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Bidding For the Laguna Lakeshore Expressway-Dike Project Fails

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) was compelled to end the bidding process for the much anticipated P123-billion **Laguna Lakeshore Expressway-Dike Project**, after no offers from three qualified bidders were made for the deal to push through.

"It's a failed bidding," claimed Ariel Angeles, DPWH director for Private-Public Partnership (PPP) service, as bids amounted to zilch passed the deadline for submission of offers.

The three qualified bidders that were expected to submit their bid documents were: **Alloy Pavi Hanshin LLEDP Consortium** (composed of Alloy MTD Capital BHD, Prime Asset Ventures Inc., Hanshin Engineering Constructions), **San Miguel Holdings Corp.** and **Trident Infrastructure and Development Corp.** (composed of Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc., Ayala Land Inc., Megaworld Corp. and SM Prime Holdings Inc.).

According to San Miguel Corp. president and chief operating officer Ramon S. Ang, the Laguna Lakeshore project is not feasible. "Government will have to re-examine its assumptions and redesign a mutually beneficial contractual structure best suited for a deal as large and complex as this one, given its potential to create opportunities that will generate the greatest benefit to a lot of people," Ang said.

Alloy Pavi Hanshin LLEDP Consortium, on the other hand, in a letter to the DPWH, claims there are unresolved issues affecting the propriety and validity of the procurement process for the project.

"With due respect, we strongly believe the bidding process is an illegal and unenforceable transaction unless there is a signed presidential proclamation and signed tripartite agreement between PRA (Philippine Reclamation Authority)/LLDA (Laguna Lake Development Authority)/DPWH prior to the bidding", the group's authorized representative, Isaac David,

stated. David added that it would be best for the bidding to be deferred until a new administration takes over to ensure transparency and fairness.

For Team Trident, Roman Azanza, first vice president for business development at Aboitiz, said their group did not participate in the bidding due to concerns on the economic viability, balance of risks and rewards, and the task of securing financing for the project. Seeing the complexity of the project, the group wanted more time to work with the government on a concession agreement that addresses the concerns of the private sector.

"If they (government) can come out with a revised CA that tackles most if not all of these concerns, then I think we would be willing to revisit (the project)," Azanza said.

In line with this, DPWH Secretary Rogelio Singson said the government will yet have to look into the matters raised by the bidding groups.

"Well, we will have to assess why it failed.", Singson said.

While the PPP Center is bent on supporting DPWH to be on the project, PPP Center executive director Andre Palacios said a second bidding for the project is unlikely within the term of President Aquino.

"For Lakeshore, I doubt if we can do another bidding within this administration," Palacios said.

The Laguna Lakeshore Expressway Dike project can be dauntingly extensive. It involves the financing, design, construction as well as operations and maintenance of a 47-kilometer flood control dike with expressway toll roads under a 37-year cooperation period.

The project is expected to reduce the travel time from Bicutan to Los Baños from 90 to 35 minutes, while also purposed for the creation of a high standard highway with a dike that will ease traffic flow and mitigate flooding in western coastal communities along Laguna Lake.

Alveo Wins Best In Property Development Award



Alveo Land President Robert Lao was on hand to receive the award.

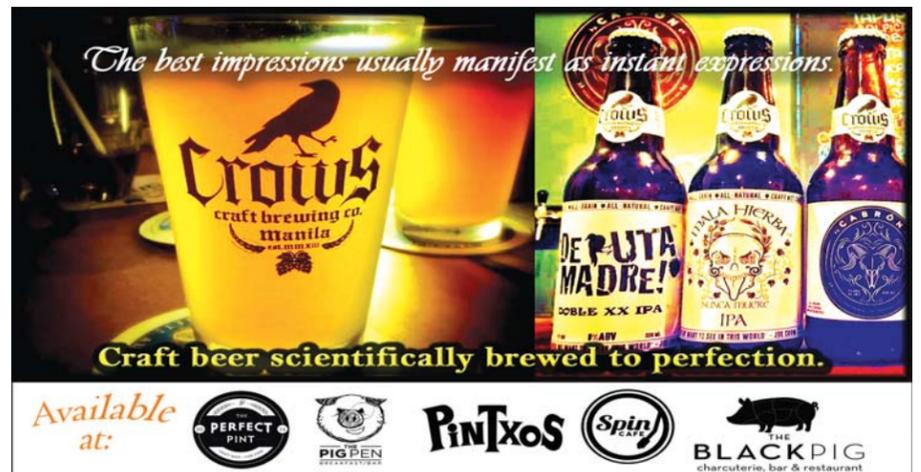
Given due recognition in the recently concluded 2016 IAIAR Property Awards was Alveo Land, winning Excellence of the Year for Innovation and Leadership in Property Development (Philippines).

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Tel. No.: (02)897-8420/ (049)543-1420
Mobile Nos.: (0915)489-9827/ (0919)666-1612
Website: www.voiceofthesouth.ph
E-mail address: voiceofthesouth2003@yahoo.com

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Joseph Roces Chanco

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Tess S. Blardony

EDITOR THINKS



It's a matter of Who's Got It?

Who, among the 2016 presidential candidates, should be this country's next president? For our sakes, it has to be one who truly understands the need for the Philippine leadership to strengthen the role of the marginalized citizens and the diverse Filipino minorities in governance and nation-building, but then must also possess the equivalent will to actualize the solution to this need. Now who among them has got the substance, or at least enough essence, to probably become this ideal leader? Let us think.

Must be a Revolutionary Thinker

To successfully lead this nation, as a genuine patriot would, in the years to come, will be a Herculean task, demanding radical changes in many of our political structures, starting with the very principles by which we operate our democracy. From the way we elect our leaders, to the way we create and implement our laws—so much of these current systems our government employs must be forgone with and supplanted with new, more fitting methods and processes. This is what we need to set our nation to the right path.

If, for instance, this rightful leader is among the presidential contestants now, how can he or she arise to the necessary office, if the very electoral process is full of faults? If members of political dynasties are allowed to run for public offices despite the explicit provision in our Constitution to ban such malpractice; if both the convicted and suspected plunderers are simply permitted seats of authority, while other well-meaning citizens, those who have no such involvement in any graft and corruption scams, are booted out from the chance to serve the public, because of minor technicalities; and if the Commission on Elections as well as the Philippine National Police keep on claiming every time that we have relatively peaceful and honest elections, despite decades of election violence (including the dreadful Maguindanao massacre of media personnel), poll fraud (as documented in cases where the cheated appeal and the supposedly elected are asked to step down and turnover the authority of the office after already assuming office), vote-buying, mass disenfranchisement of voters and, recently, numerous cases of malfunctioning automated counting machines (compounded by suspiciously-timed brown-outs in whole municipalities)—should we honor the electoral process still? Do the winners of our political elections truly represent the popular will?

The fact that political dynasties are commonplace in our society clearly shows how our democracy has been hi-jacked by the ruling elite, which in many cases are actually just a bunch of corrupt, power-greedy families that neither have an honest will to serve the public, nor have much knowledge on how to develop a nation. Because of such a set-up, our government, to the majority of Pinoys, has become largely dysfunctional and increasingly intolerable. As society's elites keep government structural change to a bare minimum, keeping as much as possible the loopholes that make corruption unpunishable, they become bolder and bolder in running for offices even without any viable platform for governance, and in altering national policies so as to accommodate all sorts of scams. Our right to suffrage has been flagrantly usurped and turned into an instrument to legitimize a blunt sham.

Must be the Strongest Advocate of Truth and the Freedom of Information

Because the flawed system allows the candidacy of those who have the most inaccurate perception about the country's needs, and those who are the most indifferent to the sentiments of the masses, elections then become ineffectual in the cause of progress. Here, hypocrisy and empty lip-service became the most traditional of political exercises.

Many politicians, while campaigning, make vociferous vows in the themes of good governance and anti-corruption. But do they really fulfill these vows once elected? As a matter of fact, it's become often that the very people who promise to end corruption, once they are in a position of authority, are the ones who turn out being charged with graft later on. So, unfortunately for most Filipinos, the elected are usually the ones who do not want meaningful change and progress to happen, as they benefit from the corrupt status quo where they can plunder and get away with it rather easily.

In our dire situation, information is crucial. But then even this very abundant resource that we share quite freely in this information age is antipathetically suppressed by a government so obsessed with the privacy rights of public officials.

Must be Progressive, Pro-majority, and Anti-trapo

With the same breath, the inept leadership suddenly becomes so discrete about their inaction on urgent social issues, almost always playing blind, deaf and dumb when it comes to addressing the weal of the confused and impoverished masses.

The poor and undereducated comprise more than two-thirds of the Filipino population, but they're representation in the law-making body is cruelly minimized as "marginalized sectors", with the implementation of the Party-List system. So technically, the united voice of the majority was chopped up into a dizzying array of subcultures and socio-economic archetypes bearing watered-down voting power in the policy-making process. The resultant framework further trapped the most needy in our society, deeper into unserviceable positions.

Instead of the hard-up and hungry simply lobbying for one, united national food program that is not prejudiced against them, now the food program for, let's say, the jeepney drivers might seem too small to act on immediately, as the food requirements of many other party-list groupings need to be considered as well. Somehow, it even gives the corrupt more opportunity to plunder, having more causes to use as reasons to not release funding to those who need it most. So what if the whole transport sector protest in front of Malacanang Palace? It's not like it's an EDSA Revolution, where the citizenry united and invoked "People Power" against tyranny.

Always neglected and disappointed by the government, the numerous poor careen in despair, threatened by an uncertain future, and living frantically as if each day unraveled a life-and-death situation, as the acquisition of something as basic as food is a major struggle. The ruling elite, therefore, endanger themselves and their opulent dynasties by ignoring the needs of the masses.

Did not such indifference become so obvious when the rest of the world were more prompt and more generous to the Yolanda survivors in Tacloban, than our own leaders... who mostly just dished out a series of excuses amidst a bewildered population that can't help but wonder just how much the government is putting in the effort to aid and rehabilitate the devastated areas?

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In a supposed democracy wherein the minority, and not the majority, run the government, only corruption can happen. Progressive groups have been echoing this fact for several years now, and they are probably right. At about the same span of time, the roster of so-called illustrious Philippine statesmen, then and now, did not give this fundamental flaw much thought and just proceeded with, not even solid platforms for nationhood, but mere slogans—like “Philippines 2000”, “President For The Masses”, “Strong Republic” and “Daang Matuwid”—only to see the corruption problem worsen. It seems clear that many of our leaders know that corruption is our society’s prime weakness, with a lot of them having declared war on the menace. After all those years since the kleptocracy of Marcos dictatorship, and all the self-proclaimed graft busters we entrusted to do the job, what happened? Well...under the supposed “straight path governance” of the seemingly incorruptible P-Noy, the Pork Barrel Scandal broke out. And it should have stopped there. But no, the DAP (Disbursement Acceleration Program) fiasco followed shortly after. This, despite Supreme Court deeming unconstitutional these bulk disbursements to vague budgetary line items. But guess what? After the DAP, the 2015 and 2016 National Budgets were tainted with the same scheme, only named differently or not even named at all.

After all his talk on setting the government straight, did P-Noy simply overlook the across-the-board robbery happening in the Senate and in Congress? After Erap’s famous lines, “Walang kama-kamag-anak, walang kai-kaibigan”, did he fail to see that in his shortened term he managed to build a strong political dynasty, side by side with a cronyism that’s very much in the color of a mob syndicate, like the Mafia? After replacing Erap via Edsa Dos, surely Gloria Arroyo can’t seriously believe she built a strong republic, exiting the presidency with the government bankrupt, and consequently allowing her to languish for years under a farcical hospital arrest while she in effect evades prosecution for various criminal charges?

Are we to hope that Mar Roxas will have a much, much better version of “Daang Matuwid”, or just bank on Duterte to clean up the government, which he claims he can achieve in a matter of weeks? Can we expect good governance to happen under a Jejomar Binay presidency, when charges of graft plague him and his political dynasty family, or should we entrust our fate to law-savvy Miriam Defensor-Santiago, who was either mum during the course of very un-constitutional corruption-riddled administrations, or spoke in favor of the wrong side (remember the critical “envelope” during Erap’s impeachment...and the Infamous 11 senators who triggered EDSA Dos by their sheer bias for an elaborate cover-up)?

Chance of Daylight

Now, Grace Poe...she’s another matter. She seems to be a cut above the rest. Maybe even several cuts. Or at least, it is the impression she gives every time she speaks in public.

After P-Noy delivered his latest SONA, a number of public officials made comments in the media about it. Of the brief, nervously tacky, and self-praising speech, some said the SONA was concise, some said it was well-delivered, some said it was beautiful. In short, it was a slew of narrow adoration...the usual feedback from suck-ups. For seriously, this was just at the wake of the vaguely explained Mamasapano incident. At that point, dark and gloomy clouds were already threatening what bright future our nation could possibly have under the circumstance, until Grace Poe said what she thought of it...and literally became a beacon of hope.

“He didn’t mention anything about the Freedom of Information Act”, she said, obviously sharing what was anticipated by most members of progressive groups and true patriots. Bingo! It is exactly that kind of disposition, expressed spontaneously as she did, that tells a genuine nation-builder from a fake one. It somewhat confirms: Grace Poe is no Tra-po.

Stuck in such backward ways of government, like the stupidity of patronage politics, traditional politicians lack the profoundness of perception to see what is desperately needed, but then fervently denied, our democracy. How can daang matuwid happen without upholding and promoting the truth? The truth has always been denied an already severely confused public that even now does not have clarity nor justice on the official crimes committed during the Marcos dictatorship, on the Hacienda Luisita massacre, and on earth-shaking fiascos like the Bataan nuclear “white elephant”, the United Coconut Planters’ scam, the Jueteng, Tobacco Excise and Jose Pidal scandals, the Fertilizer Fund scam, AFP procurement scams and revolving door tradition, Hello, Garci, the Maguindanao Massacre, Pork Barrel, DAP, and the Mamasapano massacre. Without the firm establishment of truths, daang matuwid can only be as crooked and hypocritical as the past bad administrations. And that’s the truth.

Grace might have, inadvertently or on purpose, stretched some statistics a bit to satisfy some technical pre-requisites for presidential candidacy. But the arguments deterring her now about her being foundling, or about her lacking two months stay in the country to qualify for residency status, are not as significantly foul as allowing plunderers and political dynasties to hostage the authority of our national government. To block her aspirations to lead this nation will not be just. And maybe...just maybe...nothing can truly stop her.

Perhaps, like Cory Aquino, Grace wouldn’t even need to devise meticulous campaign strategy to be president. And after all the defects that smear the sanctity of the polls, she might not even need an election...like Cory who lost in rigged snap elections against Marcos, but then ended up unseating him in the end. If what is needed is a tearing down of an old dysfunctional system anyway, then why subject this potential new era leader (as opposed to tra-pos) further to the crooked rules that give the advantage to the crooked leaders she needs to replace for real national progress to happen.

A New World That Demands Fundamental Changes

Only when the public truly possesses the freedom, actually the right, to know the whole truth about the government can it be deemed a true democracy...of the people, for the people, by the people. In this dynamic age of information, we are bound to diversify a whole lot more, as we are made aware of more things at a given time, and thereby multiplying also our options and choices. The number of minority groups that shall be formed by the blending of diverse minds and cultures will overwhelm us completely. With the diversity that will soon unravel in the midst of our society, Congress will need to have hundreds, if not thousands, of party-list groups just so it can be consistent and true to its concept of representation politics.

If at present, the government systems seem already quite obsolete, unable to serve the public as it should, it would be many times more incompatible with the public five or ten years from now. We cannot be selecting our leaders the way we do it now. We’ll need to come up with radical new ways of voting and attaining consensus. And definitely, new laws need to be established to address the rapidly multiplying issues the citizenry needs to face, and with increasing sophistication.

Perhaps presidential debates in the future, as well as the mandatory qualifying conditions for that office, will be more complex, demanding an elaborate explanation of platforms, and a testament of public service integrity and dedication based on past merits. Perhaps a set of questionnaires?

1) What do you propose we do to secure the food supply of 150 million Filipinos for the next ten years?

2) How do you plan to avert violent conflict and instead promote peace and productive cooperation with regards to the contesting territorial claims in the West Philippine Sea?

3) Can you propose a viable solution to the power gap, while in the process force a total shift of the power-generation and distribution industries towards the mass utilization of cleaner, renewable energies?

4) How can you make all Filipino citizens enjoy true “inclusive growth”, where taxation does not encumber but rather uplifts—with free and good quality education, well-appointed, free and steadfast health and social services, and a justice system that serves swiftly and equitably regardless of age, sex, religion and subculture?

5) Are you aware of the gravity and complexity of the problem that global climate change presents to us? If you are, do you have enough drive in you to take the necessary steps so as to mitigate the destructive effects that can be brought by this alarming phenomenon?

In the future, it might be prudent to have aspiring presidents answer these preliminary questions for the perusal and benefit of the public. Heck, we should be asking these now to this year’s presidentiables. It sure is better than watching them prove their macho by challenging each other to a slap-fest, a fist-fight or a gun duel...on national TV.

Wait a minute. We have Grace Poe, who in spite of the stressful hurdles laid out on her campaign trail, and the attempts to belittle her and disqualify her completely; and amidst critics’ taunting and instigations that could have driven anyone to lose their cool, stoop down and lash disgracefully at her rivals, she maintained a very decent poise. Instead, she spoke for those who were willing to listen to her—not just about what she promises, but actually explaining why we must address certain imperatives that the Aquino administration simply forgot to. In the process, she somewhat answered already the questions enumerated above, in the most intelligent, and most dignified way.

Poe’s got it.

MCL's CpE students win as Champion in regional quiz bowl

The 4th Year Computer Engineering (CpE) student representatives from Malayan Colleges Laguna (MCL) emerged as Champions for the Interscholastic Quiz Bowl at the recently concluded CpE Challenge 2016 held at Colegio de San Juan de Letran - Calamba last February 6. The CpE Challenge was organized by the Institute of Computer Engineers of the Philippines - Student Edition Region 4-A (ICpEP.SE Region 4A).

The team of Mark Anthony G. Barcenas, Pamela Mae D. Berdos, Aaron Paul D. Filipino, and Simon James C. Zafra bested six other student teams hailing from various universities from all over CALABARZON who competed in the said quiz bowl. These schools include First Asia Institute of Technology and Humanities, De La Salle University – Dasmarias, Pamantasan ng Cabuyao, Colegio de San Juan de Letran, Lyceum of the Philippines University – Batangas, and University of Perpetual Help system DALTA – Molino Campus.

The Interscholastic Quiz Bowl consisted of three rounds: Easy, Average, and Difficult. According to the team’s coach and Computer Engineering Program Chair Engr. Maribelle Pabiania, the CpE Challenge covered a totality of all major courses taken up within the students’ third to fifth year.



“We had to do a supplementary form of review because they are still currently on their fourth year. We did an advanced study on topics that they are not yet familiar with,” Engr. Pabiania said.

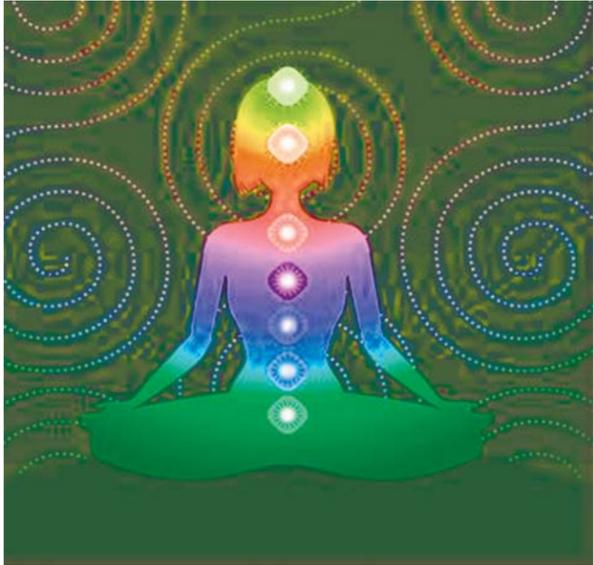
Having to compete against other known schools in the region, the team recalls how intimidated they were and yet, they believe it’s the ample time and effort exerted for review that has led them to attain the championship award.

“I think it really was the preparation that has helped us a lot. In these kinds of competitions, you can’t just wing it. You should be competitive, but more importantly, you have to be prepared,” said Pamela, one of the student representatives.

This, according to Engr. Pabiania and the members of the team, is their contribution to the institution’s commitment to Excellence and Virtue.

Going Holistic

When you've already tried pills, surgery, and everything else conventional medicine has to offer, and still feel ill somehow, perhaps you ought to try the holistic approach to recovery.



For the longest time, the holistic approach may have been unjustly dismissed as “unproven” or mythical by stern proponents of modern medicine, but today we are seeing more and more doctors believe in the principle that true recovery can only be achieved through healing, and not simply curing through pharmaceutical science and surgical procedure. Perhaps recent medical breakthroughs like the research findings pointing to the relationship of disease and stress helped open many medical minds to the holistic theory, as it is mainly premised on the idea that the mental and emotional well-being of a person is directly related to his or her health. The integration of conventional medicine and the holistic approach by medical doctors has consequently produced several types of healing practices that are known to be effective, and thus has developed into a discipline in its own right, called Integrative Medicine.

Actually, in this age of information, the strictly conventional doctors who deem holistic medicine as nothing but snake oils and nostrum increasingly seem like bigots, sticking to a one-dimensional science that, in the end, would admittedly take a stance that it doesn't have all the answers anyway. On the other hand, this is where Integrative Medicine gains credence, being a practice that is open to both conventional and alternative approaches, and therefore having a wider perspective in diagnosing, and drawing from a larger pool of methods for treating patients. And while rigidly conventional medical practitioners are often dumbfounded by numerous cases of patients who were healed through Tradition Chinese Medicine, Hilot, Energy Healing, or Ayurvedic Medicine, the practitioners of Integrative Medicine do not simply believe but understand the causations behind the alternative healing processes.



The doctors at **CENTRO HOLISTICO** practice Integrative Medicine, and promote such alternative and complementary medical treatments, for the education and health of patients. The doctors here see health as having four aspects: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. And their practice is founded on having all these elements in good condition to be free from disease or “truly healthy”. In their experience, disease does not necessarily mean a pathological defect, but sometimes just a “dis-ease” or something that makes one uneasy, due to an imbalance of the four aspects. Balance, therefore, is the key.

During a Holistic Medical Consultation, the physician assesses all the elements of health (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual) of a patient and then recommend treatments based on resultant evaluations. **A LIVE BLOOD ANALYSIS** is often included in these

consultations so as to get a better picture of the patient's health and nutritional status. In this procedure, the physician collects 2-3 drops of blood from the patient using a lancet and places it on a glass slide, which will then be put under a microscope for analysis. A single drop of blood can actually reveal a lot about a person's health condition—from stress levels, to the presence of certain diseases, even diet preference. The Holistic Medical Consultation becomes the basis for determining what therapies would be recommended to patients.



CENTRO HOLISTICO commonly employs treatment by **ACUPUNCTURE**, the planting of very fine needles on specific points in the body, as per the Traditional Chinese Medicine method. The philosophy behind acupuncture is hinged on the stimulation or redirection of the flow of “qi” (life energy), blood, and body fluids in patients. This goes hand in hand with treatments such as ventosa, electro acupuncture and acupressure, which are modalities that basically share the same principle. The doctors at **CENTRO HOLISTICO** use a particular treatment involving five specific points in the ear, meant to induce natural detoxification of the body, but also treat specific imbalances that manifest as addictions, manias, mental health issues, and emotional trauma. In this treatment, the patient is asked to sit on a comfortable chair where the physicians can easily apply to the special points on both ears. This is best for those who'd want to quit smoking, drinking and other forms of addiction. Its beneficial effects to patients recovering from traumatic experiences, and those suffering from insomnia, are also well-documented.



Another acupuncture treatment offered is **COSMETIC ACUPUNCTURE**, a natural way to remove wrinkles and to lift the face and neck. It also helps in preventing wrinkles, clearing up the skin and brightening the skin around the eye area, without any injections or surgery. This procedure uses more than thirty acupuncture needles embedded on the face, activating proper skin function, and increasing as well as maintaining the moisture and fat of the skin. This stimulates the facial muscles and then allows it to relax, heal, restore the natural flow of energy, induce collagen production and improve blood circulation. It's an effective detoxification and anti-aging regimen, promoting a healthy, radiant look.

But perhaps the most “felt-to-the-core” detoxification treatment offered by **CENTRO HOLISTICO** is the **COLON CLEANSE**. It involves the infusion of a coffee solution into the rectum through the anus. Other herbs are also used to aid in the detoxification process. This gets rid of toxins in the blood stream. And right away, patients feel cleansed.



There is also the **HEAVY METAL DETOX** for people exposed to heavy metals in through their environment, diet, or habits like cigarette smoking or drug usage. This treatment involves soaking the patient's feet in a magnetic clay solution for 30 minutes. Upon contact with fluid, the clay's electrical components change, giving it the ability to absorb and remove toxins, heavy metals, chemicals and other impurities.

IV (Intravenous) Nutrient Therapies are offered as well at **CENTRO HOLISTICO**. These are for the replenishment of vitamins and minerals in the body, which are essential for optimum health. Moreover, these therapies can be used to complement treatment for certain diseases, like Fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Cancer, Autoimmune Diseases, Chronic Pain, Atherosclerosis, and Hypertension among many others. Different infusions are used for different conditions, and are formulated according to the needs of the patient.



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Forest and Landscape Restoration: A Forgotten Imperative?

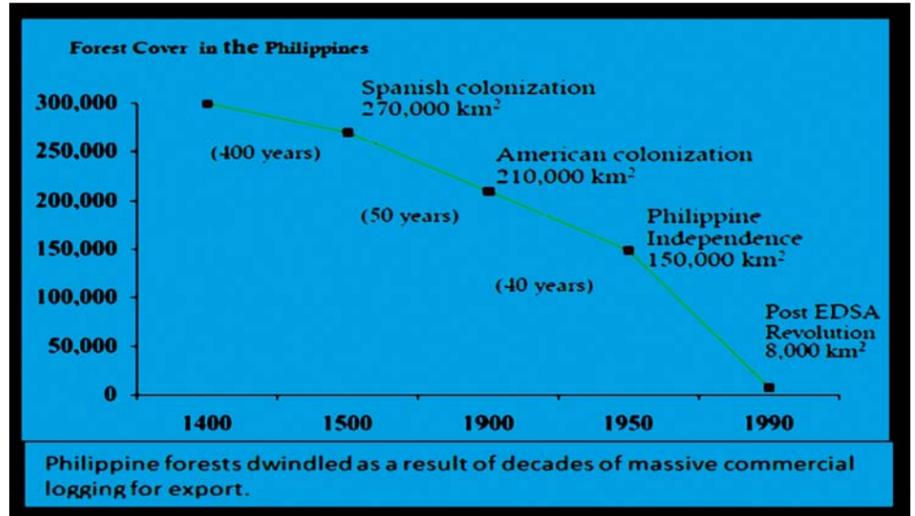


Today, more and more countries in the world are taking the global movement to restore deforested land to a considerably advance level, compared to the recent decades that passed, where we saw climate change, in turn, gradually manifest as fearsome reality...from a mythical and highly arguable concept many a pragmatist have scoffed at.

Region-wide restoration programs are currently underway, like a country-led initiative to restore 20 million hectares of degraded land in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2020. There's also an analogous effort in Africa, but more ambitious, aiming for the restoration of 100 million hectares by 2030. And, regardless of where these initiatives are launched, it seems to draw remarkable political support. These gargantuan tasks, however, are not simply driven by mere advocacy, no matter how inspiring. Land restoration, which is practically healing the Earth, demands great forces, and often implemented on a planetary scale for the endeavor to be significant.

optimize their utility, the management of plantation forests, apparently, employs a simple strategy founded on the principle of balance between diverse ecological relationships. Small and medium scale plantations produce wood for cooking and construction, while industrial-sized plantations produce wood for paper-making and construction. Intensive design and management is the key to make plantation forests more useful. Think of it as some form of agriculture...only you grow trees instead of crops.

Plantation forests may bear some pretty good prospects for this country, and pave the way to the recovery of our nation's severely denuded canopies. But, of course, the drawback would be the prevalent poor management of and the tendency to abuse and misuse any system by most Filipinos...as seen in too many malfunctioning government establishments. As gross negligence is often the cause of a lot of disasters in this country, and with proper practice often



monocultures, in which case biodiversity suffers. Often, this becomes a source of conflict in land usage, or may even lead to poor soil conditions, degradation of native grasslands, loss of critical habitat of insects...even disease, if things get out of hand. And being a warm, tropical country, the densely spaced plantation can also suddenly just ignite to a huge forest fire. We really could be looking at potential disaster. So, no doubt, there are yet many more challenges to reforestation, besides the actual planting of trees over vast tracts of land.

But rather than be daunted by these challenges, we must realize the consequences if we do not willfully embark on this mission to rehabilitate our environment. With the government flunking in practically all its duties, and had allowed over the decades the wanton destruction of our natural resources, groping with ceaseless corruption and scandals that illustrate utter ineptness—the odds are really against us. Civil society, therefore, must move, and move definitively, to initiate this effort and make it sustainable. From establishing certification schemes, to promoting community-managed small-scale forestry, to organizing a yearly mass action targeting the reforestation of hundreds or even thousands of hectares of denuded areas—we have to start somewhere. Maybe the best place to start is within ourselves. Restoring the functionality and ecosystem of degraded lands, by increasing the number of trees in the landscape, takes a holistic approach and, if successful, can provide economic, social and environmental benefits—like

increasing household income, improving food security, creating new habitat and, of course, rehabilitating our planet. We need to tell ourselves that wanting these is actually tantamount to the survival of our species...along with numerous others. In meditating this, we have to get through our thick skulls that even though planted forests will never replace natural forests, natural forests won't grow fast enough on their own to cope with the rate of devastation humanity is doing to the natural world.

This May, we shall have once again the every-six-years-opportunity to choose a new president to lead this nation in these climactic times. Who among those vying for the position actually realizes the magnitude of the consequences presented by this pressing issue, should the people of this nation choose right action, wrong action or no action at all? Obviously, none of the past presidents was able to reduce and discourage the extensive denudation of Philippine forests. Will the next president heed this very grave demand and mandate the bureaucracy, the corporate community, farmers and all citizens to act with expediency to effect solutions? He or she should, for it is actually a "must" already at this point. Forest and landscape restoration is gaining significant momentum across the world as a viable and cost-effective solution to address the impacts of climate change, improve rural livelihoods, generate economic outputs, and spur the rehabilitation of the planet. Now, more than ever, is the time this nation acts on this need.



But new awareness on the matter just sprouted recently. It seems a particular technique demonstrated a good success rate. And it involves the creation of "plantation forests".

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization defines a productive plantation forest as a "forest of introduced species and in some cases native species, established through planting or seeding mainly for production of wood or non-wood goods." To

overlooked by stewards, commonly due to some bribery activity or the influence of law-breaking and dishonest capitalists who throw their weight around—a huge question mark looms over the sustainability of plantation forests here.

Plantations run the risk of over-sprawling onto neighboring lands and could cause a variety of liabilities to adjacent properties, especially those with existing structures like houses or buildings. Plantations, at times, are also planted as big



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Singaporean cuisine is a mixed bag of exotic elements which resulted from a colorful blend of several ethnic groups and their respective food. And Singapore's history as a seaport with a considerable immigrant population was a major contributor to the vibrant evolution of Singaporean food.

The imprints of Malayan, Chinese, Indonesian, Indian, Peranakan, Sri Lankan, Thai, English, and Middle Eastern flavors are quite evident in the vast array of Singaporean foods available today. Yet, many Singaporeans view their food as something crucial to their national identity. Among them is **Mr. Sonny Goh of Sophie's Bistro**.



Sonny sees his native cuisine as a unifying cultural fiber, adamantly believing that eating is actually Singapore's national pastime. Actually seeing him at work in the resto's kitchen will confirm—it's somewhat an obsession for him to cook and serve hearty Singaporean meals. Plus, a short chat with him will most likely end up as a lengthy discourse about his country and his food. It is, however, with good reason that he does.

Singaporean dishes are a hit the world over. In 2011, four Singaporean dishes were picked as among the 50 of the world's most delicious foods in a worldwide poll by 35,000 people conducted by no less than CNN International. These are the Hainanese

Chicken Rice (13th), Chili Crab (29th), Katong Laksa (44th) and Roti Prata (45th). And Sonny proudly serves these delights at Sophie's Bistro.

The thing about Mr. Sonny Goh is that he even adds his own unique flavour into the already distinctive multi-ethnic dishes. He's got stuff there that can actually boggle the mind and make you think again about the depth and diversity of Singapore's food.

"Sometimes, we'll eat multiple times in a day", he says, "That's how much we love our food".



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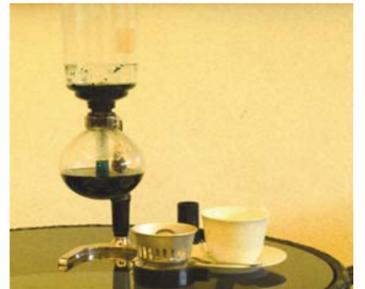


Garlic Prawns



Grilled Squid

After a nourishing, scrumptious, Sonny Goh-style Singaporean meal, there's another thing offered at the Bistro which somewhat comes like an ace hidden up a sleeve: coffee. It's served through a gizmo that's seemingly pulled out of a sci-fi movie...or a mad scientist's lab. Perhaps Mr. Goh recommends it as the best thing to cap the Singaporean bonanza, but then again, it could be an integral part of his magic.



Sure, one might say he's had better noodles, or better chicken, or crab somewhere else. It would be an opinion that's quite off the course though. For how can one really establish a point of comparison where there is no point of reference. Although Sophie's Bistro serves Singaporean, there's nothing quite like Sonny Goh's Singaporean.



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To The Needy, A Barrage Of Gunfire Instead Of Aid...under *Daang Matuwid*

As a cruel spell of drought desiccates farmlands south of the country, Filipino farmers, the food producers, ironically, find themselves besieged by hunger. On top of this, an evident callousness demonstrated by government officials, heading the institutions mandated by law to give farmers aid through funded contingency measures and such programs, mercilessly snatched hope from the afflicted. Desperation then mounted to chaos.

On March 28, 2016, some 150 farmers from Arakan Valley, North Cotabato rented a truck to join thousands of farmers from other towns in the province, and amassed in one big protest, in the hope that the government will finally heed their cries of despair. They stayed in the highway for days, pleading for immediate relief from starvation, and demanding the provincial and local governments to dole out assistance, particularly rice and farm inputs to save their crops and livelihood in the wake of the calamity.

But instead of giving them food and helping them, the government responded in a way that illustrates best how insensitive, how inhumane, and how anti-poor public officials can be. On April 1, upon orders of the local government, police and soldiers fired their guns at the protesters, resulting in the death of three farmers and wounding of many others. It was a blunt act of atrocity in the caliber of flagranties committed only in regimes ruled by sadistic tyrants.

An emailed statement by the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR), which found its way to Voice of the South's inbox, vividly outlines the brutality of government action in what has already been dubbed, The Kidapawan Massacre. The statement is as follows:

STATEMENT
5 April 2016

On the Killings of Protesting Farmers in Kidapawan

The Center for Trade Union and Human Rights vehemently condemns the brutal dispersal of protesting peasants in Kidapawan, North Cotabato last April 1. Reports of the incident reveal glaring violations of human rights committed by state security forces.

The violence used by state against the farmers clearly violated the people's right to life, and right to freedom of assembly. To date, two are confirmed dead and over a hundred were reported injured due to indiscriminate firing by the police. At least 88 people reported missing as of April 2. The illegal arrests of around 79 other individuals (34 women, 3 are pregnant) also violate the victims right against arbitrary detention and illegal arrest.

One of the farmer protester bleeds heavily after being injured during the violent dispersal of farmers in Kidapawan on April 1 (Photo from Kilab Multimedia)

Words cannot express our condemnation of this incident. We are overwhelmed by outrage and we are appalled by the extreme violence this government continues to inflict on people whose fate it has dragged to abysmal hunger and despair even prior to the killings. For months, the farmers of Southern Mindanao suffered hunger and incurred debts because their crops were destroyed by El Niño. On February 5, a farmer from the same region committed suicide after his crops were destroyed by the drought. This is so telling of unbearable misery, a farmer would rather take his life than suffer.

Still, many of the farmers persisted and resolved to seek the government support due them, if only to sustain their families until after the drought. On March 30, over 5,000 farmers held a protest. For three days they barricaded a major hi-way, with simple demands: rice and subsidy. But instead of giving aid, the government ordered state security forces to strafe their barricade with bullets. Instant and widespread public condemnation followed the incident. But the Aquino government and its local allies are unmoved. As though gloating over the demise, pain and grief of their victims, the government even honored the police officials involved in the brutal dispersal. Such smugness and heartlessness is exceptional. It is despicable.

While Malacañang has stated that it would investigate the incident, the local government and police forces continue to harass and vilify the

peasants and their supporters. On Saturday, the police searched for explosives in the United Methodist Church compound that served as refuge for the peasants. And on Sunday, the police barricaded the gates of the same church compound to prevent other farmers seeking aid to join their fellow farmers in the church sanctuary. The 79 individuals arrested were charged with direct assault only recently.

The killings in Kidapawan sorely demonstrates the profound injustice the Aquino government has perpetuated and engendered throughout its six-year term.

To begin with, the farmers in North Cotabato are already victims of a bogus agrarian reform, wherein farmers virtually get no support from the government while the landlord class—to which the family of President Aquino belongs—continues to reign over lands which should have been distributed to the farmers.

It is not incidental that in last six years, the agriculture sector nearly shrunk with minimal growth rates as a result of Aquino's neoliberal policies which left local farmers in the direst of situations. Ineptness and corruption characterized the Aquino government's response to disasters and climate change impacts like typhoons and El Niño.

Under the Aquino administration, over 300 individuals were extra-judicially killed among hundreds of other victims of numerous human rights violations, as reported by group Karapatan. Specifically, the people of Mindanao have become targets of the state's counter-insurgency program Oplan Bayanihan. Over 50 percent of the Armed Forces of the Philippines are deployed in Mindanao

sowing violence and fear among people justly defending their right to land from the entry of mining corporations and corporate agri-plantations.

Blood is all over Aquino's hands. The Kidapawan killings is only the latest addition to the history of the Cojuangco-Aquino's history of violent suppression of peasants who wage struggles for true agrarian reform—from the Mendiola massacre in 1987 to the Hacienda Luisita massacre in 2004.

The Center for Trade Union and Human Rights grieve with the family of victims of the Kidapawan killings. We stand with them in their fight for immediate relief and justice. The violence and harassment against the farmers in Kidapawan should immediately end. Those detained must be freed immediately and their demand for rice and subsidy be provided to them. The police personnel and local government officials responsible for the violence must be held liable. Ultimately, the Aquino government must be brought to justice for its many crimes against the Filipino people.

#BigasHindiBala

Justice for the victims of Kidapawan Killings!

Stop the Killings!

Perhaps this makes it clear enough for all to see: massacres resulting from blunders in command, endless finger-pointing, scandalous neglect and ineptness of public offices, an abundance of unpunished crimes and record-breaking kleptocracy are actually the highlights of the Noynoy Aquino administration and its so-called daang matuwid.

In-Laws Vouch For Grace

It would be a different version of "daang matuwid" (straight path) if Senator Grace Poe becomes the next president, says her father-in-law.

Teodoro "Teddy" Llamanzares spoke about his daughter-in-law when he and his wife Carol went to attend Grace Poe's mini rally at Barangay Segunda Parang in Lumban, Laguna.

Grace is a "fighter", Llamanzares said, claiming that he knew his daughter-in-law well, "we've been with her for 23 years."

"She will really go for a straight path...but a different version", he asserted to media personnel who took the



opportunity to interview him before the rally.

Llamanzares also narrated how he and his wife prayed hard when the Supreme Court was

deciding on the disqualification cases filed against Poe over her citizenship and residency.

The high court later ruled that Poe is a natural-

born Filipino and has met the 10-year residency requirement in the country to qualify her to run for president.

Air Force Experimenting With Ice From A Helicopter To Stop Mt. Apo Blaze, Americans Prompted To Intervene



In Davao, fire raged near the peak of Mt. Apo, but instead of dousing it with water, the Philippine Air Force (PAF) dropped some 400 kilos of crushed ice.

According to Lt. Col. Jose Ritchie Pabilonia of the PAF, the first experimental operation was conducted after six days of non-stop forest fire. It is not certain, however, if the experiment was a successful one.

"We have yet to confirm the effects of the crushed ice with the volunteers on the ground," he told journalists during a meeting with the provincial disaster management authorities in this city.

To extinguish the blaze, the PAF's technical operations group 3rd air division has been conducting bambi-bucket runs with but one Super Huey helicopter. If the said experiment turns out to be effective, Pabilonia plans to drop more crushed ice over the area using a UH1H helicopter.

Director Liza Mazo of the Office of Civil Defense-Region 11 said the ice used was donated by the Solano and Davao ice plants. Mazo proposed "cloud-seeding" to put out the fire.

But then, from out of the blue, the U.S. Government comes to the rescue. Philip Dizon, president of the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines in Mindanao had stated to the media that US Ambassador Philip Goldberg has pledged to help put out the fire in Mt. Apo.

"The Americans will be sending help", claimed Dizon.

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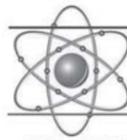
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Korean National, Filipino Companion Lose P4.6 M to robbers in Laguna mall

A Korean and his Filipino companion were robbed of P4.6-million worth of payroll money by thieves at a shopping mall parking lot in Calamba City, Laguna.

Lee Dongho, 40, and his companion, Jhenelyn Baccay, 24, had just withdrawn the cash from a bank inside SM City Calamba mall at 3 p.m., when they were suddenly approached by three men at the parking lot, according to Supt. Fernando Ortega, Calamba City police chief.

The report stated that the robbers held the victims at gunpoint and made them drive their vehicle until they reached Barangay Prinza in the city where the suspects took off with the money. The victims were not harmed.

The stolen cash was supposed to

be the payroll for employees of FS Phil Corp., a Pampanga-based construction company, which incidentally also had a branch in Barangay Batino, Calamba City where Dongho is branch manager and Baccay an administrative supervisor.

"Please note that these are all still allegations," Ortega said, emphasizing that they were still checking all possible angles, including the possibility that the robbery might be an "inside job."

Ortega took note of the fact that the open space where the victims claimed they were attacked did not have a security camera. Also, the victims curiously reported the incident to the police three hours later, according to him.

2 IBM Employees Hit By A Bus In Sta. Rosa, Die

Two employees of a business process outsourcing (BPO) company were killed after they were hit by a bus as they were crossing a street in Sta. Rosa City, Laguna.

Laguna provincial police reports state that Gennin Navarro Landicho, a resident of Tanauan City, Batangas, and John Patric Go, both employees of the IBM Corp. in its facility in the technology hub of Nuvali in Sta. Rosa, died instantly after a Jam Transit bus hit them at about 5:30 a.m. along the Balibago-Tagaytay Road in Barangay (village) Sto. Domingo.

According to case investigator Police Officer 3 Romeo Contreras, Landicho and Go had just ended their shifts when the accident happened. The bus driver, he said, whose name was not immediately available, escaped after the accident but later surrendered to the police.

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