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End the Silence of the Gagged!



Artwork/Steely Dhan Caballero

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EDITORIAL



A SLAP ON THE FACE OF DEMOCRACY

“NO LAW shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances”.

This is the line, provided under Article 3 of the Bill of Rights Section 4, that protects our right to express our thoughts and opinions

about our government. As citizens of a democratic nation, we are free to say what we think of how our government officials are doing, whether positive or negative, without fear of getting imprisoned or criminalized.

Or so we thought, until last September 12, when the Cybercrime Prevention Act was signed by the President.

Everything seems to be okay at first glance, as it targets computer hacking, identity theft, forgery and child pornography. But when you get to the fourth content-related offense in Section 4 of RA 10175, things get a little unconstitutional.

What the libel clause of the law means to do, in plain and simple terms, is gag the people. Contrary to

what some people think, it includes everyone, not just journalists. The clause means to stop anyone from complaining or from airing out any bad assessments of the government, as these can be classified as libel. Libel is defined as “the public and malicious imputation of a crime, or of a vice or defect, real or imaginary, or any act, omission, condition, status,

or circumstance tending to cause the dishonor, discredit, or contempt of a natural or juridical person...” in the Revised Penal Code. What’s even worse is that the law is tagged as *mala prohibita*, as distinguished from *mala in se*. As written in Ateneo School of Law professor Atty. Mel Sta. Maria’s article, for *mala in se*, the intention to do wrong is an essential



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MORE THAN JUST THE COLORS

KIRSTEN ILAJAS
NEW AGE SPOLIARIUM



A PRESIDENT asking his nation's support and sympathy. The highest court of the land steadfast in defending its decisions. A legislature divided in their allegiance. Militant groups marching the streets asking for their leader's resignation. And a country, where almost all battles, allegiance and principles are signified by different colors of the ribbon.

After the PDAF controversy comes another issue on government funding and spending. This time PNoy's Disbursement Acceleration Program is placed in spotlight. DAP according to Budget and Management Secretary Florencio Abad is the system wherein, government projects that need to spend large amounts in shorter periods will be funded or aided by government savings. Compared to PDAF where funds will be given to senators and congressmen for discretionary projects, DAP is only a system that will aid projects that are already ongoing. PNoy claims that DAP has helped the Philippine economy.

However, Supreme Court declared DAP unconstitutional. The budget for implementing projects shall be used for the specific projects that they are allotted for by the congress. Another reason for its unconstitutionality is that the "activities and programs [are] not covered by appropriations in the General Appropriations Act." Also, cross-boarder transfers of savings from the executive to other branches. SC declared it unconstitutional despite PNoy's claims that DAP was in "good-faith."

Militant groups and people opposing this DAP has filed impeachment complaints against the president. They claim that the president has committed culpable violation of the Constitution. They poured their dismay in protests and in criticizing DAP in social media. And in defense of SC's decision, they ask, "what

kind of president does not know the laws of the land?"

With the different views, each side is not giving up on its principles and interpretations of the law. PNoy asked his supporters to wear yellow ribbons as a sign of allegiance. In defense with their decision SC asked its employees and those who side with them to wear black ribbons. And as for those who clamor for PNoy's impeachment, peach ribbons. And even the State of the Nation Address was more like of a what-ribbon-or-color-are-you-wearing.

Thinking of this, I asked a student, "what ribbon will you be wearing?" He answered, "I'll go for the yellow, PNoy's from a good family." And I asked another. And she answered, "I'll be wearing black. My mom is a judge." And so I wonder, is it really up to the ribbon?

The colors of the ribbons have determined each Filipino's allegiance. We can recall, from the Marcos regime, yellow was the color of freedom. On elections, expect a parade of colors. On protests, tie black ribbons. But more than just the ribbons that we place on our chests, do we really understand and try to comprehend on these issues? More than calling out to people to wear these ribbons or to side with what we believe, have we really made them understand?

The different colors of the ribbons have somehow signified a country that is not divided by views, but just a country divided by different colors. And what difference does it make?

As Filipinos, it is our right to know and our task to understand. More than just siding with what or whom, let us know our laws and be vigilant. Vigilance would be a great unifying factor for a country that wants freedom. 🌐



Artwork/Kristoffer Jan L. Tipon

element. However, for *mala prohibita* laws, which include libel, there need not be a criminal mind. The mere perpetuation of the prohibited act is enough. Merely liking a status or photo about a politician who wrote a law that disregards constitutional rights can be deemed as libelous and can put you in jail.

The libel clause in the law simply shows the type of people we have sitting in the government of our supposedly "democratic" country. They have shown that democracy is a mere tag and they have no pretensions about it. Democracy is supposed to be a government by the

people. By passing this law, the very essence of democracy has been thrown out the window and right at the faces of the Filipinos.

The question that remains now is this: are we going to remain silent now that our rights are taken blatantly from us? Are we simply going to accept this and live with it? What we need is collective action that will remind the government who the bosses are. They don't get to repress us and get away with it. We get to say stop when things go too far. Because in this democratic country, and as the President said himself, we are the bosses! 🌐

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A DEGREE OF SEPARATION

MA. KRISTINA CAMELIA NARDO/ADJUSTING THE FRAMES



APART FROM her famous pick-up lines, Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago also got the attention of her audience when she said that she does not want an idiot to become president.

The chairperson of the Senate Committee on Constitutional Amendments said she opposes any motion to change the constitution. But if ever there will be, she said that she wants to add another qualification in the constitution for the positions of president, vice president, senator and representative: they must be college graduates.

The cruciality of education mattered so much to the expert in International Law that she praised Ruby Tuason as a witness who is "perfect, intelligent and competent." Though Tuason said that she did not finish college,

at least Tuason, the senator said, was college-educated. This is in contrast with her view of Janet Lim-Napoles whom she belittled in the presence of the Senate by saying that the alleged architect of the pork barrel scam could not have pulled it off without anyone backing her up.

But education is not the measure for a person's dedication to serve the people. To have a seat at the three important branches of government does not only require an intelligent mind. It also requires a compassionate heart. Being in public office means doing public service.

Senator Manuel "Lito" Lapid, for example, admits that he only had little formal education. But he initiated what is now known as the "Free Legal Assistance Act of 2010" - an act that grants

legal service to those who cannot afford it. In return, lawyers can have as much as 10 percent deduction in their annual income tax. He said his inspiration came from a wrongful conviction of a poor prisoner.

I am not saying that the former silver screen hero has dirty or clean hands, especially with the ongoing investigations of the PDAF scam, nor that all who have degrees are greedy pigs. All I want to say is that he has done something significant to make the heavy burden lighter for those who need it. So far, his name has not been dragged to any plunder cases compared to others who studied in prestigious universities.

Now, perhaps someone with a degree did plan the complex scam to steal the hard earned contribution of

the Filipinos, thus refuting Santiago's viewpoint. If this is the sad reality, then it is education wasted.

I recognize the importance of education and would really want to see leaders who are competent. But in this nation where the gap between the rich and the poor is wide, only those who have the financial advantage and those granted with scholarships can finish their studies. The best education in our eyes are those that can be measured through how much it costs. The suffering reality of the marginalized is, most of the time, foreign to those who have lived in comfort.

As Senator Santiago said, even those applying to become a part of the police force must have a college degree. But one of the qualifications to become the

president, vice-president, senator and representative is to win during the elections. Only the citizens, through their votes, can do that. This is the difference between a person applying to become part the police force and a person aiming for a government position.

Though I find Senator Santiago's proposed change as something that completely makes sense, it is not necessary. What is clear though is that the valueability of education that the well-known politician emphasizes is, without any doubt, worth admiring. Education is important. To use it wisely is also of equal importance. Education does not define a person's character. It is what he or she desires to accomplish using it. 🌐

FOR A SENATE-LESS PHILIPPINES

CHRISTOPHER ED CABOVERDE/THE OPTIMISTIC PESSIMIST



IT IS AMAZING that the Philippines is still utilizing the bicameral system, in which there are two chambers in the legislature.

The Philippines is not a federal state; it is a unitary state. The Philippines has inherited the bicameral system from the federal United States. The bicameral system is more suitable for federal countries as it can balance the interests of the different states and the people through equal representation.

In the United States, its House of Representatives represents the people living in the smaller districts while its Senate represents each

state. With the Philippines being a unitary state, there are no states to represent to in Congress in the first place, making the Senate's existence as redundant.

Moreover, the bicameral system can be a tool to prevent bills from being hastily passed without proper consideration and to prevent dictatorship according to its supporters. However, basing on history, the experience of other states with unicameral legislatures shows that there are ways to prevent aforementioned events.

In Finland, a country with a unicameral parliament, the president may ask the Supreme Court to check the

constitutionality of a bill that he or she has received from parliament. The president may also decide to refuse signing it; this delays its passage. However, the parliament may pass the bill again which becomes law even without the president's signature.

As a form of comparison, despite having a unicameral parliament, Finland remained to be one of the most democratic countries in the world, ranking 9 out of 165 in the Democracy Index 2013 of the Economist Intelligence Unit.

In the Philippine context, the 1987 Philippine Constitution has provided suffi-

cient checks and balances to prevent the president from becoming a dictator. Whenever people have disagreements with the constitutionality of a bill, they may file a petition for a writ of certiorari in the Supreme Court for it to review its constitutionality. For example, detractors of the RH Law filed petitions in the Supreme Court to review the law's constitutionality. Also, just like the Finnish parliament being able to pass again a bill that the president refused to sign, the Constitution states that Congress has the power to override presidential vetoes.

Hypothetically speaking, if ever the Philippines adopts the unicameral system, a

single-chambered Congress can still override presidential vetoes. Furthermore, what or who would ratify international treaties without the Senate? Simple, the unicameral Congress can handle that.

Hence, it is time to abolish the Senate. 🌐

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Always Prepared. A firetruck is on standby awaiting for the next emergency it needs to respond to. Photo/Charydel Cassandra Malintad

JESHER JOSHUA ARSENI0

A TYPHOON-FREE City. One of the Safest Cities in the Philippines. These monikers are commonplace when one describes Davao City. However, after a recent string of natural calamities hit the city, one is left with a question to ponder: Is Davao City prepared enough?

Disasters: The Year in a Nutshell

Disasters have come in various forms this year. Last October 5, Bohol was stunned by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake, leaving 222 dead, 976 injured, and 8 missing. The month of November was also marred by the coming of Typhoon Yolanda (known

internationally as Typhoon Haiyan). The typhoon affected Visayas, particularly the islands of Samar and Leyte, leaving about 6,000 people dead and thousands more devastated. An estimated US\$2.4 billion worth of property was also decimated by the storm.

Davao City also experienced its share of

disasters this past year. Atty. Romeo Cabarde, Jr., head of the University Community Engagement and Advocacy Council (UCEAC), summarized the more common calamities that occur in Davao City.

“The most regular occurring natural calamities in the city include flooding, landslide, and storms. There

are also those that can be attributed to human causes, such as fires,” he claimed.

Earlier this year, an estimated 25,000 people were affected by flash floods caused by torrential raining, causing tributaries of the Davao River to overflow. Non-stop raining, especially in the wet season months of June to

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Davao City's 911 is a source of pride among Davaoeños for its preparedness to respond to emergencies and disasters. Photo/Charydel Cassandra Malintad



► October, also caused massive flooding around the metro.

Flooding of this regularity, once considered uncommon in the metro, has become a commonality in the recent years.

"The problem has become insurmountable because of climate change and continual urbanization," Davao City's Drainage Management Unit head Yusop Ahmad Jimlani said in an interview with the Business World Insider.

"The city's drainage canals can no longer accommodate the large volume of rain

brought by climate change in recent years. The situation is compounded in low-lying areas during high tide," he added.

On December 4, 2013, Davao City was rocked by a 5.7 magnitude earthquake, one of the strongest in recent history. The University was no exception to the effects of the quake. A strong tremor at around 8 in the morning was felt all around the school. People immediately rushed to the open field, seeking safety from the possibility of the school's structures collapsing. Emmanuel Banga, a BS Chemistry graduate, even tweeted about the situation.

"Cracks...on the Canisius building...omg. That was strong indeed," Banga said on a tweet with an image showing the damage left by the earthquake.

Another student, insisting anonymity, added, "The earthquake was so strong. I was sleeping in class, and I sprung up immediately as soon as the ground shook. It was frightening!"

On August 22, 2013, 270 houses were destroyed when a fire razed a village in Sasa. Around 300 families were affected by the fire, which lasted four hours. Damages incurred amounted to an estimated PHP1.5 million.

"Actually, sa dagan sa among operation didto ganina di makasulod atong mga firefighters tungod kay swampy ang area. Walay dalan na maagian. We sought the assistance from our Marines, so along the seashore sigang mi ug kumbate to put off the fire," Inspector Rodolfo Alocelja, chief of Davao City Fire District's Investigation and Intelligence Section, said.

Steps are being taken

In light of these events, the city government has been active in working for the preparedness of the city. Because the possibility of these events happening

again is always there, it is therefore only fitting to be able to anticipate the coming of these events so as to mitigate their effects on the general populace.

In response to the budding flooding problem of the city, the Davao City Environment and Natural Resources Office implemented the Ecological Solid Waste Management Ordinance. The ordinance aims to control the blockage of the city's drainage system by the banning of the use of non-biodegradable plastics and Styrofoam in the city. The city is also bolstering its flood monitoring system by acquiring new flood pumps for draining water out of the



city streets.

"We are still in the process of acquiring a new pump, which will be funded under our maintenance fund, hopefully before the end of the year," Dennis Flores, the Department of Public Works and Highways regional information manager said in an interview with Business World Online.

"The pump used to automatically drain water when it breached a certain level. But since it has not been working for months now, water has to drain naturally," he added.

The city has also installed new cameras and alarm systems designed to monitor the water levels in riverbanks and tributaries prone to overflowing. In an interview with the Philippine News Agency, Davao City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council Chief Pepito Capili said that the city has already installed CCTV systems along riverbanks, but more systems need to be installed uphill to keep the city safe. He also said that the alarm system would further bolster the city's already-existing Automated Early Warning Alert systems for calamities such as floods, typhoons,

and earthquakes.

There has also been an increase in monitoring of potential tell-tale signs of flooding.

"Natural indicators of coming disasters, such as sea swells, are constantly being monitored by the city government," Atty. Cabarde said.

The city has also activated eight water measuring systems and two rain gauges provided by the Department of Science and Technology. Maps equipped with Light Detection and Ranging (LiDar) instruments will also

be used in creating three-dimensional maps of the city for easier evaluation of disaster-risk areas. This leads to better evacuation planning. Dr. Anthony Sales, regional director of the Department of Science and Technology, said that his agency has already completed the LiDar equipped instruments and will be made available to Davao Oriental and Compostela Valley as well.

The university is also contributing to the disaster preparedness of the city. Ateneo de Davao University, in the wake of typhoon Yolanda, has already started venturing into the possibility of partnering with the Local Government Unit for pre-disaster preparation. Atty. Cabarde said that the university is looking to introduce Disaster Survival Kits for 72 Hours (DSK72), which will contain various items such as water purifiers and solar chargers. Aside from contributions in technology, the school is also engaged in providing research work and data analysis, using various technologies available within the school campus.

The city government is not alone in responding to disasters that occur in the city. Various groups such as the National Red Cross, the Archdiocese of Davao, socio-civic groups like the Rotary Club of Davao and the Lions Club, and many different non-government units are also active in providing assistance to those affected by calamities in Davao City.

The bigger picture

All in all, the city is vulnerable to different kinds of disasters. There is more focus in providing remediation to problems that have already happened, instead of providing long-term solutions to prevent future calamities from happening.

"What we have are merely band-aid solutions, those that only cover up the problems without fixing

“
Natural indicators of coming disasters, such as sea swells, are constantly being monitored by the city government.”

them. This is because we only look at the individual problems and fail to look at the bigger picture. Climate change is a reality, and we have to start patterning our solutions to address that. We can always provide stopgaps for the problems, but climate change will be a constant cause to these problems," Atty. Cabarde said.

For the UCEAC Chair, there will be a tug-of-war between choosing how the city would develop.

"Do we go for more development in terms of infrastructure and transportation, more buildings and roads? Or do we choose to preserve the environment to minimize the effects of climate change? The possibility also exists for both to be developed," he remarked.

"If we can find a way to solve this dilemma, then I could say that the city will have a positive outlook, in terms of disaster-preparedness," he added. 🌐

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DRSUS: FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE?



HANNAH FAITH TORMIS

“MAJORITY OF the students of USEP do not approve of DRSUS. I am one of the presidents of the affected universities that do not approve of this system,” expressed Richmon Allan Garcia, the Internal Vice President of the United Future Educators of Davao and President of the College of Education Student Council of University of Southeastern Philippines.

Proposed by Davao City Representative Isidro T. Ungab, House Bill 5311, commonly called as the Davao Regional State University System Bill, aims to merge all state universities and colleges in the entire region into one system.

The state universities and colleges of Region XI are the following: University of Southern Philippines (USEP), Davao Oriental State College for Science and Technology (DOSCST), Southern Philippines Agribusiness and Marine

and Aquatic School of Technology (SPAMAST), and Davao del Norte State College. Once unified in this system, the said state universities and colleges will be known as the Southeastern Philippine Regional State University.

This merging is said to be a solution to the deteriorating quality of education offered by the said state universities and colleges due to the decreasing government subsidy. It aims to reduce the number of state universities

and colleges in the country so as to maximize their limited budget. Through this system, the monitoring of the allocated budget is said to be possible and effective.

This system also requires each state university and college to have a flagship course or program. Flagship courses are courses, which are the ‘specializations’ of a particular state university or college.

“For example, ang University of Southeastern

Philippines (USEP) ay magiging center of development for Governance, Business and Engineering, while Davao Oriental State College for Science and Technology (DOSCST) will be the center for Marine biology program and agriculture,” Commission on Higher Education Davao Director Edward Aquino informed.

Garcia, however, disagrees, saying that it will become a burden for the students in the way that they

MULTI-SECTORAL GROUPS INTERACT FOR PEACE PROCESS

MARY GYLE MANUBA

THE MINDANAO Peace Summit, with the theme “Building Peace for Better Mindanao,” was held at the Finster Auditorium, Ateneo de Davao University last November 30, 2013.

Fr. Jose Gabriel Gonzales, S.J., the University Academic Vice President, gave the first welcome message. It was followed by Retired Police Chief Superintendent Francisco

Villaruman. He filled the place of Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, who was not able to attend the said forum.

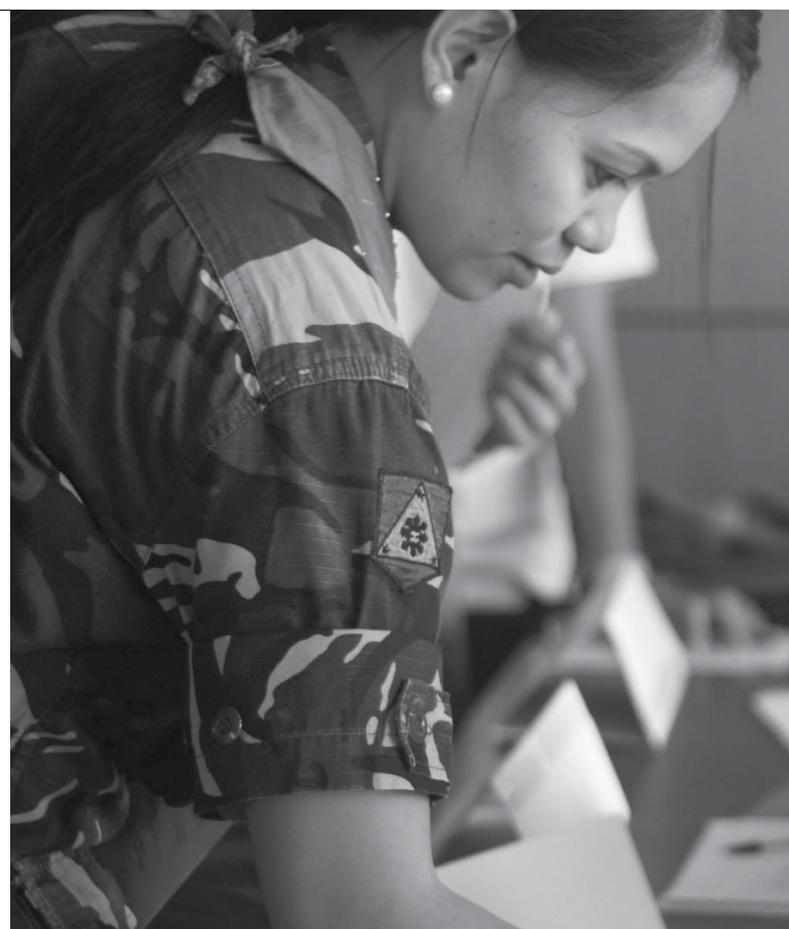
“We remain as vigilant as ever in our mandate to protect the people and dismantle groups and individuals who engage in acts of terrorism,” Villaruman said.

“AWAT Mindanao, along with its activities, is a mark stone in the history of Mindanao. It brings us to

one goal, which is lasting peace,” Chairperson of Anti-War/Anti-Terrorism (AWAT) Jose G. Aduma II said in his opening remarks.

He also stated that the participants, resource persons, and representatives of the different sectors of the society are tasked to set up democratic solutions for the unrest in Mindanao.

“We must negotiate, compromise and unite for the sake of peace in





The planned DRSUS will consolidate three state colleges and universities into one big regional university system. Artwork/Nadine Caballes

will have to transfer to the school which specializes on the course that they are planning to be a graduate of.

“For example, diba we have five campuses here and every campus namo, there are different specialties. For example, sa Bislig, ang kusog didto kay College of Technology. So therefore, tanang studyante namo diri - ang mga College of Technology students - mabalhin didto. Unya, burden sya sa mga studyante. It’s because kung asa ang specialty sa school, mo-adto pa sila didto sa layo na lugar? Unsaon ang mga estudyante, mangita

ug laing colleges? Dili mi manugot na sila mangawala sa USEP tungod ana na system,” Garcia explicated.

This bill caused students - the stakeholders of this issue - to raise their brows and fists in protest of its implementation. It is detrimental, they say, for the region’s students. Instead of creating ways to increase the educational budget to elevate the quality of education offered, it compromises the rights and welfare of the students to receive the good quality of education that they should receive from the government.

“Mas ginapaskusgan namo ang among voice na dili gyud mi musugot. Mas ginapaayo namo among proficiencies, gina-maintain namo among ranking para ipakita bitaw na nganong kailangan man gyud na i-apil ang USEP sa DRSUS which is nindot naman among stand karon? Majority of the students of USEP do not approve of DRSUS. I am one of the presidents of the university that do not approve of this system,” Garcia expressed.



Majority of the students of USEP do not approve of DRSUS. I am one of the presidents of the university that do not approve of this system.



Even people in uniform have expressed their hopes for a peaceful and harmonious Mindanao. Photo/SAMAHAN Creative Team

Mindanao because peace is everyone’s responsibility,” Aduma added.

The statements from the resource speakers looked back at the conflict between the Philippine government, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the peace processes between them under the different Philippine presidents.

Additional topics covered in the statement included the views of the MNLF, the MILF, the academe and the Catholic Church on the peace process, and the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB).

Archbishop Emeritus of Davao Fernando Capalla said that there must be a preparation to engage in dialogue as makers and builders of peace.



The constituency of peace is increasing through an understanding of history.



He also admitted that he was disappointed because a satisfying level of peacemaking has not yet been reached due to the people’s weak understanding of

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► peace.

“What we must try to come up with now is a real formation program to have a community of peace and so it must begin with individuals,” he said.

MNLF Spokesperson Atty. Randolph Parcasio, on the other hand, stated that each must be at peace

with himself and that the challenge to come together is to be united regardless of faith. He remarked that all sectors in Mindanao should lead the people to being united through common interest.

“Moralists of the world, unite,” he said.

University President Fr.

Joel Tabora, S.J. suggested that the academe must try to understand more the history of Mindanao seriously and scientifically because issues like the Muslim and Lumad groups' grievances are being misunderstood from a lack of awareness.

“Waging peace means renouncing violence. We

must trust one another to respond to each other's needs and to renovate our consciousness,” he said.

Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) President Dr. Sukarno Tanggol agreed with Fr. Tabora about the academe's focus and improvement on the instruction of Philippine

history. He believed that there is a need to improve the understanding of history to understand the present situation.

“The constituency of peace is increasing through an understanding of history,” he said.

Dr. Tanggol also said that the failure of the peace



DAVAO RIVER: SOURCE OF LIFE, CAUSE OF DEATH

ESTELLA JANE SASIL

WHAT SERVED as a source of life is now becoming the cause of death for some people in Davao City.

The Davao River basin is the third largest river catchment in Mindanao and is the largest of Davao

City's nine principal watersheds, namely Lasang, Bunawan, Panacan, Matina, Davao, Talomo, Lipadas, and portions of Inawayan and Sibulan. It is the main natural reservoir of the aquifer in Davao.

Based on the statistics from Make It Davao webpage, Davao River

has a total area of 172,811 hectares, 70 percent (113,000 hectares) of which run through timberland, and 22 percent (38,800 hectares) are alienable and disposable. The river stretches 143 kilometers through a good number of streams, the main source of which originates from as far as the Salug River in

San Fernando, Bukidnon, flows southward along the central part of Davao City and opens eastward towards the Gulf of Davao. Its width varies approximately from 60 to 90 meters, and the average flows within the river are at an estimated 70-80 cubic meters per second near the mouth.

Davao River was recently identified as the First Water Quality Management area in Region XI. Davao River's identification is in line with the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 (RA 9275), which mandates the DENR, through the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), to designate water bodies like rivers, creeks,

process is a function of an immature government. He cited the patronage system as an example.

“We must draw a lesson from the experiences, analyze failures and permit strengths of the peace process through individual and collective efforts,” he stressed.

Datu Ali Sangki, former executive director of the Office of Muslim Affairs, elaborated the four aspects of struggle, which are political, economic, sociological and personal in nature. He asserted that there is an urgent need for a political party to be organized and that a feasible peace program shall be considered.

He pointed out that the struggle to self-determination of the Moros is ripening but the system is not ready to give in to their aspirations. Mindanao has been subjected to political experiments and he believed that we must create an environment wherein good personalities in Mindanao can lead us.

“Let’s identify the pool of our resources and personalities capable of articulating the situation in Mindanao,” Wadi said.

Former National Defense Secretary Norberto Gonzales adhered the fact that war always produces uncontrolled events and that the state should never use war unless extremely

necessary.

The summit was organized by the Anti War/ Anti Terrorism Mindanao (AWAT), Pinag-isang Lakas ng Samahan ng mga Progresibong Atenista (PIGLASAPAT) and the University Community Engagement and Advocacy Council (UCEAC). 🌐



Among its many functions, Davao River serves as the thoroughfare of thousands of Davaoños per day. Photo/Kristoffer Jan Tipon

came from the untreated domestic wastes directly discharged to the river.

“Karon, kung kusog ang ulan, magbaha dayun. Di na jud kakumpansahan kay daghan na jud namatay tungod aning sapa,” Cuatro added.

Aside from the dangers brought by the water of the river, another hazard seen by the residents is the improper waste management of the residents. As what can be seen in the area, most of the people just throw their wastes on the river.

What is more alarming is the toxic waste brought by a hospital nearby. The Community Health and Development Cooperative (CHDC) Hospital allegedly disposes chemicals from their laboratories directly to the river.

According to Vilma Galang (not her real name), a big pipe from the hospital delivers waste to the river.

“Naay usahay manimaho jud ug medisina. Nagkasakit na gani ang uban diri ug Hepa tungod ana,” Galang revealed.

“Usahay matimangan na mudiretso ang kemikal diri unya nay maligo na mga



“We may have disposed liquid wastes on the river but these are filtered and already clean. We also strictly follow the rules and standards of the Department of Health.”



bata mao nang delikado jud. Naa gani panahon na dugo ang mugawas diri,” she added.

In defense to this, CHDC Pollution Control Officer Melyn Quiban clarified that this problem had been solved three years ago.

According to Quiban, the hospital received a complaint from the residents in 2010 regarding the waste disposal of the hospital and they immediately fixed it.

“Our monitoring is religious, and there’s no leaking found as of now,” Quiban said.

“We may have disposed liquid wastes on the river but these are filtered and already clean. We also strictly follow the rules and standards of the Department of Health,” Quiban added.

Davao River plays a very important role to the people of Davao City. Unfortunately, its water quality has already deteriorated. There are already many programs to preserve the river but the devastation continues. Man abuses nature, nature takes life in return.

Unless people realize their individual responsibility to the river and to the environment as a whole, there will be no reconciliation between man and nature. 🌐

lakes, and marine waters that need water quality management interventions to improve their water quality and/or preserve their condition as a Water Quality Management Area (WQMA).

However, this has not been properly implemented considering the situation of the river and of the people residing near the area. Today, the basin, which is supposed to be a treasure of the City, has taken the life of some, especially those living along the riverbanks where some have built their houses like in Barangay 2-A, Magallanes, Davao City.

According to Rose Cuatro, a resident of Barangay 2-A, the river had been very useful for them during the 1990s.

“Sa una, tin-aw pa kayo ang sapa. Diha pa gani mi maligo ug mang-laba,” she said.

However, because of the shortcomings of the people and the rise of establishments around the area, the river has become polluted. Based on the assessment of the Environmental Management Bureau XI, the pollution load of the river is derived from several sources. But, most of it

HIGHLIGHTS



EDCA: TREATY FOR SAFETY?

Artwork/Steely Dhan Caballero

EDCA, as defined in the government's official gazette, is "an agreement between the Philippines and the United States. It is envisioned to advance the implementation of the Philippine-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT)."

KIRSTEN ILAJAS & URSULA CALIPAYAN

THE AGREEMENT is said to be signed to strengthen and enhance the Philippines' territorial and external security and defense, specifically on modernizing and strengthening the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) capacity. Also, the agreement is designed for the interoperability between the allies. The US will be allowed to build infrastructures and use AFP bases in the Philippines. The agreement will also allow the "US Military to preposition warplanes and ships in the PH." Among its lines of purpose are the maritime security and maritime domain and awareness that clearly support the Philippines' territorial security. Also, one of its features is the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). It was linked to the need for immediate help during disasters, pointing Yolanda's wrath. As stated in the gazette, HADR will be improved and strengthened "through prepositioned materiel and closer cooperation with the US."

How is EDCA different from the Visiting Forces Agreement?

The Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) between the Philippines and the United States was signed on February 10, 1998, and took into force on June that year. VFA constitutes nine provisions that highlighted among others, the US Military's entry and departure in the country, laws that bound the two allies, and movement of vessels and aircrafts. On the other hand, EDCA used the provisions laid by VFA and included specific provisions like security, ownership, and implementation.

EDCA has twelve articles that constitute a provision on "resolution of disputes."

However, with the security and advancement that

it may bring, many have questioned the agreements' constitutionalities and if they really are helpful in resolving disputes. Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago stated in an interview with Philippine Daily Inquirer that constitutional provisions are violated, saying, "The Senate has not been given the courtesy of being furnished with a copy." Thus, she pointed out Art. 18, Sec. 25 and Art. 7, Sec. 8, which requires and emphasizes two-thirds of Senate concurrence in foreign military treaties and Art. 2, Sec. 8 that prohibits nuclear weapons in the Philippine territory.

Also, petitions were filed to the Supreme Court to stop the agreement's implementation. The petitions were brought about by the agreement's allegedly lopsided favour to the US. Among the petitioners were former Senate President Jovito Salonga, Atty. Harry Roque, former Rep. Teddy Casiño, etc.

The petition also pointed out the dangers that might be brought by the agreement. With China's aggressive claim on Philippine territories, the agreement may create more sizzles from the already heating up dispute.

"Our goal is not to counter China."

This was the statement of US President Barack Obama, answering to the criticisms that EDCA is mainly signed as a deterrent to China's aggressive claim to the West Philippine Sea.

"Our goal is not to contain China. Our goal is to make sure international rules and norms are respected, and that includes in the area of international disputes," he insisted during a joint press conference with PNoy.

While the Preamble of EDCA highlighted the obligations of the

Philippines and the United States to not encourage the use of threat or force to settle international disputes, it still did not stop China's criticism that the agreement is aggressive and is aimed at containing them.

And while the EDCA took two years to negotiate and eight round discussions before it was agreed by both parties, it took mere minutes to annoy Beijing.

In less than an hour after the controversial agreement was officially signed, state-owned China newswire Xinhua labelled the Philippines a "troublemaker in the South China Sea" and went so far as warning the U.S. that its plans in "interfering" may backfire.

The editorial added that the pact is "particularly disturbing" given that the Philippines is at a territorial conflict with China.

China claims 90 percent of the South China Sea or West Philippine Sea, including the high seas as their territory. Moreover, it has also threatened to grab the Philippine exclusive economic zone and extended continental shelf which violates the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

EDCA - Not the solution

Militant groups reiterated that the agreement will not help the country from the aggressiveness of China in relation to the territorial row.

According to former Bayan Muna Partylist Representative Teddy Casino, instead of depending on the US and the "return of US troops", the country should stand on its own feet and "get the support of all countries who respect our sovereignty."

"EDCA will only worsen the situation and escalate the possibility of conflict in the region," he said to reporters.

Other points against EDCA in relation to the territorial row include the possibility of the Philippines siding with the US for protection against the aggressiveness of China as something that may backfire.

In a conference held on Myanmar just this year regarding the South China Sea disputes, the current Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Niccolo Machiavelli warned smaller states from siding with bigger states against another powerful state.

He argued that that there may be a point where the less powerful state becomes a bargain between the two powerful states.

After all, the Obama administration has often described its ties with China as the "most important bilateral relationship in the 21st century."

In the same joint press conference with PNoy, President Obama made it clear that the US does not take any sides regarding the sovereignty of conflicting territories. He also made clear that the primary concern was the freedom of navigation in international waters.

EDCA and the Bangsamoro Agreement

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) believes that the Philippines-US agreement will not affect them.

"This agreement is between the government and the USA. Bangsamoro is not party to that agreement. So, we are not directly affected," Chairman Al haj Murad Ebrahim of the Philippines' largest Muslim rebel group said in a press conference.

The MILF Chairman also encouraged the Philippine government to pursue peace talks with the Communist

Party of the Philippines (CPP).

Whether or not the EDCA can protect the country against possible conflict with a great power, it cannot be denied that the agreement has garnered many criticisms because of its flaws.

First, it does not only allow increased rotational presence of US troops, but also permits them to build military bases in the country without them having to shoulder the cost of building one.

Second is the question of its constitutionality. Although the EDCA is treated as an executive agreement between the two governments and not as a treaty, thus not requiring the permission or opinion of senates in both countries, the factor that is involved with the agreement is something that still needs consent from the people. The fact that the pact was negotiated behind closed doors and was only announced to the public after it was agreed by both parties only fuelled the anger of those against it.

Third, EDCA allows US troops to stay indefinitely because of the provision of the agreement allowing automatic renewal after its initial term of ten years. It was also stated in the same provision that to terminate the agreement, either party may give a year's written notice to stop it.

It cannot be argued that the Philippines fall short when it comes to protection against more powerful neighbours. Compared to other powerful states, we don't have fighter jets and we have underfunded the Armed Forces, including the navy and coast guard.

Whether the agreement was done for safety or not, Filipinos must be on guard.



2 NEWS

PHILIPPINE UNIVERSITIES TO SHIFT ACADEMIC CALENDAR

SOL MARIANO

DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES in the Philippines are now considering to shift the opening of their academic year from June to either July, August or September after four of the country's biggest universities, namely University of the Philippines, University of Santo Tomas, De La Salle University, and Ateneo de Manila University, have expressed their intent to move the opening of their classes to the said months, now that Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) 2015 is fast-approaching.

ASEAN 2015 is when an

economic community will be established to set free trade among its members, including the Philippines. With its impending arrival, the country is scrambling on its feet to prepare for it in every possible angle—including education.

Many higher education institutions (HEIs) agree that changing the opening of classes to July, August or September will help the country promote ASEAN mobility, allowing citizens of member states to travel conveniently and attend schools within the region, and making the Philippines' higher educational system more competitive.

Though many HEIs have yet to make a decision, "autonomous" universities can decide for themselves whether to shift or not. The universities with autonomous status are considered as centers for excellence, thereby having more freedom to implement changes in their education system with notification given to Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

Those HEIs with no autonomous status will have to seek approval from CHED, which regulates them.

CHED recently released an official statement, saying that a technical working

group will do a thorough study to see if all HEIs should shift their opening of classes to the said months in preparation for the ASEAN 2015.

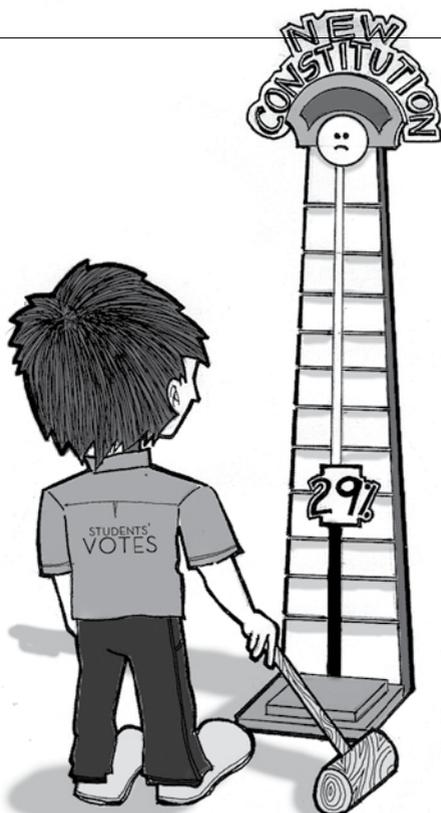
CHED Chairperson, Patricia Licuanan said that at this time, she believes that the shift may not be advantageous for all. But still, CHED will be studying the proposal submitted by the HEIs to consider every aspect possible.

Some members of the Ateneo community were asked regarding the topic at hand.

Lovelle Liwanag, an incoming fourth year AB

Mass Communications student, said that she agrees with the planned move, "as long as all the universities follow and that the benefits of applying the shift outweigh the costs."

When asked whether Ateneo de Davao University (AdDU) is aiming for the shift, University President, Fr. Joel E. Tabora said that he has yet to hear about the decision of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) and that if a shifting of the academic calendar is to happen, all universities in the Philippines should follow and not just the aforementioned "big four" universities. ☺



Artwork/Jaiza Mae Jumawan

COMELEC DECLARES FAILURE OF PLEBISCITE; VOTER TURNOUT STANDS AT 29.16 PERCENT

CHRISTOPHER ED CABOVERDE

THE COMMISSION on Elections (COMELEC) declared the constitutional plebiscite last March 12 – 15 a failure after the final total turnout stood at 29.16 percent.

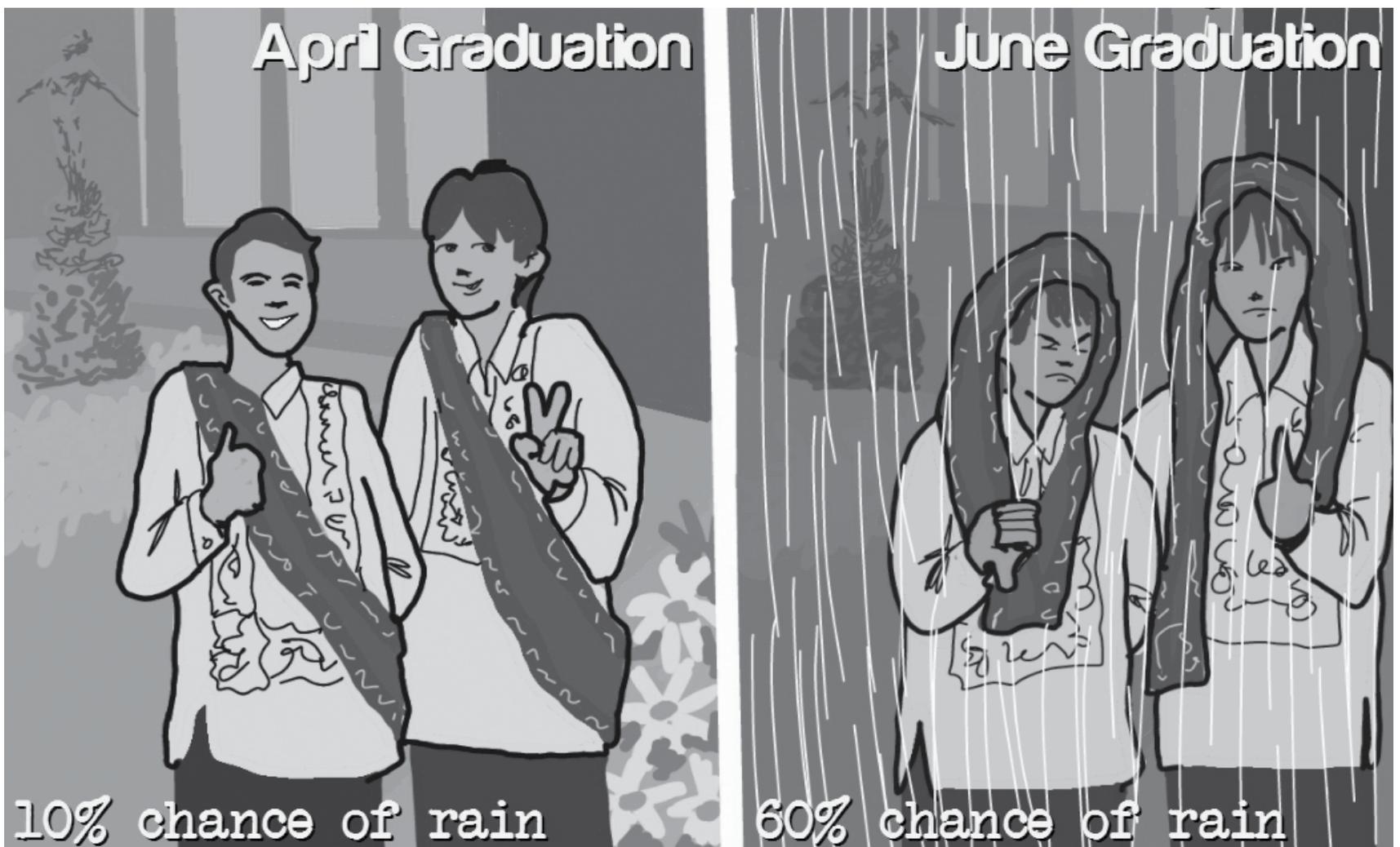
This is despite the

overwhelming support of those who voted for the proposed constitution, with 2,071 "yes" votes and 300 "no" votes.

For the breakdown of turnout results per division, the Accountancy Division, Business and Management Division, School of Engineering and

Architecture, School of Nursing, Computer Studies Division, Humanities and Letters Division, Natural Sciences and Mathematics Division, Social Sciences Divisions and School of Education had a voter turnout of 32 percent, 18.49 percent, 23.93 percent, 37.67 percent, 43.68 percent, 40.8 percent, 44.3

Academic Year that starts in August.



Some have expressed their disapproval over the shift of the academic calendar in the University of the Philippines through art. **Artwork/Danilo Arao**

percent, 32.89 percent and 57.46 percent, respectively.

Incoming third year AB Political Science major Djumeneil Gerard Tinampay expressed his sadness with the turnout of the plebiscite. He also commented that it seems that Ateneans are apathetic about what is happening in SAMAHAN.

“I am not so happy with the turnout of the SAMAHAN Constitutional [Plebiscite] since the Ateneo community seems like they don’t care about the constitution. Even if they want to disagree about the SAMAHAN Constitution, they need to vote. If they

wanted to disagree, they should have voted 'no' but they didn't,” Tinampay said.

When asked about his thoughts regarding the results of the plebiscite, the 2013-2014 SAMAHAN Constitutional Commission Chairperson Cel Lord Delabahan stated that the failure of elections or plebiscite is a trend among Ateneo schools across the country.

“Trend ang failure of elections or plebiscite not only in AdDU pero pati sa Ateneo de Manila Sanggunian. Failure of elections sa ilaha tapos sige sila extend sa voting period pero failure of



The good thing is at least we can see that the constitution had a chance kasi around 2,000 plus ang nag-vote for yes. So at least yun kahit papaano may good thing na man din despite the end result.



elections gihapon. Sa Xavier University pud sa ilang College Student Government, failure of elections pud,” he stated.

He shared that the reason for the failure of plebiscite is the freedom the Ateneo gives to the students.

“Ang main reason siguro is because Ateneo gives too much freedom to its students. Out of a hundred choices na pwede nilang buhaton sa Ateneo, mga isa lang ang maki-join sa SAMAHAN,” Delabahan remarked.

COMELEC Commissioner Maria Margarita Chua, on the other hand, was

optimistic despite the result of the plebiscite.

“The good thing is at least we can see that the constitution had a chance, kasi around 2,000 plus ang nag-vote ng 'yes'. So at least yun kahit papaano may good thing na man din despite the end result,” Chua said.

For former SAMAHAN President Ralph Robin Tongcua, he knew that the proposed constitution would not push through.

“Well, somehow it was already expected. There are some factors to be considered,” he said.



2 NEWS

► He shared that some people thought that there was no proper information dissemination. But Tongcua insisted that the groups involved, such as the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 SAMAHAN Central Boards, the 2013-2014 Constitutional Commission, COMELEC, and all volunteers who helped in

the campaign, did their best to publicize and promote the plebiscite.

He also mentioned that the low turnout may be attributed to the fact that the students are up to their academic requirements as the semester ends.

Moreover, he said that

the culture of apathy has probably become a culture among the students of Ateneo.

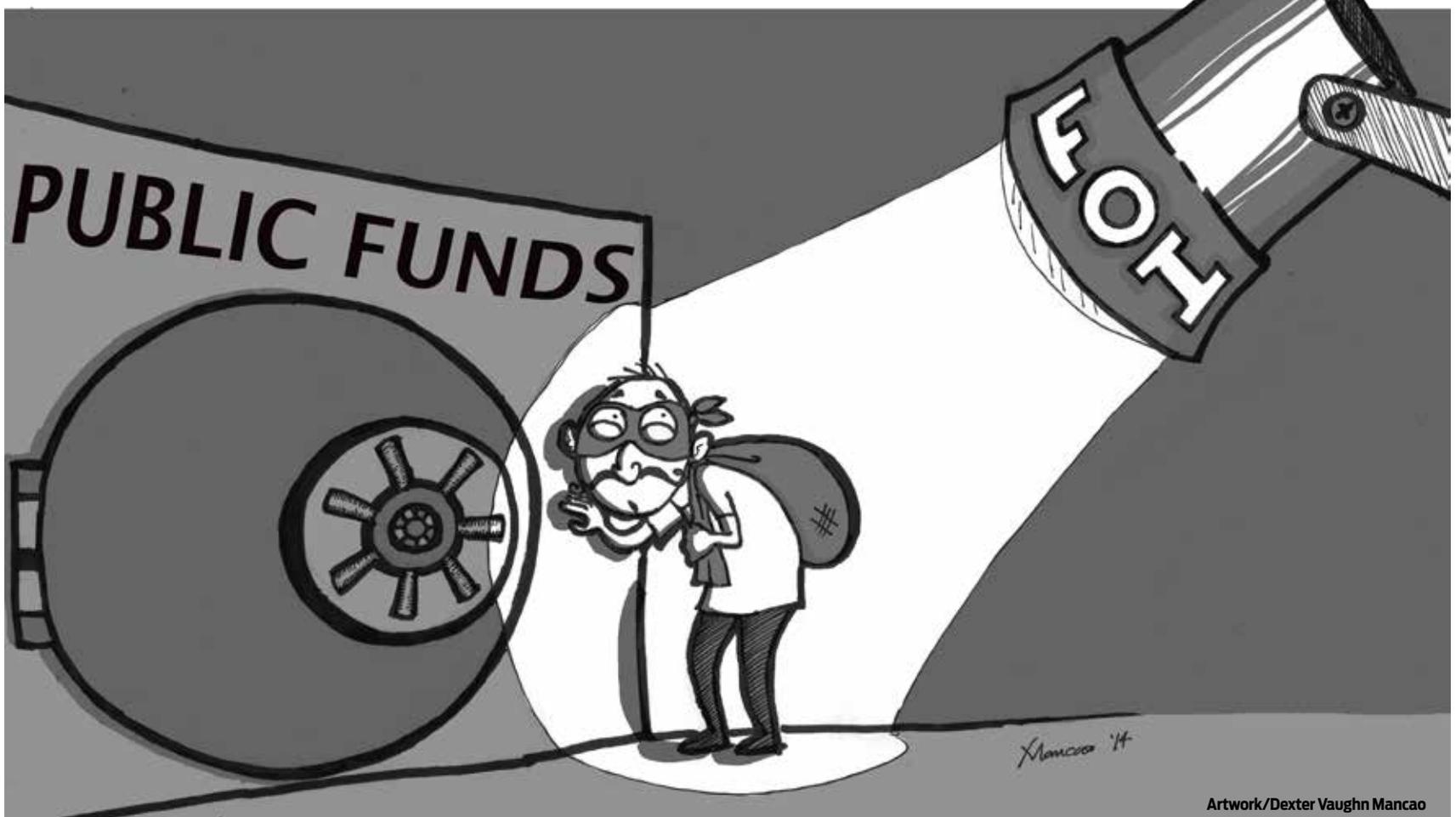
“To those who are apathetic, I don’t know what the reason is. It is probably because it has become a culture. People have different interests. I see that entertainment

is the top of the interest list, but it’s something that we should do something about,” Tongcua stated, adding that every student, “has the responsibility to be vigilant.”

He further stated that this apathy is “the externalization of ignorance or fear. It is ignorance

because you don’t know these things. [And it is] fear because you don’t want to know them anyway.”

However, Tongcua said that the SAMAHAN Central Board will not quit on its struggle of ratifying a constitution for the SAMAHAN.



Artwork/Dexter Vaughn Mancao

MEDIA, STUDENTS CALL FOR FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ON THE 4TH DAVAO MEDIA FREEDOM DAY

ESTELLA JANE SASIL

DAVAO MEDIA and communications major students gathered last November 23 at J301 to celebrate the 4th Davao Media Freedom Day, which commemorated the Ampatuan Massacre that ended the lives of 58 people, including 32 journalists.

This year’s theme, “FOI now! Access to information, a weapon vs. corruption”, aimed to raise the call to pass the Freedom of Information Bill.

Activities for the students were set in the morning for them to remember how impunity changed the face of justice in the Philippines

and how things went for the media since 2009.

A forum, which focused mainly on the discussion of freedom of information by speakers Charie Villa, Atty. Rene Villarente, Eduardo Fernandez and Stella Estramera, went on during the afternoon.

In his speech, Atty. Villarente tackled why people hunger for information and the exemptions to access some information.

“Information is a source of power and there has been a struggle between releasing information and keeping it as a secret,” Villarente said.

He enumerated the exemptions to free access of information as provided by House Bill 53, section 7.

The bill states that ‘the information is specifically authorized to be kept secret’ provided that the information directly relates to national defense and its revelation will cause grave

Nevertheless, he stressed that he has no idea what the 2014-2015 SAMAHAN Central Board's plan would be. However, as per COMELEC guidelines, he said that the future of the SAMAHAN Constitution is still up to the SAMAHAN Central Board.

As for his message to

those involved in the plebiscite process, he said, "Well, cheers! We got this far. It was a good fight. It was not in vain. It's a mark that we're not stopping in the struggle."

Lastly, when asked about the plans of the incumbent SAMAHAN Central Board regarding the SAMAHAN

Constitution, incumbent SAMAHAN President Regal Kent Asuero told Atenews that they may find ways to continue using the current draft of the proposed constitution and go right away with conducting a plebiscite in the upcoming semester instead of going through three separate readings before conducting

a plebiscite.

"There were no clamors against any provisions. So what are we going to change? Why would we conduct three separate readings again? Hence, prepare the students na lang to another plebiscite. Educate them for that matter," he said.

He mentioned that the plebiscite's result means that the Ateneo student body is "not yet ready for it," adding that "some people did not feel the gravity of the need of having a constitution. That is why they took it lightly."



Information is a source of power and there has been a struggle between releasing information and keeping it as a secret



damage to the internal and external defense of the State or the information requested pertains to the foreign affairs of the Republic of the Philippines, when its revelation unduly weakens the negotiating position of the government in an ongoing bilateral or multilateral negotiation, or seriously jeopardizes the diplomatic relations of the Philippines with one or more states, with which it intends to maintain friendly relations.

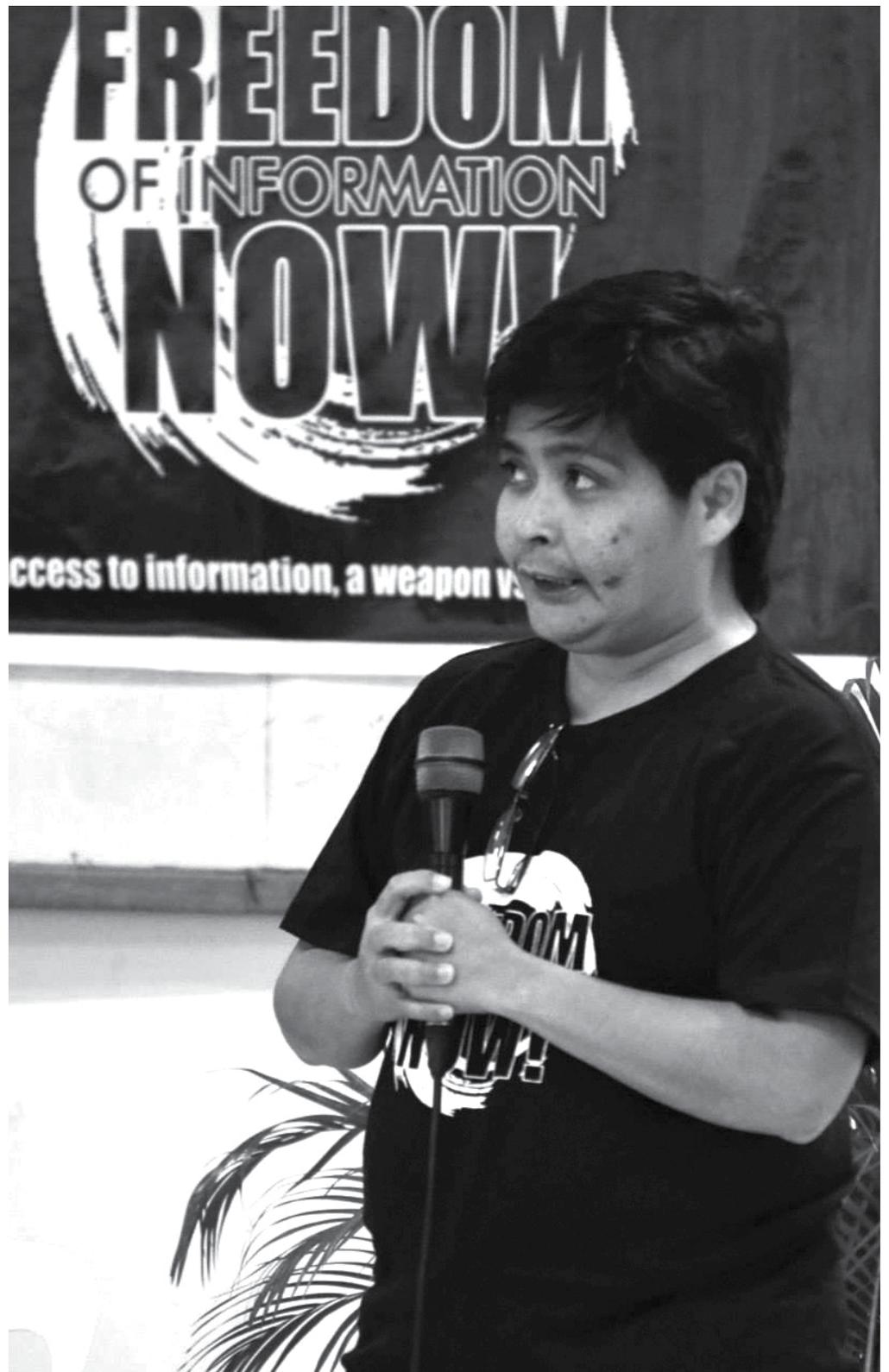
Furthermore, speakers reminded the students that exposing the truth is not easy, especially when negative consequences could possibly happen.

However, Fernandez and Estramera said that the free access of information

will not injure national security but will rather feed the interest of the people giving them the pieces of information that they actually deserve.

The celebration was also a reminder that people, especially those in the media, will never forget the terrible incident that happened four years ago and other violence against media. With this, the cry for free access to valuable information was strengthened, believing that the lack of information hinders the people to fight corruption and other anomalies in the government.

The 3rd International Day Against Impunity was also commemorated on the same day. 🌐



Stella Estremera, Editor-in-Chief of Sun Star Davao, tackles the need for Freedom of Information Bill in the country. Photo/Necta Casiple

2 NEWS



The band "All We Need is Ice Cream", with composer Francis Muñoz, wins as the 27th Awitenista Grand Champion. Photo/Charydel Malin-

'I'LL SURVIVE' DOMINATES AWITENISTA

MINNIE B. MABOLOC

FIFTEEN CONTENDERS pursuing to be the next grand champion of the 27th Awitenista clashed and sang their hearts out during the Grand Finals Night last March 2 at the Finster Auditorium.

The night started with a teaser from the finalists' production number featuring the OPM classics from the Apo Hiking Society and Eraserheads, among others.

Music and composition icons, Paolo Sisi, Jad Montenegro Amor, and guest judge Aristotle "Gloc-9" Pollisco, judged the performance of the contenders.

The finalists performed their compositions accompanied by their bands, which made the crowd jive into the groove of the competition.

The crowd rocked even more when guest judge, Gloc-9 performed his hit singles – 'Magda' and 'Sumayaw Ka'.

Winners of each category were: Religious – I'll Survive by Francis Muñoz, Nationalistic – Huni by Sam Joel Nang feat. Prince Padilla, Contemporary – Di Na Lang Sana by Dwight Ian Perez, and Jam Atenista – 143 Ateneo by Pao Lofranco.

The results were revealed after the astonishing performance from the guest judge.

Lynith Celeres' 'Seatmate' garnered 37.6 percent of the votes and got the People's

Choice Award.

The most prestigious award – the 27th Awitenista Grand Champion title – was handed to Francis Muñoz for his religious song, 'I'll Survive'.

Muñoz could not believe that he won the award.

"Hinihintay ko lang kung kailan ako magising," he expressed in an interview.

He said he did not expect

to get the highest award because the making of the song was rushed.

The winners of each category received PHP 3,000 and a shiny trophy. The grand champion received PHP 12,000, a trophy, and a chance to have a gig at Java Jive Resto Bar. 🎸

ATENEWS BAGS LANOG 2013 AWARDS

JESSICA MARIE R. CALISO

ATENEWS HAS successfully bagged awards at Lanog 2013, the Mindanao-wide Student Press Convention, last October.

Lanog is an annual activity spearheaded by the College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP). It recognizes excellent and innovative performance of campus press.

Highlights of the events included the basic, intermediate and advanced journalism skills trainings, socio-political discussions,



1st place in Alternative Form and Tabloid Category and 2nd in Magazine Category. The Ateneus holds strong and proud the fruits of their efforts won at last year's Lanog. Photo/Kristoffer Jan Tipon

and forums on the most pressing issues in the field of media and journalism. It was designed to improve the skills and awareness of the young writers and artists.

It also featured Lanog Awards, wherein Ateneus got 1st place in the Alternative Form Category (Diwanag), 1st place in the Tabloid Category (Ateneus tabloid),

and 2nd place in the Magazine Category (Our Issue).

The CEGP, now on its 82nd year, continues to be the oldest and widest existing

alliance of student publications in the country. 🎉

3

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MEETING HALF-WAY: FIXING THE 'FIXER' CULTURE



Photo/Christopher Ed Caboverde

3 FEATURES



Fixers speed up the snail-paced processes in the government as long as one has the money. Artwork/Dexter Vaughn Mancao

Meeting half-way: fixing the 'fixer' culture

Not your uncommon scenario: You enter inside a government office to get your license processed. The staff instructs you to submit this document at Desk A. By the time you arrive in front of Desk A, the staff says you need to pass this document to Desk B, which then tells you to go to Desk C. Then, it becomes apparent that the staff treats you like a football being passed around inside the football pitch. After you have accomplished this tedious process, you may be mistaken to think that all of it is done. But then the staff tells you to wait for n-number of days before you can get your license. Frustrating, right? But if becoming a human-size football is not your thing, you may want to get your "fix" by availing the services of a "fixer."

KATRINA GUILONSOD AND CHRISTOPHER ED CABOVERDE

MS. TETCHIE AQUINO, a professor from the Political Science and History Department of the Ateneo de Davao University, stated that in the Philippine context there is excessive red tape in the government. This refers to the many processes, rules and paperwork needed to be followed and gone through to get a desired outcome.

Thus, people turn to fixers since they, "will make your life easier," she remarked.

So how does this happen? According to an anonymous source named Alias Insider, fixers tend to stay outside the offices waiting for a possible client who would need their services.

From medical certificates and drug tests to permits, you name it and they process it. You would not be bothered by the cumbersome red

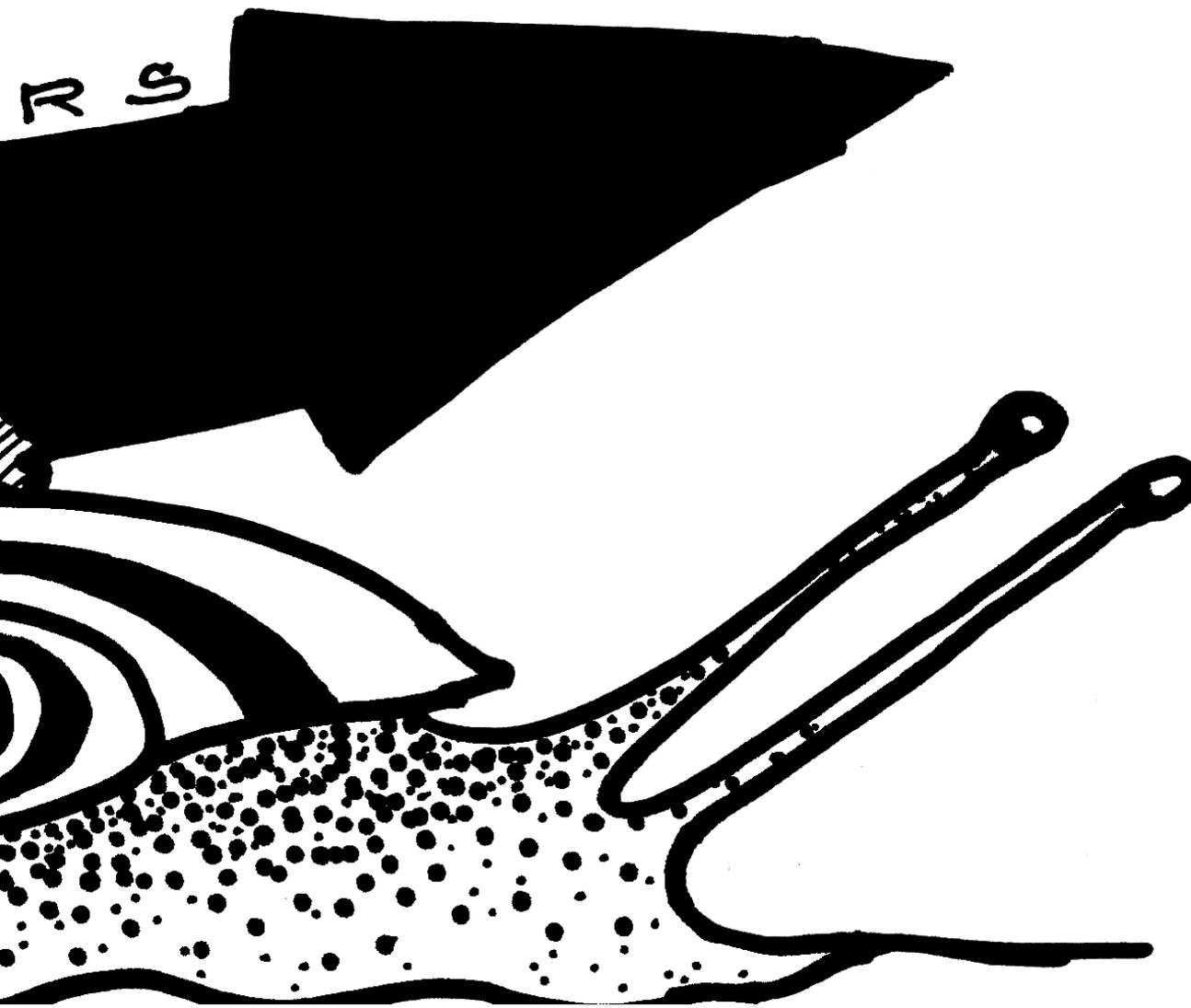
tape.

"Hayahay jud kung magpa-fixer ka labi na kung lakas ang fixer sa sulod. Dali ra jud kaayo na," the anonymous source said.

Once you submit the requirements to the fixer, he or she will go directly to his or her contact person inside of the office, may he or she be a liaison officer or an administrative officer.

After receiving it from the fixer, the officer inside the agency will directly process the papers needed in exchange of a "padulas" or bribe. With this, Alias Insider said that availing a fixer's services could mean faster yet more expensive processing.

"Mas mahal jud kung magpa-fixer. Kung PHP1,000 imong ibayad sa normal, pag magpa fixer ka mga 1,800 imong magasto. Ang 800 pangkape, pang-sigariliyo sa ilang mga contact sa sulod



ug sa ila,” he shared.

Instead of having it processed for roughly two to three days, the papers will be done within the day.

The process is even easier when you have a direct connection with the offices like a friend or relative working inside to make the process easier.

Although it makes life easier, the “fixer” culture is one manifestation of graft and corruption that the Philippine government is known for.

How to fix the fixer problem?

Some would equate government bureaucracy with red tapes, fixers and corruption. But it does not have to be like this.

According to Aquino, the government has implemented programs to cut red tape, which would help discourage

the public from availing the services of fixers.

One such program is the city government’s one-stop shop program catering to entrepreneurs. In this program, instead of going to different offices and desks to renew their business permits, business owners need only submit their documents to the Business Bureau at the Sangguniang Panlungsod Building.

Still, Aquino remarked that long lines remain a problem because of the Filipino habit of last-minute queuing and submission of documents. Hence, some people still pay for the fixers’ services to expedite the process.

“Ugaling Pilipino man gud ang mag-process on the last day. Taas gihapon ang linya. Since last day na man, so bayad na lang sa fixer.”

She added that because of this reality, it is difficult to

blame solely the government for the continued existence of fixers.

“Lisod man pud i-blame ang government. So, the existence of the fixer works both ways,” she said.

Also, there are checks in place to reprimand and punish those people within the government who are caught coalescing with fixers. After all, this is a form of graft and corruption.

“Of course. I-check man na siya. Kung dili siya elected, sa Civil Service siya ma-under. Kung elected siya, sa Ombudsman. Kay nganong paspas [ang prose-so]? Kay naa kay makuha. So kung naa kay makuha, diha na mosulod ang graft and corruption,” Aquino stated.

Meeting half way

The government may be trying to do away with rigid protocols and exces-

sive rules, and punish erring officials, but the public also has the responsibility to help eradicate the “fixer” culture.

For Aquino, she remained optimistic that through time, the public would do away with this habit.

“But you can change [this] culture through time,” she said.

Each person can change this by simply falling in line days or weeks ahead of the deadline. For example, whenever the Commission on Elections conducts its registration drive, fall in line as soon as it begins. One must not wait for the last day to register. By this, one need not hire fixers to do the job for him or her.

In short, the government and the public have to meet half-way. 🌐



The “fixer” culture is one manifestation of graft and corruption that the Philippine government is known for.



3 FEATURES

LEFT. The trail of destruction that Yolanda left is no match for this child's optimism as he rides away with his bicycle. Photo/ David Guttenfelder

CENTER. Yolanda left Tacloban with thousands of dead bodies lining up the city streets. Photo/ David Guttenfelder

RIGHT. The man with the rosary around his neck is among the thousands of victims who continue to have faith despite the tragedy that struck. Photo/ David Guttenfelder



Life after the storm: Filipino resilience after Yolanda

The destruction caused by Typhoon Haiyan, known locally as Yolanda, is undoubtedly tremendous. With over PHP30 billion worth of infrastructure and farmland destroyed and about 6000 casualties, it is difficult to gather strength after such a disaster. The whole country and the rest of the world grieve for the lives lost and the families broken. Despite this, the people see past the storm clouds and see the silver lining. The Filipino spirit still lives to see another day.

MADRID CATRE & LE GRANDE DOLINO

REPORTS BY the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) revealed 6,109 deaths, with 1,779 missing and 27,665 injured. Haiyan dragged with it a total of PHP36,690,882,497.27 worth of damage, gripping the agricultural sector by the neck as it went.

In spite the dead bodies and debris that cluttered the streets, the low food and water supplies and the safety issues, especially at night, victims in Tacloban and other affected areas managed to showcase resilience.

David Guttenfelder, an American photojournalist, took photos, uploaded it on his Instagram account and captured scenes that surprised the world. His photos showed body bags lying side-by-side and victims taking shelter on the pews of a church. However, two photos showed the other face of the coin.

One of his photos featured a little boy smiling as he rode through the debris on a small bicycle. Another photo highlighted a group of men, "during a procession to call for courage and resilience among their fellow Typhoon Haiyan survivors," as what the caption explained.

This resilience drew attention from many other international bodies.

"The Filipino people, the people of Tacloban, and Samar and Cebu and all these places where so many have died, they're strong not just to survive the storm, but they are strong to have survived the aftermath of the storm," CNN's Anderson Cooper said.

For Ernesto Jelo, who, with his family, survived the storm surge, strength was the key. Originally from Bohol, Ernesto and his family moved to Tacloban where they resided for a year until Haiyan hit. After the disaster struck, he and his family took up shelter in Tugbok.



For him, the only way to go is up.

“Kusog kaayo ang storm surge. Kung wala mi kasaka ug building kay ma-wash out mi tanan,” Ernesto recounted.

Ernesto expressed how thankful he was for him and his family to survive the storm, which devastated the rich and the poor alike.

Helping hands

The rest of the Philippines also shared with the pain of Eastern Visayas. Across the country, schools, governments and other bodies collected relief and aid to help rehabilitate the victims.

Last December, the Arrupe Office of Social Formation, together with their volunteers and other offices, hosted Pagbabahagi, which brought the victims of Haiyan together in light of the holidays. University Community Engagement and Advocacy Council (UCEAC)

chairperson, Atty. Romeo Cabarde, Jr. expressed that despite the tragedy, the holidays brought light.

The event sought to provide Noche Buena packages and other gifts as well as entertainment to the victims.

Lilibeth Arcena, director of the Arrupe Office, shared to the survivors that their strength served as an inspiration.

“Hindi ako ang nasa lagay na magbigay ng inspirational message. Higit sa inspirasyon na ibibigay namin sa inyo ang inspirasyon na idinudulot niyo sa amin,” Arcena said.

Filipinos also showcased vigilance in the aftermath of the typhoon. The netizens in social media sought to prevent people from politicking the situation. They criticized Vice President Jejomar Binay for allegedly posting his name on relief goods and criticized the distribution of relief based on voting

patterns.

Filipinos initiatives sharpened in these grave circumstances, prodding them to move and daring them to defend and to take part.

Sonny Rosal, head of the United Architects of the Philippines, which is helping the National Housing Authority (NHA) design stronger houses, said, “What is being discussed now in the NHA is that it may take us 10 years to be able to rebuild. It’s not that easy. A lot is involved here. It’s like building a new country.”

Nevertheless, after death’s howl, sounds of life started to fill the air in Tacloban. The roar of engines clearing the streets covered with debris was a hopeful sign of movement. The markets began to be filled again with fish, vegetables and staples. The survivors also received their daily rations. Furthermore, the ruins did not hinder the people from setting up their shelter from scratch.



They're strong not just to survive the storm, but they are strong to have survived the aftermath of the storm.



Tacloban showed signs of fighting back.

Vatican's envoy to the Philippines, Papal Nuncio Giuseppe Pinto, led the Christmas Eve Mass at Palo Cathedral in Leyte, bringing with him a message of hope from Pope Francis.

On the other hand, Archbishop John Du said in his homily, “We lost a lot of things that we own, but here, we never lost hope.”

After the mass, survivors marched towards an expanse of land behind the church where bodies of victims were laid to rest and formed a sea of candle lights. As darkness fell, they left their candles one by one and went on their way towards a new dawn, to a new hopeful beginning. 🌅

3 FEATURES



Lady Justice is calling on lawyers to be part of the Public Attorney's Office to help tip the scales in favor of indigent clients. Artwork/Rafael S. Benedicto

Public Attorney's Office: not your ordinary day job

KATRINA GUILONSOD

IT IS enshrined in the Constitution that the people, especially the accused have the right to counsel. But that right is expensive, especially when one gets the services of private lawyers and law firms. Fortunately, for those who cannot afford the services of a counsel, they may run to the Public Attorney's Office (PAO), which provides legal services to the public for free.

For the indigent citizens

The PAO was known as the Citizens' Legal Assistance Office (CLAO) until it was changed to its present name in July 25, 1987. However, the mission of the agency to provide free legal services to the indigent stayed the same.

It assists the indigent and low-income citizens because they are deprived of legal services, especially during criminal and administrative cases.

PAO is the principal law office of the government and is under the Department of Justice. It caters to civil, criminal, labor, quasi-judicial and administrative cases of mostly indigent citizens.

Other legal services including notarial services and administration of oaths are given free of charge.

Inside PAO

In an interview with Public Attorney's Office Regional Director Atty. Francis A. Calatrava, he said that working for PAO is tough because you need to know all the ropes of being a lawyer in a short time.

"Ako, I didn't have a special field in law like criminal law or labor law. But with PAO, I was able to practice almost all special fields in law," he said.

PAO lawyers are even hailed as "Jacks-of-all-trades" or "Lawyers-of-all-trades" because of the

trainings they got inside the office.

When asked on the how the services are being delivered, Calatrava said that they are a service-oriented office. They seek to serve the public rather than gain credit.

"No matter how much time we are exerting, as long as there are people who need legal assistance, PAO will surely be there for them," he said.

PAO today

PAO is known as the training ground of aspiring public lawyers. But nowadays, PAO lawyers seem to come and go according to an article in the website of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). PAO Chief Attorney, Persida Acosta, said that PAO roughly needs at least 1000 new lawyers nationwide to suffice the problem of clogged up courts and cases.

In Davao City, there are 18

courts and only 16 lawyers. These numbers show that there is a scarcity of lawyers within the local courts. The ideal ratio is one lawyer equals one court. But, with the number of lawyers, some have to handle two courts at the same time.

But according to Calatrava, the shortage of lawyers is not a threat to the office because the lawyers of PAO are competent in terms of working their loads.

"Having many lawyers who are incompetent is useless. I'd rather have a fewer number [of lawyers] but functioning at its best and competent enough to serve the people," Calatrava added.

With an average of 300 people who do their transactions with PAO everyday, what drives them to continue?

"Gusto ka makahelp sa mga tao kay luoy pud sila labi na mga indigent jud.

Maski stressful ang working environment, ang pag serve nalang sa mga tao akong gina-isip para maganahan ko," a PAO employee said.

Working in an overly demanding environment is tough and draining. For the people working inside PAO, to continue serving requires a lot of dedication and commitment to the job.

"[It is a] privilege to serve the people who really need legal services because not everybody is given this opportunity to serve the way PAO does," Calatrava conclude.

The Public Attorney's Office may look as an ordinary government agency. But beneath the cramped up papers of cases, the noisy stamps and the shortage of employees lies an office filled with people who have the heart for service, especially to the marginalized. Indeed, this is not your ordinary day job. 🗳️

4

DIVERSIONS

BARYO TINYO/DEXTER VAUGHN MANCAO

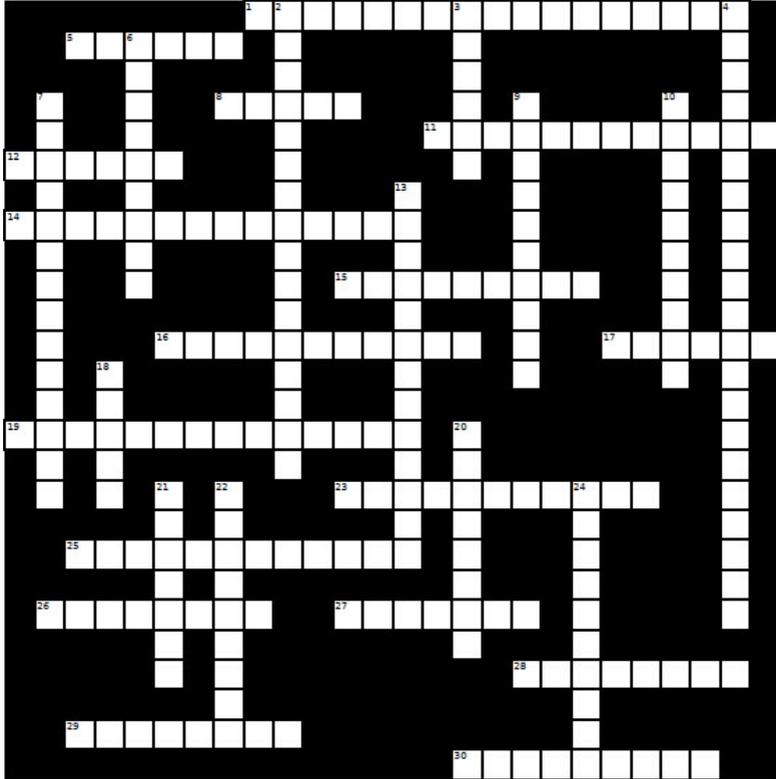


PEDRO TAGAPARADA AND THE LONGEST LINE/STEELY CABALLERO



4 DIVERSIONS

PASTIME/CROSSWORDS



ACROSS

- 1 (4W) President of Singapore
- 5 2014 FIFA World Cup host nation
- 8 Equivalent to 12 dozens
- 11 (2W) New dean of the School of Arts and Sciences
- 12 Territory of Ukraine that declared its independence
- 14 (3W) 2016 Olympics host city
- 15 Sun Goddess in Shintoism
- 16 (2W) Open forum wherein students voice out their concerns to the administration
- 17 ABBA's home country
- 19 (2W) Founder of Wikileaks
- 23 (2W) The "God particle"
- 25 Judicial capital of South Africa
- 26 De facto capital of the EU
- 27 Driest desert in the world
- 28 (2W) Program to colonize Mars by 2025
- 29 Old name of Scotland
- 30 A policy wherein people are segregated from each other

DOWN

- 2 (2W) The best alternative forgone
- 3 The city where the modern pizza originated
- 4 (4W) "I Have a Dream" speaker.
- 6 European city known for its red-light district and coffee shops
- 7 (2W) Original name of Mickey Mouse
- 9 (2W) Autobiography of Hitler
- 10 (2W) "Seize the day"
- 13 (2W) Oldest US President to assume office
- 18 Strongest earthquake recorded that occurred in __ in 1960
- 20 Alternative name for German Shepherd Dog
- 21 Football club owned by Roman Abramovich
- 22 The parasitic flowering plant known for its foul odor
- 24 "Fermented cabbage"

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ANSWERS NEXT ISSUE

THE MORE YOU GIVE/DEXTER VAUGHN MANCAO



ANO'NG BALITA?/NADINE CABALLES



#FEELINGDYSEBEL/DEXTER VAUGHN MANCAO



HISTORY REPEATS/STEELY CABALLERO



5

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WHAT MAKES THE PASTURE GREEN?

Year 2013 ended economically triumphant despite calamities that hit the country, but there are families that feel a loss for years. The Philippines' 7.2 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth tagged the country as "one of the fastest economies in Asia, second only to China" yet it usually never brings family members back for good.

5 MONTAGE



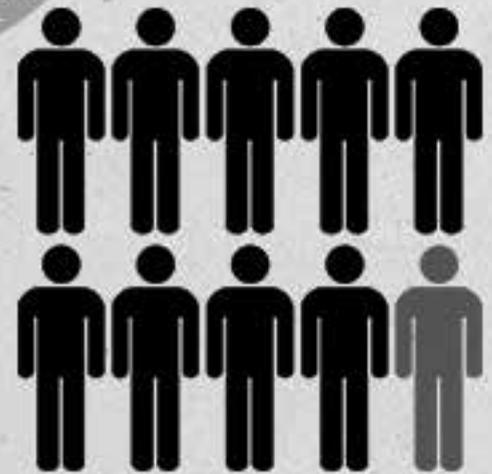
THE PHILIPPINES REMAIN FOURTH WORLDWIDE IN TERMS OF COUNTRIES WITH THE LARGEST REMITTANCES.

—'BALITANGHALI' REPORT—

EVERY DAY, 3000 FILIPINOS LEAVE FOR ABROAD.

AT PRESENT, THERE IS ABOUT 10 PERCENT OF ALMOST A 100 - MILLION PHILIPPINE POPULATION WORKING OVERSEAS.

—CFO—



ALMOST ALL FILIPINOS HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER OR RELATIVE WORKING OUT OF THE COUNTRY.

—CFO—

What makes the pasture green?

Year 2013 ended economically triumphant despite calamities that hit the country, but there are families that feel a loss for years. The Philippines' 7.2 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth tagged the country as "one of the fastest economies in Asia, second only to China," yet it usually never brings family members back for good. KATRINA KATE DIANNE PUNAY

NUMBERS AND words may look and sound prosperous. However, behind the figures, heavy compromises are made.

Standard Chartered, a British Bank, sees that compared to a muted impact of foreign exchange, remittance growth or money sent by OFWs is the one that boosts domestic spending. It has a, "significantly strong relationship" with nominal GDP compared to many countries. This does not only mean that there is a more promising income for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). This also says that remittance flows will be increasing, encouraging another set of risk-takers to leave their country—and families.

In a journal entitled the Future of Children published last 2005, Paul Amato's study was cited, emphasizing that children who grow up in a household with only one parent have more social and other problems than children who are raised by both parents. In addition, the presence of both parents in

a child's growth indicated a better emotional well-being.

In a culture where family ties are deemed significant, it is a fact that Filipinos, in the pursuit of a greener pasture, go far away. But how far really is this pasture, a meadow so abundant, that it is needed to be looked for?

Ivy Jean Tupas, an incoming 4th year Education student and second of three siblings, says that both of her parents work in Japan since she was 12 years old. Because their parents are away, their grandmother looks after them.

With her mother working as a manager and her father as a mechanical engineer, she compares the salary her parents would receive if they worked here in the Philippines to how much they are getting in Japan.

"They earn twice as much during normal season, and thrice if the demand is high. Financially, this secures us more," she says.

Yet, Tupas also says that the hardest part about her

parents being OFWs is that they cannot have "direct comfort or emotional support."

Despite the challenge that distance gives, she made it clear that the bond between her and her parents is still strong despite the miles between them, as they still find time to communicate, a call and text away.

"They also come home at least once a year, and stay for two weeks to a month," she adds.

To compensate her parents' sacrifices, Tupas recognizes that, "giving importance to my education is one of the greatest gifts I can give them in return."

Christine Joyce Agapito, a Far Eastern University (FEU) BS Nursing student acknowledges the fact that, "financial support itself does not strengthen family ties."

Agapito was among the awardees of the 2013 Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) Search for Outstanding Expat Pinoy Children for being outstanding in both academic

and non-academic fields.

Agapito is confident that her father, who works in various construction jobs, is a responsible parent.

"We never felt that we're not loved. He was far from us but we weren't taken for granted and we truly felt loved. Regardless if (sic) whether he was at home or overseas, it was the same," she said in an article in the official website of the Far Eastern University.

While the parents of Tupas and Agapito have allotted enough time to bond with their children, for other OFWs, it can be difficult when practicality sinks in.

It is the practicality of leaving loved ones behind for a love that wants to, literally, provide. It is the practicality of working hard far from one's roots to get what one's family deserves.

Yes, a higher GDP gives the country a sense of pride. But for those families whom the OFWs have left behind, it is more personal.

'Caring', and not necessarily 'providing', is what makes the family abundant and green.

The 'unsung heroes' of GDP may be good providers. It is one thing. Being good fathers and mothers is another. It is what makes the real pasture, the true meadow, look greener. 'Caring', and not necessarily 'providing', is what makes the family abundant and green.

Perhaps, the question should be: how alive is this pasture, where Filipinos reside, really is? How alive is this meadow when instead of nourishing it, we leave it behind? 🌱

5 MONTAGE



Social Activism: from streets to screens

Picture yourself in the middle of the street, seeing people raising their banners and hearing their voices echoed as they shout their sentiments to the government. Now, picture yourself in your room, facing your laptop and reading posts of individuals who are taking a stand regarding the current issue of the country and posting sentiments to the government. Do you see any difference? BASIL ESPINOZA

IT ALL boils down to activism. The usual activism that we know does not just end on streets, but now it already made its way to the cyberspace, specifically in social media.

The Power of Social Media

Social media has now become part of daily life. Many now have accounts on Facebook and/or Twitter and find these sites quite accessible. By just using a smart phone or laptop, you can like, comment and share posts anytime and anywhere as long as you have internet connection. With that, this ability of social media to reach people has been utilized to connect and influence people.

For example, the cry to abolish the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) was channeled through social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter. Last August 2013, people responded to the deafening call for the abolishment of pork barrel through partic-

ipating in the #MillionPeopleMarch. Though others did not join the rally, netizens continue to protest through sharing memes and participating on online discussions on Facebook and Twitter.

An activist speaks

Avon Sinajon, a graduate of Mass Communications, shares her reason why she chose social media as an avenue to share her advocacy as a social activist.

First, social media is accessible. As long as she has access online, she can immediately share what she thinks about an issue and share relevant information online.

Second, it has a wider scope. Since Avon has a lot of friends on Facebook, she can target a huge number of people with just one post.

Third, there are no processes and protocols to follow. Unlike other organizations that have to follow a lot of processes to form an assembly, in social media, a simple status and share will do.

She also analyzed why there are still others who remain apathetic or unin-

terested in participating in discussions and making a stand about important issues in the country.

“Uninterested sila in the first place, because they are not informed. Even if you feed them information, still, they don’t understand it,” Avon stressed, highlighting that you do not just inform them but help them shape their opinion.

She also added that one also has to encourage them in joining online discussions and giving them references, so that they would not be left hanging.

Avon also said people tend to turn you down if you show aggressiveness and force your stand on to them. Instead, she remarked that you need to teach them how to think.

Challenges faced by a social activist

Although it may seem that what she is doing is easy, Avon tells that she faces a few challenges as an activist in social media.

First, she highlighted credibility as one challenge. Avon explained that we live in a society where the only

credible sources of information are from the media and those who are involved in the issue.

“So kung ako ang tao, kung makita nako ang post makaingun jud ko 'kinsa man na siya oi?’” she said.

The biggest challenge, according to Avon, is to establish your credibility, especially if you are giving opinions.

Moreover, she highlighted the validity of information, especially those available online. As a social activist, she is careful when sharing information because people might respond negatively if she shares the wrong information.

Lastly, Avon highlighted that one needs to have the courage to stand by for what one has said, adding, “You don’t just share for share sake.”

Dealing with the stereotypes

Being an activist comes with a stigma of constantly complaining about many things the government does. Avon admitted that you cannot avoid it. But how does she deal with it?

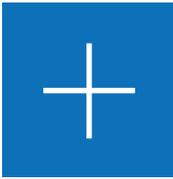
“Pinapanindigan nako siya,” Avon stressed.

She explained that there is nothing wrong about people labeling her as an activist because that is the truth.

“I post not for image-building... If I think na makakatulong siya sa public and public concern siya, gina-share nako... and why should I care about what the public would think of me?” Avon added.

May it be on streets or in social media, activism stays

This ability of social media to reach people has been utilized to connect and influence people.



BACK PAGE ANTICS/EDRIANNE CARL MILITAR



DIWANAG 2015

DREAMS & NIGHTMARES

Submit your entries to
ateneo@gmail.com or at the
Ateneo office on or before
September 13, 2014

