parents of the artists, Mr. Pablo and Mrs. Ning Capati; and Ms. Veronica Howe, Director of One East Asia Gallery

You can tell a good meal by what is left.

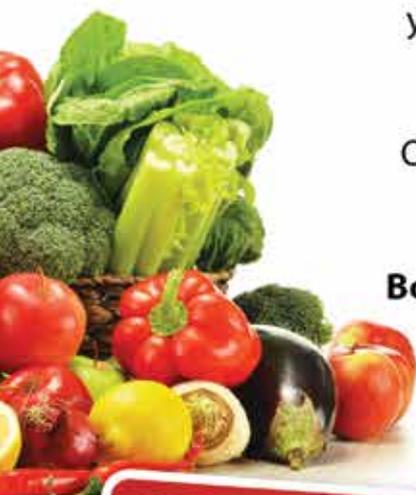


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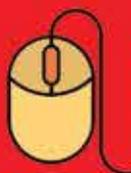
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Philippine Ambassador to Singapore Antonio A. Morales (third from right, front) leads the ceremonial blowing of the birthday cake for DOLE, OWWA and FOWS.

3rd FILCOM GM: Preparing for Philippines 119th Anniversary

The Philippine Embassy and the Philippine Overseas Labour Office (POLO) in Singapore hosted the 3rd General Meeting of leaders of the Filipino community (Filcom) on 20th May 2017. More than 100 officials of Filipino community organisations and other entities participated in the meeting, which deal with a number of items on the agenda, including preparations for the 119th anniversary of Philippine independence.

Officials of the Philippine Embassy provided the participants with relevant updates on developments in the Philippines, as well as improvements in the services of the Embassy. Meanwhile, Filipino community leaders were requested to encourage their members to register for overseas voting for the 2019 Philippine elections.

Filcom organizations were also given an opportunity to announce activities involving the Filipino community in Singapore. Philippine Ambassador to Singapore Antonio A.



Ambassador Morales administers the oath of newly-elected officers of the UP Alumni Association Singapore (UPAAS).

Morales administered the oath of newly-elected officials of the UP Alumni Association in Singapore (UPAAS). The meeting was preceded by a networking "Kapihan" and concluded with a lunch arranged by the Philippine Overseas Labor Office.

Bayanihan Walk 2017

The 4-km Bayanihan Walk, a fun walk, was successfully organised by the Philippine Embassy and the Philippine Bayanihan Society Singapore (PBSS) on 21st May 2017, at the Labrador Park in Singapore. The 3rd edition of the walk-for-a-cause, was held to support the charitable activities of PBSS and promote a healthy

lifestyle and networking between the Filipino community and Singaporeans. This year's walk forms part of the activities that the Philippine Embassy is organising in support of ASEAN 50 and the Philippines' chairmanship of ASEAN. More than 400 people participated in the event.

Ambassador Antonio A. Morales with walkers during the Bayanihan Walk 2017. Photo: Philippine Bayanihan Society - Singapore / Facebook



Filipino Culture WOW Factor at Singapore ASEAN 2016 Gala Night



MAGIC unfolded with bolts of sparkly lights and music in a profusion of rich pageantry for the massive audience which had gathered to celebrate the ASEAN 2016 GALA NIGHT held at Singapore's Shangri-la Hotel, on 23 November 2016. Hosted this year by the Laotian Embassy this year's annual cultural festivities celebrated Laos' chairmanship of ASEAN. By tradition the gala is co-hosted by the ASEAN Diplomatic Missions in Singapore and is an excellent platform to showcase the unique aspects of the ASEAN identity as member states set up on display the rich diversity of their cultural specialties at the booths set up at the venue.



The huge gathering comprised over 400 guests from the ASEAN diplomatic and business community, along with many dialogue partners and officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore. Also attending this year's annual do was the Philippines' Undersecretary for Policy, Enrique A. Manalo, who was in the country to deliver a lecture on the Philippines' priorities of the 2017 ASEAN chairmanship. Philippine Ambassador Antonio A. Morales was accompanied by a number of guests from the Philippine Embassy in Singapore.



The Philippines' booth at the gala, featuring the 'Fiesta' theme, drew a lot of attention. A first for the country at the booth was the lively display of food and beverages promoting Filipino firms making these products or those which promote Philippine products. It was an excellent way to introduce the huge gathering to the diversity of the country's food and beverage market. Visitors got to sample the chicken Adobo and Sisig Bangus, a part of their Masarap platter. Benjamin, Chrisslyn and Adeline Ong, owners of Prime Food Marketing, were on hand to personally serve their ever popular Saranggani Bay Bangus canapés and Malagos chocolates. That's not all. The crowd got to gorge on the range of yummy flavours of Carmen's Best Ice Cream provided by FORM. Those who enjoy their drinks could be found thronging the cocktail bar hosted by La Maison Du Whisky. Bleeding Heart Rum didn't want to miss out all the action either. Managing Director for Asia Pacific, Mr. Andrew Garcia and Business Development Director, Mr. Steve Mills, provided miniature Don Papa Rum give-aways.



Billed as one of the primary highlights of the entertainment was the performance of the Singapore-based Filipino vocalist, Mark Anthony Canios, who belted out popular hits such as Anak and Beautiful Girl. The lucky draw is always a big hit and this year guests from the Philippine Embassy won prizes.

Philippines Takes Charge of ASEAN Chair

As the new Chair of the ASEAN the Philippines is in a feisty mood to showcase ASEAN as a model of regionalism and a global player and to bring home the point that crucial to the realization of the goals set in place is the cooperation and support of all ASEAN member-states and its dialogue partners



Laotian Ambassador Latsamy Keomany handed over chairmanship of ASEAN to Ambassador Elizabeth P. Buensuceso, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to ASEAN, witnessed by ASEAN Secretary-General, Le Luong Minh in Jakarta

THE first day of the New Year —1 January 2017 —kicks off on an auspicious note for the Philippines, with it officially taking over the Chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Earlier this year, on 8th September 2016 Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte had formalized this acceptance in the handing over ceremonies at the National Convention Center in Vientiane, Laos, under the auspices of Lao Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith, who had chaired ASEAN in 2016. The move comes at an appropriate moment in time for ASEAN, which will also be celebrating 50 years of its founding in 2017, and signals its preparations for the challenges of the coming years.

On its part the Philippines is looking to “introduce important initiatives that will significantly advance ASEAN community-building, promote inclusive and innovation-led growth; highlight ASEAN’s resilience; advance maritime security and cooperation; contribute to regional peace, security and stability; and showcase ASEAN as a model of regionalism and a global player”.

President Duterte, on the occasion, also unveiled the theme “**Partnering for change, engaging the world**” (a muted reference to his campaign slogan “change is coming”) for the 2017 ASEAN Summit in Manila, where the Philippines will play host. The Manila conference will coincide with ASEAN’s 50th anniversary celebrations.

The President confided that the theme of 2017 conference reflected the Philippines’ resolve to consolidate ASEAN to enable it to take its rightful place in the international community. The President said that also brought home the point that “crucial to the realization of our goals is the cooperation and support of all ASEAN member-states and our dialogue partners.”

Ambassador Elizabeth P. Buensuceso, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to ASEAN, on being handed over the chairmanship of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) by Ambassador Latsamy Keomany, Permanent Representative of Lao PDR to ASEAN, indicated that she was committed to continue the work and sustain the gains achieved by previous CPR chairs with the support of the CPR and the ASEAN Secretariat.

A report in Asia Foundation marks how the Philippines’ successful hosting of the

APEC in 2015 has well-positioned it to facilitate 'massive significant international events' so observers will be free to focus on the details of its performance in the substance of its Chair. The country's excellent economic growth last year (amongst the five top economies in ASEAN) is also an indicator of a repeat performance (if not the fastest) this year—it also reflects the thinking of the President's robust team of economic managers attending to not just 'the continuity of macro-policies', but also the projections to further efforts for a more inclusive growth to address the country's high levels of poverty.

Apart for the ripples in the ASEAN region caused by its steady economic performance, President Duterte's administration intends to improve relations with China in the light of past difficulties Chinese pressure on the matter of the South China Sea/West Philippine Sea.



President Duterte at the 13th ASEAN Business and Investment Summit (ABIS) in Laos on September 2016. The ABIS is the region's premier annual Business and Investment platform for the business community

There are several matters which will draw the attention of the new Chair of ASEAN

this coming year—amongst these: the theme of the Philippines' Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2017; thematic priorities of the country; major ASEAN meetings to be hosted by the Philippines next year; commemorative activities on the occasion of the 50th Founding Anniversary of the ASEAN; and perspectives on the ASEAN Political Security Community, with emphasis on the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM Plus.

Mr Enrique Manalo, the Undersecretary for Policy at the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs, speaking to Singapore's daily *Today* newspaper on the sidelines of a lecture organised by ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, where he was invited to deliver his views on Manila's priorities for its 2017 chairmanship of ASEAN said, "We will continue the traditional ASEAN policy of engaging partners and trying to play a central role in the affairs of the region."

Also in line of the priorities in hand is the need to refresh the group's charter to keep in tune with current dynamics in the region. While referring to the document that codifies ASEAN's norms, rules and values, which came into force in 2008, Mr Manalo said: "The issue is to see where the 2008 charter can be brought up to date. Even in the charter, it calls for a (periodic) review." Mr Manalo further noted that "The exercise next year is not aimed to amend or revise the charter, but (to) look at which provisions are relevant and which need to be amended. There will not be any major revision of the charter during our chairmanship."

Another concerning matter to be prioritized is the bringing together of ASEAN and the people "strengthening the capacity of small and medium enterprises; protecting vulnerable sectors of society, including overseeing the welfare of migrant workers; and environmental sustainability," said Mr Manalo, while speaking of matter pertaining to the Philippines ASEAN Chair and its agenda for the region.

Manuel Teehankee: Foreign Affairs and Embracing the ASEAN Chair in 2017

A conversation with Undersecretary Manuel Teehankee and Assistant Secretary Hellen B. De La Vega sheds light on the Philippines foreign policy and how it aligns the country's own growth plans in conjunction with the ASEAN's areas of focus



Undersecretary Manuel Teehankee

THE cutting-edge focus on all-round development and the welfare of its people and the exponential and vibrant economic growth of 7 per cent in a decade, has been pivotal to the shaping of the foreign policy of the Philippines, the fastest growing country in ASEAN region. In April the Philippines assumes the Chair of ASEAN 2017. The President's directives to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for the successful chairmanship of ASEAN will be the pursuit of his 10-point socio-economic agenda. "So we are very excited to keep up the momentum," says Undersecretary Manuel Teehankee.

The Philippines is placed in an even more advantageous position for partnering for positive change in the lives of ordinary people and engaging the 10-member nations in the region and the world at large to contribute even more vigorously to the twinning concerns for both itself and the ASEAN region— pushing the inclusive socio-economic agenda, infrastructure, health and water, human development and education, safety and security (in the light of combating piracy, transnational crimes). Undersecretary Teehankee points out that all these issues are of grave importance to the 10 member-states of ASEAN and they must move forward in unison, which involves the participation of not only all kinds of private and governmental sector co-operation but also of civil society so that ASEAN's 100 years can be an occasion of even greater celebrations.

Assistant Secretary Hellen B. De La Vega shares the six thematic priorities in hand: Looking at the vision of ASEAN for year 2025; a more people-centred, people-oriented ASEAN; peace and stability in the region; maritime security co-operation; inclusive innovation-led growth; focus on development of MSMES and women and youth entrepreneurs—and of course there's the priority of disaster risk management in the region

ASEAN 50th Anniversary

Being the 50th anniversary of ASEAN the country's president has emphasised on the centrality of ASEAN. "So in pursuing our foreign policy national interests do dictate pursuing the interests of our country and our people, but the Philippine's interest is deeply embedded in the ASEAN family. Of course we have our Plus 3 partners, plus 6 partners and our East Asia dialogue which includes the US and Russia," elaborates Undersecretary Teehankee.

"ASEAN centrality is a very important issue when it comes to the challenges that we face in the region, but one needs to caution that is one needs to maintain a liberal order, a region that remains open and continues to promote democracy and freedom—because an open system is very important and there's all the more reason for that as we get closer together and for people to show moderation and tolerance of the wide diversity of the different political systems that we have and yet maintain an open system of trade and investment," says Assistant Secretary Hellen B. De La Vega.

The whole world is looking at ASEAN in 2017 during its 50th year. Already in the light of the changing face of the global political scenario in recent times, the ASEAN region's importance has grown considerably. There's talk even of the next decade as being the time of ASEAN in the world arena. For one it's a

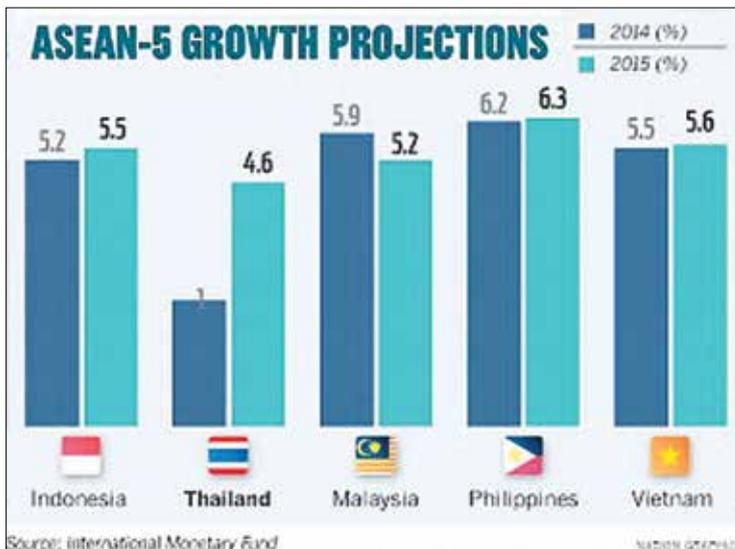
“The whole world is looking at ASEAN in 2017 during its 50th year. Already in the light of the changing face of the global political scenario in recent times, the ASEAN region’s importance has grown considerably. There’s talk even of the next decade a or so being the time of ASEAN in the world arena.”

peaceful region. It has economic cooperation amongst the 10-member states, who work together harmoniously - much more than other regions around the world - and this is where the role of the Philippines as ASEAN chair for 2017 (which aligns with the celebrations of 50 years of ASEAN) becomes even more critical in shaping the growth of this relationship.

Undersecretary Manuel Teehankee says “The ASEAN Way—co-operation, consensus building and sharing experiences and helping each country in uplifting with inclusive growth the welfare of everyone— encourages dialogue, openness. It is only openness and dialogue which can create constructive solutions.”



Asst Secretary Hellen B De La Vega



Shared Prosperity

Singapore and the Philippines have shared excellent bilateral relations, drawing upon each other’s strengths, for the welfare of their people. Because of Singapore, people in the ASEAN region have become aware of the availability of professionals from the large pool of talent in the Philippines. Singapore, a leader in infrastructure development, technology and petrochemicals, is in an excellent position to help other ASEAN countries who need their expertise for their growth.

ASEAN, Undersecretary Teehankee shares, is non-confrontationalist and also harmonious in approach “So we want to enjoy the communities as families. As families there may be problems, but we are happy to tackle the problems together. What we want after 2017 is to invigorate and re-energize all ASEAN citizens to be more aware that ASEAN is the way forward to the next 50 years as will look forward to the hosting for the 100th anniversary,” he says.

IMF: PHILIPPINES to Grow 6.8% in 2017

President Rodrigo Duterte's 10-point socio-economic reform agenda 'Duterteonomics' aims to give teeth to his ambition to raise six million Filipinos out of poverty and transform the Philippines into a high middle-income economy by 2022



Socio-economic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia: P1.13 trillion would be set aside for 2018, P1.18 trillion for 2019 and P1.29 trillion for 2020 under the three-year rolling infrastructure programme (TRIP)

DRIVEN by high public spending, a strong domestic consumer demand and recovery in exports, the Philippines is predicted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to become South East Asia's leading light in terms of economic growth over the next two years; as envisaged by IMF's 2017 *World Economic Outlook Report*, the Philippines GDP growth rate is expected to grow 6.8 percent in 2017 and 6.9 percent in 2018, taking it ahead of Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. Though its economy is expected to race ahead of China in Asia it will be outpaced by regional leader —India, according to IMF estimates. According to a statement released by Shanaka Jay Peiris, IMF resident representative, "Higher commodity prices will push up higher inflation (3.6 percent in 2017 and 3.3 percent in 2018), although still within the BSP's target range of 3±1 percent."

Socio-economic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia shared that the Philippine government was looking at growth of 6.5 to 7.5 percent this year and 7 to 8 percent next year. The President is looking to grow the economy by 50 percent in his 6-year tenure and raise 6 million Filipinos out of poverty and transform the Philippines into a high middle-income economy by 2022. According to Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez infrastructure in the Philippines remains below regional standards. The government currently spends 5.4 per cent of its GDP on infrastructure. It is now looking to raise spending on infrastructure to 7.4 percent of GDP by 2022, by developing highways, bridges, ports, airport upgradation and rural and city railway lines.

President Rodrigo Duterte's government on 18 April 2017 released its ambitious economic 10-point socioeconomic reform agenda 'Duterteonomics' which is rooted in the Philippine Development Plan (see accompanying story next page) — aimed at revving up development of key infrastructure and give more teeth to the country's all-round economic growth. Dominguez opined that the proposed comprehensive tax reform bill is a key factor to this economic agenda. He saw this as a "key link in the grand effort to break out from the cycle of low growth and build a dynamic and inclusive economy." The projects under the umbrella of the **Build! Build! Build! Programme** (to the tune of P3.6 trillion) will feature projects for water resources, sewerage and sanitation, solid waste management, maritime, transportation, flood management, social infrastructure, information communications technology and energy et al. The North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) Harbor Link Segment 10 is aimed to be wrapped up by the year end. Travel time from Metro Manila to NLEX will come down to 10 minutes, ease congestion in the Capital Region and propel commercial activity between Central and North Luzon. The 'Duterteonomics' forum, hosted by the Department of Finance (DOF) and the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), also saw the launching of the P1.5 billion Runway Manila pedestrian bridge linking Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 to Newport City in Pasay. As revealed by Pernia the number of projects to be covered are still not identified but shared that P1.13 trillion would be set aside for 2018, P1.18 trillion for 2019 and P1.29 trillion for 2020 under the three-year rolling infrastructure programme (TRIP) seen as the Philippines' golden age of infrastructure.

Top priority projects include Mindano's first railway and the much needed-subway for Metro Manila to reduce congestion. The 2,000-km, US \$9-Million Mindanao Railway project, aimed at connecting the cities of Cagayan de Oro, Iligan, Zamboanga, Butuan, Surigao, General Santos and Davao will begin works of the first phase— from Davao del Sur to Davao del Norte, in 2018; the project's second phase will be the stretch from Davao Del Norte to Butuan City; the third from Butuan to Cagayan De Oro and the fourth phase runs through Cagayan de Oro to Iligan and Zamboanga peninsula. According to the National

Economic Development Authority (NEDA) Malaysia, Japan and China have shown interest in the project. Apart from this the President has promised to set up three other railways — the Manila-Nueva Vizcaya line, the Manila-Sorsogon line and the Manila-Batangas line.

DUTERTENOMICS: Re-Branded Economic Gameplan



Continuing and maintaining current macroeconomic policies, including fiscal, monetary and trade policies



Instituting progressive tax reform and more effective tax collection while indexing taxes to inflation



Increasing competitiveness and the ease of doing business, drawing upon successful models used to attract business to local cities such as Davao, as well as pursuing the relaxation of the Constitutional restrictions on foreign ownership, except with regard to land ownership, in order to attract foreign direct investments



Accelerating annual infrastructure spending to account for 5 percent of the Gross Domestic Product, with public-private partnerships playing a key role



Promoting rural and value chain development toward increasing agricultural and rural enterprise productivity and rural tourism



Ensuring security of land tenure to encourage investments and address bottlenecks in land management and titling agencies



Investing in human capital development, including health and education systems, as well as matching skills and training to meet the demands of businesses and the private sector



Promoting science, technology and the creative arts to enhance innovation and creative capacity toward self-sustaining and inclusive development



Improving social protection programmes, including the government's conditional cash transfer programme, in order to protect the poor against instability and economic shocks



Strengthening the implementation of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law to enable especially poor couples to make informed choices on financial and family planning



PDP Six-Year Plan

The Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 is the first medium-term development plan to be anchored on the national long-term vision - AmBisyon Natin 2040.

During its third meeting under the administration of President Rodrigo R. Duterte, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board officially approved the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 on 20th February 2017 at Malacanan Palace.

To download the PDP 2017-2022: <http://pdp.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/PDP-2017-2022-05-11-2017.pdf>



Going for Growth and Shared Prosperity On Homefront & ASEAN Region

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) of the Philippines has an important agenda to raise the bar for the country's economic growth. Partner Philippines caught up with DTI Secretary Ramon Lopez who shared his views



DTI Secretary Ramon Lopez with interviewer Mrs Nomita Dhar, Editor-in-Chief Partner Philippines

THE Philippines, the 2017 Chair for ASEAN, is also the region's fastest growing economy. Little wonder it is getting bullish on ASEAN, a huge growth area and one of the world's fastest rising regions. Ramon Lopez - who is much respected by the business, financial and investor communities in the Philippines and abroad for his extensive experience - and now as the Philippines' DTI Secretary, has an even more challenging role as Chairman of the ASEAN Economic Ministers. "We can all see the benefits of a more integrated economy - lowering unemployment...improving the general quality of the life of the people in the region," he says, while sharing his thoughts on the Philippines' economic strategy in the coming years as well as this year's direction for the country as they host the ASEAN summit.

Lopez also points out that ASEAN as a region is also strengthening its partnerships with its dialogue partners. The ASEAN summit weekend is seen as particularly significant for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) - involved in negotiating a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) amongst ASEAN's 10 member-states and six other countries - Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea - all of which come from one half of the world and make up a third of the world economy—even more so for the Philippines, who chairs the ASEAN Economic Ministers, and the Filipino President chairs the ASEAN summit. Lopez is keen that the meet turns out to be a platform for achieving some kind of agreement in the RCEP, so that there can be a stronger ASEAN region that is made up of its 10 member-states plus the other six FTA countries.

Line Up of Activities

The Philippines, as ASEAN Chair for 2017, has an exciting line-up of many activities (almost every month) so member-states can look forward to rewarding interactions in year-round activities which would incorporate all the dimensions of the sectors which would be aligned with ASEAN's overall objectives - an inclusive, innovative growth, which would lead to shared prosperity, so everyone is aligned towards that vision. Meetings are planned with:

- Senior officials and amongst the ASEAN Economic Ministers
- Summit meeting at the level of the Presidents and Prime Ministers
- Activities to enhance women entrepreneurs of the region, for youth, for micro SMEs, for technology-oriented enterprises (part of the youth entrepreneurship)
- Conference to promote new technologies like mobile apps as well as game-changing disruptive technologies for tech-savvy and aspiring entrepreneurs and for the creative industries.

The Philippines growth story has been quite exciting having recorded a growth of about 7 per cent - the highest in the ASEAN region; also, this growth has been backed up by the growth of its industrial sector - almost 8 per cent - and the manufacturing sector which is part of the industry is also growing by 7 per cent.

"That's a big story for us," says Lopez, "because in the past years manufacturing

The Philippines growth story has been quite exciting having recorded a growth of about 7 per cent - the highest in the ASEAN region... this growth has been backed up by the growth of its industrial sector - almost 8 per cent - and the manufacturing sector which is part of the industry is also growing by 7 per cent.

was only growing by about 3 per cent year on year—and this is really good as it is indicative of a highly productive manufacturing sector and also as a source of stable jobs...decent jobs, for many Filipinos and our commitment to push for entrepreneurship amongst our partners in the Philippines.”

Infrastructure too is an area the new government has been looking at from the time it assumed power. It was decided at that time that a higher infrastructure budget must be allocated— at least 5 per cent going up to 7 per cent of GDP— increasing from the earlier 3 per cent. “We are not waiting to implement this in the fifth year. This has been approved at the economic board level. This involves economic zones, ports and airports, farm to market roads— all kinds of infrastructure to ensure to ease the flow of goods to improve efficiencies, lower production costs and improve efficiencies,” shares Lopez.

The President’s mandate for the DTI is to create lots of jobs, create entrepreneurs and to empower each one of them to be self-sustaining to become smart entrepreneurs. “Smart entrepreneurs will have the potential to grow big and rely less on government; teach them how to fish...don’t give them the fish; that’s the basic principle that we are adopting under President Duterte,” says Lopez.

The Negosyo Centers, or business centres, managed by the DTI, have been tasked to help micro-, small-, and medium-scale entrepreneurs with business registration, financing, and market promotion. Their role in promoting “ease of doing business and facilitating access to services for MSMEs within its jurisdiction” is pivotal to entrepreneurship growth and have a big role in uplifting the lives of Filipinos and helping in address the issue of inequality in society— in strengthening the path of inclusive growth—an important economic agenda.

The centres also help generate jobs through the development of the MSME sector. “We always say if you empower the bottom of the pyramid, you can empower the nation with less inequality. So that’s the priority for the President of the current administration.” Changing the mind-set of the people, to shake them out of their complacency, Lopez shares, is really the key to having an inclusive growth. To this end DTI has training programmes in Negosyo Centers which address this need. In the past six months, under the new government, he reveals, 213,000 walk- in clients have passed through its 450 Negosyo Centers.

Already the pursuit of the Philippines to create jobs through entrepreneurship and partnerships with foreign investors has seen unemployment come down from an average of 6.5 per cent to 4.7 per cent, reveals Lopez. There are more jobs for young people who are empowered by their education and training. And it’s the youth which will have many more years to go to add to the country’s economic development. It is this young empowered middleclass populace which will also lead to a greater consumer base, a huge attraction for foreign investors.

Business Friendly



One of the most important reasons why investing in the Philippines is very attractive, according to Lopez, is that, “The country’s new administration is led by a President who is friendly to investors. He himself will guarantee the protection to investors from extortion from corruption and any difficulties, because when he talks to investors he gives that personal guarantee of assurance. He is a very sincere government leader because his concern is very simple—anything that will help the poor people of his country—he will be an ally, a protector, because he knows investors will create jobs. He’s creating economic opportunities to create jobs for the small entrepreneurs, for the poor and for the marginalized.”

Philippines’ Edge



Lopez says that what enhances the business-friendly environment of the country is “The large pool of highly educated, highly capable, English-speaking workers, their reputation in terms of honesty and integrity, their creative spirit. Most of the graduates in the talent pool have pursued business-related courses as well as in the fields of science and technology.”

“In the service sector, the Philippines has already been providing professionals in terms of executives and managers, engineers and other tech-savvy workers to markets in Asia and further afield. The Philippines has a very good track record in the BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) space as a professionals service provider be it in Singapore or in the US.

“The basics that would matter would be the quality of the labour and the costs, which is a good basis to look to the Philippines and that’s working to our advantage. Its factors such as these which will compel investors to relocate to the Philippines as an investment destination,” says Lopez.

PTIC: Opening New Doors for Trade & Investment Ties

The Philippines and Singapore have commercial linkages which go back a long way in time. The two countries now deepen their engagement as trade and investment opportunities open up future prospects in a highly charged global scenario



DTI-PTIC Commercial Counsellor Glenn Peñaranda invites Singapore companies to learn more about the Philippines to invest and do business there

A conversation with the Department of Trade and Industry's Philippine Trade & Investment Center (DTI-PTIC) Commercial Counsellor Glenn Peñaranda, based in Singapore, sheds light on the exciting investment opportunities emerging out of the ASEAN region's fastest growing economy. He says the two countries have much to share in terms of technology, services and products when it comes to strengthening old bonds and steadying the process of engagement on many fronts - not only between them but also for the region and globally.

"This long relationship based on the engagement and collaboration between the two countries remains relevant even today in this age when companies are operating globally and complimenting each other," shares Mr Peñaranda. "Singapore, for the Philippines is a major strategic partner. It is Philippines' fourth largest export market and a major source of investment. Singapore being a trading hub and Philippines being an important part of the global supply chain - specifically for a major export product like electronics - trade has continued to grow over the years. In investment, we are very happy to note, in 2016, based on available data from investment agencies, Singapore emerges as the top source of investments for new projects in the Philippines," he says.

The explanation behind the continued strong performance of Singapore in the Philippines is the role of the many multinational companies who are also looking at the region. So when there's talk about companies from Singapore looking at investment opportunities in Philippines, it might also involve Japanese, American and European MNCs firms based in the island republic.

Strong Interest in Manufacturing

A look at the top investors from Singapore in the last few years, sees a strong engagement in the manufacturing sector. The keen interest is because there has been a resurgence in manufacturing, helped by the fact that it is a priority sector for the Philippine government and also the influx of investments from traditional sources such as Japan. This in turn has had a multiplier effect attracting investments from other countries in the region to support the manufacturing operations or projects in the Philippines.

As the country continues to grow there is also a huge requirement for infrastructure and much potential for investment in this critical area as well. Investments are also coming in the form of many big companies using the Philippines as a back office for their ASEAN and global operations as indicated in the continued growth of the country's IT services industry.

With strong economic growth registering the record 7 per cent mark and a relatively young populace of 100 million people, the Philippines is attracting much attention, according to Mr Peñaranda. This demographic dividend, he says, coupled with growing opportunities in the economy is currently driving investments and interest in the country. Good economic fundamentals over the past few years, have resulted in infrastructure investments not only in urban areas, but also all over the country and best of all he notes, is that it is not only Singaporean firms, but also the multinationals based here who are taking a closer look at the Philippines.

“Singapore, for the Philippines is a major strategic partner. It is Philippines’ fourth largest export market and a major source of investment.”

Opportunities in Agri-business

Another area is the agri-business sector where opportunities are immense and still growing. The country’s great wealth of natural resources, both from the land and the sea, are its greatest assets. While it has many agri-products it is looking to enhance and value-add these with better downstream processing. “It is very important for the Philippines to improve its agriculture, not only to feed the growing population, but also increase incomes for workers in the agri-sector and improve the greater population’s economic wellbeing,” elaborates Mr Peñaranda.

Progress in creating awareness has been high on the DTI-PTIC’s agenda. “It is really the window of the Philippines for businessmen,” says Mr Peñaranda, “and we want to serve as a first-stop shop, with a full range of services, for anyone wanting to do business with the Philippines.” The centre shares information about the economy and, more importantly, about specific opportunities to help companies identify the areas they can participate in the growing economy. The centre is also able to set up relevant meetings for those who want to visit the country and continues to assist them so they can be successful in their endeavours.

Singapore Players Already There

As mentioned earlier the agri sector has already attracted interest from large multinationals and Japanese firms based in Singapore, who are now already actively trading in agri products and have invested in the plantations. Singapore corporations such as Singtel and Singapore Airlines already have a presence there.

The Philippines faces many challenges in terms of logistics and Singapore supply chain giant YCH has set up a facility in Metro Manila and is also expanding to Davao, in Mindanao - the food basket of the Philippines - to help distribute agri-products in the region. Singaporean firms are also looking at business hubs, beyond Metro Manila, to engage in investment opportunities in places such as Cebu, the Clarks area and Davao. They realise that even second tier cities with their massive populations are a huge potential. These regional economies are growing very rapidly and there are lots of opportunities for investments that can prove to be worthwhile in the long run.

Mr Peñaranda assures potential investors that the DTI-PTIC can help address any concerns they might have regarding ease of doing business there, as well as ensuring competitive propositions for investment, particularly for those locating in its SEZ areas (see accompanying story), where most export-oriented firms are stationed.



Spread over 9,450 ha within the Clark Special Economic Zone (CSEZ) in Central Luzon, Clark Green City (CGC) falls in the provinces of Tarlac and Pampanga. To be helmed by the government’s Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) the Clark Green City project is expected cost around US\$14.00 billion. CGC is envisaged to become the most modern and the first technologically-integrated city in the Philippines. The city’s profile will highlight the seamless fusion of residential, commercial, agro-industrial, institutional and IT developments, supported by a green, sustainable and intelligent community for its residents, workers and business establishments.

The development of the city will be along two established lines: the area’s natural resources and ecosystems and on smart urban development. “For many who have gone to Bonifacio Global City, they will have seen what a success it is,” says Commercial Counsellor Peñaranda. CGC will also address the rising need for office space and the country’s need to push development outside of Metro Manila.

“A lot of Singaporean companies have an expertise in master plans, and a great track record in industrial development as well and we would like to encourage them to participate in this project,” shares Mr Peñaranda.

To find out more

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Website: www.dti.gov.ph

Tourism: Masterplan for Investing in Inclusive Growth

President Duterte's 10-point socio-economic agenda mandates tourism as a primary investment-enabler to create jobs and a major contributor to the national economy. Guiller Asido the Chief Operating Officer of Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) .



Mr. Guiller Asido, Chief Operating Officer of TIEZA: "It is a complete masterplan."

PUSHING tourism arrivals is an important mandate for the Philippines tourism sector, but under the country's new economic game plan the sector is to play a pivotal role in economic growth as well as employment generation, which will be supported by enhanced infrastructural development. And the body that has been tasked this onerous responsibility of attracting investments from home and abroad, as well as identifying and following through on tourism infrastructural projects, is Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) headed by Guiller Asido Chief Operating Officer who is also a Member of the Board of Directors of the agency.

TIEZA, a government corporation, which was set up in 2009 is the Philippine's Department of Tourism's implementing arm. In 2016 it was vested the powers to push for investments and allowed to give fiscal and non-fiscal incentives to investors looking to do business in the tourism sector, reveals Guiller Asido, while shedding light on the agency's mandate to develop tourism infrastructure and to identify areas for tourism investment—aimed to be pivotal in creating economic activities for the local communities.

TIEZA establishes sustainable tourism enterprise zones and undertakes infrastructure projects that contribute to inclusive growth. By 2026, TIEZA aims to have established sustainable tourism zones in key areas identified in the National Tourism Development Plan. According to TIEZA's website "As the country's builder of tourism infrastructures, TIEZA brings development to areas with high cultural, historical, religious, heritage and/or eco-tourism values, helping shape a deep sense of awareness and pride for the Filipino's traditions, natural bounties and uniqueness as a race."

The principal programme the agency is undertaking is to fully designate, regulate and supervise tourism enterprise zones (TEZs) across the Philippines. "We have marked out the country in terms of identifying the potential areas where there can be investments for tourism and we have also identified six flagship tourism enterprises for which we have created a master plan for these areas", shares Asido, who goes on to reveal that TIEZA is implementing the process of three tourism enterprises under the Tourism Master Plan.

The first of these flagship Tourism Enterprise Zones (TEZ) projects by TIEZA is the 14km **Long Beach Area of San Vicente in Palawan**, under the Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP). The plan envisages proposals for the development of tourism establishments in the area following a set of design principles for a viable and sustainable approach. "We have in the Master Plan, also identified the environmental considerations to ensure that the sustainability of the area is always maintained," reassures TIEZA's COO. In addition to the San Vicente Long Beach Area project, work is continuing apace on ensuring the opening of the San Vicente airport, with the government putting in place infrastructure that will in turn become a support to investors in the beach project.

TIEZA has also roped in the local government units and all the other agencies involved to set up a one-stop-shop mechanism which will handle all interaction with investors "and that agency is TIEZA," reveals Asido. "Our intention," he continues, "is to ensure the ease of business in these areas and *also make sure that even before the investor actually sets up his business, we can assist him in terms of identifying his needs and what should be the areas of interest in a particular project.*"

Flagship TEZ Projects

The Flagship Tourism Enterprise Zone (TEZ) Project is a joint initiative of DOT and TIEZA to proactively develop strategically important TEZ. A *Flagship* TEZ differs from an ordinary TEZ in three respects: the party initiating the process, the criteria employed, and the management of the project. In a Flagship TEZ, the DOT and TIEZA initiates the process by proactively seeking out areas with viable tourism potential. In an ordinary TEZ, the applicant initiates the process by formally filing an application for designation as TEZ and submitting the documentary requirements.

To date there are five flagship TEZ:

- **San Vicente Long Beach**
(Palawan)
- **Rizal Park Complex**
(Manila)
- **Samat Shrine**
(Bataan)
- **Bucas Grande Island**
(Surigao del Norte)
- **Panglao Bay Premiere**
(Bohol)

Investment figures can vary from project to project. Giving the beach project as an example Asido says that they are looking at an investment of about USD 2.6 billion, which covers the whole stretch of the beach. "In fact it covers almost the whole municipality in terms of potential investment. The Master Plan actually identifies and categorises not only in terms of the principal tourism facilities as in resorts, hotels, spas and the like, but also looks at the support infrastructure which is needed - roads, public utilities in terms of electricity and water - so it's a complete master Plan," says Asido. TIEZA is not only a developer and investment-enabler, it is also involved in the setting up some of the infrastructure in its initial stages as it is doing in the case of the Vicente airport like building approach roads, removing some of the hills around the area, setting up the TIEZA office in Vicente, so that when the investor comes there is already something there - not just some raw, bare expanse of land. He can also see that the government is investing in the area, qualifies Asido. TIEZA is looking at these projects also as PPP partnerships.

In conjunction with the Department of Tourism, the plan is also to hold a Tourism Investment summit, a first for the Philippines, around June /July 2017. This will be promoted by huge marketing efforts, not just through TIEZA, but the DOT, as well and other related agencies. The plan is to lure not just local investors, but those from abroad as well. Incentives will be both fiscal and non-fiscal (visas, licences, labour) for potential investors. Already interest has been shown by China and Japan, which is a direct result of the new relationship of the two countries under the new leadership of the country. The message though is clear - the Philippines is open to tourism from investment from all over the world.



The 14-km long San Vicente Beach destined to be a top tourist Philippines destination

Private TEZ Projects

Six areas have been designated as private TEZs. These are:

- **Ciudad de Victoria**
(Bulacan)
- **Resorts World Manila**
- **Queen's Castle**
(Cebu)
- **Hijo Plantation**
(Tagum, Davao)
- **Bravo Golf Resort**
(Dumaguete)
- **Kingdom Global City**
(Davao)

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Groundbreaking & Game Changing for the Philippines

The Philippines' Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) has set up an aggressive agenda for sustainable progress



Mr. Vivencio B. Dizon, President and CEO / Vice-Chairman of the BCDA

Key Thrust Areas

These key projects hold the promise of numerous opportunities for investment and tourism for both the local and international investors. They are expected to generate jobs for thousands of Filipinos

- Clark Freeport Zone (Pampanga)
- John Hay Special Economic Zone (Baguio)
- Poro point Freeport Zone (La Union)
- Bataan Technology Park (Morong)

ONE of the cornerstones of President Roberto Duterte's development platform for the Philippines is a massive infrastructure spending plan billed simply as BUILD.BUILD.BUILD. The BCDA is empowered to use this great initiative to partner with investors who will participate in the transformation of the nation to greater prosperity.

A conversation with Mr. Vivencio B. Dizon, President and CEO/ Vice-Chairman of the BCDA sheds fresh light on the on-going progress of one of the most important organizations involved in the country's growth plans. The BCDA was born out of a critical need when the Philippine's government took a momentous decision to give a new life, to the American and Spanish military bases on its soil whose leases had run out, by creating new economic zones and mega cities. Also Central Luzon was reeling from the devastating aftermath of the 1991 eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in Pampanga, which had left the region in complete disarray— with an incalculable estimate of loss of lives, cultivated lands and infrastructure.

Developing Assets with Partners

The BCDA broke ground with four major projects to convert the abandoned lands into efficient world-class communities and in building sustainable cities and centres of economic growth. To be helmed by the BCDA, Pampanga's Clark Air Base, Baguio's Camp John Hay, Wallace Air Station in La Union and the former Philippine Refugee Processing Centre (PRPC)— Baatan in Morong, were the first projects identified for transformation by converting them into new areas of development, through a well-planned agenda under the Bases Conversion Development Act of 1992. The BCDA moved forward by "developing assets, entering into partnerships with private contractors and real estate developers" according to its website. This Herculean agenda also envisaged Central Luzon emerging as a vital new centre of opportunities for investment from home and abroad —as well as a major hub for employment.

The BCDA is at the forefront of successful PPP partnerships. All development follows the PPP model, according to Dizon, who cites the success of the Bonifacio Global City as the perfect example of the PPP model— which entails the private sector putting in the investment and BCDA or the government acting as the facilitator by providing the land and some basic infrastructure like roads. Clark is another successful PPP model he points out, while elaborating on the plan to develop a spanking new terminal at the airport here, starting the second half of 2017. "The new terminal will be built by the government but private investors will operate it," he says.

While Bonifacio Global City has been the most successful BCDA project of transformation of an American military base into a modern city full of fresh promise and opportunity, the next big project of development is Clark with a land asset of 32,000 hectares, which is half the size of the entire Manila Metro, and its international airport is the second international and regional hub of the Philippines, says Dizon. Clark's airport, he remarks, has been in operation already for several years now.

The potential for investment opportunities in these new projects are

Countries which have shown the greatest interest have been the likes of Japan, South Korea, France, Germany and Singapore, from where companies such as Temasek and educational institutes like Nanyang Technological University have indicated their interest in partnering with the BCDA.



To illustrate main areas and scale of commitment of President Duterte government's plans for building up the country's infrastructure

enormous Dizon enthuses. In Clark alone, he tells us, there are almost 1000 foreign and domestic locators...and out of the 1000, 70 per cent are foreign locators— Big brands such as Japan's Yokohama, as well as leisure and tourism brands like Hilton and Marriott which are said to be completing their projects in the next year or so. "We are now building with the help of our Japanese partners—the Japan Overseas Network for Infrastructure Development, a new city which we call the Clark Green City, which will be, hopefully, the alternative to the Metro Manila area and which will be the second premier city of the country. We are in fact in the process of planning and developing that city right now," says Dizon.

Elaborating on the interest generated by all this activity by the BCDA Dizon says that amongst the countries which have shown the greatest interest have been the likes of Japan, South Korea, France, Germany and Singapore, from where companies such as Temasek and educational institutes like Namyong Technological University have indicated their interest in partnering with the BCDA.

Calling All Investors

"The message of the new Philippines government is that if there is a time to invest in the country it is now, not just because it's the fastest growing economy in Asia but because the new government's 'will' to really invest heavily in the kind of infrastructure that will provide a long term perspective of growth is here and when we talk about the government's 'will' I mean the need for massive public infrastructure spending, which I think governments in the past did not have," says Dizon. In the next few years, he says, people will see tremendous investments in infrastructure that will provide the impetus for longer and for sustainable and faster growth in the next few years.

Roadshows to Showcase New Mantra of 'Build, Build and Build'

To create a huge buzz around the many opportunities awaiting investors in the Philippines, thanks to the President Duterte's aggressive agenda for massive infrastructure building in his vision for the development and socio-economic growth of the Philippines, the BCDA has set the ball rolling with a slew of roadshows not only in the Asian region countries such as Japan, China, Singapore, South Korea and Malaysia, but also in Europe and the US. The President sees infrastructure development on a large scale in the country as a springboard for the nation to move forward and for Filipinos to have better lives, as it will not only bring in more investments, it will also create millions of jobs and bring down the cost of commodities.

In Tokyo BCDA operatives spoke to 1000 investors about the tremendous opportunities in Clark, in the Philippines—but also in the ASEAN region. Organizing the ASEAN summit in November this year as its Chair, Dizon shares, will give the Philippines another opportunity to showcase Clark as a premier investment destination.



Roadmap 2022: Strategy for BPO Market

With outsourcing not only continuing to expand exponentially and also moving into non-traditional functions ASEAN'S leading light in the outsourcing industry relies heavily on its talent pool for future



Mr. Ike Amigo, President and CEO of ITBPAP - currently most of the outsourcing business, comes from the US but with Asia and the ASEAN region expected to be the growth centre for the next decade or so, future growth lies in partnerships closer to home

The Engine that Drives Country's ITBPO Industry

Amigo emphasizes that for decades the size of the country's talent pool has been created by an eco-system from which it can source college graduates with a high command of the English language and have firms where the students gain training and experience.

"We actually have half a million graduates coming in from the universities annually. There are 170,000 of them coming from accounting for business-related courses; a little over 60,000 would be in engineering and another 70,000 in IT. So that is a huge talent pool that is added to the workforce every year. And even health information management outsourcing we can take care of with the huge number of nursing graduates coming out every year," shares Amigo.

IKE Amigo, former Accenture executive, recently charged to steer the course of **IT-Business Process Association of the Philippines (ITBPAP)** as its President and CEO, envisages the country's IT-BPM sector leveraging on its latent strengths to capture a bigger share of the global pie in the coming years.

Amigo believes that for the Philippines to maintain its leadership in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) market in ASEAN needs to monitor the new complexities brought in by innovation, which is intrinsic to the industry's future developments and growth curve.

The Information Technology and Business Process Outsourcing (ITBPO) industry has played a pivotal role in the Philippine economy, not only for being such a lucrative avenue for revenue accruals, but also providing jobs for the Filipino workforce. In fact job-creating has been a significant factor in its operations and signals an important lesson for countries such as Singapore (which may be strong on technology but faces a huge manpower crunch, because of an ageing population).

IBPAP, is crucial too for facilitating the needs of the IT-BPM industry in the Philippines, and given the huge experience Amigo (who has previously served as the managing director of Accenture—the Dublin-based multinational company's local operations, as well as the IT director of Ayala Foundation) brings to the task given him, future prospects will be driven by a practical, carefully crafted agenda of constantly reinventing itself in its bid to move higher up the value-chain and to remain constantly relevant to global needs.

Amigo is confident of the future role of IT-BPO industry in the country's economy, "We are employing 1.15 million people. That's a very large number and that's direct employment—that means all these people are working for BPO companies or IT companies, servicing various clients all over the world. In terms of revenue," he shares, "that's close to US\$23 billion."

Amigo points out, that while the Philippines is well known as the call centre of the world that's not the only area of its activities, it is also involved in outsourcing IT, financial accounting and engineering service outsourcing and the spectrum of services continues to be quite diverse. Their large talent pool of nurses has opened up the area of health information management as an outsourcing centre to various clients and companies all over the world. Animation is another area, with outsourcing services going out to the US and Japan as well as gaming primarily to the US.

Factoring in the reality of increasing automation, the Filipino IT-BPO sector is readying for the transition towards higher value addition and more knowledge-intensive activities to stay in the game as a leader in the region. The future prospects of the Filipino IT-BPO industry are being steered by the strategies enshrined in the recently crafted IT-BPM Roadmap 2022 an agenda for the next six years which will essentially, according to Amigo, take the industry to the next level—and in terms of numbers— from today's 1.15 million people of direct employment to 1.8 million— and in terms of revenue— from US\$22.9 billion to US\$39 billion.

There are investments coming in from Singapore with 61 companies listed in IT-BPM with Singaporean ownership or equity so Singapore has been taking advantage of the Filipino connection because of its manpower crunch back home.

Most of the Philippines' outsourcing business (almost 70 per cent) comes from the US. With Asia and the ASEAN region expected to be the growth centre for the next decade or so, Amigo is of the opinion, that it's the partnerships in ASEAN which gives the Philippines, as the present Chair, a good advantage in terms of the industry. These, he believes are just the early stages, but once the partnerships mature with the nations under ASEAN they can take the IT-BPM to the next level.

For example, there are investments coming in from Singapore with 61 companies listed in IT-BPM with Singaporean ownership or equity so Singapore has been taking advantage of the Filipino connection because of its manpower crunch back home. Amigo points out that though the US partnership has been good for them, for the industry in the Philippines to grow further, it is encumbered upon them to have initiatives that focus on the market in the Asian countries.

Ike Amigo's message to investors is that what is most important for the IT-BPO industry is a high quality talent pool, which is what the Filipino industry has leveraged in a big way (see accompanying story on previous page).

Amigo is very clear that their targets for the next six years are very realistic. In the past few years, he says, the Philippines has been having double digit growth in the ITBPO industry, in terms of compounded annual growth rates. This time, he points out, it will be in single digits because of their understanding of the impact of technology, which will eliminate the simpler jobs. One day, says he, automation and artificial intelligence will dramatically reduce the need for call centre agents and it is with this in mind that IBPAP has created its projections.

But why the industry is still growing is because the strategy of Roadmap 2022 is to move up the value chain, where robots and automation will not necessarily replace things easily— because, it is where you need more thinking, more analysis and more experiential skills to do your job.

As an association IBPAP is creating high impact programmes (for the next few years so that the industry can stay on course), which area divided into six categories such as human tactical programmes, which address the changing talent requirements (like moving up the value chain); programmes on the impact of technology, programmes to grow outside Metro Manila—targeting growth throughout the country. The IBPAP agenda has a multiplier effect— creating jobs not only in the BPO industry but in other fields (real estate, food , entertainment, retail) as well, because of the ecosystem ITBPM has created and also leveraging on the greater purchasing power of the new Filipino middle class.



Confidence is very high for the Philippines IT-BPO industry. (Above): Online promotional material for an outsourcing company based in Clark Freeport Zone

Dovetailing BPO & PEZA Agendas

Over the past decade the country IT-BPO sector has grown at an annual rate of 30 percent, over time diversifying into the areas of healthcare, engineering, finance and accounting, business analytics, big data, animation and game development. Cost performance, Ike Amigo points out, is not just about labour, technology, the Filipino globally competitive ICT infrastructure ...it's also the low cost and high quality of available real estate— a big attraction in the Philippines. Also the fiscal and non-fiscal incentives, tax holidays, lowered corporate tax (around 13 per cent) and the like for those ITBPM firms located in the Philippines Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) area are an allurements for investors. On the non-fiscal front the there's assistance and swifter services in visa-processing for foreign investors. As Chair of the ASEAN this year the Philippines is also working in the direction of leading other ASEAN countries in setting up such groupings which are still coming up in the BPO arena.

Mindanao: New Impetus to Increase Its Shared Bounty



This land of promise... this wondrous fruit basket of the Philippines is looking to up the ante with its allurements for potential investors



FAO-Mindanao Strategic Programme for Agriculture & Agribusiness (MSPAA)

The key development pillars of the FAO-MSPAA include:

- Increase production and productivity
- Promote appropriate technologies, e.g. new crop varieties, better livestock breeds and fishery/aquaculture species
- Promote climate-smart technologies that can respond effectively to climate change impacts and natural disasters
- Improve competitiveness and profitability of small-scale agriculture
- Enhance diversification
- Enhance value-adding (on- and off-farm processing)
- Support intensification of post-harvest technologies
- Improve governance and institutional frameworks for accessing technologies, credit and markets
- Tap the private sector to link with small farmers under co-production/ marketing arrangements

Note: Between 2014 and 2016, FAO assistance in Mindanao reached more than 45,000 farming and fishing households.

A thumbnail profile in an updated report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations reveals that the Mindanao group of islands, the second largest island (104,630 sq km) in the Philippines, is home to over 21.5 million people — about a quarter of the country's total populace. One third of the Mindanao's land is under agriculture. Mindanao also plays a critical role as a food resource for the country, providing almost 40 per cent of its food supplies, apart from contributing over 30 per cent to the Philippines food trade.

A chat with Glenn Penaranda, the Singapore-based Commercial Counsellor of the Philippines, opens up visions of Mindanao as a land blessed with an exceptional varied range of terrains— rugged, faulted mountains, volcanic peaks, rolling plateaus and vast marshy plains — rich volcanic soils supported by an equable climate and plentiful of rainfall. **Northern Mindanao alone, he shares, leads in production of pineapple, coconut, corn, sugarcane and banana.** Pineapples and bananas are Mindanao's leading agri-product exports. Mindanao is also the country's biggest rubber producer, blessed as it is with rich soil and good climatic conditions in its rubber-producing regions.

Mindanao's economy revolves around its agriculture sector and in recent years its gross regional domestic products has raced ahead of that of other regions as well as the national average. However, there are still serious challenges that need to be addressed unequivocally for the island to fully capitalize on the prospects opened up by agri-industrial development.

The Philippine Government's agenda for its agriculture and fisheries sector is to increase productivity and forward linkages with the industry and services sectors; it's also looking to improve resilience to risks, including climate change. There's a growing interest in investment in Mindanao's agriculture and fisheries sectors, as we learn from Mr Penaranda, and they would like not just neighbouring Singapore to come in but also other countries in the ASEAN region as well.

Agriculture, for long, has been recognized by experts to be a key factor in making economic growth inclusive and in reducing poverty in a country. The World Bank is already considering additional projects for Mindanao, in line with the government's inclusive agriculture paradigm. The Bank is looking at Mindanao as the pilot area, following the steps taken under the Mindanao Rural Development Programme— the PRDP's precursor. During their Philippines tour a delegation, accompanying Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, elicited interest, in investment opportunities in the agribusiness sector — identified by the Filipino government as one of its five top priority areas of development under the government's comprehensive national industrial strategy programme. According to a report in The Philippine Star, the Japan International Cooperation Agency extended a ¥4.9-billion loan for the development of Mindanao's agriculture sector which will act as a lending facility for agribusiness and related investments. The project will help ordinary farmers in the island— as well as the appropriate institutions, to develop the agri sector; not only would these attract more investment, it would also create much needed jobs.

Mr Penaranda is of the opinion that there is a lot of investment potential for Singaporean business men in the agri-sector. Durians from Davao are already being brought into Singapore and there are other agri-products which can be sourced from Mindanao.

Aviation: Fueling Tourism Growth In and Out of the Philippines

The Asian market is growing and there is scope to improve the Philippines international air connectivity with new services.



PAL's Cebu-Clark inaugural flight water-salute on 30th January 2017 before taking off at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport

ACCORDING to the Philippines Tourism Department estimates, as of August 2016, over 50,000 tourists visited the country. Taking the lead were visitors from Asia, followed closely by the US, through the primary gateway airports of Manila, Cebu, Kalibo, Clark, and Davao.

The country's airlines includes Philippines Airline (PAL), Cebu Pacific Air (CBA), Air Asia, and Skyjet. Dominating the narrative of the aviation industry of the Philippines are Philippines International Airlines and Cebu Pacific

In January on the sidelines of the Hospitality Investment Conference (HIC) in Manila, Air Philippines Tourism Undersecretary Benito C Bengzon Jr, said support for tourism from the aviation sector, would come in the forms of greater air connectivity and expanding capacity. These are two of the most critical factors necessary to drive the growth in tourism.

The ASEAN economic crisis of 1997 had its backlash on the aviation industry as well, but things appear to be looking up for the Philippines—given the healthy growth figures of the airlines and the race to upgrade fleets with fresh orders for new aircraft, and allocation of new routes and new destinations, both at home and abroad.

From 6-8 March 2016, for the first time ever, the Department of Tourism of the Philippines hosted the 14th annual event of Routes Asia, at the SMX Convention Center in Manila. This prestigious event attracted leading airlines, airports and their stakeholders to discuss air services to, from and within Asia.

According to Katie Bland, Director of Routes: "The Philippines has gained an influential position within the aviation industry by hosting Routes Asia 2016. The Asian market is growing and there is scope to improve the country's international air connectivity with new service."

A Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA) report reveals that "The Philippines domestic market has seen a surge in domestic capacity in 2H2015, pressuring yields and profitability. More domestic capacity increases are likely in 2016, driven by the up-gauging of flights at Manila and new point to point flights from Cebu and other secondary cities.... Consolidation and a more



Domestic growth prospects are bright as it would be sustained by the increase in international services coming out of countryside airports, such as Cebu, Davao, Puerto Princesa and Boracay.

rational approach to capacity led to a significant improvement in market conditions in the Philippines."

Pivotal to this growth too is the up-gauging of flights in Manila, and the construction and modernization of new hubs in Cebu and Caticlan. Consolidation came by way of Philippines AirAsia essentially merging with Zest Airways (in early 2013) "while the PAL Group transitioned AirPhil Express (now known as PAL Express) from a LCC (low cost carrier) to a full service regional subsidiary. There was further consolidation in early 2014 as Cebu Pacific acquired Tigerair Philippines (now known as Cebgo)" said CAPA.

As Asia's oldest commercial carrier the Philippine Airlines (PAL), run by PAL Holdings Inc. is setting a lively pace with an ambitious agenda to become a five-star carrier by 2020. To do this it's adding new state-of-the art aircraft to its existing fleet, rejigging its services and opening up a slew of new routes. By the year ending 2016 PAL is projecting a passenger volume of 13.5 million— a 13% increase from 11.9 million passengers it carried in 2015. (See accompanying box story next page)

PAL New Planes & New Routes



**Philippines
Ambassador
Antonio A. Morales
congratulated
PAL on its latest
offering as it enables
the airline company
to further penetrate
the Singaporean
market, which
currently sits as #1
in ASEAN and #5
in Asia in terms of
tourist arrivals**



(Above photo): Launch event of PAL's 4 times weekly Singapore to Cebu flights on 13th Dec 2016. Ambassador Antonio Morales (center) and Ms. Soleil P. Tropicales of DOT's Route Development (rightmost), make a toast during the launch of the Singapore-Cebu flights with PAL officials: Ms. Marila Revilla, SAVP for International Sales (2nd from right) and Ms. Marie Jemma B. Saranillo, Singapore, Indonesia & Malaysia Country Manager (2nd from left).

(Left photo): PAL President & CEO Mr Jaime J Bautista

IN a recent interview PAL President and Chief Operating Officer Jaime J. Bautista confidently predicted, "We will achieve 13.5 million (passengers)." The airline is looking to enhance passenger capacity in 2017 (targeting 15 million passengers or an increase of around 11% up from 2016's figures) with new routes and increased flight frequencies. The formula to achieve this he shared, "New routes, more destination, more frequency and China charters," while elaborating on the commercial aviation major's expansion plans for 2017. Of the 43 destinations PAL feeds presently, 20 of them are located in east Asia, 10 of them fall in Australasia and the Pacific region, seven in the Middle East, five in continental North America and one in Europe.

PAL's serious intent to achieve its targets are reflected in the recent order — at the last Singapore Airshow, for six new Airbus A350-900s for US\$1.85 billion, resumption of the domestic expansion and re-jigging of old alliances. As revealed by Bombardier, Philippine Airlines has firmed an order for five Bombardier Q400 turboprops, with purchase rights for an additional seven aircraft. The five Q400s, which will be configured with 86 seats in two classes, will be delivered throughout 2017.

PAL aims to use the short-range aircraft for domestic routes. As revealed by Lucio Tan, PAL owner and chair, in PAL's *Mabuhay Magazine*: "The new Q400s, ideal for short runways, have 10 more seats than our existing Q400s, as well as a premium economy section." PAL took delivery of seven aircraft this year, comprising long-range Boeing 777-300ERs and Airbus A321s— re-configuring its fleet strength to 81 aircraft.

Philippine Airlines launched its first Clark-Caticlan daily flight on December 16, 2016 from Clark International Airport (CIA), in response to President Duterte's call to decongest the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) which in 2015 alone had processed 36 million passengers. More flights to the airport are expected beginning January 30, 2017; also on the agenda are daily flights from Clark-Cebu and Clark-Davao; four-times-a-week flights from Clark to Busuanga, Palawan, and another three weekly flights to Cagayan de Oro. The airline plans on having a total of 21 weekly flights, served by its Q400s and A320s, at Clark Airport by March of 2017.

On 17 December 2016, flights from Singapore to Cebu were started flying four times a week. Philippines Ambassador to Singapore Antonio A. Morales who had earlier officiated at the launch event on 13th December congratulated PAL on its latest offering as it enables the airline company to further penetrate the Singaporean market, which currently sits as #1 in ASEAN and #5 in Asia in terms of tourist arrivals, as of January-August 2016.

"It is indeed a proud moment for us to see our flag-carrier flying high on Singaporean skies," said the Ambassador.

PAL opened 2017 with the launch of a new route—Clark to Incheon (South Korea)— by its subsidiary, PAL Express. The daily service using the 199-seater Airbus A321 jet will allow passengers from Central and Northern Luzon to fly to Incheon bypassing the maxed-out Manila airport.

Cebu Pacific Air Growth

Cebu Pacific Air (CEB), according to company sources, flew in over 10 million passengers from January to June in 2016—an increase of 9% over the same period in 2015. Though the airline has 25 international destinations, this upsurge in passenger volume was primarily driven by popular domestic destinations in Visayas and Mindanao—Kalibo, Tacloban, Siargao, and Tagbilaran amongst them. But that's not to say that the volume of long-haul passengers did too badly. Passengers to and from Cebu's destinations in the Middle East and Australia also contributed to the upsurge, with a sizeable increase in volume from January to June 2016, comparable to the same period in 2015.

Cebu's primary short-haul destinations such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore also did pretty well in the first half of 2016. The airline's launch of its Cebu-Tokyo (Narita) in March 2015 and Manila-Fukuoka in December 2015 brought in rich dividends.

JR Mantaring, Cebu's vice president for corporate affairs, voicing his satisfaction at these results said, "We are very proud to share with you that since CEB's inception in 1996, our passengers now number more than 130 million and counting. These promising figures encourage us to cater to the growing travel demand not just in Manila, but throughout our six strategic hubs nationwide." Cebu's 57-strong fleet comprises seven Airbus A319s, 36 A320s, six A330s and eight ATR 72-500s. By 2021 it hopes to wrap up delivery of 32 A321neos and 16 ATR 72-600s. The airline's operations include destinations in Asia, Australia, the Middle East, and the United States.

In an interview with Business Mirror aviation expert Avelino L. Zapanta, shared: "... the declining cost of fuel will allow airlines to lower their operating expenses, hence, they can afford to expand their operations and thereby bring down the price due to the relative growth

in capacity, which will trigger price competition and market incentives." He believed the growth would be sustained by the increase in international services from countryside airports, such as Cebu, Davao, Puerto Princesa and Boracay. He continued, "Second reason the market will be vibrant this year is the revival of secondary routes by our local airlines. The introduction of Philippine Airlines and Cebu Pacific of more flights to and from Cebu to international destinations will require them to launch more domestic flights for intra-secondary airport connectivity."

Congratulations to the Republic of the Philippines on taking over the ASEAN Chair in 2017

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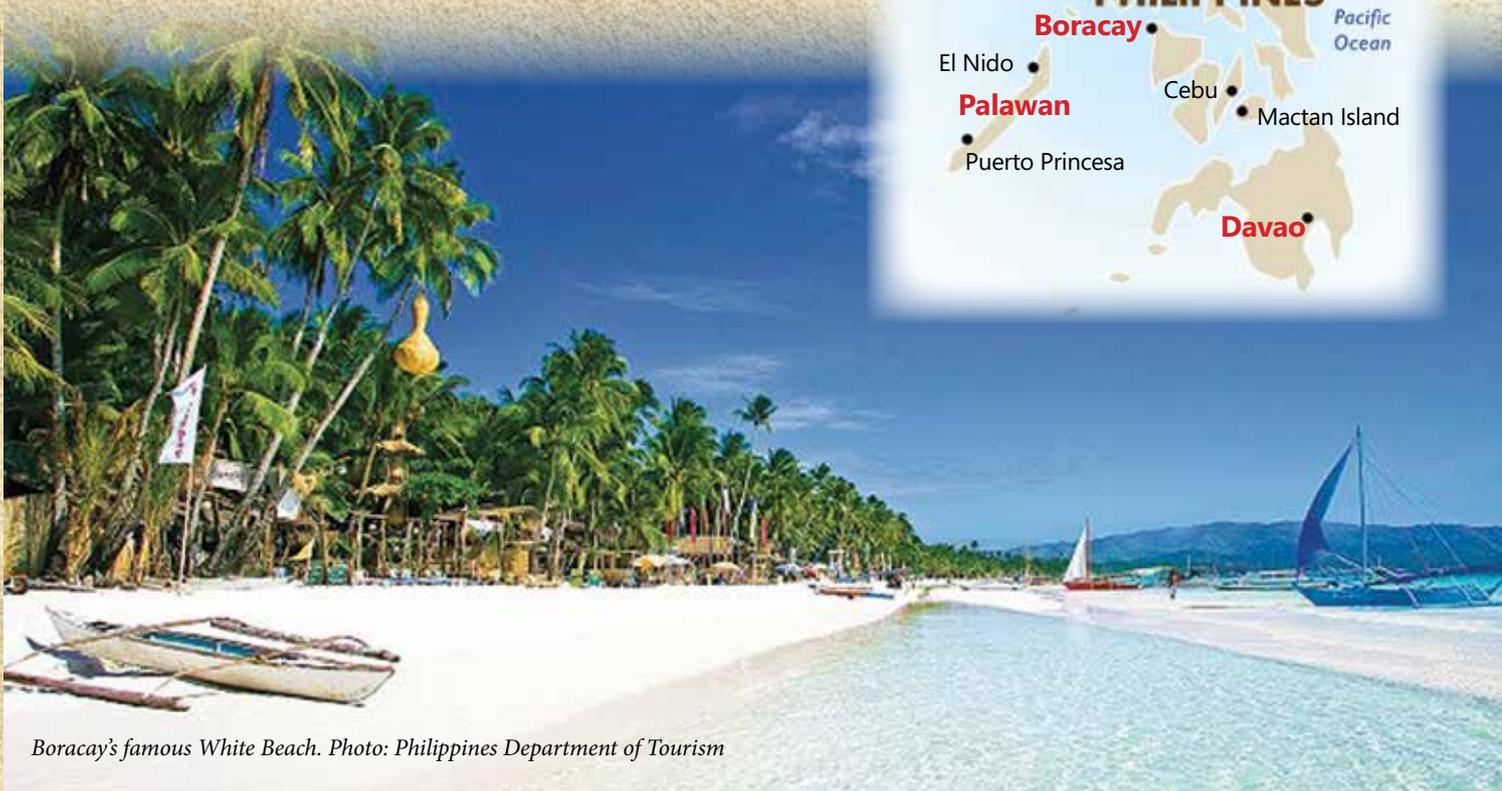
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Combos of Captivating Holidays!

Scattered across the regions of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao are some of the Philippine's most enticing holiday allurements on sea and land. And the beat goes on....

THE Philippines is projected to be the next big holiday and MICE destination in the coming year. For those who have already tasted of its refreshing charms and unreserved hospitality, repeat visits with friends and family are a hot topic of discussion when planning the next vacation in the calendar year. Though a majority of its visitors have been from its neighbours in the Austro-Asia, Asia-Pacific regions, business from Europe and the Americas is quietly rolling in.



Boracay's famous White Beach. Photo: Philippines Department of Tourism

Boracay

Reputed to be the world's best beach destination Boracay (it has at least 30 beaches to explore) isn't going to let go of that thrill in a long time. Though this tropical paradise is about 315 km south of Manila, off the northwest tip of Panay Island in the Philippine's region of western Visayas, it has good air connectivity out of the capital (1.5hrs), Cebu and Kalibo. The island is on course for outrigger boats from Caticlan jetty. That's a big plus for this tiny island which is the country's top leisure destination and a favoured MICE hub. A warm and hospitable home crowd adds to the rich flavours of Boracay. White Beach is the place to be at as this is where much of the thrilling beach and aquatic action is centred. It's also where there's plenty happening on the shopping and entertainment front. For those looking for a less frenetic pace Bulabog Beach is a good option as it's also good for watersports. Puka Beach is less developed and a tranquil retreat amidst picturesque surrounds. A catamaran cruise offers thrilling explorations of the island surrounds. For those who enjoy exploring on their own paraws (native sailboats), kayaks, and motorized outrigger boats are widely available for hire. For some bats may be creepy, but plenty of visitors can be found heading for the bat caves of Yapak for a guided tour.

You can enjoy world class cuisine in its dazzling array of restaurants and resorts and the bars are always a-buzz with tourists from home and abroad. Music, wild parties and a happy mingling of the locals and tourists keep the island bucking with merriment day and night. The joyful Ati-Atihan festival offers a lustrous insight to the island's many charms. Head for Ilig-iligan village where the Kar-Tir Seashell Museum is located. Apart from an astonishing range of seashells on display it also features traditional costumes from across the Philippines, pottery and hand-woven items.

Multi-cuisine restaurants, a casino and thrilling nightlife are just a few other enticements at Clark. There's also a load of theme parks to keep everyone busy



(Top row, from left):

1. Puning Hot Spring & Sand Spa. Photo: angelou / looloo.com

2. Fun at Dinosaurs Island
Photo: Mel Torres

3. Peaceful tranquility at a beautiful lake at Pampanga in Clark. Photo: Clearwater Resort, Clark

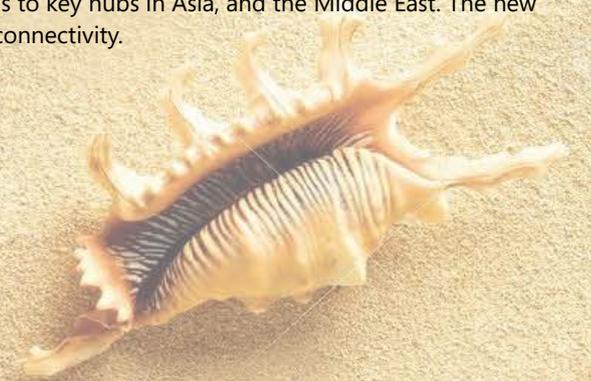
(Right): The Philippine International Hot Air Balloon Fiesta at Clark Freeport Zone, Pampanga. Photo: www.pinoyadventurista.com



Clark

Though the allurements of Manila and Cebu, both as holiday hotspots and MICE breaks, are well documented in tourism circles and the corporate world, the former US air base in the Philippines, Clark, on the island of Luzon in Pampanga province, is fast emerging as a new gateway for a range of leisurely pursuits. Back in the hands of the Philippines government, shortly after the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in June 1991, a slow but steady transformation has created a brand new holiday experience just 80km north of capital Manila, in Clark Field. In addition it's also being enjoyed as a MICE destination, as it's well equipped to handle conventions and conferences of various dimensions. Declared the Clark Special Economic Zone it is already attracting sizeable business for manufacturing and exports. Clark's International Airport offers good connections to key hubs in Asia, and the Middle East. The new Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway and the North Luzon Expressway offer seamless connectivity.

Its 33,653 ha sprawl offers adventures galore. From golf to trekking, from hot air ballooning, to sky diving, from duty-free shopping to new age wellness treatments...there's plenty to keep holidaymakers on the go at Clark. Take a dip at Puning's hot springs...savour the delights of the Hot Air Ballooning Fiesta in February...go off-road motorcycling... get ready for an adventurous hike up to the dormant Mt Arayat, or even more thrilling crater lake of Mt. Pinatubo. Multi-cuisine restaurants, a casino and thrilling nightlife are just a few other enticements at Clark. There's also a load of theme parks to keep everyone busy—amongst them the Fontana Water Park, Clark Dinosaurs Island, Zoocobia Zoo and Clark Nature Park.



Davao

The buzzing cosmopolitan hub that's Davao City, located in the Davao Region in Southeastern Mindanao, presents a fabulous montage of the confluence of tradition, heritage and contemporary times. Davao is serviced by direct flights from Manila. Culturally nurtured by the great waves of migrants it's also home to numerous ethnic communities—amongst them the Bagobo, Mandaya, Manobo, T'boli, Mansaka and B'Laan, as well as a fair sprinkling of expats. Rich in flora and fauna, it is home to the iconic Philippine eagle, and astonishing species of orchids and fruits. Mt. Apo, rising from the valley floor offers stunning views of its beautiful surrounds. Samal an island in the Gulf of Davao is home to a resort which once served as a pearl farm. The beaches and watersports facilities are excellent. You can head too for the cooling heights of Maragusan in the Compostela Valley. This coffee-growing region is home to the Mansaka tribesmen and is a nice hotspot for picnics by waterfalls and silvery streams. If you want to explore the region's ethnic culture up-close and personal time a visit during the 10-day Kalibongan Festival, hosted by Kidapawan. Marvel afresh at the beautiful rituals, the repertoire of music and dance unspooled over these days and nights by the various tribal communities.

Davao City itself is hip and happening with modern-day distractions, from spiffy restaurants to luxurious resorts and hotels. The nightlife is driven by pulsating music from live bands, videoke bars, dance halls and music lounges and a turn at the casino. Shopping for tribal handicrafts is quite a rewarding experience.

If its mysteries you seek to unravel, travel to Davao Oriental to discover the mysterious lake—Tinagong Dagat, at San Isidro. At Cateel lies the Philippine's highest waterfall—Aliwagwag, dropping from a height of 338m. Take a 3- hour bus ride from Davao City to savour the marine wealth of GenSan famed for being the tuna capital of the Philippines.



*Pearl Farm Beach Resort at the Island City Garden of Samal, just a few minutes from mainland of Davao City.
Photo: www.blogph.net*



Aliwagwag is a series of 130 cascading waterfalls! Photo: thetravelteller.com

Palawan

This paradisaical world of natural delights is the very heart of a back-to-nature experience in the Philippines. And most remarkable of all is that its pristine splendour has been preserved with astonishing results, despite the frantic pace of today's business and leisure time pursuits—serving up as it does endless rewards for the nature buff. Its massive sprawl of 1.5m acres lies Mindoro and north of Malaysia's Sabah Island. Bristling with a fabulous range of tropical verdure its numerous island and tiny islets are home to a fascinating range of fauna and avifaunal wealth. The 1,769 islands of Palawan are grouped into several clusters- the Calamian lie to the north, to the northwest is the Cuvo group and the Balabac-Bugsuk group falls in the southwest. A giraffe in the Philippine? Yes, just head for Calauit Island where its 3,700 hectare game preserve and wildlife sanctuary is home to giraffes, zebras, and gazelles as well as marvellous range of marine life by the shoreline. Its incredible beaches, scuba and snorkeling amongst the shipwrecks and reefs, the underground river —the Cabayugan River, (named amongst the New 7 Wonders of Nature), along with an explore of its ancient archaeological haunts, offer lively diversions for visitors of all ages. Air connectivity is available from Manila, Cebu and Catician.

(Below from left): Calauit Island has a 3,700-hectare game preserve of giraffes, zebras and gazelles! Photo: Philippines Department of Tourism. Bacuit Bay, El Nido, Palawan, Philippines. Photo: FAQ.ph



Subic Bay

Cocooned cosily in the picturesque setting of the coastal expanses of Subic Bay Freeport, about 100km northwest of Manila, Subic is a big draw for those who love the sea, sand and sunshine. This old Spanish naval base (don't miss the **Spanish Gate** dating to the 19th century) is very big on scuba as there are shipwrecks and wondrous coral reefs to explore. Standing cheek-by-jowl with legend-rich **Olongapo City**, overlooking the South China Sea, it has also served as an American naval base till it was handed over to the Philippines in 1992.

On the waterfront the mingling crowds of locals and tourists gather on the boardwalk to marvel at the glorious canvas of the sea and sky at sunset. Families congregate at **Malavan Park** to enjoy bay views, picnic in the open and angling buffs escape for a tranquil retreat.

The beaches of Subic have been giving endless pleasure to both residents and tourists. Chief amongst these are **Hidden Beach**, **Miracle Beach**, **Nabasan Beach** and the ever-popular hub with the US troops— **Officers Beach** and **All Hands Beach**. A lot of people also congregate at the **Baloy Beach** for the edgy delights of **Philemon's Flyboard** and watersports at **Barrio Barreto**, just a short distance away. For those who love sailing the yacht club is a great place to hang out. One can also play a round of golf or even take a turn at the casinos here. Multiple dining experiences and nightlife marked by live bands, karaoke bars, videoke bars and discos in the heart of Olongapo City keep you going to the wee hours here. Subic hosted the 1996 APEC Summit, and is supported by a contemporary range of convention and exhibition facilities making it an excellent MICE destination.



Subic's The Lighthouse Marina Resort - a boutique 3-storey hotel capped by a lighthouse!
Source: www.philippinebeaches.org



(Above, from left): Flyboard and water jet-pack action at Subic's Philemon Flyboard. (Below): Pristine waters and sands of a Subic Bay beach





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After location, you can also tick off on your list of other features to look forward to: Airy, warmly furnished rooms with floor-to-ceiling windows. They offer free Wi-Fi and flat-screen TVs, plus iPod docks, minibars, and tea and coffeemakers. Suites also have added living rooms.

Please check out your usual accommodation websites for great deals as the hotel has 281 rooms and suites, which makes it a top choice for business travellers and families. Rooms are spacious (starting from 291 sq feet for a superior room) and the hotel proudly offers chiropractor-approved beds for slumber time.

Facilities include a restaurant and gym-spa to wind down the day but best reason for us to recommend the hotel was our own experience with their warm and friendly staff that made our visit in the capital city a more enjoyable experience.

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Philippines: Your Ideal Destination for MICE

Tourism has truly emerged as one of the Philippines' "feel-good" industries as it continues to have a significant impact on both the public and private sectors. For the period of January to August 2016, tourist arrivals in the country reached a total of 4,092,049, which is 12.59% higher than the previous year. This consistent growth in foreign tourist arrivals makes the 6-million target for 2016 highly attainable.

The big impact of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions / Events (MICE) on the country's over-all tourism industry is noteworthy. Taking charge of facilitating MICE events, the Department of Tourism (DOT) and Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) have had its fair share of cooperating and working with industry partners. With major events organized in 2016 consisting of the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) in January, Madrid Fusion Manila and World Streetfood Congress in April, the Philippine Travel Exchange (PHITEX) in September, and the Travel Blog Exchange (TBEX) Asia Pacific in October, international and local MICE organizers and delegates are discovering the capability of the country to host large-scale events and conferences.

The country has established Manila, Cebu and Davao as key MICE destinations. These places offer not only the best of tourism products and services with vast opportunities for business, but also have consistently growing local economies which have attracted investors to build hotel and meeting facilities.

Manila is known to have pioneered Asia's MICE industry with the establishment of the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), setting the trend for neighboring countries to build their own. The SMX Convention Center is also another world-class facility for international exhibitions, local trade events, conventions and corporate functions. Its proximity to the SM Mall of Asia integrates business with recreation, shopping and entertainment. The World Trade Center (WTC) is also a perfect and convenient place for conventions and exhibitions. Manila takes center stage with a distinct combination of character, professionalism, history and style with an array of tourist spots and recreational activities.

Contrary to the agile lifestyle the metro offers, Cebu is a favorite getaway destination for those seeking a co-existence of casual function and exciting leisure. Today, the island has one of the fastest growing economies in the country. Far from being just a leisure destination, Cebu is now one of the prime destinations for MICE with its improved facilities, the presence of an international airport, chained-brand hotels and convention halls of international standards. Cebu is acknowledged as a fully-equipped MICE destination with Marco Polo Plaza Cebu, Radisson Blu Cebu, Shangri-La's Mactan Resort & Spa and the upcoming SMX Convention Center onboard.

The dynamic economy, human resources, infrastructure, favorable business environment, responsive local government and high quality of life in Davao City makes it a sought-after destination for leisure, trade, investment and MICE. It has a wide range of accommodations, resort properties, meeting facilities, shopping malls, restaurants and health and wellness centers that define modern living in a safe and green environment. Most importantly, with the convenience provided by the SMX Convention Center Davao and Marco Polo Hotel Davao, the province has become a preferred destination for meetings, conferences and corporate events in South Philippines.

A city that is expected to boom for MICE is Iloilo. In the last two decades, Iloilo has silently achieved progress. It has built new roads, multiple spaces for commerce and a modern airport which services regional travelers. With the establishment of the Iloilo Convention Center (ICC) in 2015, the expected growth of the MICE industry in the city will further support tourism, transport and manufacturing industries.

The Philippines' beaches, distinctive rock formations and stalactites, underground caves and rivers, exuberant festivals, friendly people and 7,107 islands highlight the very best of the country's offerings for MICE and beyond. Truly, the Philippines is positioned on the crossroads of international trade and commerce in the Asia Pacific region.

Kadayawan Festival: The Beat Goes On

Look forward to truly rewarding experience of President Duterte's home town. The festival highlights are the street dancing performances in all the glittering finery and effervescent celebration of life



HOT and steamy August is when the streets of Davao step away from the humdrum of everyday vignettes to a world of magical delights. But preparations for the Kadayawan Festival begin many months ahead, not just for the organisers, the artisans, choreographers, the costume makers, the caterers, the flower vendors, the mask makers... and most important of all the city's administration, to ensure that the many visitors from both home and abroad who converge on Davao city's street to witness the pageantry and the "Indak-Indak sa Kadalanan" (street dancing with a distinctively Mindanaoan beat and costumes), of one of the Philippine's most iconic festivals, go back home with memories of having the best time of their lives. And the visitors... from Germany, United States, the Netherlands, Sri Lanka, India, Singapore, China, and Japan— don't give a hoot about the heat and humidity as the beat goes on...

"As the longest-running community festival in Mindanao, Kadayawan has metamorphosed into a grand celebration that honours Davao's rich cultural heritage and the many blessings bestowed on the city," observes the Davao Tourism office. The festival has evolved into one huge jamboree which celebrates the tribal heritage, the agricultural and industrial wealth and the diversity of the arts and entertainment landscape.

It will knock you off your feet, sometimes literally, as the crowd edges closer and closer to the streams of gorgeously costumed participants who flaunt their most vivacious smiles and fabulous dancing moves as they follow the route of the great parade. Emblazoned with embroideries in golds and silvers, reds and greens, the intricate costumes themselves are a stunning revelation of the many man hours put in just to showcase ancient Filipino crafting traditions for such important festivals

and precious events. The fantastical headgears...of the men and women and the little children joyfully keeping in step, are a mind-boggling endeavor of high creativity and innovative splendour.

Fabled icons of Davao

Going into its 32nd year of celebration in 2017 Kadayawan Festival (events are held at several venues) is a quick lesson of a very old tradition when the Davao's natives would gather on the hallowed soil of Mt Apo to give thanks to the deity - Manama, for a good harvest bestowed upon them each season. This was no quiet affair. The offerings of different produce from the harvest to the deity were accompanied by much singing and dancing and ululations, all of which is integral to the festivities to this day. This thanksgiving festival evolved into something called the 'Apo Duwaling,' which embodied fabled icons of Davao: Mt. Apo, the country's highest peak; Durian, the king of fruits; and Waling-Waling, the queen of orchids. It was in 1988, that president day Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte who was the City Mayor at the time decided to rename it as 'Kadayawan sa Dabaw' to celebrate the bountiful harvest of Davao's flowers, fruits and other produce as also the great cultural diversity of the city.

The Kadayawan Festival parade provides visitors an excellent window to Davao's ethnic landscape and the entire proceedings are infused with a raw energy that is a marvel to behold as each tribe showcases its individual cultural richness in the aspects of its costumes, headgear and dance forms and, repertoire of music.



Different Tribes One Vibe!

Visitors are booking hotels months ahead as by the third week of August when the event takes over the city, the best places have already been snapped up!



Photos source: GinaD / Wikimedia Commons

In fact the street dancing is the great highlight event at the festivities and the contestants look forward to the prizes to be won. The competition can be friendly but fierce as each one tries to outdo the other. A series of events mark the celebrations apart from the street dancing—kayak races, a skim boarding competition, whale watching, moonlight cruises, concerts, a fashion show....these were just a few items on the 2016 festival calendar.

Visitors are booking hotels months ahead as by the third week of August when the event takes over the city, the best places have already been snapped up. One can look forward to a truly rewarding experience of President Duterte's home town, when it steps out in all its glittering finery and effervescent celebration of life. A joyous, multi-dimensional cultural extravaganza Davao City's annual Kadayawan Festival harvests the richest aspects of the Philippines' multi-cultural world.



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Vista Residences at Costa Vista Boracay Vista Residences - the condominium arm of Vista Land, the country’s premiere property developer - is creating sanctuaries between Boracay’s extraordinary sea and unforgettable sky

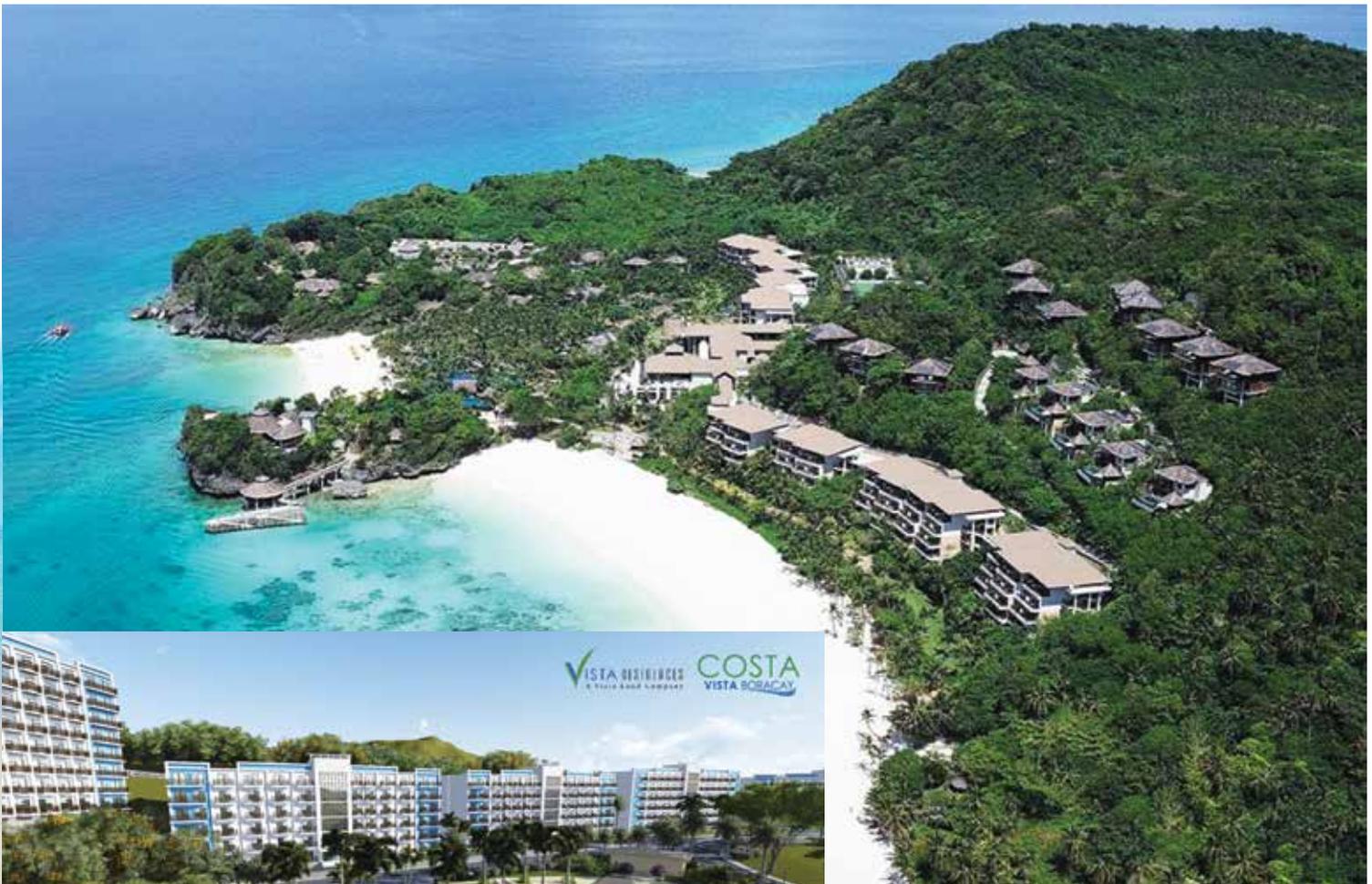
NOW you can stay on in Boracay. Anyone who has been entranced with the lure of its dramatic sunsets, azure waters, balmy winds as well as its famous soft and fine powder white sands, can stay on to savour more of a good thing. Whether you are considering it as a retirement getaway or are looking at its potential as investment or source for rental income, some cold hard stats might serve as a good introduction to the island located just a 40 mins flight away from Manila and is served by its own regional Caticlan airport.

In 2015, the island welcomed 1.5 million tourists (by the way, there is NO off peak season period) and last year it drew a record 1.7 million according to the Malay Municipal Tourism Office there.

One prominent sign arising from this growth has been the upgrading of Caticlan Airport for higher numbers of tourist arrivals with night landing facilities, addition of eight jet bays, expansion of the passenger terminals and accommodation of jet planes such as the Airbus.

Another fresh dimension that will add to the growth of the island is the development of Vista Residences’ Costa de la Vista at Barangay Yapak, Malay Aklan, which is situated in between the 5-star resort of Shangri-La Boracay and Movenpick Resort & Spa Boracay. They share with Vista Residences privileged access to the beautiful Punta Bunga Beachfront.

Costa Vista Boracay’s six stunning residential towers, private villas and hotel will rise gracefully above over six hectares around a pavilion with a viewing deck, pool, convention center and a commercial quarter, providing everything one needs to relax or simply escape. The towers will offer studios to



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For more information on the properties or if you have any queries please contact:

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The group successfully opened a project at Cebu in 1991, the first Manila-based company to do so. Thus began its expansion into various provinces all over the Philippines

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In 1995, the group began a pioneering undertaking by offering thematic, masterplanned communities through the launch of Crown Asia.

In 2007, all of the companies of the group were joined together to form VISTA LAND AND LIFESCAPES, INC., and entered the Philippine Stock Exchange by a record of \$532 million Initial Public Offering (IPO), the highest undertaking during that time.

Corporate Services for Philippine Investors in Singapore

There are many Filipino companies who have set up offices in Singapore and there are a host of incentives available looking to register a business in Singapore. The government, in its latest budget, has put up a host of resources to help Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Well into 90 percent of the companies in Singapore are SMEs and in the pipeline to aid in their growth are a lot of PIC (Productivity and Innovation Credit) grants, digitalisation and innovation programmes and other grants to help the companies



Setting up business in a foreign country (or even in one's own country) can be daunting, especially when navigating the minefield of arcane corporate laws and administrative paper work. Enter Managing Director of MC Corporate Services Pte. Ltd, Helen Campos, who brings with her over 20 years of experience as a corporate lawyer, business consultant, chartered secretary and thought leader

LOCAL or foreign companies seeking corporate secretarial services can consider MC Corporate Services (MCCS), one of Singapore's top corporate secretarial firms which Helen Campos co-founded in 2007. She is also the Chairperson of SICCI (Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry) and provides a one-stop centre for advise on corporate matters.

In 2008, she established HC Consultancy Pte Ltd (HCCS), a full-service corporate secretarial firm that complements the core business of MCCS. "We can offer personalised services that range from corporate governance to tax services. Right from set-up to incorporation, business development assistance. We also offer accounting and tax services and consultancy," said Ms Campos.

"This all-inclusive suite has resulted in the company earning the trust of over 1,000 clients that include the likes of Singapore International Arbitration Centre, The Old Parliament House Ltd, ACCA Singapore and Operation Smile Singapore," according to Ms Campos.

She also added that, "We facilitate the establishment of business operations in Singapore, be it foreign-owned or homegrown. There are a lot of corporate consultancies in Singapore and how we differentiate ourselves from the rest is by offering a lot of value-added services."

Providing personalised service is the core of the company and the she takes it one step further, "We don't just say fill out the forms, tick the boxes and lodge with the registry. We provide advice on how to set-up a business and the structure it could possibly follow. Once the framework is in place, we will address the corporate legal compliance issues, which every business has to adhere to. For example, if someone wants to establish an investment holding or buy a piece of property, we will advise them how to hold it, whether an individual or entity should hold it and who should be the beneficiary, etc." elaborates Ms Campos.

Taxation is an important consideration for all investors. After the above legal matters are addressed, the next issue a company should have knowledge of are the tax implications. "The number one question consultants are asked is how much tax one pays if they are to register a business here. Singapore is easily one of the best places to set up businesses, especially in Asia. Our biggest competitor would be Hong Kong," she reveals.



Night skyline of the Singapore's Business District



Regarding companies from overseas such as the Philippines expanding to Singapore, Ms Campos is of the opinion that Singapore is a more conducive corporate environment due to competitive tax rates. "The corporate tax rate in the Philippines is 30% whereas in Singapore, it is 17%. The top income earners in the Philippines are taxed 32% while Singapore top earners are taxed 20%," she explains.

In fact, there are many incentives for companies to register a business in Singapore. The government, in its latest budget, has created a range of resources to help Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). "There are many SMEs in Singapore and to aid and facilitate their growth the Government has initiated many PIC (Productivity and Innovation Credit) grants, digitalisation and innovation programmes and other grants to help the companies," shares Ms Campos.

The age of the companies eligible for grants and help from the Singapore government does not matter. "The assistance offered is open to every business. Existing companies or new businesses, foreign-owned or locally developed, it does not matter. Foreign companies can avail themselves of other benefits even if some of the grants do not apply to them," she emphasises.

Although the attractive tax rates are the main draw for foreign companies, it also depends on the type of operations that may affect their total operating expenditure. "If a foreign company wants to set up a manufacturing arm in Singapore, the maintenance costs could be high but they can certainly set up their headquarters in Singapore. This is what the Singapore government is encouraging and that's where MCCS comes in," underlines Ms Campos.

With MCCS track record, the Singapore government has also tapped onto Ms Campos for her expertise over at the SME Centre @ SICCI (Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry) as its Chairperson, which she is serving since 2014.

If you are interested to know more, please contact:

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SME Centre: Better Access & Opportunities

The SME Centre referred to by Helen Campos is one of 12 SME Centres run by SPRING Singapore, a government agency that is tasked with nurturing a pro-business environment and develop the capabilities of SMEs for better access to markets and business opportunities.

"What I do at SME Centre@SICCI is similar to what I do in MCCS; creating awareness that there is a trusted platform out to provide advice and grants for SMEs. I get immense satisfaction from this role as it allows me to contribute to the business landscape of Singapore with the active support of the government. It cannot get any better than doing national service for your country," she evinces.



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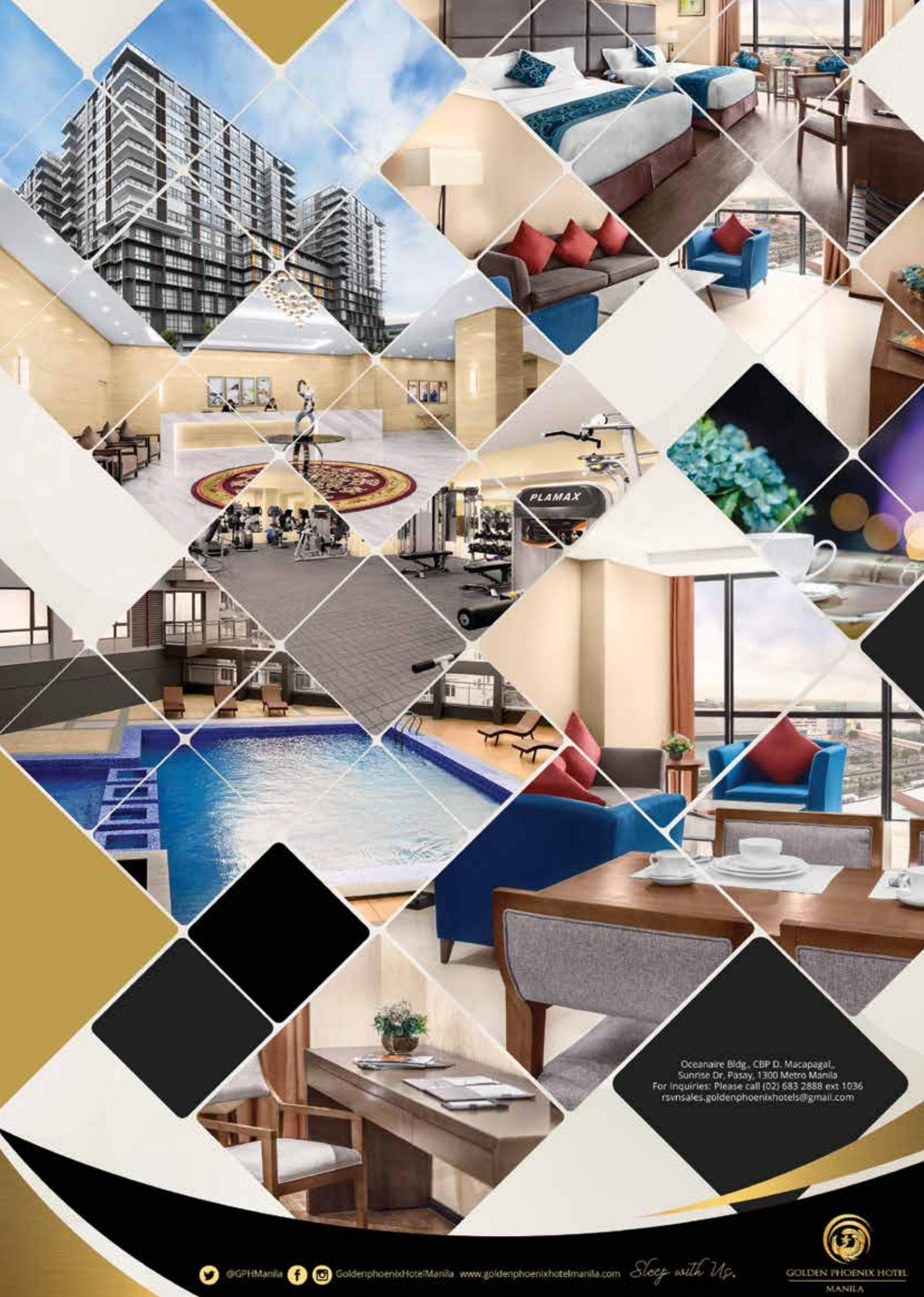
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