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BUSINESS REVIEW

Volume XXXII No. 2

February - March 2016

**WHEN WE BUILD IT,
THEY WILL COME**

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YPC Inter-Chamber Young
Professionals Networking Night

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Making tourism more of a pleasure

By Florian Gottein

I recently returned to the island of Bohol in the Visayas to visit the fabulous white sand beaches in Panglao Island, as well as at the small town of Anda located on a peninsula along the east coast of the island.

Bohol is famous among foreign tourists for its scuba diving off Panglao Island; its wonderful coral reefs and, of course, the eerie “Chocolate Hills” with its over 1,200 hill-like mounds that now feature a new adventure called “zipline biking”. It’s also famous as the only home of the big-eyed tarsier, the second smallest primate in the world.

Bohol is no stranger to me since I’ve visited this emerald isle twice before. This time, however, I was a seasoned and braver traveler so I decided to get to Anda by motorcycle from the provincial capital of Tagbilaran on the south of the island.

Roaring along the Bohol Circumferential Road along the shore towards Anda with the sea breeze hurtling into my face was a truly marvelous experience. The road was a well-paved highway that got me to this famous tourist destination with little trouble. I discovered that Anda’s white beaches are as lovely as Boracay’s.

On the way back, however, I decided to take another route suggested by Google Maps so I could explore more of Bohol. The well paved highway suddenly ended and then turned into a single lane dirt track. From then on, my uneventful tour became decidedly more arduous, including pushing my bike to the nearest vulcanizing shop in the middle of nowhere.

Well-paved roads that whisk tourists to their destinations are part of that invisible framework of any tourism industry called “tourism infrastructure”. Along with well-built bridges, railways, airports and seaports, paved roads make tourism more than a pleasure. On the other hand, the absence of or the poor quality of tourism infrastructure leads to an action we all don’t want to see, namely people rethinking of the Philippines as their next vacation destination.

I know from first-hand experience the Philippines has vast tourism treasures foreign tourists will love to explore. It’s just a matter of improving the tourism infrastructure, as well as the services offered to a more international standard so as many tourists from Europe and elsewhere get to travel to their destinations quickly and as comfortable as possible.



Florian Gottein is the new ECCP Executive Director. He is also the New Project Director of European-Philippine Business Network (EPBN). He can be reached at florian.gottein@eccp.com.

Tourists don’t expect to travel thousands of kilometers from their home countries only to complain about terrible vacations. They travel for the exciting, new experiences they can cherish and flaunt on FB, Twitter and Instagram.

The European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines is working with the government and the private sector to both modernizing tourism infrastructure and thus further unlock the Philippines huge tourism potential. Tourism is one of the economy’s key growth drivers and expanding tourism’s contribution to the GDP will also foster inclusive growth.

Most of the local businesses that cater to tourists are micro, small and medium enterprises that together employ millions of Filipinos. Tourism can be the ticket of these Filipinos out of poverty.

The cover story of this issue of the ECCP Business Review examines the state of the Philippines’ tourism infrastructure. More important, it tells what ECCP and its partners are doing to help to improve that infrastructure so it benefits not only foreign tourists but even more so every Juan.

San Carlos City launches Project i4J

By: Vonier delos Reyes



San Carlos City Mayor Gerardo "Ginggo" P. Valmayor Jr. and Negros Occidental Vice Governor Jose Eugenio "Bong" V. Lacson (center) leading the Project i4J Launch

The City Government of San Carlos, Negros Occidental publicly launched Project i4J in their locality.

San Carlos City Mayor Gerardo P. Valmayor Jr. and Negros Occidental Vice Governor Jose Eugenio V. Lacson led the project launch last March 14. To name a few, the event was attended by Diocese of San Carlos Bishop Gerardo A. Alminaza and Graft Investigation Officer I of the Office of the Ombudsman-Visayas, Atty. Evangeline G. Nuñal. Partners and multi stakeholders from national line agencies, regional and local government offices, barangay officials, local civil servants, business chambers and industries, transport groups, religious sectors, media partners and people's organizations were the groups who witnessed the launching.

Mayor Valmayor on his opening message emphasized governance as a shared responsibility among the government officials, civil servants, business partners and the public.

"We should work together as partners. We should live the culture of integrity"

as this will evolve our city to become investment and business-friendly LGU, thus creating more jobs to our people. Let us all serve, lead and live with integrity," he highlighted.

On the other hand, Vice Governor Lacson delivered a solidarity message and mentioned, *"Everyone should have integrity. It takes two to tango for corruption to take its root."* Considering that integrity must be present at all levels of government, be it national, regional or local.

Also, the City Mayor also recognized their established Integrity Circle and Technical Working Group to the general public at the San Carlos City Hall Grounds. A motorcade also took place which was participated by partners and supporters of Partnerships for Integrity and Jobs.

Other highlights of the event were the launching of "Feedbox," offshoot of the Civil Service Commissions' Contact Center ng Bayan that will enable citizens to provide feedback on the quality of service of the LGU to its clients; and the Public Signing

on the Integrity Wall showing their commitment to serve, lead and live with Integrity.

Being the first to publicly launch in Visayas, the project implementers and partners hoped to inspire and encourage other LGUs to join the movement resulting to the institutionalization of the culture of integrity in all parts of our country.







YPC Inter-Chamber Young Professionals Networking Night



ECCP's Young Professionals Committee kicked off its first event for the year with an Inter-Chamber Young Professionals Networking Night, last April 6, 2016 at Twenty-four Seven McKinley Building, Taguig. This event co-presented by JLL, was in partnership with the American Chamber of Commerce, Australian-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce, Belgian Filipino Business Club, British Chamber of Commerce, French Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Korean Chamber of Commerce, Philippines-Netherlands Business Council and the Spanish Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines.



The event had a speed networking theme, requiring attendees to meet new people and have their names written on name cards which were used as raffle prize tickets. The event was a success, with almost 300 people in attendance as well as positive post-event feedback from most of the attendees.



If you are interested to find out more about the YPC and its membership, please email ypc@eccp.com.





When we build it, they will come

By Art Villasanta

We normally don't think about infrastructure when we think about tourism, but if we can't get from tourism destination A to tourism destination B, what's the use of tourism at all? Equally important, it's also about reaching tourism destination A in a comfortable and safe way and without major delays.

The latter is especially important to foreign tourists like those from Europe that travel thousands of kilometers and expect nothing more than to be conveyed to tourist havens such as Palawan and Boracay quickly and with the least amount of discomfort. Hence, the fundamental value of tourism infrastructure, which is, after all, the backbone of any tourism industry.

By tourism infrastructure we mean the local airports that are the gateways to those marvelous beaches and foodie trips; the all-weather roads that allow international tourists to experience those "Wow!" selfie moments as they trek through verdant landscapes and even the clean toilets without which tourism would be a nightmare, among many other things.

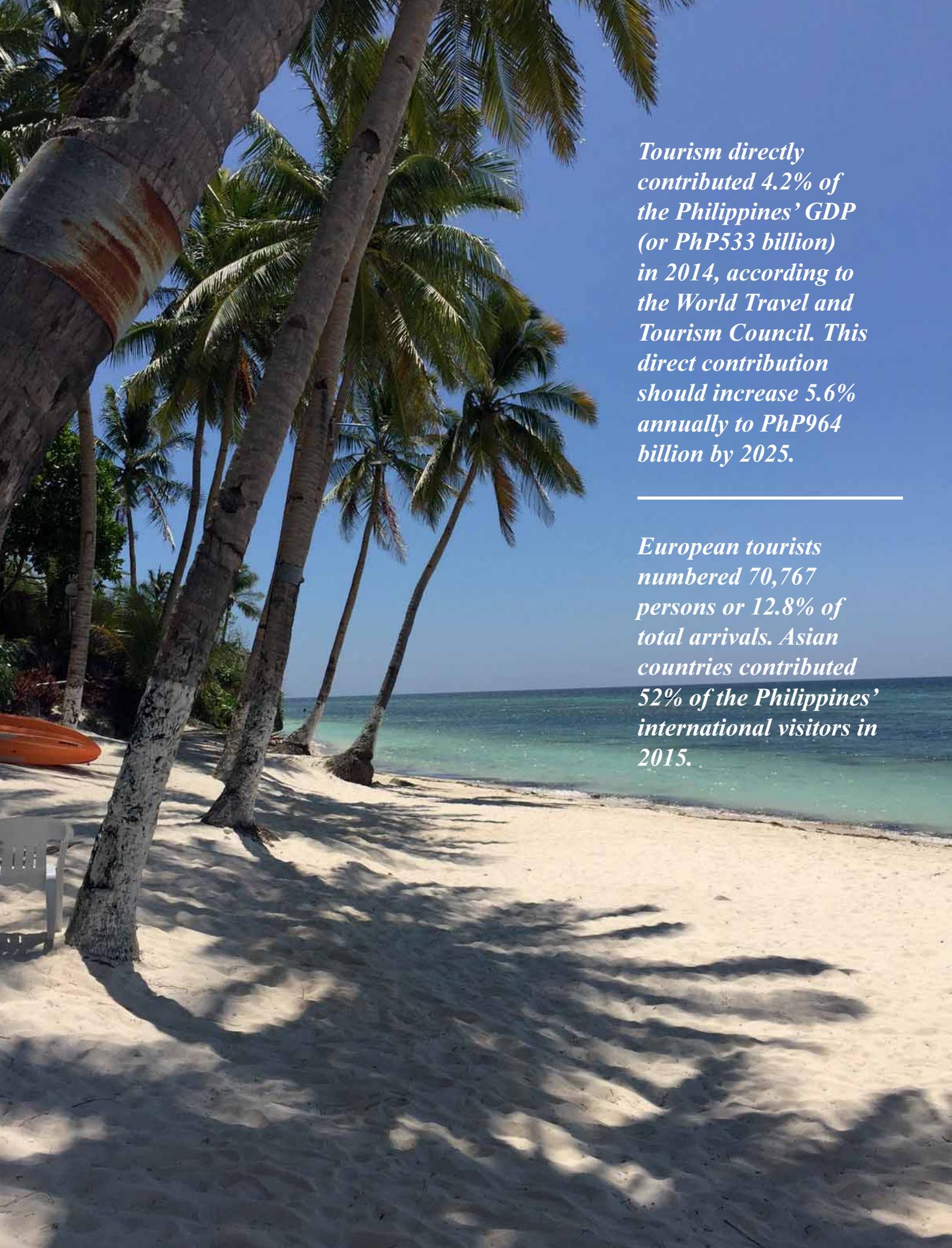
The Philippines' tourism infrastructure has long been found wanting, however. The 2010 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report prepared by the World Economic Forum ranked the Philippines the worst in tourism infrastructure among the countries comprising ASEAN -6 (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam). The report rates 180 countries on a set of regulatory and business-related standards in travel and tourism competitiveness.

The sad state of the Philippines' tourism infrastructure has also been noted in reports by Arangkada Philippines, the Joint Foreign Chambers of the Philippines (JFC) and the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP). Arangkada is

the major advocacy of JFC to increase investment and employment in the Philippines.

The infrastructure bottleneck is one reason why this country received only five million international tourists in 2014 compared to 27.4 million for Malaysia, 24.8 million for Thailand and 15.1 million for Singapore, according to the United Nations' World Tourism Organization (WTO). Inadequate infrastructure remains one of the biggest hindrances to investments in Philippine tourism.

But the Philippines (*once famous as the Pearl of the Orient*) has got to build it – the infrastructure – so tourists will come and keep on coming. And the government has got to partner more with the private sector to do this.



Tourism directly contributed 4.2% of the Philippines' GDP (or PhP533 billion) in 2014, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. This direct contribution should increase 5.6% annually to PhP964 billion by 2025.

European tourists numbered 70,767 persons or 12.8% of total arrivals. Asian countries contributed 52% of the Philippines' international visitors in 2015.

Going it alone

A huge problem in this case seems to be the national government's insistence on almost monopolizing tourism infrastructure development with scant private sector involvement. Unfortunately, this means scarce foreign direct investments (FDIs) are going to tourism infrastructure, especially maritime tourism infrastructure that is vital given the Philippines' archipelagic geography.

A negative result of the scarcity of FDIs is to limit the country's "tourism carrying capacity". This capacity is defined by the WTO as the "maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic, socio-cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors' satisfaction".

The paucity of our carrying capacity seems to be a reason for the Department of Tourism (DoT) lowering its initial estimate of tourist arrivals in 2016 to six million from its target of 10 million. The unanswered questions seem to be "Where will these 10 million tourists stay?" and "How will they get there?" In other words, since we didn't build it, they can't come.

DoT has admitted that boosting tourist numbers by almost five million people in just one year will take "some doing" and that the lower number of six million is a "more realistic figure". On the upside, the government claims foreign tourists are spending more money and staying longer.

Tourism: great for growth

Tourism directly contributed 4.2% of the Philippines' GDP (or PhP533 billion) in 2014, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. This direct contribution should increase 5.6% annually to PhP964 billion by 2025.

In 2015, DoT reported foreign tourist arrivals grew 10.9% to 5.4 million persons. It also said the tourism industry employed some 4.9 million persons or 12.7% of total national employment and up 4.8% from 2014. Also in 2015, spending by international visitors rose to PhP227.6 billion (US\$4.9 billion) compared to US\$214.9 billion in 2014.

European tourists numbered 70,767 persons or 12.8% of total arrivals. Asian countries contributed 52% of the Philippines' international visitors in 2015.

Despite these cheerful numbers, the performance of Philippine tourism pales in comparison with its other Asian neighbors. Data from the WTO show the Philippines accounted for just 1.8% of all international tourist arrivals in the Asia-Pacific region in 2014. Malaysia took 10.4%; Thailand, 9.4% and Singapore, 4.5%.

A new willingness to spend

This uncomfortable statistic is set to change, however. In late 2015, DoT announced an update to its Tourism Road Infrastructure Project Prioritization Criteria (TRIPPC) that focuses on building and repairing roads leading to tourist destinations throughout the country. The government has budgeted PhP24 billion to build the infrastructure that makes tourism destinations more accessible.

Among the many roads to be worked on are the Ternate-Nasugbu Road in Batangas and Cavite; access roads to the Puerto Princesa Underground River system in Palawan and access roads to Donsol, Sorsogon (home of the whale sharks or "butanding").

DoT said more provincial airports are being upgraded. Among the airports being improved is the Puerto Princesa International Airport that should see its carrying capacity increase

to two million persons by 2018 from 350,000 persons.

Construction of the Panglao International Airport in Bohol will be completed by 2017. This airport will have a carrying capacity of 1.7 million persons. Other airports being upgraded are the Bacolod-Silay airport in Negros Occidental; the Iloilo airport in Panay Island and the Davao airport.

The government has also announced plans to improve five seaports: Manila, Boracay, Puerto Princesa, Currimaog in Ilocos Norte and Sta. Ana in Cagayan.

DoT believes the next administration will go ahead with TRIPPC and other tourism infrastructure projects. DoT Undersecretary Benito Bengzon Jr. said DoT's strategic infrastructure projects have been embedded "so it's not as if the next administration can just stop this".

DoT said it looks forward to adopting a National Tourism Development Plan for 2016-2022 that will further improve connectivity between tourist destinations; improve access and build more infrastructure.

Building this tourism infrastructure, however, is the job of two other government agencies: the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC).

DPWH builds the roads that take tourists from the airports and seaports to their destinations while DOTC builds the airports, seaports and railway systems. Tourism infrastructure has been affected by the Aquino administration's much criticized budget underspending that some analysts claim helped push down economic growth in 2015.

The administration hasn't made that mistake for 2016 with the national budget for infrastructure spending coming close to the cherished goal of 5% of GDP. This willingness to spend will see the DPWH's infrastructure budget rise to PhP269 billion for paving national roads and building access roads to airports, seaports and tourist destinations.

The DOTC's new budget allocates PhP10.2 billion for the construction and improvement of airports and seaports. In addition, PhP15.7 billion is set aside for the rehabilitation of railway systems.

How to boost tourism infrastructure

ECCP's Tourism Committee has met many times over the past years with representatives from the DoT, the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) and the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) to discuss key recommendation that support the development of tourism in the Philippines and the main areas of concern for European businesses.

ECCP and the EU-Philippines Business Network (EPBN), an EU-funded project implemented by ECCP and seven other bilateral chambers of commerce in the Philippines, also highlighted restrictions on investments such as outdated laws and regulations that block the development of the tourism industry. Of particular importance to ECCP and EPBN is the registration and operation of cruise ships.

This problem of insufficient maritime tourism infrastructure is widespread but is keenly felt in popular island tourist destinations such as Cebu. The Cebu Association of Travel Operators has long advocated that the government conduct a serious effort to



repair or build port terminals first, then follow this up by building a reliable sea-based transportation infrastructure that allows provinces to better profit from their unique tourism sites.

Robust port terminals and the availability of boats and ferries that can transport international tourists are necessary if big international cruise lines are to make the Philippines their regular port of call.

ECCP believes Cebu is in a brilliant

position to profit more from its tourism opportunities and become a world-class tourist destination but has to fix some unattractive issues such as poor seaports and the lack of docks for mammoth cruise ships. It pointed out Cebu is gaining interest among elderly Europeans as a retirement destination, hence the urgent need to improve the island's road and sea infrastructure.

ECCP and EPBN also advocate the need for infrastructure development; better regulation and streamlining



They're also urging the government to provide incentives for foreign players in the tourism industry, following best practices seen abroad.

One reason for the trickle of European tourists is the absence of direct flights to and from major European capitals to the Philippines. This state of affairs, however, might soon end. In 2015, Patrick Roux, senior vice president for Asia Pacific of KLM, said the airline might resume direct flights between Amsterdam and Manila if market conditions continue improving in the Philippines.

And just this January, DoT announced an effort to get Lufthansa German Airlines and KLM/Air France to resume direct flights to Manila. Lufthansa discontinued direct flights from Manila to Europe in 2008 due to market conditions while KLM/Air France did so in 2012 because of aviation taxes. DoT is also pushing the government to adopt a more liberalized civil aviation policy and boost bilateral air negotiations with other countries.

The ECCP European Carriers Committee was established with the primary goal of improving the connectivity between the Philippines and Europe, further improving the ease of doing business in the Philippines, and consequently, increasing investments and generating employment.

In an ECCP meeting with DoT last December, DoT shared and presented their route development program geared towards further enhancing competitiveness in Philippine tourism. This is in line with their vision to improve connectivity, market access, and destination infrastructures.

This program also seeks to modernize and expand the Philippines' premier gateway and secondary airports in order to sustain its international

of the tourism sector. In 2015, EPBN and its partners agreed that a public-private sector task force involving relevant government and private sector stakeholders be created to work on the streamlining of activities that facilitate the development of maritime tourism and tourist transportation.

ECCP has pointed out factors holding back EU firms from investing in the Philippines' tourism sector, including high investment risks and unreliable occupancy rate data. It

noted that possible solutions might be to increase the government's data collection capability and further strengthen the capacity of the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (*TIEZA*) that regulates and supervises Tourism Enterprise Zones (*TEZs*).

ECCP and its partners are currently developing a comprehensive sector study to guide EU companies on how to do business in tourism, medical tourism and retirement migration.

market growth and improve the tourists' arrival and departure experience, as well as increase air services and routes. In terms of airport infrastructure, ECCP expressed its support for the dual airport system. It proposed that budget airlines be moved to Clark International Airport in Pampanga while top airlines remained in Manila. This will, however, require increased connectivity between Clark and Manila.

Both ECCP and EPBN have submitted a position paper with recommendations as to what to do to encourage more infrastructure investments. Among these recommendations are amendments to Republic Act 6957, otherwise known as the Build-Operate-Transfer

law, and approval by the House of Representatives of House Bill 6631 or the Public-Private Partnership Act.

While ECCP has identified infrastructure as a weak link in boosting Philippine competitiveness, the chamber is crafting solutions that should help improve the quality of Philippine infrastructure, including tourism infrastructure. On Nov. 24, 2015, ECCP held the Innovation in Infrastructure Congress (IIC), a conference and exhibition that highlighted the known available innovative infrastructure solutions and products from the private sector. IIC focused on four sub-components: energy, transport, water and telecommunications during the well-

attended event.

ECCP said adopting innovative solutions and technologies in construction will hasten infrastructure development and also help create a more welcoming environment for FDIs.

More airports, seaports, paved roads and tourist facilities will serve to unlock the true potential of tourism as driver of growth and inclusive development. And more of this infrastructure will allow tourists to relish the experience of the Philippines' magnificent landscapes; its breathtaking underwater bio diversity; its hundreds of havens for restless souls and the friendliness of the Filipino people.

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Making European luxury cars more affordable disclosed at **1ST EUROPEAN MOTOR SHOW**



Makati City, March 15, 2016 -- The three-day 1st European Motor Show in the Philippines flaunted European excellence in automotive engineering and design as well as held open the move to make European cars more affordable through a Free Trade Agreement between the Philippines and the European Union.

The European Motor Show featured some 20 magnificent cars of various classes from iconic European brands such as Audi, BMW, Maserati, Mercedes-Benz, Peugeot, Porsche, Volkswagen and Volvo that are famous for their fabulous luxury, eco-friendly auto technology and high safety standards. There was also a display of classic cars from the collection of European car clubs that participated in the event.

European motorcycle makers such as BMW Motorrad, Ducati and Ural exhibited a dozen of their superbikes during the event while MAN showcased a passenger-friendly bus suitable for Metro Manila road conditions.

The well-attended event at Bonifacio High Street was co-funded by the European Union and organized by Fairs & More, Inc. (FMI), a subsidiary of the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP). The show was organized in

cooperation with the EU-Philippines Business Network (EPBN) which includes the Belgian, British, European, French, German, Italian, Nordic and Spanish chambers of commerce. The show was supported by co-presenter Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation that briefed visitors on Euro IV fuel standards as well as by sponsors MAN and JEC Philippines and media partner, CNN Philippines

Also displayed at the motor show were different European-made automotive products, components, and tools. A crowd pleaser was a full-scale replica of a Formula 1 racing car provided by Asian Replicas and transported by Ex-Works that could be driven on a virtual race track. Children were likewise treated at the Volkswagen play tents to learn about road safety. There were also well-received seminars about road safety, automotive lighting and mass transport systems.

To kick-off the event, a much anticipated European Car Motorcade was held before the official opening ceremonies. EU Delegation and Embassy officials, ECCP executives as well as other VIP guests were treated to a "choose-your-ride-and-drive" from among a line-up of brand new vehicles provided by exhibitors. The motorcade was a big success with the full

support of the AUDI, Benz, BMW, Peugeot and Volvo clubs of the Philippines. Classic, sporty and 'looker' cars from Benz, Classic MINI, Peugeot and Volvo clubs were major attractions of the show.

The opening ceremonies of the event were led by Ambassador Franz Jessen, European Union head of delegation to the Philippines, and ECCP president Guenter Taus. EU Ambassador Jessen mentioned during the press briefing that while European car brands are technologically competitive, these are disadvantaged by high duties and taxes. He noted that a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will be able to address this issue as well as help the Philippines in its development plans while boosting business ties and trade between both partners. The first round of FTA discussion is expected to start here in May with a second round to be held later this year in Europe.

Taus said the FTA will contain provisions that will modify customs duties and other barriers to trade, services and investment. The elimination or reduction of customs duties should significantly level the playing field for European brands vis-à-vis Japanese brands, given that the latter enjoy preferential tariffs under JPEPA.



ECCP VICE PRESIDENT VISITS DAVAO CITY

By: Fem Garcia

The European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines' Vice President for Operations, Mr. Gerry Constantino, visited Davao City last February 7, 2016. During his visit, he had a meeting with Assistant Regional Director Elsie Solidum of Department of Science and Technology (DOST) XI and Regional Director Belinda Ambi of Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) XI and discussed future collaborations and potential projects. ARD Solidum also toured Mr. Constantino around DOST XI laboratories and facilities and provided an overview of the services they offer. Moreover, he also had a chance to meet some of Davao-based businessmen who showed interest and support to ECCP Davao's future activities.



Hotel Jen Manila's General Manager



Edward Kollmer

General Manager, Hotel Jen Manila

Edward was appointed general manager of Hotel Jen Manila in March 2015. With a wealth of hospitality experience through managing many hotel businesses around the world, he shall bring a very focused approach to developing the success of the Hotel Jen brand.

Prior to joining he was general manager of the Thistle Hotel, Johor Bahru in Malaysia as well as having responsibilities for the Thistle Hotel Port Dickson near Kuala Lumpur. He also worked as general manager managing two hotels for the Thistle group in the fashionable cinema and theatre area of Leicester Square in London.

An Irish national, Edward graduated from Shannon Hotel school, attended Cornell University in the US as well as completing a master's degree in international hotel management from the University of Buckingham in the UK.

Edward is excited to be part of Hotel Jen and truly believes "it is the new way to stay."

SEACCN: Eyes on Chiangmai

By Patricia Kyle Mendoza

As one game is likely a part of another sizeable framework, a benchmarking mission to Chiangmai, Thailand falls into context with the Southeast Asian Creative Cities Network (SEACCN).

SEACCN is a network for the creatives of Southeast Asia, focusing on second cities inclined towards but not limited to cultural heritage, arts, media and functional creation. Majorly comprised of cities, experts, and communities, SEACCN also welcomes collaborators from other parts of Asia or Europe.

Launched in April 2014 at the 1st SEA Creative Cities Forum in Chiangmai, SEACCN is currently comprised of members from 4 cities: Chiangmai (Thailand), Penang (Malaysia), Cebu (Philippines), and Bandung (Indonesia).

Taking advantage of travel retail possibilities created by this network, ECCP Cebu with the Tourism Services Industry Cluster of which RD Asteria Caberte is the National Industry Cluster Coordinator, mounted a Travel Retail Immersion Program (TRIP) that will encourage MSMEs in the Wearable and Homestyle clusters in each selected region to establish long-term strategies for their focus products.

Specifically, in the framework of DTI Region 7 and ECCP Cebu's network of local crafters and creative manufacturers, TRIP seeks to upgrade the quality of souvenir, craft, wearables and homestyle items. This process is to begin with local crafters from Cebu and Bohol and will expand as initial success is achieved in the selected pilot areas.

The Chiangmai benchmarking mission and TRIPs to be conducted in the future seeks to grow cooperative knowledge sharing between creatives, and stakeholders from the Philippines and its neighboring collaborators.

With the flat world continuing to extinguish distance between continents and countries, the Philippines finds itself in the same ring as its fellow competitors, instantaneously reeling from punches thrown from each opponent.

As collaborations begin between Chiangmai and Cebu, one should know that we aren't down for the count. There's always a chance to learn, recreate and innovate with the times.

ECCP Cebu, with the Materials Innovation Centre (MATIC) as a flagship project, plays a significant role.



ECCP CEBU @25, Imagineering the next 25!

By Rosemel D. Calderon

ECCP Cebu celebrated its 25th year anniversary on February 23 at the Grand Ballroom of Marco Polo Plaza Cebu with the theme ECCP Cebu @25, Imagineering the Next 25!

EU Ambassador Franz Jessen graced the occasion as keynote speaker. Special speakers during the occasion were Marc Yang, one of the famous Three Kings of ECCP Cebu business community; Roselu Paloma, ECCP Cebu's manager for 23 years; and ECCP Cebu's architect Henry Schumacher whose speech was delivered by Gus Palao.

Sponsors of ECCP Cebu's 25th year anniversary celebration are as follows:

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manufacturers. It was curated by Debbie Palao. A blend of European and ethnic music filled the air.

ECCP Cebu started with a desk office in 1990. It has now progressed with professional services ranging from advocacy and membership development to business enhancement programs. ECCP Cebu is also driving materials research and development and is managing the Materials Innovation Centre (MATIC), working hand-in-hand with government partners and allied organizations.

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TIÑO Suits; Manila's finest tailor

By: Patti Veridiano

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Enhancing Tourism Development

The EPBN Tourism Advocacy Forum brought together high level participants from government and the private sector last 6 April. This Forum facilitated a productive discussion on how we can jointly pursue and promote Philippine tourism development. Keynote speeches were delivered by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone (TIEZA), and were followed by presentations from Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila and Asia Pacific Projects.

DOT shared its current initiatives (i.e., Routes Asia 2016) to further tourism development, and presented the National Tourism Development Plan and its strategic directions. Among DOT's priorities are improving market access, connectivity, and destination structure. Developing competitive tourist products and destinations also remain at the forefront of their agenda. Furthermore, providing capacity building and upgrading human capital are deemed crucial for the industry's success. Moving forward, DOT strongly believes that more investments must be made in the accommodation sector, and meeting and convention facilities, as well as airport infrastructure.

Reaffirming its resolute commitment to Philippine tourism competitiveness, TIEZA pushes for the building of better infrastructure and offering of better business environment opportunities. TIEZA also identified their next steps, and urged both public and private sector to join hands in making even larger strides in tourism development.

From a private sector perspective, Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila uncovered the market profile of the top visiting European countries in the

Philippines as well as the visitors' major concerns with respect to Philippine travel and tourism.

The Asia Pacific Projects, on the other hand, highlighted the importance of collaboration in developing the European long-haul travel market. Perspectives on the European travel

market and how we can jointly increase European market penetration were brought forward. Recommendations include enhancing pre-trip product information and booking systems; improving access and connectivity; providing quality transit facilities and services; and enhancing in-destination travel support systems.



Roundtable discussion with former PPP Executive Director USec. Canilao

Several ECCP members and EPBN colleagues had the privilege to have a roundtable discussion with USec. Canilao. The former Undersecretary shared more about the PPP Center, its achievements up to meeting date, and what the future holds for the PPP Center.

The discussion also focused on the following items:

- Current status of the Public-Private Partnership
- Alternative measures in the event that the PPP Act does not materialize
- Moving forward: The future of the PPP and its role in national infrastructure development



EPBN Consumer Goods and Retail Committee

The Committee discussion revolved around the following items:

- **Retail Trade Liberalization.** The committee reiterated that allowing the entry of foreign investments in the Philippine retail sector will increase market competition and benefit consumers through wider market choices and better products and services.
- **Harmonization of ASEAN standards for food and beverages.** Adoption of international standards remains high on the agenda of the Committee.

- **Potential excise tax on sweetened beverages.** The Committee discussed various viewpoints on this as there has been no established standard for consumption of sugar.
- **FDA e-registration.** While progress has been made in this area, some members have aired out issues on e-registration. The food and beverage sector is of the opinion that increase in registration fees must be staggered and be lower for 'volume' products.
- **Customs issues.** It was suggested to allot a section especially for Customs issues in

the EPBN Consumer Goods and Retail position paper. It was reiterated that National Single Window is important in simplifying import/export applications and facilitating exchange of trade information in a more cost-efficient and systematic manner. Expanding the coverage of the super green lane facility was suggested.

- **Transportation of goods.** Railways could be explored as another mode of transporting goods. ECCP also reported that TABS- accredited trucks will not be covered by truck bans starting 15th of February.

ECCP European Carriers Committee

The Committee members discussed the following:

- Air Passenger Bill of Rights - did not progress in both Houses of Congress. ECCP requested the committee members to list down the exact provisions that are adversely affecting the industry.
- Bill of Rights for Taxi Passengers. Committee members feel that this Bill is quite reasonable; commuters have the right to be protected from rude taxi drivers. The lack of available taxis at the airport was raised once again. The count on available taxis must be made on a per-airport basis, not per-terminal. In the same way, air passenger flow management must be centralized and uniform across the airport, not airline-specific.
- ECCP expressed support for the dual airport system, and proposed that budget airlines be moved to Clark airport and top airlines remain in Manila. This will require increase connectivity between Clark and Manila. Committee members see resistance from the local carriers.
- On travel tax and airport service fees. These should be integrated in the ticket fee. Also, the tax should be the same for online and offline carriers given their same nature of business.
- Air traffic control. The Committee is of the opinion that general aviation must move out of NAIA.

EPBN Environment and Water Committee

The Environment and Water Committee agreed to focus on the following areas:

- **Tendering and procurement**
The Committee stressed the need for the improvement of technical specifications for tender documents. EPBN will look into getting support from the EU Trade-related Technical Assistance (TRTA) for relevant government agencies. DPWH also welcomes comments to their procurement manual.
- **Green building and incentivizing energy efficiency**
 - Green building code
 - Working with PEZA on their new environment pillar for PEZA locator criteria.
- **Water regulatory reforms**, a central water commission, waste water treatment and need for pre-treatment

ECCP also emphasized the need to work closely with local government units to effect faster and sustainable reforms.

EPBN Human Capital Committee

The Committee met to discuss the advocacy priorities of the Human Capital Committee. Among these key priorities are:

- Apprenticeship Bill (and Immersion Program of K-12) / addressing skills gap
- Liberalization of the Labor Code (easing of provisions on 'hire and fire')

EPBN Automotive, Parts, Lubricants, and Fuels Committee

The EU Delegation in Manila presented about the EU-PH Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with special focus on the automotive sector, and discussed how the private sector can help in this exercise. Negotiations are expected to start in April.

The Committee members agreed to focus on the following advocacy priorities:

- EU-Philippines FTA, inclusion of a chapter on Automotive industry that will benefit European automotive and parts manufacturers;
- Comprehensive Automotive Resurgence Strategy---revisit CARS and see how this can benefit European automotive manufacturers even more;
- Euro 4 implementation, alignment of emissions tests minimum standards to the Euro 4; and
- Importation of car parts, facilitation of importation of car parts such as car batteries and windshields.

- Good governance in education
- Knowledge transfer
- Employment of foreigners

ECCP reported about its initiatives on apprenticeship and senior high school immersion program. The Chamber has been in discussion with DepEd in creating possible, alternative models for the SHS immersion program.

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