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Thrift Banks Help Fuel Economic Growth

By CARMENCITA H. ACOSTA

The nation marks Thrift Banking Week from March 20 to 26 this year. The Philippine government encourages and assists thrift banks to help fuel the country's economy. Republic Act No. 7906 otherwise known as the Thrift Bank Act gives incentives to these banks to promote agriculture, trade, commerce and industry, and at the same time puts within easy reach of the people the medium-and long-term credit facilities at reasonable cost.

At present there are 73 thrift banks in the country, with 55 of these as members of the Chamber of Thrift Banks with 1,200 branches nationwide. What are thrift banks? They include savings and mortgage banks, private development banks, and stock savings and loans associations organized under existing laws, and any banking corporation that may be formed for the same objective. A thrift bank is organized in the form of stock corporation.

Patrick D. Cheng, president and CEO of



Jose Teodoro Limcaoco, CTB convention chairman, Patrick D. Cheng, CTB president; and Suzanne Felix, CTB executive director

HSBC Savings Bank, is currently president of the Chamber of Thrift Banks (CTB). He said that last year there was increased consumer spending and setting up of businesses, especially micro, small, and medium enterprises. According to him, "As people feel good about the state of the economy, they want to spend their money wisely and they want to engage in putting up businesses. CTB wants to seize this opportunity by continuing to generate deposits, creating more opportunities for lending, implementing more aggressive marketing programs, and increasing the public's confidence in thrift banks."

Consumers, Entrepreneurs Needed for Growth

CTB holds its annual convention on March 23. Convention chairman Jose Teodoro Limcaoco, president of BPI Family Savings Bank, said that this year's theme is "Thrift Banks: Fueling Consumers and

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EXPAT AND THE EARTH

The Lowdown On Puerto Galera's EUF Issues

By TIMOTHY JAY IBAY

Plans to hike Puerto Galera's Environmental Users Fee (EUF) from Php50 to Php120 have been met with a cynical combination of criticism and opposition. The local government insists, though, that the proposal to increase the EUF must be met with open minds.

Those Who Oppose

The different groups from the tourism industry (resort owners, boatmen, vendors, tricycle operators and drivers, and some tourist guides) claim that such an increase would greatly affect the tourism industry which is responsible for a huge bulk of the local government's income and the main source of livelihood of its more than 30,000 residents.

Opponents of the EUF increase also point to the decline in the number of tourist arrivals

from 2008-2010 as proof that the timing for such an increase is questionable. Puerto Galera began collecting the 50Php EUF fee in 2007.

The Deal

Municipal Mayor Hubbert Christopher Dolor, though, insists that increasing the EUF will benefit the same tourism industry in the long run that EUF increase opponents are trying to protect. One project pointed out by Dolor that merits the proposed increase is the construction of the sewage water treatment plant (SWTP) at the northwestern tip of Oriental Mindoro. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (Pemsea) have conducted studies that have shown that some of the waters of Puerto Galera, most notably

the Sabang shoreline, have already been contaminated. This is one of the reasons why Dolor has been adamant in saying that the SWTP project can no longer be delayed.

According to Dolor, the town only receives an internal revenue allotment of Php58 million per year; the SWTP project would cost Php100 million. This is why the LGU is pushing for the increase of the EUF. The proposed increase will be collected for a period of 25 years and would be used as collateral for a loan that would finance the SWTP project.

Dolor likewise stressed that the Php70 increase in the EUF is not the reason for the declining tourist arrivals. In an interview with Expat, he even half-kidded that the proposed Php120 EUF translates to spending on just about a couple of drinks in most

resorts, adding people should understand that the reality is that tourists are complimentary to the (water contamination) problem, and it follows that they should also be part of the solution.

Puerto Galera has been a member of the UNESCO sanctioned club of "The Most Beautiful Bays in the World".

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A TAO Trip to Palawan

There's more to see in the Philippines by sea

Text and Photos by STEPHEN CARROLL
Main Photo by KARMINA DE UNGRIA





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The five day TAO expedition sea safari is magical and is possibly one of the best travel experiences I have had out in 20 years of restlessly roaming this earth of ours. Superbly organized, this trip had everything: great food, good company, stunning vistas, beautiful white powdery beaches, wonderful swimming and snorkelling, and a whiff, just a whiff of danger. Enough to keep one's senses on high alert.

The trip starts in El Nido, not the El Nido of the resort brochures in your wonderful gated beach community, but downtown El Nido, where old hippies, presumably come to die in tie dye heaven. We met at TAO's offices in the middle of town and were charmingly welcomed by Stella, who was in charge of admin and Romy, who was to be our expedition

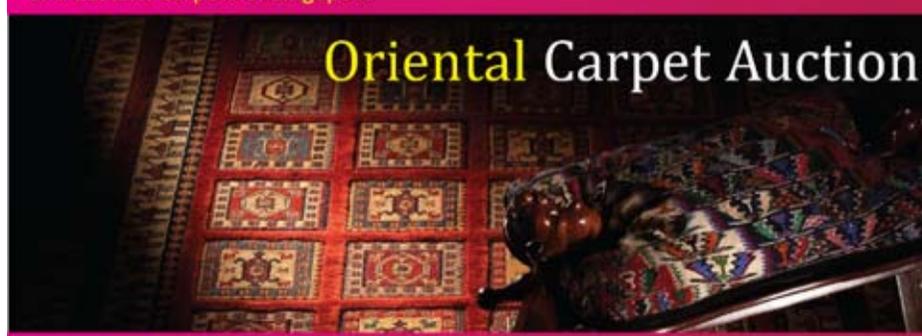
leader on this trip. After cursory introductions to our new companions, which included a charming French couple and highly energetic Polish - Dutch adventurers, we settled down to a clear and thorough briefing by our excellent guide Romy. This done, we were soon on our boat, the Krisolo, met our crew who included Captain Lolong, upon whom our survival in the high seas depended, Willy, our ever dependable chef, and Bordes, our ever cheerful boatman.

For the next three days we explored the beautiful Bacuit archipelago, its little coves, beaches, villages, coral gardens that remain tucked away far from any grand resort hotel or day tripping parties. TAO has mapped them out, not all for sure, but enough to ensure that each night we were in for a lovely surprise. Some nights we slept in a tropical paradise, with the sound of birds, cicadas and frogs serenading us at night.

Some nights, we played at Robinson Crusoe, utterly alone on a strip of palm fringed white sand, watching shooting stars and fire-

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(top left) A mouthwatering fresh feast

(clockwise) Stunning sunny and watery views are part of a sea buoyed expedition



flies. Other nights, we stayed in little lost villages where, despite intermittent electricity, a little karaoke can still make friends in the most unlikely of places. And some nights, we were just in heaven, with a bed on a beach and a most wonderful moon lit starry night to keep us company.

The days passed by in a beautiful, happy sunny haze, with some time on the water, some time on land, and some time in the wonderful underworld beneath the sea. This was no boot camp, no forced marches, no racing on kayaks across fearsome straits, no marathon swims across dark and forbidding waters. If you wanted to wander and walk, you did, if you wanted to gently kayak around and explore to your heart's content you did, and if you wanted to just sit on deck and read a book or crack silly jokes with the crew, you did. It was that kind of trip. Romy was always on hand to suggest new activities and things

to do or so and don't get me wrong we did, it was just at a shall we say, Palawan pace. And of course, how could I even forget. The food. Willie our chef, working from a small two plate hob at the back of the boat, and sourcing all of his food locally managed to produce a continuous array of wonderful meals. Breakfast, elevenses, lunch, tea, supper, nothing was forgotten. Piping hot coffee, fresh fruit, omelettes, porridge-de rigueur for a relaxing breakfast on the beach before the day's activities. Crab curries, freshly grilled squid, jack mackerel fish, milkfish, were often on the menu for lunch. As for dinner, invariably candlelit, an even greater feast of local fish and chicken dishes were served, washed down of course with ice cold beer or rum and served with a smoothness and charm that would do George Clooney proud.

This was an expedition though and some days we would have to go and source locally

and I do not think any of us will ever forget the moment we passed a scene straight out of Kevin Costner's 'Waterworld', a large raft of floating fishermen drying their washing in the sun. We were after ice and fish, they were it appears after some rum to no doubt keep them company on the long hot nights. A barter was duly organized and both parties it seemed had got exactly what they wanted.

Despite the bountiful food and non-stop service we, surprising as it may sound, kept pretty active and spent our days mainly on the water- snorkelling in some of the best coral any of us had ever seen, swimming in the beautiful blue waters, and sometimes hiking through the lush foliage of the islands.

The beaches were beautiful, empty, unspoilt, a 24/7 Bounty Bar ad. The coral garden was just mind blowing, a kaleidoscope of colour, shapes and movement.

The trips inland were just as rewarding,

whether it was to buy a chicken for the evening's supper or just to drop by and sayhello to our neighbours for the night. We usually tried to find time to explore the islands a little, usually in the morning and their peace, serenity and beauty set us up wonderfully for the day ahead. We even found time to explore some old shipwrecks as we approached Coron, but no gold found alas. TAO may have struck on something even better, sheer unadulterated bliss. The return was hard, friendships made, memories shared and indeed we made a vow to each other. We shall return.

For info/ bookings go to: www.taophilippines.com

Stephen Carroll is a Paris based global marketing director for a luxury brand. He is currently on a three month sabbatical in the Philippines.

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Romanian Ties with the Philippines Remain Strong

By RAYDON L. REYES Photos by JAHZEEL ABIHAIL G. CRUZ

In celebration of the National Day of Romania last December 1 in the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Romanian Ambassador Veleriu Gheorgie couldn't have said it better when he asserted that the friendship between the Philippines and Romania has remained strong since it was established in 1972. "Filipinos have facilitated themselves in Romanian society," says Gheorgie, toasting this alliance. He adds that because of this friendship, "we are able to rise again in the era of information."

The National Day of Romania has always been about friendship. Originally, it commemorates the union of Romania with Transylvania in 1918, also marking the unification of the provinces of Banat, Bessarabia and Bukovina.

The union was conditional, and became crucial to the the preservation of a democratic local autonomy --the equality of all nationalities and religions. The Assembly also formed from 200 of its members, plus 50 co-opted members a High National Romanian Council of Transylvania, the new permanent parliament of Transylvania.

Since then, Romania has enjoyed one of the highest economic growth rates in Europe and has often been referred to as "the Tiger of Eastern Europe." Not to mention there has also been significant improvements in human development, according to Human Development Report of 2009



Ambassador Veleriu Gheorgie toast the enduring ties with the Philippines



Katerina Petratou and Belgian Ambassador Christian Meerschman



Finnish Ambassador H.E. Heiki Hannikainen and Saudi Arabian Ambassador H. E. Abdullah Bin Ibrahim Al Hassan



Mexican Ambassador H.E. Tomas Javier Calvillo Unna and Indian Ambassador H.E. Yogendra Kumar



Argentinean Ambassador Joaquin Otero, Panama Ambassador Ivan Crespo and Mr. Miguel Realmonde from the Embassy of Argentina



Consul Visitacion Costa of Togo, Pakistani Ambassador's wife Sarwat Razi and Austrian Ambassador's wife Yan Donko

A Toast to Arabian Magnificence

Text and photos by TIMOTHY JAY IBAY

The United Arab Emirates celebration of their National Day marks the date when the seven emirates were formally unified in 1971. The annual event is traditionally celebrated on the 2nd of December with lights and fireworks displays and parties across town. Last December, H.E. Ambassador Moosa Abdulwahid Alkhajah and the UAE Embassy hosted a reception to commemorate their 39th National Day.

With the familiar friendly faces of diplomats filling the New World Hotel's Grand Ballroom, everyone had their fix of good food and flowing drinks on their way to a grand time, nothing as enthused as the actual Arab festivi-

ties, but a jovial mood was still set in place, fit for toasting the auspicious event.

Owing to that union back in 1971, The United Arab Emirates now enjoy a very modern state with great architectural and technological advancement. Outside the Grand Ballroom, was a gallery exhibiting the magnificence of cutting-edge hotels and resorts along with majestic skyscrapers that the Arabian nation has to offer. Photographs of the spectacular Burj Khalifa and Burj Al Arab, among other glorious UAE landmarks, served as reminders Belated congratulations to H.E. Moosa Abdulwahid Alkhajah and the UAE Embassy, cheers!



Ambassador Alkhajah leads the traditional cake-cutting



Mohammed Al Hamed with Ali Amjad Abdul Karrem of the Embassy of Iraq



South African Ambassador Agnes Nyamande-Pitso and Argentinean Ambassador Joaquin Daniel Otero



Erik Hannikainen with Atty. Katerina Petratou



French Ambassador Thierry Borja De Mozota with Bernard Kerblat



Mr. and Mrs. Sergey B. Shipolov of the Embassy of the Russian Federation



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Speak the truth – Mendoza urges

By RICHARD A. RAMOS

A former auditor of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) called for the public to voice out the truth versus corruption and other misdeeds since everybody needs to do their part in fighting society's evils instead of merely doing nothing.

"There is no retreat or stoppage. We have to let the public know the truth whether media is present or not, whether people are present or not. It is an uphill battle which we should undertake," Heidi Mendoza told the Cebuano media in a press gathering held at the Sacred Heart Center in Cebu.

Sheshrugged off the matter of death threats, saying that she refuses to recognize such deeds while depending on divine intervention as her security detail. When it happens, it happens, she answered casually.

In a forum dubbed "Moving People Power Through Faith-Impelled Truth Telling," the speaker bared that she does not want to be called a "whistleblower" but more as a "truth teller" since the truth was her only concern in her expose against former Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia.

She reminded the audience that she has

been involved in such activities since 2004 when nobody has paid her attention, even when she resigned in 2006.

"Now I am witnessed by the entire country, using my own resources against somebody with so much power and influence," hinting that her actions have finally bore fruit beyond her expectations.

On the subject of politics, she said she has no such political aspirations as she only plans to continue making an impact in the news. Everything is part of God's plan, she continued, and we all need to take that leap of faith so the truth will be known.

People's Expectations

The speaker sighed that the people are now expecting her to take up their cudgels, no matter how outrageous or far out it may be, in her role as probably the country's foremost "truth teller."

She related that some people want her to handle their problems regarding particular causes and advocacies, even on some topics which she has no knowledge about.

"I am being pulled in different directions

by people who do not fully understand my situation. I was even invited to be one of the speakers at the Seven Last Words of Christ during the Holy Week. Let it be known that I am only human and have no plans of heading this or that organization," she clarified to the audience.

Prior to this statement, somebody asked her assistance in getting long-delayed pension from a medical group. She replied that she needs the full details first and the proper agency before the matter could be acted upon.

For the moment, she is contented with guesting at parish meetings and reviving the faith of the people.

To recall, Mendoza spoke on the corrupt practices of the country's top military officials led by Gen. Carlos Garcia in a recent Sandiganbayan hearing over live TV coverage that reverberated throughout the country.

The forum was organized by Dilaab, a Church-based group headed by Fr. Carmelo Diola; the Cebu Business Club headed by Dondi Joseph, and the Mandaue Chamber of Commerce and Industry led by Eric Ng Mendoza.

Flash Reports

By CARMENCITA H. ACOSTA

Canadian Circus to Dazzle Manila

Spectacular acrobatic acts are the main fare of the Canadian outfit, Cirque de Soleil in its forthcoming show in Manila. The venue is the Luneta where a Grand Chapiteau (Big Top) is being built across the Quirino Grandstand. The Manila Hotel is co-presenting the circus show dubbed "Varekai."

Cirque du Soleil had its beginnings in 1984 with 20 street performers. It is now a major Quebec-Montreal based company providing high quality artistic entertainment with 5,000 employees, including more than 1,200 artists from some 50 countries. It has performed to almost 100 million spectators in 300 cities in five continents. It is presenting 21 shows simultaneously in different parts of the world, including Manila where the opening salvo is on June 22.



Guam Eyes Asian Tourists

Executives of the Guam Visitors Bureau recently visited Manila and other Asian cities to make a sales pitch for travel to the island territory of the United States. Guam's ocean is an

open playground to water sports enthusiasts. Tourists can take a submarine tour, riverboat trip, watch dolphins at play or visit the Underworld Aquarium. Diving and snorkeling are popular pastimes. The country has diverse and rich coral reefs with more than 300 types and 950 species of coral reef fishes. White sand beaches as well as golf courses abound. The Chamorros, the indigenous people of Guam, are expert seamen, as well as excellent weavers and pottery makers.

UN Youth Champion Talks to Manila Youth

Monique Coleman, a popular American television actress of High School Musical fame, was in Manila recently in her capacity as United Nations (UN) Youth Champion. This is the first time that UN has created such a work title. Coleman's mission is "to raise awareness about the challenges young people face and highlight the positive contribution they make to their communities." She spoke before students of the Philippine Normal University and the University of Santo Tomas, and also met with student leaders from other schools, explaining to them that youth participation is needed in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Monique Coleman



USANA Bats for Optimal Health

USANA Health Sciences founded by Dr. Myron Wentz in the United States has opened a branch in Metro Manila to promote optimal health for the skin and body system. Wentz is an internationally known microbiologist and immunologist who has come up with nutritional supplements and skin care products that have been scientifically tested for efficacy. According to him, eating the proper kinds of food is vital because "a nutritional supplement does not replace a healthy diet. But proper supplementation can bridge the gap between what our body needs in optimal nutrition and what most of us actually get from food."

Auction of Oriental Carpets

In Touch Community Services, Inc., administrator of the Crisis Line free telephone counseling, is holding an Oriental carpet auction in coordination with Eastern Carpets of Singapore. This is to be held on March 19 starting at 6 p.m. at the Inter Continental Hotel in Makati. The fundraising is to help support Crisis Line and related humanitarian outreach programs. More information may be found at website <http://www.in-touch.org>

Spanish Outfits Hold Tourism Workshops

Spain is stepping up its campaign to promote its tourist attractions such as historical places, festivals, cuisine and modern-day amenities. Spain is in Europe, but geographically it is the country that is nearest North Africa with the Strait of Gibraltar, which is only 13km wide, separating Spain from Africa. Nonetheless, the country remains safe for travel. A Spanish tourism campaign was held recently in Manila with close to a hundred travel agents attending. The Instituto Cervantes, Punta Fuego, Fundacion Flamenco, Mango Brand and other Spanish companies and institutions in the Philippines teamed up to conduct interactive workshops complete with actual demonstrations and audio-visuals.

Thrift Banks Help Fuel Economic Growth... from page 1

Entrepreneurs as Engines for Sustained Economic Growth." He stated that the convention highlights the thrift banking industry's commitment to provide first-class products and services to their niche markets. "The 2011 convention is the biggest one CTB has had so far."

The Monetary Board fixes the minimum paid-up capital of thrift banks in such amount as the Board may consider necessary for the safe and sound operation of thrift banks, taking into account due protection of the general public. No thrift bank shall be organized with-

out a certificate of authority from the Monetary Board.

In order to maintain the quality of bank management and afford better protection to depositors and the public in general, the Monetary Board may pass upon and review the qualifications of persons who are elected or appointed bank directors and officers and disqualify those unfit. The Monetary Board prescribes the qualifications of bank directors and officers.

In addition to powers granted it by Law,

any thrift bank may accept savings and time deposits; open current or checking accounts and act as correspondent for other financial institutions. It may also invest in allied undertakings such as in banking and financing; warehousing and other post-harvesting activities; fertilizer and agricultural chemical and pesticides distribution; farm equipment distribution; trucking and transportation of agricultural products; marketing of agricultural products; leasing; and other undertakings as may be determined by the Monetary Board.



Local Eye for the Foreign Guy

A Guided Search

I love travel books. To be accurate – and so we are on the same page on what a travel book actually is, I checked the only source of authority on everything, Wikipedia, for a definition: a travel book may refer to travel literature, a genre of literature or a guide book, documenting a geographic region or a tourist destination or itinerary as an aid for tourists and travelers. Ok, so, Fodor's and Lonely Planet guides count as does my dog eared copy of "Do's and Don'ts in Japan", which I meticulously read before and after my trip from Tokyo last year. Luxe City Guides are invaluable chic, bite size pockets of information for hip and fabulous travelers-or at least those who want to be.

Paul Theroux's The Great Railway Bazaar will inspire you to hop on a train and see the world via locomotive. The hippie in you might go On the Road, a la Jack Kerouac. And if you're Gen X, like me, and "carry a lot of scars and like the way that sounds" maybe your book is The Beach by Alex Garland. Certain books can stir your soul and excite your imagination about a place you've never been to, or tempt you to experience places and things you've never seen whether they are factual, historical, biographical, fictional, or anecdotal. They draw you in and shape your anticipated experience.

Some destinations owe a percentage of

tourist dollars to best selling authors whose stories have transformed the extraordinary into the mythical. It's hard to think of London without thinking of Harry Potter or New Zealand without the Lord of the Rings or the Louvre without The Da Vinci Code. And yes, there are official tours named after them.

But is there an emblematic book about the Philippines? Is there even a proper travel guide to its cities? I might get some flack for this but I'll stick my neck out and say... I think not. There are bits and pieces but nothing too compelling or worth naming a tour after for that matter. I sort of resent that Manila does not have a Luxe Guide but I understand how it might be difficult to get that guidebook together. So much about what is great about this country is indescribable or insider information. I suppose it is that part that is preserved for the traveler or expat that gives the county more than a passing glance.

Alain de Botton writes that "if our lives are dominated by a search for happiness, then perhaps few activities reveal as much about the dynamics of this quest, in all its ardor and paradoxes, than our travels." They are the ways we express what life might be about. Sort of hard to put your finger on that in this country... many try but I go back to the old saying- it's the journey, not the destination.

economy & business

By CARMENCITA H. ACOSTA

Britain Supports Aquino's PPP Focus

The economic jargon Public-Private Partnership (PPP) refers to a scheme that involves a government service or private business venture which is funded and operated through a partnership of government and one or more private sector companies.

President Benigno Aquino's current focus on Public-Private Partnerships to rev up the country's economic growth has been viewed positively by observers. In line with this, the British Embassy in Manila, in cooperation with other local institutions, invited two PPP experts from the United Kingdom - Edward Farquharson and James Ballingall to conduct workshops on the latest trends and methods with Philippine businessmen and functionaries.

UK Ambassador to Manila Stephen Lillie stated in his remarks, among others: "Britain is very supportive of the Philippines' efforts to develop PPP. There's a simple reason for that: it's because we are supportive of the Philippines. Britain has identified the Philippines as a key emerging power in East Asia. The Philippines is one of the largest countries and a key player in ASEAN. We have every interest in your future success. Last year's economic growth figure of 7% was very impressive especially since it was

accompanied with a 23% increase in bilateral trade between Britain and the Philippines. The outlook going forward is clearly very positive too, and if the essential underpinnings of stronger infrastructure can be put in place, then the prospects will be very bright indeed...

"...I'm also confident that going forward, the UK private sector can make a significant contribution to what you're doing. We have a wealth of experienced British specialists in all fields of consultancy and practice, in managing, structuring and negotiating PPP arrangements. We have international law firms, financial advisers, project managers, risk managers, planners, environmental strategists, designers, and many others.

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British Ambassador Stephen Lillie



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C is for C'Italian

By RAYDON L. REYES Photos by FRANK DIZON



Chris Locker gives us a taste of northern Italian cuisine

By now, people in Metro Manila are already familiar with the Panizza. It's literally a thin pizza roll that has alfalfa and arugula leaves as toppings--giving you a unique experience of eating a favorite Italian dish while also providing a relatively light and healthy meal. In fact, some of the mainstream and fast food Italian restaurants have recently added it to their respective menus. However, what most fans of the Panizza don't know is that it originally came from Pampanga, Philippines.

Swiss cum Italian chef Chris Locker had just opened C'Italian in Clark Field, Pampanga back in 2004 when he noticed a high demand for pizza from his customers. Since he didn't want the restaurant to offer something that people would readily find in any Italian restaurant, Locker decided to experiment. It took him six months of playing with various ingredients, most of which came from northern Italy, before he finally came up with the concept of rolling alfalfa and arugula leaves with a very thin slice of pizza. Hence, the Panizza quickly made it to C'Italian's repertoire and became an instant hit. "The Panizza was originally just an afterthought. But people kept nagging and nagging that they wanted pizza. It was a trial and error thing. And now, it's definitely our specialty," says Locker.

The Panizza became so popular that other establishments started imitating the recipe.

But as the saying goes, nothing beats the original. After all, Locker himself has carefully chosen different pizza flavors that would suit the concept of the dish. Ninety eight percent of the ingredients used in C'Italian are also imported from Italy, Australia, Switzerland, New Zealand, among others. For him, though, the secret of his success all comes down to "simplicity. Real Italian food is not a combination of ten different flavors with nine different layers. I'm also not a fan of drinks that overwhelm flavor." That's why when it comes to alcoholic drinks, he insists that red and white wine are the perfect partners for your food.

Besides the Panizza, Locker wants diners to try out some of their other specialties as well, including pasta and bread that's influenced greatly by northern Italian homecooking. He shares, "I was born and raised in Switzerland. My grandmother was Italian. That's how I happen to have Italian flare. Any

item you find in the menu are the kinds of food that I grew up with in my house."

Foodies will also enjoy the authentic Italian feel of the restaurant, with stone dwellings making you feel what Locker was aiming to show--"the culinary tradition that has evolved over hundreds and hundreds of years." So make that drive to Clark Field and "C" why urban dwellers go all the way to Pampanga for this unique Italian dining experience.

The original Panizza is a light pizza roll served with alfalfa and arugula leaves



A Heritage of Lambanog (Philippine Vodka)

The Heritage Hotel's Riviera Café has found an extraordinary use for the local drink called lambanog. Heretofore used only as a beverage, it is now used as a flavor enhancer, infused in gourmet cuisine. Known as the Philippine version of the Russian vodka for its taste and potency and akin to Grappa for its roots and popularity among the farmers, the painstakingly-prepared lambanog is harvested by farmers climbing 30-foot high coconut trees. Using bamboo and sickle, the farmer collects the sap from the flowers. Subsequently, the sap is fermented and distilled for hours to make lambanog. This beverage is traditionally produced in Quezon Province where the coconut tree grows in abundance. A round of lambanog drinking shots is accompanied by singing and playing of the guitar.

"The lambanog-infused spread of dishes is the latest addition to Riviera Cafés multi-hued international menu for lunch and dinner buffets," enthused Heritage Hotel PR ladies Romina Gervacio and Jo-Ann Emperado. "For foodies, sampling lambanog mixed in the international culinary selection at

the Riviera Café is a short cut to experiencing the traditions and subdued kick of this strong-flavored beverage." Among the lambanog-infused dishes are the following: Marinated King Mackerel Loins with Orange Lambanog Sauce, Crispy Fried Tofu and Chicken with Soya Lambanog Dip, Blue Lambanog Marinated Salmon with Herbs, Lambanog Seasoned Japanese Salad on Peppered Seared Tuna, Lemon Lambanog Marinated Prawn Ceviche and Roast Beef and Vegetable with Balsamic Lambanog Reduction.



This dish has a cute name: Drunken Shrimps

Have A Taste of the World

By ASTRA C. ALEGRE

Empanadas from Chile for starters, beef rendang from Malaysia for your main course and for that perfect sweet finish, how about ending the meal with an apple strudel from Austria or a Lamington cake from Australia? No, you don't need to travel all over the world to sample all these mouth watering dishes -- just drop by the "Tastes of the World" event on March 31 from 10 am to 2 pm at the Urdaneta Village Clubhouse. Over 20 countries will be participating in the said event where visitors can choose from a wide variety of authentic dishes. It will definitely be a culinary treat for all the foodies out there.

The project is organized by the Spouses Head of Mission (SHOM) in cooperation with the International Bazaar Foundation (IBF). Mme. Caecilia Legowo, wife of Indonesian Ambassador Yohanes Kristiano Soeryo Legowo and currently the head of SHOM, says that the goal of the event is "to share and promote the flavours of our countries, to give people the international culinary experience."

But more than just promoting the participants' native cuisine, the event is a fund raising affair as well. "We are going to support

the needy, the sick, underprivileged children, medical institutions etc in line with the basic categories: health, education and livelihood" Mme. Legowo says. "This year we received a lot of proposals from different foundations. We usually pay a visit to their places and ask for the details of their projects, then later we will have meetings to decide and deliberate. The process takes a fairly long time and sometimes it is a hard decision, especially we have received a lot of proposals and our funds are not enough. We ensure that the foundations we donate to really deserve it."

Aside from the food, visitors can also expect entertainment provided by the various participating countries. Raffle tickets can be purchased for Php100 and lucky winners will win exciting prizes from the participating countries and sponsors.

Food coupons worth Php 50 can be also purchased in advance but cash will be accepted on the day of the event itself.

For more information contact 0917-8160765 (Yan) or 0906-2470082/(02)810-7727 (Indira)

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The Bicycle Ride Against HIV

By RAYDON L. REYES Photos courtesy of Janusz Prud



Janusz Prud didn't know what was in store for him when he first arrived in Botswana, Africa back in 1995. Although the Polish priest from the Missionary of Divine Word Missionaries knew about the poverty and the rampant deaths caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, he never expected that the first thing that would greet him during his first days in the country would be a funeral. "The funeral happening on weekends caught my eye, mostly because one village could have eight to ten funerals in one day. Most of those funerals were for young people, aged between 18 and 30, who just died of AIDS," Prud says. He also bore witness to the rampant discrimination against victims of HIV, from the

way they were excluded from cooking food and sharing their respective families' table to the way they were made to believe that the virus was divine punishment for a sin they have committed. Moreover, the number of orphans kept growing in Botswana because after the immediate relatives of the children pass away, nobody would be left to take care of them. "Young people lost hope for the future, parents felt despair over the death of their children, people of many religions were speculating whether the pandemic was God's punishment or not," Prud laments.

It was this depressing scene which inspired him to come up with the bicycle pilgrimage. Along with the African youth from Botswana,

Prud organized a two-week bicycle ride as a form of prayer and a way to raise funds to improve the orphanages for children who were living with the virus. Prud covered a distance of approximately 1,500 kilometers from the north to the south part of the country, encouraging the communities he would encounter to join him in prayer. "The best hugs I ever received in my life were from those people infected with HIV / AIDS when I came back from the trip. They began to see the value of their lives and believe in a brighter future," Prud narrates.

He further pushed the efforts to help the orphans by launching educational programs for Botswanian youths and adults, who also began to act on their own to help those who were afflicted with the virus. "People who lost hope, started to wake up and make a difference in people's lives," Prud says, "We knew that creating a proper environment for their growth was very important to them and the society at large."

After 15 years in Botswana, Prud is now in the Philippines, studying Developmental Psychology. He continues to do his best to inform people about the conditions of Botswana and to advocate against cultural insensitivity and discrimination against those who are afflicted with HIV. For him, understand-

ing, proper education, and prayers are some of the best ways to do your part from this side of the globe. If one person can ride 1,500 kilometers, surely even more people can reach even greater lengths for the same cause.



A different kind of pilgrimage. Prud rides a total of 1,500 km in honor of HIV victims in Botswana, Africa.





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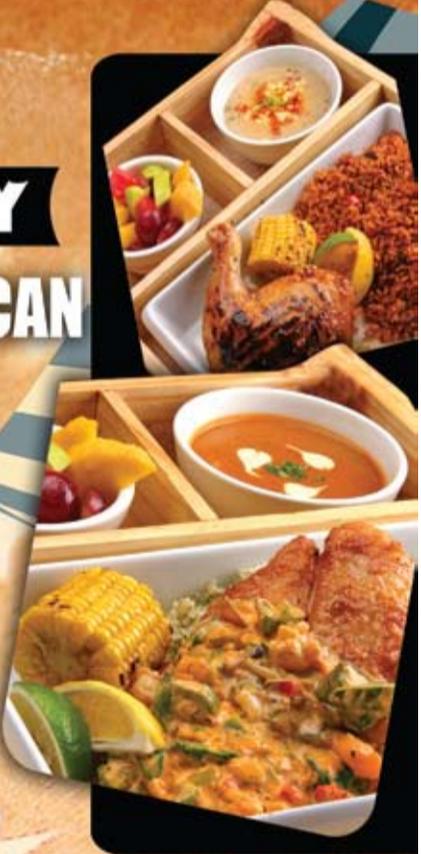
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GUIDE TO ABBREVIATIONS

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AC	- aircon
avail	- available
BO	- best offer
BR	- bedroom
drv	- driver
f-furn	- fully furnished
gdn	- garden
grge	- garage
hws	- hot water system
incl	- includes
mds. rm.	- maids room
prkg.	- parking
qtrs.	- quarters
sty	- storey

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Renovated Science Gallery Opens in Museo Pambata



A new place to play at Museo Pambata

A Science Through Discovery theme room with more exciting, interactive exhibits is now open at the Museo Pambata (Children's Museum). It is designed to help children understand the various factors that affect climate change. Dubbed "I Love My Planet Earth", the room introduces environmental concepts while doing away with complicated jargon.

The museum's president and CEO Nina Yuson said that the exhibits explain basic science concepts on environmental concerns and how one can help in making the world a better place to live in by protecting and conserving our resources.

The largest among Museo Pambata's seven theme rooms, I Love My Planet Earth is a medley of educational hands-on tools for children on several topics: climate change and global warming, renewable and non-renewable sources of energy and solid waste management. Exhibit modules include a floor board game which explores the different ways children can reduce their carbon footprints. There are different scenes from a typical Filipino home comparing the then and now, or how life was simpler and less harmful to the environment many years ago. A simple game for younger children teaches proper waste segregation, and other interactive exhibits tackling the importance of having clean air and water.

Guidebook and checklist are distributed for free to all museum visitors.

US Ambassador Harry K. Thomas, in his speech during the room's opening program, said: "Teaching future generations to cherish, protect, and preserve the environment is critical to every nation. It requires vision, perseverance, and passion." The renovation of the room was made possible through a grant from Motorola Foundation USA, which supports educational programs on science and technology. I Love My Planet Earth was created by MP's team of exhibit developers led by architect and stage designer Joselito Tecson. To ensure the child-friendliness of the exhibits, focused group discussions with children ages seven to 13 from private schools through the Gakken Science Experiment Classroom, and public schools through the museum's Children's Advocacy Program were conducted during the planning stage of I Love My Planet Earth.

Museo Pambata is the country's premier children's interactive museum which opened in 1994. "I Love My Planet Earth" is only the first of three rooms in the museum to be refurbished this year. *Katawan Ko* (My Body Works!) a room that tackles health and the human body and *Kalikasan* (Environment) are also set to be re-launched within the year.

Museo Pambata is located on Roxas Blvd. corner South Drive, Ermita, Manila; tel. (02) 523-1797 to 98; www.museopambata.org

Gulf Air Opens Falcon Gold Lounge at Heathrow

By ASTRA C. ALEGRE

Premium passengers of Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, have a great reason to celebrate, with the opening of the new "Falcon Gold" lounge at Terminal 4 in Heathrow, London's busiest airport. The new lounge is one of the largest in the terminal, with 6500 sq. ft. of carefully planned space that promises to serve as an oasis from the stressful environment that inevitably accompanies heavy passenger traffic movement in the largest airport in the United Kingdom.

"With airports increasingly becoming busier, lounges are no longer just a place to wait for flights or transit spots between connections," Gulf Air chief executive officer, Samer Majali, remarked. "Premium passengers look for an oasis of peace and comfort, expect higher levels of facilities, and personalized service. I am sure it will be a refreshingly different experience for our premium passengers."

Together with Yasser Al Hiddi, first secretary of the embassy of Bahrain in the United Kingdom, Marcus Bernhardt, Gulf Air chief services officer, and Lloyd Cromwell Griffiths, member of the Gulf Air board of directors, Majali cut the ceremonial ribbon at the inauguration of the new lounge.

The new state-of-the-art Falcon Gold lounge combines contemporary design and architecture with Arabic influences. Its open plan design gives it a sense of expansive space.

You can settle comfortably in the plush lounge chairs and sofas and while your time away watching the runway and apron through a four meter floor to ceiling high glass wall. Or be lulled by the piped-in melodic chants of Middle Eastern music while the avant-garde mood lighting changes in sync with the time of day.

The lounge's central area features a fully stocked bar with a wide selection of drinks. And at the self-service buffet in the dining area, you can grab a quick bite or choose from a wide selection of Halal menu. There's an exclusive Illy Café counter serving a variety of Italian coffee blends. The fully equipped Business Center has super-fast iMac computers, printers, Fax and other office support functions. And for those who need to stay connected, there is wi-fi throughout the lounge.

Two well-furnished private family rooms can be combined into one large room. There are large screen LCD TVs as well as a wide selection of newspapers and magazines. There are wash rooms and showers, baby change facilities and secure lockers. And for the ultimate refuge for peace and quiet, there is a prayer room.

Open from 6:00 am to 10:30 p.m. daily, the lounge can accommodate up to 110 persons and all Platinum, Gold and Silver card holding FFP members of Gulf Air, and premium class ticket holders of Gulf Air's code-share partner airlines.



Gulf Air's Falcon Lounge is officially launched

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This affordable package includes a twin-sharing/double occupancy room complete with breakfast for two and welcome drinks. Pampering can begin immediately as this package includes free manicure or pedicure for two at the SM Kenko Spa and Salon, the first authentic Japanese health spa in the country, located at the 5th and 6th floors.

On the other hand, the salon offers its signature massage Sparomatherapy, among other massage types and relaxation therapies. You can also indulge in Japanese Hot Hydrojet Pool and Japanese Dry Sauna, all first in the country.

The Le Amoretto Bar and Café at the second floor offers free dessert for a minimum of P1,000 on food and beverages. This Spanish inspired bar best renowned for its coffee, pizza, pasta and pastries also offers complimentary morning or afternoon snacks for the privileged guests. For the same minimum P1,000 spend, the Kaishu Restaurant at the ground floor, likewise offers a free appetizer.

Parents can include a maximum of two children below 12 years old in their rooms for free to make this graduation package more exciting and fun for the whole family. The hotel also offers free shuttle service to SM Mall of Asia or Robinsons Place Manila, both of which are just a few minutes away.

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A Convenient Way to Live in Crosswinds

Live a life full of beauty and convenience at the charming Crosswinds community in Tagaytay as the 18th Finds Convenience Store was recently opened in the village's Deux Pointe area. With a ribbon-cutting ceremony led by Brittany Corporation chief operating officer Camille Villar, Vista Land chief executive officer Jing Serrano and Jerry Navarette with the presence of senator Manny Villar and wife Cynthia Villar, the store opened doors to residents, guests and prospective clients who want to experience the splendour and ease of living in Crosswinds. Congratulations! For more information, call 794-9999 or 584-1182 and visit www.brittany.com.ph.



1 Leading the ribbon-cutting ceremony to formally open the Finds Village Store in Crosswinds, Tagaytay are (front row, from left) Jerry Navarette, Brittany Corporation chief operating officer Camille Villar and Vista Land chief executive officer Jing Serrano
 2 Noel Bautista with Baby and Tom Pastor
 3 The Finds Village Store in Crosswinds is always open to serve the village residents and guests with its wide array of products
 4 The country's only licensed bagpiper Roy Espiritu performs during the opening of the Finds Village Store
 5 Brittany Corporation marketing head Nova Noval with Camille Villar and Brittany Corporation's architect Verge Paule

Minerva Finds a New Luxe Destination

The fun-loving "Everybody's Group" led by the jovial Minerva Tanseco recently included the upscale dining and lounge haven Society Lounge as one of their favorite places for celebrating good times. The French Fashion Food-inspired cuisine prepared by seasoned chef and general manager Patrice Freuslon plus the chic French chateau-inspired interiors continually sets the bar higher for the dining standards of this lovely group who are always out to get the best value for their money. Congratulations to chef Patrice for making Society Lounge the destination of choice of these ladies!



(left to right) Minerva Tanseco, Chona Moran and Lulu Silverio; (Standing, from left) Lulu Silverio, Marge Ortigas, seasoned chef Patrice Freuslon, doctor Ed Fores, (seated, from left) Beng Fores, Nachi Ortigas and Margie Moran Floirendo

Celebrating 25 Years of Love

Spreading the joys of being together for 25 years are Sea Wind beach resort president Boy Jarantilla and wife Ruth as they recently celebrated their silver wedding anniversary in Boracay. With their closest friends and a sand castle-inspired cake, the couple reaffirmed their love and commitment for each other as they renewed their vows and relished their best moments together during the last 25 years. Happy anniversary, Boy and Ruth! Here's to the next decades! Cheers!



(clockwise) Say your precious "I do" in Sea Wind beach resort as it provides the perfect setting for that dream wedding or for your anniversary or any type of celebration; The silver couple of Boracay, Sea Wind president Boy Jarantilla and wife Ruth pose for a photo beside their sand castle-inspired anniversary cake; (Standing, from left) Monic Quiogue, lawyer Bobet Malaga, Boy Jarantilla, JJ Coçjin, (seated) Susan Coçjin, Ruth Jarantilla and restaurateur Emma Lagoc

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UNCLE CHEFFY IV: At Solenad, Nuvali Sta. Rosa Laguna

A Jazz Concert at the Museum

Imagine, Noel Cabangon's Kung Maputi Na Ang Buhok Ko being sung by an Israeli artist. It is enough to make even the most poised audience go wild. That is exactly what happened when Aya Korem sang the song, accompanied by Adam Ben Amitai on the guitar, for an intimate concert held recently at the lobby of the Ayala Museum.

Both artists were invited by Israel Ambassador Zvi Vapni to come to the Philippines to take part in the Philippine International Jazz and Arts Festival. It was their first time in the country and it was also their first time working together. Aya says, "We actually have separate careers but we joined forces for this event."

An equal mix of English and Hebrew songs made up the concert. Both artists agreed that it is definitely easier to sing in their own language but as Aya, noted they have been exposed to British and American music all their lives which makes them comfortable singing in English. Aside from being singers, both Aya and Adam are accomplished songwriters as well. The audience was treated to their original compositions such as Aya's Miracles. Adam remarks, "We both write songs which are personal songs, come out of our life and our experience."

A huge fan of the Beatles, Adam has been playing music since he was young. His father,

who is also a musician, taught him how to play the guitar when he was about seven years old. He recalls, "Lots of music around the house. It was very natural." On the other hand, Aya started singing when she was fifteen and she studied music in college. In high school, the songs of Joni Mitchell and Tori Amos were the ones she listened to.

Asked what they want to share to their audience through their music, Aya shares, "The experience that I want my audience to have is to get to know me through my music and second is be moved by it." For Adam he simply states "It's all about peace and love."



Adam Ben Amitai and Aya Korem at the Ayala Museum

Cabinet Secretaries at N. Samar's Launch Project

By PETER D. PAREDES

Catarman Northern Samar – Four cabinet secretaries along with some regional directors were in Catarman last February 18 for the launch of the Registered Nurse Health Enhancement Local Service Project and Convergence for Northern Samar. Secretaries Enrique Ona (DOH), Butch Abad (DBM), Armin Luis-tro (DepED) and Dinky Soliman (DSWD) were given welcome honors by Governor Paul Daza, Deputy Speaker Raul Daza, provincial and municipal officials and employees.

The program, held at the Ibabao Hall of the new Capitol building in Catarman, featured the following: unveiling of the Universal Health Care Slogan and Logo by Ona and Dr. Ivanhoe Escartin; turn-over of RN Heals project by Ona; recognition and handover of logo to the new Pantawid Pamilya municipalities by Soliman, Director Letecia Corillo and mayors of each town; DepEd MOA signing on national and local government counterparting for classroom construction; and PhilHealth card distribution by Ona, PhilHealth regional vice president Walter Bacareza, and Gov. Daza.

The governor announced that the original 17,000 family beneficiaries will be increased to 37,000 families this year for Northern Samar. More than 19,000 households will benefit

with the addition of the 10 towns. These are families from the towns of Biri, Capul, Gamay, Laoang, Lavezares, Rosario, San Isidro, San Jose, San Vicente and Victoria.

According to Soliman the national government has been downloading around Php21 Million annually to Northern Samar alone under the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program of 4Ps. In previous interviews, Gov. Daza said this additional millions of cash downloads to Northern Samar will boost the economy of the province.

Ona announced that the national government will hire 10,000 registered nurses for the RN Heals project with 1,149 of these nurses allocated to Eastern Visayas and 201 nurses to Northern Samar. They will all be assigned to different rural areas in the province.



Northern Samar Gov. Paul Daza expressed his gratitude for the projects and programs brought to the province by four secretaries who joined the launching rites of RN Heals project on February 18, 2011 as commitment of the Aquino administration to combat poverty.

Quick and Automated Food Delivery

Other than the 170 restaurants in its repertoire, Quick Delivery leads the food delivery industry because of its completely automated system. That means that Quick Delivery takes care of everything—from the time you order food to the time your company has to organize receipts. "The problem for the company is that it takes a lot of time to organize the receipts. Our systems takes care of that for your company," shares Eugenio Gonzalez, owner of Quick Delivery.

As such, companies will find it convenient to order food in bulk. "Let's say you have your meal allowance for the company. We can automate the food ordering process, and limit the delivery of food to make the corporation more efficient."

But more than this automation, Gonzalez asserts that the reason why the company has become so successful is because everyone likes food. Not to mention their delivery personnel are very efficient and have a "warrior mentality." "It's all about finding out

what customers want," Gonzalez says, adding that when it comes to operating a business like Quick Delivery, "a lot of it is observation and common sense."

Their offerings include Borthers Burger, Italiannis, Banapple, California Kitchen, among others. Go to their website <http://quickdelivery.ph> for their menu. To order, call 2121212. As they say in Quick Delivery, they deliver "two anyone."



Tirta Spa, Boracay Island



On 11th November 2010, at the prestigious AsiaSpa Baccarat Crystal Awards in Hong Kong, Tirta Spa was named "DAY SPA OF THE YEAR 2010" by a panel of leading spa industry experts.

This is an amazing achievement for a product that is only 3 years old, in a highly competitive market where competitors open in Asia almost every month and a proud moment indeed, both for owner and spa director Ms En Calvert and for all of her staff - the ultimate reward for all the hard work that is involved in creating something so special and unique.

Winning the "Best Day Spa in Asia" award is a result not only of using the highest quality products and offering innovative treatments with therapeutic benefits for body, mind and soul, in a setting of unique architectural design, but is also about the impeccable service that comes from the heart of each and every Tirta Spa therapist.

Ms En Calvert says, "I worked 24/7, almost single-handedly, to create Tirta Spa on Boracay and, having won our first award just

1 year after opening, a second award less than a year later and now this third award after only 3 years in business, am finding it nigh on impossible to express in words the emotions that I feel! Winning is testament not only to my studies and hard work, but also to that of all of my staff from whom, over the years, I could not have asked for an ounce more commitment and loyalty and who demonstrate such passion for their art."

The success of Tirta Spa is the result of years of hard work, intensive training and maintaining the highest overall standards in the spa industry, evidence of which can be seen clearly in the number of repeat clients and referrals that are received. For the past 3 years, since opening in 2007, the management of Tirta Spa has been actively promoting an authentic, holistic spa product and educating clients that the treatments and therapies offered are not based on short-term trends, or the fads of a particular season, but are truly focused on long-term wellness and rejuvenation. In this way, clients are secure in the knowledge that whatever the

season or time of year that they visit Tirta Spa, they will leave, after their treatment, feeling fulfilled, rejuvenated and utterly satisfied.

A visit to Tirta Spa is a complete experience, not only of time spent luxuriating in world-class therapies, enjoying the ambience created by the stunning architecture, Asian artifacts and landscaped grounds, but of feeling the love and true passion for what they do so well and the spirituality that pervades every corner of this holistic retreat – and makes Tirta Spa truly unique.

The crystal awards were provided by Baccarat jewellery.

The winners of the AsiaSpa Awards 2010 are:

- Destination Spa of the Year: Kamalaya, Koh Samui, Thailand
- Urban Spa of the Year: MiraSpa, The Mira, Hong Kong
- Day Spa of the Year: Tirta Spa, Boracay, Philippines
- New Spa of the Year: The Aman Spa, Amanfayun Hangzhou, China
- Men's Spa of the Year: i.sawan Residential Spa & Club, Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok, Thailand
- Spa Retreat of the Year: Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat, Australia
- Eco-Spas of the Year: Spa Alila, Alila Villas Uluwatu, Bali, Indonesia
- Socially Responsible Spa of the Year: Himalayan Healers, Nepal
- Medi-Spa of the Year: S Medical Spa, Bangkok, Thailand
- Asian Spa Capital of the Year: Bali, Indonesia
- Spa Association of the Year: Asia-Pacific Spa

& Wellness Coalition (APSWC)

- Spa Event of the Year: Global Spa Summit, Istanbul, Turkey
- Spa Personality of the Year: Susan Stein, Jari Menari, Bali Indonesia
- Spa Academy of the Year: Banyan Tree Spa Academy, Thailand
- In-Spa Training of the Year: ESPA
- Spa Design of the Year: Oazia Spa, Oazia Spa Villas, Bali, Indonesia
- Best Children's Spa Menu: little lamb's pediatric wellness place, Philippines
- Spa Treatment of the Year: 'Opium', Sense of Touch, Repulse Bay, Hong Kong
- Holistic Treatment of the Year: 'Quantum Emotional / Physical Release', Chiva-Som, Hua Hin, Thailand
- Men's Spa Treatment of the Year: 'Gentlemen Only', The Oriental Spa, The Landmark Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong
- Spa's Therapist Team of the Year: Jari Menari, Bali, Indonesia
- Most Innovative Spa of the Year: The Spa at The edge, Bali, Indonesia
- Spa Product of the Year: Aromatherapy Associates
- Anti-Ageing Product of the Year: Somme Institute
- Natural Product of the Year: ila
- Men's Product of the Year: Pevonia Botanica, 'Spa Care for Him'
- Spa Cuisine of the Year: The Farm at San Benito, Philippines
- Spa Marketing of the Year: Chuan Spa, Langham Hotels & Resorts

cultural calendar

Compiled by CARMENCITA H. ACOSTA



Igorot on Wheels

Synonyms for Antonyms

Don Djerassi Dalmacio uses various media – painting over ready made images, 3D images and light painting to blur perceptions by fitting layers of images into an amalgam of meanings; *ongoing until March 19, Blanc - Crown Tower; call 0920-9276436*

Instituto Cervantes Presents

Spanish Films (with English subtitles)

Te Doy Mis Ojos (I Give You my Eyes)
Pilar has a violent husband and she suffers his blows. After nine years of marriage she escapes from their home with their only son in search of safety. When her husband pleads with her to come back home, she realizes that she still loves him passionately. *March 19, 4 p.m.*

Mataharis (Mataharis)

Eva, Carmen and Ines work as private detectives, solving other peoples' problems. Soon, they realize that they, too, have their own private problems to solve. *March 19, 6 p.m.*

El Alquimista Impaciente (The Impatient Alchemist)

A man is found dead inside his motel room and his woman companion has disappeared. The police identify the man as married with two children but cannot solve the mystery of his death. Three months later, the dead body of a woman is found in a forest. It is presumably that of the missing paramour and the police once again conduct an investigation. *March 26, 4 p.m.*

Para Que No Me Olvides (That You May Not Forget Me)

Irene is a single parent who has worked hard to raise her son David who is now a brilliant architecture student. David shows every sign of fulfilling his mother's hopes for his future. Their worlds collide when David falls in love with Clara and ignores his mother's objection that the shop girl has nothing in common with him. The grandfather is now forced to act as a buffer to the emotional strain in the family. The unforeseen death of David renders the story a tragedy along the classic Greek. *March 26, 6 p.m.*

Poetry Reading

Mexican poet and novelist Javier Sicilia (born 1956) will read from his rich collection of Spanish poems. He is editor-in-chief of *Poesía* magazine, director of *Ixtus* magazine and professor of Literature, Aesthetics and Scriptwriting at the Universidad La Salle de Cuernavaca. *March 22, 7 p.m.*

Exhibit: Spanish Civil War

The extended run of this photo exhibit featuring the articles and photos of Spanish newspaper war correspondents brings to the fore the sufferings endured by the Spanish nation during the military rebellion led by Francisco Franco against the government of the Second Republic of

Spain. The war was fought not only in continental Spain but also in Spanish Morocco, Spanish Sahara, Canary Islands, Balearic Islands, Spanish Guinea, the Mediterranean and the North Sea. *Until March 25. All presentations, which are free to the public, are held at Instituto Cervantes, Manila; call (02) 526-1482.*

Bayanihan Onstage

The world famous Bayanihan National Dance Company of the Philippines regales audiences both young and old; *March 19, 10 a.m., Museo Pambata, Manila; call (02) 523-1797/98*

Every Friday until August the Bayanihan presents different numbers from their international repertoire of songs and dances that have captivated international audiences. 6 p.m., Philippine Women's University, Manila campus; for tickets call (02) 525-1685

Repertory Philippines

"The 39 Steps" is a comic theatrical adaptation by Patrick Barlow from the espionage novel by John Buchan. The Philippine presentation is directed by Ana Abad Santos. *Show dates are March 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19 and 20, with shows on Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and matinees on Saturdays and Sundays at 3:30 p.m. Onstage Greenbelt 1, Makati; call (02) 571-6926*

Tesselated Lives

The University of the Philippines (UP) Baguio Fine Arts students present a visual arts exhibit that shows tradition encountering modernity and the past meeting with the present. More than 15 works consisting of photographs, sculptures, paintings and print are shown; *ongoing until March 30, National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) Gallery. Intramuros, Manila; call (02) 527-2192 local 512*

Tapping the Vein

The exhibit commemorates the fifth death anniversary of visual artist Al Manrique. Featured are his paintings, prints and photographs that have never been shown before. *Ongoing until April 3 at the University of the Philippines P Jorge B. Vargas Museum (UPVM); call (02) 928-1927*

Ateneo de Manila Presents

The exhibit features four different shows – "The Inception of Deviation," "A Route to Globalization" "Breaking In. Breaking Out," and "Salvaged Antiquity" - of contemporary artists from Cebu. *Ongoing until March 27, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City; call 0917-8318353*

Let There Be UV Light

By ASTRA C. ALEGRE Photo by MARIO ALDEGUER

There was no ribbon cutting at the opening of the homecoming exhibition of Sydney-based Filipino cartoonist and artist, Edd Aragon, in the Yuchengco Museum at the RCBC Plaza on Ayala Ave. in Makati, simply because there was no ribbon to cut. Instead, there was the "switching on" of the lights, UV lights, that is.

Entitled "Under a Different Light", the exhibition features 25 paintings of female figures that can be seen only under ultra-violet light. "I have never seen an artist in Australia do what I do," Aragon says. "They have applied some luminous paint on chairs, or on sculptures, but not as a paint pigment to use as a traditional artist. That's the difference."

Aragon, who has spent more than 20 years creating editorial cartoons, comics and caricatures for newspapers and magazines both in the Philippines and Australia, had been experimenting with pigments that react to ultraviolet light since 2004. It all started after he was commissioned to paint murals for a Sydney restaurant which had back lit fluorescent lights.

At first he experimented with different vehicles, "varnishes, sealants," he relates. He formulated his own pigments with the help of a chemist friend. "Then I took it from there. I mixed fluid with the pigments so I can paint like regular painting. I still love using sable brushes. That's the most challenging part," he says, "using this medium like water color. It's control with a pleasant intent, like painting a flower, to share its beauty. It goes back to the original intent of the artist, which is to express himself."

He says it's like painting with liquid optic fiber. "The half tones, the shadows are left out because the canvass appears as black," Aragon explains. "Using these pigments are a tool

to bring out images lurking in the dark." He surprised even himself. "It is still an ordinary painting but it glows. It has a three dimensional effect, which I myself, I was awestruck at the same time."

He wrote in his blog: "A few years later the process became second nature and gave a comforting self-confidence to authorize finality to its exploration. It was time to settle down and bring back to life my old punk-haired sables and seriously romance the medium. The old dry-brush technique was rehashed to become a new religion in the arid desert of my adopted land. It was rapture for this a la prima atheist, the writing on the wall has changed. It announced a genesis of a line... "Let there be UV light!"

"This particular Manila exhibit is a humble tribute to women whose images bask under a different light," he noted. "Most of painting subjects are those of Filipino and Australian models and also include two vicarious works based on old photographs of two indigenous women, one by Eduardo Masferre and the other a detail from a 1900 photograph by a US government photographer posted in the Mountain Province at the time." The images of the half naked ethnic women, one a Kalinga woman and the other, a Bontoc woman, convey the "purity and joy of being a woman," Aragon says. "I've also included the image of my own mother carrying the 2 two-year old me in 1951." His mother, whom he has not seen in 15 years, now lives in Canada. "I thank her. I have somehow closed the arc of a mysterious loop."

The exhibit opening was graced by the presence of no less than Ambassador Alfonso Yuchengco, together with Australian Ambassador Rod Smith. The exhibit runs until April 20.



Artist Edd Aragon in front of his works

Grundle-ing For A Night

By TIMOTHY JAY IBAY

It's been called the music that killed metal. It was the last true rock scene. The worn-out clothes, the unkempt hair, the unabashed air of apathy, it will forever hold a place in the hearts of today's yuppies, as they will continue to act like musical snobs when comparing grundle with whatever these kids are listening to nowadays. Recently, one of the premier movers of the 90's grundle scene took to these islands to allow thousands of its fans to revisit that golden age in rock.

Yes, after nearly two decades, the Stone Temple Pilots finally made their way to Manila. Upon word of the tour date being confirmed, everyone in their mid-twenties to early thirties who's a fan of rock felt the thick excitement brewing. And just like that, Scott Weiland, Dean and Robert DeLeo and Eric Kretz arrived.

It didn't matter that it was the middle of the week, it didn't matter that the show was announced relatively on short notice. The fans

trooped to the Araneta Coliseum to rock out with one of the biggest bands to visit these shores in a while.

STP let the frenzy out of the gates with "Crackerman", and by the time Weiland hit the second chorus, it was clear that the fusion of nostalgia and untempered energy would only grow with every hit the band churned out.

Weiland, in spite of his past bouts with his personal demons, still crooned like the young man on the rocking chair in their unforgettable MTV Unplugged set, and roared out his dissident lyrics when he had to. The DeLeo boys partnered to steer the crowd through their heavy riffs and Kretz made sure the band packed the punch by banging on those drums like 20 years have never passed.

Currently, it's yet to be known if that memorable night has truly sunk in to the minds of the thousands in attendance.



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Civil unrest in Libya has raised concerns that the political crisis might spread to other oil-producing nations. As such, oil prices have reached an all-time high since January 2011. In fact, pump prices have jumped an average of USD 0.39 per gallon since the Libyan uprising began in mid-February. As such, we here at Expat ask, **"What can the average person in the Philippines do to conserve oil amidst these conditions?"**

Louise Ricci
American
Legal, Thomson Reuters



Considering I haven't driven in over a month, I had to look up the prices in my home town. Wow, I had no idea the price went up so high! When I left, I think gas prices were about USD2.80 a gallon. Now they're between USD3.50 to 3.90. That's quite a difference in a month! Taking public transportation and car pooling is a big way to conserve gasoline. The others would be walking or riding a bike. Attempting to do errands more efficiently, like mapping out the stores and stops that need to be made, and do them all in one trip rather than going back home and leaving again, will help as well.

Verity Cabigao
Filipino Expat
Crew, Qatar Airways



Carpooling is a good way to save gas. Also, always make sure that the car is running smoothly. It shouldn't have any leaks. My dad says that it's more practical if you have your gas tank full than to always stop for gas every day. Also, if there's heavy traffic, park your car at the mall and just take the train. I just want to add that here in the Middle East, there has been no problem when it comes to gasoline. Water is more expensive here.

Juan Carlos De Terry
Spanish
Owner, Terry's Restaurant



First of all, try to maximize what you already have. When something is free, like water, you don't appreciate it. It's taken for granted. You're not motivated to do something to save it. It's only when we have big problems when you get conscious because that's when your common sense starts working.

Anson Yu
Filipino-Chinese
Writer



A good way to conserve oil would be to make the commuting experience more pleasant. And we can do this by improving infrastructure. If you improve infrastructure, this makes the trip from the train station to the bus station, for example, easier and less of a hassle. We get motivated to use the buses and the trains because they become more accessible.

Johan Snijckers
Belgian
Deputy Head of Contracts & Finance Section, European Union



I walk a lot instead of taking a car. In Europe, we are very energy-conscious. When we go out of the room, we do not leave the lights on.

Philippe Willems
Belgian
Director, BKS



In our company, we explain to people to reuse the tools they have. It is better for the environment. It is a question of education. If we reuse, there is no need to extract more minerals.



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