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DR. TERESITO C. BACOLCOL

Director, PHIVOLCS

SHADOWS AND FRONTLINES:

Gen. Esperon's Chronicle
of a Nation at War and a
People Seeking Peace

Sulong Kabuhayan:
Empowering TODA
Leaders Through
Cooperative
Opportunities

**RC Manila
Joins**

Alay Lakad 2025

**A BRIDGE
WELL BUILT:**
The Life and
Legacy of Felicit
Cruz Payumo

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PROGRAM



ROTARY CLUB OF MANILA 14th Weekly Membership Meeting Rotary Year 2025-2026

Thursday, November 27, 2025, 12:30 PM
Manila Polo Club

Moderator:

PART I

11:00 AM Registration /Lunch

12:30 PM Call to Order

PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA

Invocation | **STAR RTN. ROWEL J. ONG**

Philippine National Anthem | **AVP**

Rotary Club of Manila Hymn
RCM WF Music Chorale

The Four (4) Way Test
RTN. LAWRENCE LI "Lance" TAN

Acknowledgement of Guests

Welcome Song | **RCM WF Music Chorale**

Birthday Celebrants

Nov. 24 Rtn. Ricky Laurel
Rtn. Johnny De Castro

Nov. 25 PD Tony Lopez

Nov. 27 Rtn. Raymond Alberto

Maligayang Bati / Happy Birthday Song
RCM WF CHORALE

PART II

12:55 PM President's Time

PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA

- **MOA Signing** with Global Peace Festival
Foundation Philippines, Inc.

- *Presentation of RCM Scholar ROLLY V. LAXAMANA*
by DGND Herminio S. "Hermie" Esguerra

1:00 PM Introduction of the Guest of Honor and Speaker
STAR Rtn. Ingill Ra

Guest of Honor and Speaker
DR. TERESITO C. BACOLCOL

Director
Philippine Institute of Volcanology
and Seismology (PHIVOLCS)

1:30 PM Open Forum / Q & A

1:45 PM Presentation of Certificate of Appreciation
PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA

2:00 PM Adjournment
PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA

EDITORIAL

Reginald T. Yu
Editor-in-Chief



ON the night of September 30, 2025, at precisely 21:59:43 PHT, the Visayas region absorbed the full, unforgiving force of the Earth's shifting crust. A magnitude 6.9 earthquake — now recorded as the strongest ever to strike northern Cebu — ruptured through the newly named Bogo Bay Fault with such ferocity that it reverberated across Central Visayas and rippled outward to Western and Eastern Visayas, Southern Luzon, and even Mindanao. In its violent passage, the quake claimed seventy-

nine lives, injured more than 1,271 others, and shattered the stability of communities from Bogo to Cebu City. More than 185,900 homes were damaged, nearly 10,600 structures collapsed, and infrastructure losses surged to ₱16.23 billion. Landslides buried roads and barrios, tsunami advisories disrupted coastal towns, and power systems failed in wide swaths of the archipelago.

In an instant, thousands were plunged into darkness — both literal and existential — as aftershocks continued to shake the region into the following days.

In moments like these, the **Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS)** becomes the nation's most vital source of clarity amidst chaos. Far too often, however, the public encounters PHIVOLCS only as a voice issuing urgent warnings or confirming the grim details of catastrophe. What remains obscured beneath the urgency is the scale of scientific labor and institutional commitment that makes such warnings possible in the first place.

EDITORIAL

Under the stewardship of Director Dr. Teresito C. Bacolcol, whose academic and professional rigor spans geophysics, crustal deformation, GPS geodesy, and active fault motion — as evidenced in his extensive body of work — PHIVOLCS has strengthened our understanding of seismic threats with an expertise unmatched in the region. The identification of the Bogo Bay Fault, supported by documented surface ruptures and fault scarps, is not merely a scientific achievement; it is a lifesaving map of danger zones that, if taken seriously by local governments and planners, should guide where we build, rebuild, or retreat.

Yet the reality is stark: time and again, disasters reveal the same national fractures. Hazard maps exist, yet settlements continue to rise over active faults. Earthquake protocols are taught, but not practiced. Engineering standards are written, yet inconsistently enforced. PHIVOLCS can produce the science, but the science means little without political will, community compliance, and national discipline.

By coordinating closely with PHIVOLCS, RCM can also take on the crucial task of transforming complex scientific data into accessible, community-level education.

The Visayas earthquake was not simply a geological episode; it was a mirror held to our own preparedness. And in that mirror, we saw how much remains undone.

This is where civil society must step in, for resilience cannot — and must not — be the responsibility of government alone. The **Rotary Club of Manila (RCM)**, Asia's first and by far one of the nation's most influential civic institutions, stands uniquely positioned to fill the widening gap between scientific warning and community action. With over a century of service woven into its identity, RCM can mobilize relief with unparalleled speed, moving essential goods, medical supplies, clean water, and

EDITORIAL

generators into the devastated northern Cebu corridor long before bureaucratic mechanisms activate fully.

Beyond the immediate, Rotary's strength lies in reconstruction — lasting, dignified, engineered rebuilding. Schools, hospitals, and community centers destroyed by the quake can rise stronger through partnerships anchored on Rotary's reputation for integrity, transparency, and long-term engagement. By coordinating closely with PHIVOLCS, RCM can also take on the crucial task of transforming complex scientific data into accessible, community-level education: workshops, seminars, information drives, and preparedness drills that actually reach ordinary families where they live, study, and work.

Equally important, Rotary's voice carries influence. Its membership is filled with leaders in business, law, engineering, academia, and public service. That collective influence can champion the enforcement of building codes, the relocation of communities lying directly over active faults, the modernization of

PHIVOLCS equipment, and the prioritization of disaster-resilient infrastructure across vulnerable regions. When Rotary speaks, decision-makers listen. When Rotary acts, others follow.

The lesson of September 30, 2025 is clear: earthquakes do not kill people — unsafe structures and unprepared societies do. We will never stop the ground from shaking, but we can stop it from burying our future.

PHIVOLCS must be supported, not only with words but with sustained investments, political protection, and civic partnership. Government must enforce what the science demands. And the Rotary Club of Manila must continue standing where it has always stood — at the intersection of compassion, leadership, and nation-building — helping ensure that the next time the earth heaves beneath us, fewer lives will fall with it.

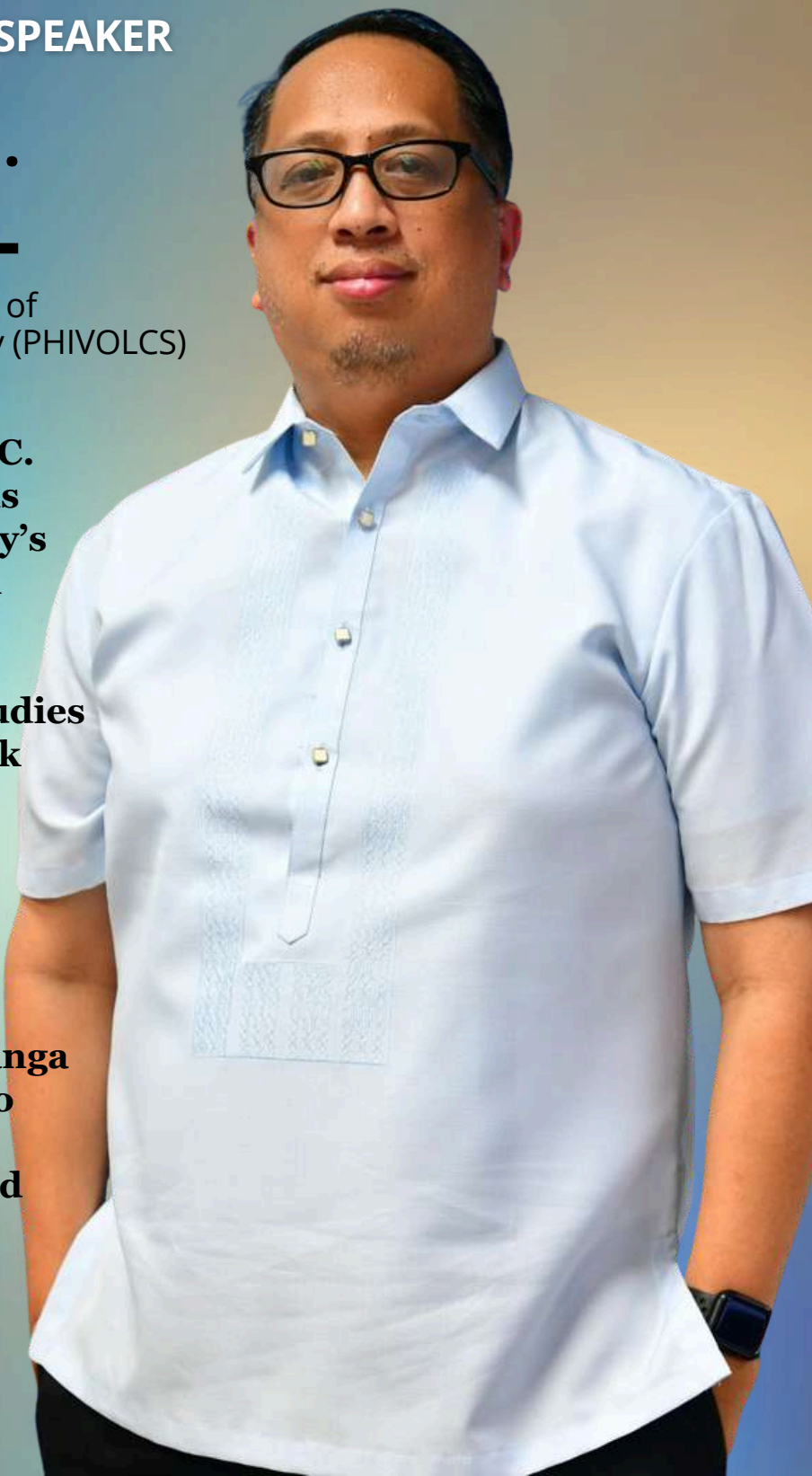
In a country fated to tremble, resilience must be a habit, not an aspiration. The ground may shift — but our resolve to safeguard the Filipino people must remain immovable.

GUEST OF HONOR & SPEAKER

Dr. Teresito C. BACOLCOL

Director, Philippine Institute of
Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS)

TERESITO “Toto” C. Bacolcol stands as one of the country’s foremost authorities in geophysics, seismic hazard science, and crustal deformation studies — an expert whose work has helped shape the Philippines’ modern understanding of earthquakes, active faults, and volcanic behavior. Born on 31 March 1973 in Zamboanga del Norte, he went on to build a distinguished scientific career marked by scholarship, leadership, and unwavering public service.



GUEST OF HONOR & SPEAKER

A product of the University of the Philippines Diliman, where he completed his Bachelor of Science in Geology, Bacolcol pursued advanced graduate studies at Université Pierre et Marie Curie (Paris VI) in France, earning both the DEA and PhD in geodesy and earth sciences. His doctoral research on the Philippine Fault system — one of the world's most complex tectonic structures — laid the groundwork for what would become a lifelong commitment to understanding the geodynamic forces shaping the archipelago.

His career at the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) spans nearly three decades, beginning in 1997 as a Science Research Specialist. His competence and dedication steadily propelled him through the institution's ranks: Associate Scientist, Director III, and ultimately Director IV, the agency's highest technical and executive leadership post. In this role, he oversees national programs on earthquake monitoring, GPS geodesy, volcanic surveillance, and geohazard risk reduction — responsibilities crucial to safeguarding millions of Filipinos in one of the world's most hazard-prone nations.

Bacolcol's scientific expertise is deep and multifaceted. His specialization in GPS geodesy, crustal deformation, and active fault motions has made him a key figure in Philippine seismic research. His extensive body of work includes publications in top-tier international journals, covering subjects such as interseismic deformation along major subduction zones, fault coupling, block motions, volcanic ground deformation, and probabilistic seismic hazard analysis. His research on the 2022 MW 7.0 Abra earthquake, the dynamics of the Philippine Mobile Belt, and the Manila Trench has contributed significantly to global understanding of tectonics in Southeast Asia.

Across his career, he has authored and co-authored numerous PHIVOLCS Open File Reports, documenting critical scientific insights following earthquakes in Surigao del Sur (2023), Cotabato (2019), Leyte (2017), and Bohol (2013). These reports serve as essential references for government agencies, local DRRM offices, planners, and researchers, directly influencing policy, risk assessments, and preparedness strategies.

GUEST OF HONOR & SPEAKER

His contributions extend beyond research. Bacolcol is an active figure in the global earth-sciences community, representing the Philippines in international workshops, conferences, and hazard-mitigation programs. He has served as a Visiting Scientist at Nagoya University, a Postdoctoral Fellow at Academia Sinica, and a panelist or resource speaker in key gatherings organized by UNESCO, CTBTO, the World Bank, and the Asia-Pacific regional scientific community. His participation in multilateral seismic and geodetic collaborations — particularly long-standing partnerships with Japan and Taiwan — has helped bring advanced scientific methodologies and monitoring technologies into the Philippine context.

In recognition of his contributions, Bacolcol has received numerous honors, including the Dangal ng Pilipino Award for Enhancing Competence and Resilience (2025) conferred by the Office of Civil Defense, the PHIVOLCS Model Employee Award, and academic accolades such as the Most Outstanding Capstone Paper and With Honors from the Development

Academy of the Philippines. In 2024, he achieved the rank of Career Executive Service Officer (CESO III), underscoring his stature as both a scientist and a senior public-sector leader.

He maintains active involvement in professional organizations, notably the Geological Society of the Philippines — where he once served as Trustee, Vice President, and Assistant Secretary — and the UP Geology Alumni Association. He is also part of the CHED Technical Committee for Geology, helping guide the academic standards and future direction of geology education in the Philippines.

Quietly dedicated yet visibly impactful, Teresito C. Bacolcol embodies the modern Filipino scientist: rigorously trained, globally engaged, committed to public service, and deeply invested in safeguarding communities. Through his leadership at PHIVOLCS and his extensive body of scientific work, he continues to strengthen the nation's resilience to geohazards and contribute to the broader global effort to understand and mitigate the risks posed by the earth's most dynamic processes.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

OVER the past couple of weeks, the Rotary Club of Manila installed several Four-Way Test markers in various strategic locations – along EDSA, inside the Arroceros Forest Park in Manila, in Tukod Elementary School in San Rafael (Bulacan), in Mariano Marcos Memorial High School in Sta. Ana (Manila), and soon on December 1, inside the Mithing Pangarap compound in Balut, Tondo.

As we all know, the Four-Way Test is one of Rotary's most enduring contributions to ethical leadership and public service, which was first articulated by Rotarian Herbert J. Taylor in 1932. Despite its simplicity, the Test challenges individuals, organizations, and communities to uphold integrity, fairness, and mutual respect in their daily decisions. Its strength lies not in complexity, but in the clarity of its principles -- principles that transcend culture, politics, religion, and social background.



Raoul C. Creencia
President

Across the Philippines and around the world, Rotary clubs install Four-Way Test markers in schools, plazas, transport terminals, barangay centers, government facilities, parks, and other public spaces. This practice is more than a branding exercise -- it is a public commitment to ethical citizenship.

The markers serve as daily visual reminders of honesty, fairness, goodwill, and service. In environments where people face difficult decisions or conflicting interests, the Test helps shape behavior by encouraging reflection before action.

Schools, I believe, is a perfect place to install markers because they reinforce character building. For students, the

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Test becomes a formative tool that complements values education, leadership programs, and civic training. This is the reason why we installed markers in three different schools in Bulacan, Sta. Ana, and in Tondo. I believe that placing a Four-Way Test marker in a school campus is more than just a Rotary tradition, but a strategic investment in the values formation of young people. Schools are centers not only of academic learning but also of character development. A visible, accessible reminder of ethical principles helps shape the habits, attitudes, and decision-making of students, teachers, and school leaders. Thus, by placing a

Four-Way Test marker, we are able to transform a simple motto into a living educational tool. Indeed, it helps cultivate a school culture where truth, fairness, goodwill, and service are practiced daily -- shaping students not just to excel academically, but to become principled, compassionate, and community-minded citizens.

Moreover, by placing the Test in high-traffic public spaces such as EDSA and the Arroceros Forest Park, we help embed ethical reflection into daily life. The messages become part of the cultural landscape, influencing behavior in subtle but meaningful ways. While not meant primarily as publicity, the markers demonstrate our Club's dedication to promoting integrity, peace, and community development. These markers remind the public that Rotary is present, active, and committed to improving society.

In a time when misinformation, conflict, and divisive discourse have become commonplace, the Four-Way Test remains deeply relevant. The act of installing these markers reaffirms our Rotary Club's belief that ethics is not an abstract ideal, but a practical, everyday commitment. Ultimately, the Test is not merely a Rotary slogan. It is a philosophy of life -- one that challenges all people, Rotarians and non-Rotarians alike, to choose what is true, fair, friendly, and beneficial.





cover story

***SHADOWS AND
FRONTLINES:
Gen. Esperon's
Chronicle of a
Nation at War
and a People
Seeking Peace***

by PE Reginald T. Yu

THE 13th Weekly Membership Meeting of the Rotary Club of Manila unfolded on a calm Thursday afternoon at the Manila Polo Club, where distinguished Rotarians from Asia's First Rotary Club gathered in a joint fellowship with the Rotary Club of Agham, Quezon City. There was a quiet hum of anticipation in the air — an atmosphere shaped by warm greetings, familiar smiles, and the promise of an intellectually stirring session under the guidance of Moderator Past Director Issam Eldebs.



RCM President Raoul C. Creencia and RC Agham President Lorenzo Angelo Santos jointly called the assembly to order.

Part I: Rituals and Fellowship

At 12:30 PM, the gavel struck as President **Raoul C. Creencia** of RCM and President **Lorenzo Angelo Santos** of RC Agham jointly called the assembly to order. What followed was a series of dignified rituals that rooted the moment in tradition and shared purpose: an invocation by Rtn. **Carlos “Caloy” Buendia**, a heartfelt prayer that invited peace and wisdom; the Philippine National Anthem rendered with solemn reverence; and the hymns of both clubs, with the voices of the **RCM WF Music Choral** rising to fill the room with rich harmony.



PD Issam Eldebs moderated the meeting.



DE Carlos G. “Caloy” Serapio led the invocation.

The recitation of the **Four-Way Test** by President Lorenzo reaffirmed Rotary's moral compass, echoing through the hall like a quiet oath. Moderator Issam Eldebs followed with an eloquent acknowledgment of guests, his words weaving together the names and achievements of the many dignitaries, business leaders, diplomats, civic servants, and uniformed officers who had come to share in the day's fellowship.



President Lorenzo Angelo Santos of RC Agham led the recitation of the Four-Way Test.

Laughter and warm applause broke the formality when the RCM Chorale performed the spirited Welcome Song, followed by the cheerful recognition of birthday celebrants from both clubs. The moment captured the delightful blend of fellowship and joy that marks Rotary life.

A highlight of the afternoon was the induction of two new members — **Mr. Eric G. Eugenio** of CE-Logic, Inc. and **Atty. Oliver L. Pantaleon** of ACCRALAW — whose accomplishments and character were introduced with pride by Past President **Teddy Ocampo** and President **Raoul Creencia**. The oath of membership administered by President Raoul sealed their entry into a century-old tradition of service and ethical leadership.



Induction of two new RC Manila members, Mr. Eric G. Eugenio and Atty. Oliver L. Pantaleon.



Proposers PP Teodoro J. "Teddy" Ocampo and Pres. Raoul C. Creencia introduced their respective inductees.



RCM President Raoul C. Creencia and RC Agham President Lorenzo Angelo Santos delivered their messages during the Presidents' Time.

Part II: Presidents' Time

The program flowed seamlessly into the portion reserved for the club presidents, where Presidents Lorenzo and Raoul spoke of ongoing initiatives, collaborative opportunities, and shared aspirations for the communities both clubs serve. Their messages underscored the growing synergy between their organizations — one rooted in science and innovation, the other in legacy and broad civic stewardship.

A Mistah's Introduction

The stage was then given to Past President Rafael "Raffy" Alunan III, whose presence alone lends gravitas to any gathering. As he rose to introduce the Guest of Honor and Speaker, he spoke not merely as a former Cabinet Secretary but as a

lifelong friend — a "Mistah" — of the man whose voice would soon command the room. His introduction was at once affectionate, insightful, and historically textured, recalling shared trials in national service and the kind of camaraderie forged only in moments of profound consequence.



PP Rafael M. "Raffy" Alunan introduced the Guest of Honor and Speaker.

Crossroads of Conflict and Peace

When General **Hermogenes C. Esperon Jr.** stepped forward, there was a perceptible shift in the room — a quieting, an unspoken recognition of a man who had lived the highs and costs of national security for decades. His opening words were warm and personal, rich with humor and memory. He addressed PP **Raffy Alunan** with brotherly fondness, recalling a vivid vignette from their past when rogue officers attempted to “withdraw support,” and how absurd it was to attempt such a move without consulting the very commanders who held the real operational strength. The anecdote, delivered with good nature and razor-sharp clarity, set the tone for a sprawling narrative that would encompass history, ideology, governance, and the very soul of insurgency in the Philippines.

Before delving into his central theme, he acknowledged an array of friends, colleagues, and fellow Rotarians — his own club president, diplomats, former classmates, Special Forces mentors, and civic leaders who had crossed paths with him throughout his long career. The acknowledgments alone might have taken the entirety of a lesser speaker’s time, but Esperon gently reined himself in, greeting birthday celebrants with sincerity and preparing the room for the weightier

substance that lay ahead.

Reframing the Topic: The True National Security Threat

Esperon began by confessing that he initially believed he was invited to speak on the **West Philippine Sea**, a domain he knows intimately as former chairman of the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea. But he chose instead to confront what he described as the most dangerous national security threat during his tenure: the **Communist Party of the Philippines**, the **New People’s Army**, and the **National Democratic Front**.

What followed was a sweeping narrative — historical, analytical, and deeply personal — on the 56-year shadow cast by the insurgency. He described the intricate structure of the CPP, from its central committee and national bureaus to the underground networks embedded in youth sectors, labor groups, and even legal organizations. His description of the NPA’s guerrilla fronts, each spanning multiple municipalities and establishing shadow governments, revealed just how systematically the rebellion embedded itself into far-flung communities.

He did not shy away from recounting

the human toll: **thousands of civilians** — many from indigenous communities — killed in purges or caught in the crossfire; the ruthless assassinations carried out by internal cleansing squads; and the heart-breaking loss of bright young Filipinos deceived into taking up arms, including six of his own classmates from Philippine Science High School. These were stories that momentarily choked his voice, for they were clearly not statistics but memories.

Why Peace Talks Failed

Esperon revisited the long history of failed peace negotiations—from talks with various regional groups to formal encounters with the CPP-NPA leadership. Each attempt, he said, had been exploited by the insurgents to consolidate, rearm, and advance their cause.

His recollection of a high-level command conference under President **Rodrigo Duterte** was particularly striking: the moment the President rejected any suggestion of a coalition government with the rebels, declaring with fury his refusal to allow peace talks to become a backdoor for power-sharing.

This decisive break led to a new approach: to bring the peace process to the communities instead of negotiating with the ideological elite of the Communist Party.

Esperon introduced one of the most transformative policies in recent Philippine counterinsurgency history — the creation of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF–ELCAC).

The Birth of NTF–ELCAC

It was here that Esperon introduced one of the most transformative policies in recent Philippine counterinsurgency history — the creation of the **National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF–ELCAC)**. The shift was profound. The armed forces were no longer the sole movers in a decades-long struggle. Instead, a whole-of-nation approach was institutionalized through **Executive Order 70**, structured from national leadership down to the barangay level.

He described the structure with the familiarity of an architect: cabinet clusters, regional task forces led by

cabinet members assigned to their home regions, barangay-level coordination, and the twelve specialized clusters — including strategic communications, international engagement, law enforcement support, and local peace engagement. Civilian agencies, he emphasized, finally took the lead in resolving what was fundamentally a social and ideological conflict, not merely a military one.

The Barangay Development Program: A Turning Point

Esperon spoke with visible passion about the **Barangay Development Program**, which he considered the cornerstone of the campaign's success. For decades, insurgents had captivated isolated communities with romanticized promises. But for the first time, government arrived with roads, school buildings, water systems, health centers, electrification, and livelihood projects — practical, tangible, community-identified needs answered with speed and sincerity.

Each barangay under the program received up to ₱20 million in development funds, with projects coursed through local government leaders rather than distant offices. The results were transformative, and Esperon knew it. These developments, he said, exposed the hollow promises



of the insurgency and restored faith in government.

Within three years, the program helped dismantle 80 guerrilla fronts; the remaining nine were neutralized under the current administration. What remains today are political formations without the power to wage armed rebellion — a reality Esperon recounts with a mixture of relief, pride, and caution.

A Third Rectification and A Look Back

Esperon explained that the CPP has once again embarked on a “**third rectification movement**,” following internal crises similar to those of 1968 and 1996. But he

expressed hope that the collapse of armed fronts marked a turning point in the nation's history.

He acknowledged that in his years as AFP chief and National Security Adviser, progress was slow — reducing enemy numbers by mere hundreds. But with civilian government and community support, what had been unattainable for decades was finally achieved.

A Rotarian's View of Peace

In a beautiful closing reflection, Esperon linked his national security work to his life as a Rotarian. He recalled **planting trees along the Agusan River** with Rotarians in Butuan, assisting displaced families in North Cotabato, and even cultivating vegetables in MNLF camps — an act that led to a humorous but meaningful consequence: the wives of former combatants refusing to let their husbands return to war lest the vegetable gardens and chicken farms suffer.

The audience laughed, but the message was crystalline: peace is built not with weapons but with livelihood, dignity, trust, and service.

“If I had my way,” he said softly, “I would always choose peace. I think I’ve done my part.”

The applause that followed carried warmth, admiration, and respect —

the kind that fills a room when truth is spoken by one who has lived it.

Open Forum, Appreciation, and Adjournment

The open forum that followed was lively and engaging, with Rotarians posing incisive questions that allowed Esperon to further illuminate the complexities of insurgency, national policy, and long-term peacebuilding. The exchange was thoughtful, spirited, and marked by mutual respect.



Gen. Esperon engaged in a conversation with PD Amado D. “Amading” Valdez, PD Oscar Del Rosario, PIA Jordan M. Pizarras, PP Rafael P. “Raffy” Saldaña (RC Agham QC), and CP Virginia Irene R. Santos (RC Agham QC).

President Raoul Creencia then presented the Certificate of Appreciation, honoring the General for his decades of service and for sharing insights that resonated long after the program's end. With closing remarks from both presidents and the final strike of the gavel, the meeting was adjourned — a fitting end to an afternoon rich in fellowship, wisdom, and hope.



Pres. Raoul C. Creencia presented the RCM's Plaque of Appreciation to Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, witnessed by Sec. Antonilo DC. "Anton" Mauricio, PP Arsenio M. "Archit" Bartolome III, Pres. Lorenzo A. "Ench" Santos of RC Agham, and PD Amado D. "Amading" Valdez.



Pres. Raoul C. Creencia adjourned the meeting.



CLUB ADMINISTRATION

RCM Members' Attendance Report
RY 2025-2026



ATTENDANCE REPORT
November 2025

NOVEMBER 2025	November 06, 2025 PEZA DE TERESO O. PANGA	November 13, 2025 SENATOR BAM AQUINO	November 20, 2025 GEN. HERMOGENES C. ESPERON JR. (RET)
MEMBERS PRESENT	38	36	33
MEMBERS PRESENT %	18%	17%	15%
MAKE UP ATTENDEES	18	13	6
EXEMPTED	6	5	3
ON LEAVE	0	0	0
Total Active Members	56	49	39
Total # of Members	213	213	214
TOTAL %:	26%	23%	18%
ROTARACTORS	12	0	13
MEDIA	0	0	0
EMBASSIES / DIPLOMATIC CORPS	0	0	0
DG, DGE, DGN, PDG	0	0	0
GOHS / GS	4	1	2
VISITING ROTARIAN	10	0	6
Guests of RCM MEMBERS	6	8	3
TOTAL ATTENDEES	70	45	57



LIST OF ATTENDEES
November 20, 2025

- Alunan III, Rafael M.
- Bartolome III, Arsenio M.
- Buendia, Carlos C.
- Castro, Karlo Eugene Josef M.
- Co, Val Constantine L.
- Creencia, Raoul C.
- Cutter, John Michael
- Del Rosario Sr., Oscar A.
- Egan, Brendan W.L.
- Eldebs, Issam
- Locsin, Arsenio Z.
- Lonzaga, Reinerio C.
- Mauricio, Antonio DC
- Ocampo, Teodoro J.
- Pascual, Abraham F.
- Peliño, Wilfredo M.
- Pizaras, Jordan M.
- Preysler, Jr., Fausto R.
- Ra, Ingill
- Reynolds, David J.
- Rodriguez Sr., Joaquin C.
- Schneider, Bernd
- Serapio, Carlos G.
- Shimoda, Shigeru
- Sibayan, Joselito H.
- So, Warren S.
- Valdes, Joel C.
- Valdez, Amado D.
- Yordanov, Stefan
- Yu, Reginald Tieng
- Kanda, Hiroyasu
- Eugenio, Eric
- Pantaleon, Oliver

CLUB ADMINISTRATION

List of Members Who Have Paid Their Annual Dues for RY 2025-2026

As of November 26, 2025

1	ABOY, VALENTINO G.	58	FAJARDO, BEDA G.	116	PALACIOS, ALBERT S.
2	ABRIAM, ARIEL	59	FERNANDEZ, ANTONIO JAIME JOSE V.	117	PALLASIGUE, JOHN BRIAN C.
3	ACOSTA, CRISPINIANO G.	60	FOLLOSCO, CEFERINO JR. G.	118	PANTALEON, OLIVER
4	AGNES, JERRY A.	61	GARCIA, HERBERT JOEY	119	PASCUAL, ABRAHAM
5	ALBAÑA, MICHAEL JAEY	62	GARCIA, PAUL JOSEPH M.	120	PAYUMO, FELICITO C.
6	ALDAY, ALBERT S.	63	GARCIA, THEODORE Q.	121	PELIÑO, WILFREDO
7	ALINGOG, ALDOUS REX A.	64	GARCIA, VICTOR III G.	122	PINEDA, JESUS JR. M.
8	ALUNAN, RAFAEL M.	65	GASPAR, FERNANDO	123	PINEDA, PATRICIO JR. F.
9	ANDAL, AVELINO L.	66	GO, DANNY C.	124	PIZARRAS, JORDAN M.
10	ARAGON, JOSHUA RUEBEN G.	67	GO, HENRY S.	125	PREYSLER, FAUSTO JR. D.R.
11	ARAMBULO, JOAQUIN JR. L.	68	GONZALES, JONAS R.	126	PUJALTE, JOSE BRITTANIO JR.
12	ARGUELLES, PABLO C.	69	GONZALES-LA'O, EMIL	127	RA, INGILL
13	AVENTURA, AVELINO JR. L.	70	GUARIN, MICHAEL ARCATOMY	128	RAMOS, CLAVER P.
14	BAGATSING, VALENTINO	71	GUEVARA, DOMINGO JR.	129	RANKL, PETER
15	BALANAY, ARIES B.	72	GUEVARA, RICARDO S.B.	130	RECTO, PHILIP H.
16	BARTOLOME, ARSENIO III M.	73	HALLARE, DELFIN JR.	131	REYNOLDS, DAVID
17	BAUTISTA, JOHN JR.	74	HALLARE, NICOLO	132	RODRIGUEZ, JOAQUIN ANTHONY JR. H.
18	BEDIONES, RODOLFO P.	75	HERNANDEZ, EDWIN H.	133	RODRIGUEZ, JOAQUIN SR. C.
19	BELLA, GERONIMO JR. D.	76	HESSE, UWE	134	ROMUALDEZ, FERDINAND MARTIN G.
20	BENEDICTO, BERNARDO III T.	77	IBUYAN, BENEDICT JULIUS F.	135	ROXAS, MICHAEL D.
21	BENEDICTO, SIXTO T.	78	KALAW, TEODORO ALEJANDRO IV Y.	136	SARMIENTO, RICARDO MANUEL M.
22	BERTELSEN, BERTEL INGMAR	79	KANDA, HIROYUSI	137	SCHMITZ, STEFAN
23	BLANCO, MANUEL M.	80	KATIGBAK J ALFONSO L	138	SCHNEIDER, BERND
24	BOGOVICH, JASON M.	81	KLEBS, DAVID	139	SERAPIO, CARLOS G.
25	BRANELEC, JACQUES	82	KOH, PAUL ANTHONY	140	SEVILLA, LUIS ANGELO L.
26	BUENDIA, CARLOS	83	LACAMBACAL, ALVIN	141	SHIMODA, SHIGERU
27	CABANGON, EDGARD	84	LAUREL, RICARDO P.	142	SIBAYAN, JOSELITO H.
28	CABUNAG, ROGELIO	85	LAZARO, JUAN MIGUEL	143	SIMON, JUANITO AYSON
29	CAMAT, NATHANIEL	86	LEDDA, JAIME VICTOR B.	144	SO, WARREN
30	CAMPOS, JOSELITO JR. D.	87	LEE, RICHARD L.	145	STRANATHAN, IKE EDWARD
31	CANON, RAUL JR. C.	88	LI, RICHARD JOSEPH C.	146	SYJUCO, JOSE, JR. A.
32	CARLOS, VICENTE J.	89	LIM, DAVID EDUARDO T.	147	TAGAYSAY, HECTOR O.
33	CARRANCEJA, ARVIN ARIK B.	90	LOCSIN, ARSENIO Z.	148	TALAMPAS, JOSE ANGEL L.
34	CASTRO, KARLO EUGENE JOSEF M.	91	LONZAGA, REINERIO C.	149	TALUSAN, FERDINAND E.
35	CATALAN, RODILLO	92	LOPEZ, ANTONIO	150	TAMANO, SHALIMAR H.
36	CHAHWAN, RAMI	93	LOPEZ, ARTHUR M.	151	TAMAYO, VICTOR L.
37	CHAN, ROBERT JR.	94	LORENZANA, DELFIN	152	TAN, EUSEBIO V.
38	CID, DEAN	95	MACAPAGAL, MICHAEL T.	153	TAN, JOHN G.
39	CO, VAL CONSTANTINE L.	96	MACATOMAN, ABDULGANI M.	154	TAN, LAWRENCE L.
40	COYIUTO, ROBERT JR. G.	97	MAGSAYSAY, FRANCISCO D.	155	TEE, TEDDY JR. B.
41	CREENCIA, RAOUL C.	98	MANALAYSAY, CESAR P.	156	TEJUMAL, MICHAEL
42	CUREG, ALEXANDER P.	99	MANGALILE, SENEN	157	TILLMAN, HANSEL JOSEPH MICHAEL L.
43	CUTTER, JOHN MICHAEL	100	MARTINEZ, RONALD	158	VALDES, JOEL C.
44	DAYANG, JUAN E.	101	MATSHUCK, GUENTER GERHARD G.	159	VALDEZ, AMADO
45	DAVIS, RAYMOND N.	102	MAURICIO, ANTONILO DC	160	VALDEZ, JASON ROLAND N.
46	DEL ROSARIO, OSCAR	103	MAURICIO, FRANCISCO C.	161	VALDERRAMA, JASON ROMEO
47	DIONISIO, RAFAEL	104	MENDOZA, MIGUEL	162	VALENCIA, JOHN NICO P.
48	DOMINGO, RICO, V.	105	MENDOZA, RAYMUND JOSEPH D.	163	VALENCIA, RODOLFO G.
49	DOMINGUEZ, CARLOS G.	106	MOMMAERTS, STEVE	164	VAZQUEZ, EVARISTO JR.
50	DY, MANUEL	107	NOLIDO, RAMON ALBERTO B.	165	VILLARICA, HENRY R.
51	EGAN, BRENDAN	108	NOMURA, KAZUHIRO	166	YAP, ENRIQUE JR.
52	ELDEBS, ISSAM	109	NONES, ROMEO C.	167	YORDANOV, STEFAN
53	ENRIQUEZ, EDUARDO III	110	NUÑEZ, JOSE A.	168	YU, GEOFFREY C.
54	ESGUERRA, HERMINIO S.	111	OBRADO, DANIEL	169	YU, REGINALD T.
55	ESQUIVIAS, JOAQUIN PABLO A.	112	OCAMPO, TEODORO J.	170	ZALDARRIAGA, FELIX FRANCISCO S.
56	EUGENIO, JOHN EMYL G.	113	ONG, PHILIP	171	ZEITOUNI, NAGI
57	EUGENIO, ERIC	114	ONG, ROWEL JANSON S.	172	ZIALCITA, XAVIER Y.
		115	PAGDANGANAN, ROBERTO M.	173	ZIMMER, CHRISTOPHER

CLUB ADMINISTRATION

President Raoul Creencia Inspects Newly Renovated RCM Storage Room



PRESIDENT Raoul Creencia inspected the newly renovated storage room at the RCM office on November 22, 2025. The repairs included a fully restored roof and ceiling, along with repainting. This renovation was generously sponsored by DGND Hermie Esguerra and Incoming Treasurer Arik Carranceja.







ROTARY CLUB OF MANILA TREE PLANTING WITH COMMUNITY IMMERSION

Join us for a morning tree planting event dedicated to preserving our planet and creating a green & circular economy for future generations to come.

SAVE THE DATE

 November 30, 2025
7am-12nn

 San Ysiro, Antipolo, Rizal

Package A (In Person Visit)
P2000/head:
Includes guides, lunch, 3 trees
+ 1 pair of boots donated to farmers

Package B (Donation only)
P1300/head:
Includes
3 trees + 1 pair of boots donated to farmers



Final List of Nominees for Board of Trustees of RY 2026-2027

Nominee/s	Accepted	Declined	Remarks
CHAIR. ALEXANDER P. CUREG	√		
PRES. EDUARDO V. ENRIQUEZ III	√		
SEC. ANTONILO DC. MAURICIO	√		
TREAS. MICHAEL D. ROXAS	√		
BLA CARLOS G. SERAPIO	√		
AT DANIEL OBRADO CALZADO	√		
IPP/AS MICHAEL JAEY C. ALBAÑA	√		
TRUSTEE SIXTO T. BENEDICTO	√		
TRUSTEE RAMI CHAHWAN		√	
TRUSTEE/ PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA	√		
TRUSTEE/ VP RICARDO SB. GUEVARA		√	
TRUSTEE DELFIN N. LORENZANA	√		
TRUSTEE BERND SCHNEIDER	√		
TRUSTEE WARREN S. SO		√	
TRUSTEE FELIX FRANCISCO S. ZALDARRIAGA	√		
PD REINERIO C. LONZAGA	√		
RCM TREAS. PAUL JOSEPH M. GARCIA		√	
RCM DIR. JASON BOGOVICH	√		
RCM DSAA JOHN CUTTER		√	
PD ABRAHAM F. PASCUAL		√	
PE REGINALD T. YU		√	
VPE KARLO EUGENE JOSEF M. CASTRO	√		
DE JOHN NICO P. VALENCIA		√	
DE TEODORO ALEJANDRO Y. KALAW IV		√	



Sulong Kabuhayan: Empowering TODA Leaders Through Cooperative Opportunities



ON November 22, 2025, the Rotary Club of Manila organized “*Sulong Kabuhayan*,” a seminar highlighting the advantages of operating a cooperative. The event was attended by 105 presidents from various Tricycle Operators and Drivers Associations (TODAs) across the City of Manila, who received valuable insights and opportunities for growth.



COMMUNITY ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

Sulong Kabuhayan: Empowering TODA Leaders Through Cooperative Opportunities



President Raoul C. Creencia presented to TODA leaders the benefits of having a cooperative.



*Memorandum of Agreement signing between the Rotary Club of Manila
and Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association (TODA)*

Rotary Club of Manila Supports Youth Education at **ALAY LAKAD 2025**



THE Rotary Club of Manila joined thousands of participants in the annual Alay Lakad, or Walk for a Cause, on November 23, 2025. Organized by the Alay Lakad Foundation, Inc., the event started at 5:00 AM at the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park, Manila, bringing together community members with a shared goal: to raise funds to support out-of-school youth.

Rotary Club of Manila Supports Youth Education at Alay Lakad 2025



The 2025 theme, "*Alay Lakad, Edukasyon - Kaunlaran ng Kabataan*," is closely aligned with the Rotary Club of Manila's values. Translating to "*Walk for a Cause, Education - Progress for the Youth*," it reflects ongoing efforts to support young people through access to education.



Rotary Club of Manila Supports Youth Education at Alay Lakad 2025



Rotary Club of Manila Supports Youth Education at Alay Lakad 2025





**WATER, SANITATION,
AND HYGIENE**

Donation for Handwashing Station and Mini Library at Tukod Elementary School



On November 21, under the WASH Program, a donation of P24,000 was turned over to begin the construction of a handwashing station at Tukod Elementary School in San Rafael, Bulacan. School Treasurer Cindy Geronimo received the funds, accompanied by School Principal Lito Bautista. This initiative, which also includes a Mini Library, is a joint project between RC Manila, RC Makati, and RC Makati West.

PUBLIC IMAGE

Rotary Club of Manila Installs Four-Way Test Marker at Tukod Elementary School in San Rafael, Bulacan



On November 21, 2025, the Rotary Club of Manila installed a Four-Way Test marker at Tukod Elementary School in San Rafael, Bulacan. The event was attended by School Principal Lito Bautista and a group of elementary students, who proudly recited the Four-Way Test aloud, marking the occasion with enthusiasm and purpose.

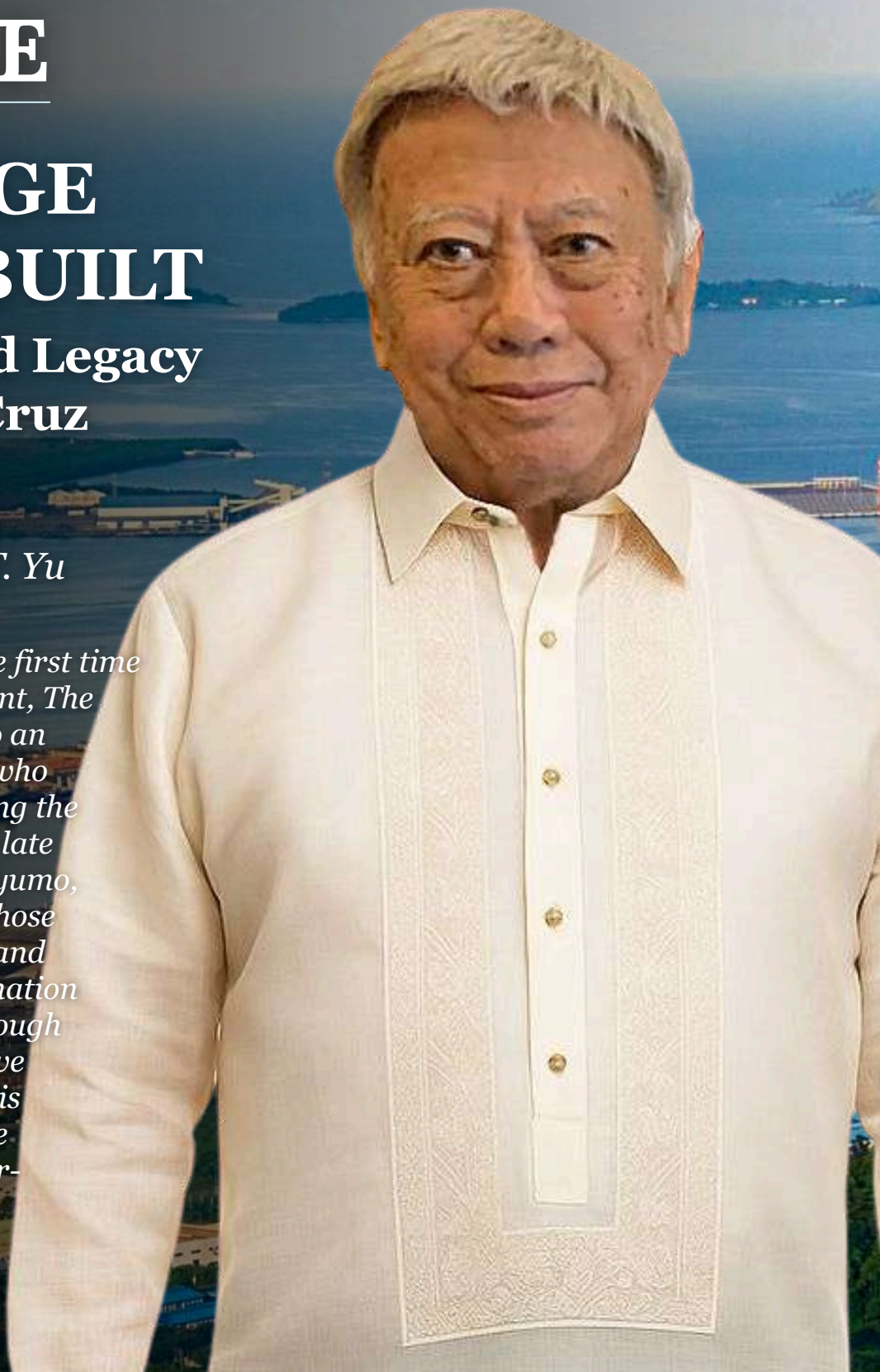
PEOPLE

A BRIDGE WELL BUILT

The Life and Legacy of Felicito Cruz Payumo

By PE Reginald T. Yu

Editor's Note: For the first time in its PEOPLE segment, The Balita pays tribute to an illustrious Rotarian who has passed — honoring the life and legacy of the late Felicito “Tong” C. Payumo, a visionary leader whose brilliance, integrity, and service shaped both nation and community. Through this special feature, we remember not only his achievements, but the enduring spirit of purpose that defined his remarkable journey.



A BRIDGE WELL BUILT: The Life and Legacy of Felicito Cruz Payumo

HE was a man who moved between worlds — from the quiet rivers of Dinalupihan to the storied halls of Harvard, from the corridors of Congress to the boardrooms that shaped modern Philippine industry. To those who knew him, Felicito “Tong” Payumo was more than a public servant or a corporate executive; he was a bridge builder in every sense — between ideals and action, intellect and humility, progress and remembrance. His was a life defined not by titles, but by transformation: the transformation of a boy from Bataan into a statesman whose vision continues to ripple through the nation’s infrastructure, economy, and civic conscience.

One of the most contentious issues during President Corazon Aquino’s administration in the mid-1980s was the debate over the U.S. military bases agreement — whether to allow the continued presence of American forces at Subic and Clark.



Class Valedictorian, Dinalupihan Elementary School — Tong’s early academic excellence was already evident during his formative years, where his diligence, discipline, and thirst for learning set him apart. This milestone marked the beginning of a lifelong journey defined by purpose, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to education and community service.

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Among the voices that would later shape the nation's economic and geopolitical landscape was that of Congressman **Felicitto Cruz Payumo**, representing Bataan's First District. To his constituents, he was simply "**Tong**", a name uttered with both familiarity and respect. He would later chair the **Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA)** and, in the twilight of his career, the **Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA)** — the very institutions that rose from the ashes of those once-divisive debates.

To those who knew him, Tong was the rarest of figures in public life — a thinker who acted, a leader who listened, a servant who led by conscience. He moved through the worlds of business, politics, and community with the same quiet precision that marked every decision he made. There was no bluster, no vanity, no need for spectacle. His was the calm authority of one who understood that real power lies not in command, but in example.

Yet beyond the chambers of policy and the corridors of power, Tong remained profoundly human. He was a husband devoted to Daisy, his life's quiet anchor; a father who led not by instruction but by example; and later, a grandfather whose gentleness revealed the fullness of his heart. To his family, he was not the congressman or the chairman, but the steady hand that guided, the patient ear

that listened, the man whose laughter — rare but genuine — carried the warmth of home.

His faith was constant, though never loud. Each day began and ended with prayer — not for favor, but for guidance. "Gratitude," he often said, "is the highest form of wisdom." It was the thread that wove through his entire existence — gratitude for family, for work, for the chance to serve.



Captured in a moment of quiet concentration, Tong sits at his desk at the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) as Chairman and Administrator, immersed in the rhythm of a typical working day. Papers neatly arranged, phone within reach, and his pen poised in thought, this scene reflects the discipline, order, and diligence that defined his leadership. Behind the calm demeanor lay the sharp mind of a strategist — a man who could navigate bureaucracy and vision with equal ease.

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For Tong, the work of building never ended. Even after the applause of public life had faded, he continued to construct what mattered most: opportunities for others, education for the young, and dignity for the ordinary Filipino. In his later years, he could often be seen walking quietly across the university grounds he had built, greeting students with a nod and a smile — content that his final bridges were those of knowledge and hope.

This is the story of a man who lived by design — the design of conscience, the geometry of grace. His life was not about the heights he reached, but about the strength of the foundations he laid. For in the end, the bridges that matter most are not the ones that cross rivers, but the ones that cross generations.

And this — this enduring span between duty and destiny — is the bridge that Felicitto “Tong” Payumo built.

Roots of Duty

The story of Felicitto Payumo begins in the fertile plains of **Dinalupihan, Bataan**, where the scent of newly turned soil mingled with the memory of war. It was **March 7, 1939**, when he first drew breath — a time when the Philippines was still emerging from the tremors of history, still learning how to rebuild its body and spirit from the ashes of occupation.



Tong, the baby in this cherished family photograph, is lovingly held by his Tía Goreng. On the far right stands his mother, Marcela Cruz Payumo, whose gentle strength and nurturing spirit anchored the family. In front center is his sister, fondly called “Ate Armie,” while behind her stands his older brother, “Kuya Pito,” protective and proud. At the center is Tía Iring, the youngest sister of his mother. Captured in this timeless image is not just a family portrait, but the roots of love, kinship, and togetherness that shaped Tong’s earliest years.

In those early years, Dinalupihan was a microcosm of the nation itself: humble, scarred, yet unbroken. Wooden houses perched on stilts above muddy fields.

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The sound of carabaos plowing through the earth echoed with persistence. Faith was the town's most precious currency; people prayed as they worked, worked as they prayed. And in that modest rhythm of life, a boy was being shaped not by privilege, but by purpose.

Tong was born to **Jose R. Payumo Sr.** and **Marcela Cruz-Payumo**, a couple who embodied dignity in simplicity. His father, a man of steady character and civic devotion, served as the **fourteenth Mayor of Dinalupihan** in the years following the war. He was a figure of quiet strength — a leader who believed



that public office was not an entitlement, but a trust. From him, young Tong absorbed the first lessons of leadership: that it is not power that defines a man, but how gently he wields it.

Marcela, his mother, was the soft voice that balanced the home. If Jose taught him to act with justice, she taught him to act with compassion. Together, they formed the two poles of his moral compass — duty and empathy — guiding him through the contradictions of a changing world.

Even as a child, Tong had a contemplative nature. As a boy, he waded through its rivers barefoot. He would laugh, years later, recalling how he was circumcised on the riverbank without anesthesia, chewing on *bayabas* leaves to dull the pain. It was, in many ways, his first lesson in endurance. While other boys ran barefoot through the



Tong at Dinalupihan Elementary School, Class of 1946 — part of a generation that grew up in the postwar years, marked by resilience, hope, and a deep yearning to rebuild. In those formative classrooms, he cultivated a love for learning and a sense of discipline that would later define his life of leadership and service. The modest school grounds of Dinalupihan became the foundation of a journey that would shape not only his future, but also the lives of those he would later inspire.

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“Baton boys?” — a playful snapshot from Tong’s early years at Dinalupihan Elementary School. Long before he became an educator and community leader, he was once this cheerful young boy, brimming with curiosity and energy. These school days in Dinalupihan shaped his character, instilling in him the values of discipline, teamwork, and perseverance that would later define his life’s journey.



A cheerful boys’ studio portrait from Tong’s Dinalupihan days — a glimpse into the carefree spirit of youth, captured in timeless black and white. Long before he became known as a leader, educator, and mentor, he was simply a boy full of laughter and dreams, growing up in the small yet vibrant town of Dinalupihan where his lifelong values of humility, hard work, and faith first took root.

fields chasing dragonflies, he would often sit by the window, sketching imaginary maps of roads and rivers. To his teachers at the **Northern Bataan Institute**, this quiet intensity was unmistakable. He was curious, precise, and disciplined beyond his years. His classmates would later recall how he approached even the simplest arithmetic problems with the concentration of a scholar twice his age. Long before he learned the philosophies of the Jesuits or the principles of business strategy, he learned courage – raw and unadorned – from the currents of his childhood river.

At **fourteen**, he graduated **valedictorian** — a feat that in itself

spoke of both his intellect and his humility. When handed his medal, he didn’t smile for the cameras or boast to his peers. He simply bowed his head and whispered a silent prayer of gratitude. That gesture — modest, deliberate, and reverent — was the first public expression of a private creed he would carry all his life: **to serve without spectacle, to excel without arrogance.**

But education, for Tong, was never an end in itself. It was a means of understanding people — how they lived, what they hoped for, and how systems could be built to help them thrive. He devoured books on history and economics not to display knowledge, but to grasp why societies

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rose or fell. The devastation of post-war Bataan had imprinted on him a simple yet profound truth: that progress was fragile, and that rebuilding a nation required both intellect and heart.

The Payumo household was one of modest stability. They were not wealthy, but they were rich in principles. Every evening, the family gathered for prayer before dinner — a ritual that taught Tong the rhythm of gratitude and reflection. His father, though often burdened by municipal work, always found time to teach him the importance of fairness and integrity. “A man’s name,” he once told his son, “is the only legacy he can never rebuild once lost.” Tong would remember those words through every decision of his later life.

It was also during these formative years that Tong’s sense of **order and responsibility** began to crystalize. He kept a small notebook where he listed his daily goals, long before planners became fashionable. Each page began with the same heading: *‘Things to Do for the Day.’* At the bottom of each list, a quiet mantra: *‘Do all with honor.’*

He carried this discipline into adolescence, even as the world around him grew louder and more chaotic. The Philippines of the 1950s was a country learning to stand upright amid its newfound independence. The air was thick with optimism, yet also shadowed

by uncertainty. For many young men of his generation, ambition meant escape — to Manila, to America, to anywhere the world seemed larger. For Tong, ambition meant **return** — to build upon what his province had begun, to make progress not an abstraction but a daily reality.



During his Ateneo High School years, Tong’s character, discipline, and moral compass began to take shape. Within those storied halls, he was introduced to the Jesuit principles of magis — the pursuit of excellence — and cura personalis — care for the whole person. These ideals took root deeply, nurturing in him a lifelong devotion to purpose, integrity, and service. They became the bedrock of his journey as a leader, an educator, and, in the truest sense, a man for others.

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When the time came for Tong to leave for college, the people of Dinalupihan gathered to wish him well. His father, standing before the small crowd, placed a hand on his son's shoulder and said simply, "Go and learn all you can — but remember, you belong to this place." It was both a blessing and a commandment. And Tong carried it with him like a sacred text.

He would go on to fulfill that instruction many times over — in boardrooms, in legislative halls, in the cities and provinces that would one day echo his name. But in that moment, he was still just a young man with a satchel full of dreams and a promise etched into his heart: to return, and to give back.

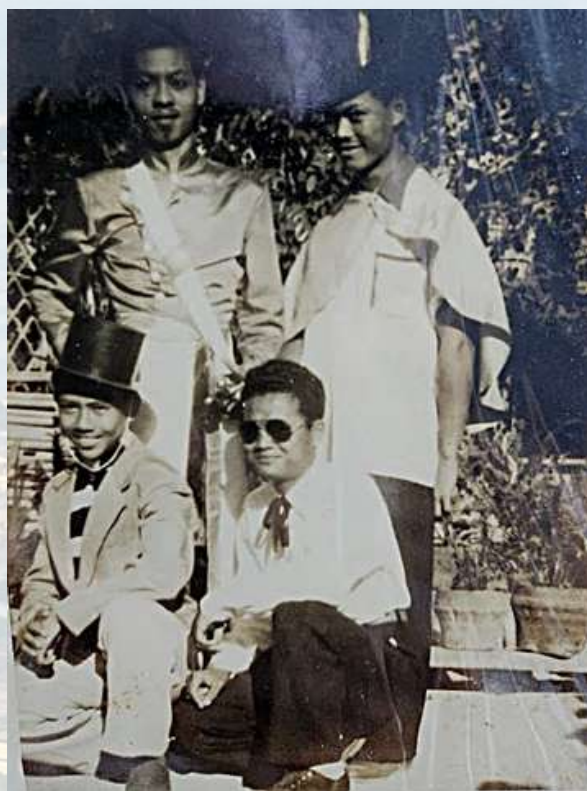
In Dinalupihan's fields, the seasons turned as they always had. The carabaos plowed, the sun rose and fell, and the Payumo family continued their quiet rhythm of service. But for the boy who was leaving, the world was about to widen — and with it, the scale of his responsibility.

As the bus carried him out of Bataan and toward Manila, he looked once more at the landscape he called home — the green plains, the chapel steeple, the school that had molded him. He didn't yet know how far life would take him, or that one day he would return to transform the province itself. All he knew, in that quiet departure, was that every road he would travel, every law he would later write, every bridge he

would build, would somehow lead back here.

The Atenean Mind

After high school, Tong's next chapter was shaped by serendipity. He had been



Tong during his Ateneo High School days — a period that shaped his character, discipline, and moral compass. It was within the halls of the Ateneo that he first encountered the Jesuit ideals of magis — striving for excellence — and cura personalis — care for the whole person. These formative years nurtured in him a deep sense of purpose, integrity, and service to others, values that would define his journey as a leader, educator, and man for others.

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accepted into the **University of the Philippines**, but fate – every playful – intervened. He boarded the wrong bus and found himself at **Ateneo de Manila University** instead. There, inside one of the halls, he noticed the Blue Eagle emblem – a symbol that stirred memories of his basketball idols. A Jesuit priest persuaded him to stay and apply. He did, and as with most of life's accidents, it became one of his most defining turns.

When Tong arrived at the **Ateneo de Manila University**, he was not merely stepping into a campus – he was entering an idea. The Ateneo of the 1950s was a place where intellect and conscience were not opposites but complements, where the pursuit of knowledge was inseparable from the cultivation of character. Its stone buildings, shaded by acacia trees, echoed with both prayer and debate. To study there was to be refined not only in thought but in spirit.

For the young man from Dinalupihan, this environment was both exhilarating and humbling. He carried with him the quiet discipline of the province and the hopes of a family who had sacrificed much so that he could walk those storied corridors. Manila was a different world – louder, quicker, more uncertain – but within the walls of the Ateneo, he found a rhythm that felt both demanding and divine.

It was there that Tong first encountered the full rigor of **Jesuit education** – a formation that insisted not only on the mastery of facts but on the moral weight of ideas. Each day began with reflection; each subject, no matter how technical, was tethered to a question of purpose. “What does this mean for others?” was the unspoken refrain behind every lesson. For a mind already inclined toward service, it was like discovering a home for his convictions.

He majored in **Economics**, a field that appealed to both his logic and his compassion. Numbers, for him, were not abstractions – they were the pulse of a nation, the record of its pain and potential. He saw in economic systems a moral dimension: that policy could liberate or confine, that progress meant nothing if it left the poor behind.

By his second year, Tong had already distinguished himself not only as a scholar but as a **leader**. He joined the **Student Council**, eventually rising to become its **President**, where against all odds, he won – defeating a city-bred Manila candidate through grit and grassroots charm. The next morning's *Guidon* headline captured the significance of that victory: “A boy from a public high school in a remote municipality in Bataan is chosen by the Ateneo student body to become their leader.” It was more

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than an election result; it was a statement that brilliance and leadership could emerge from the margins.

As a student leader, he earned a reputation for clarity and fairness. His speeches were never theatrical. He spoke in calm, precise tones — reasoned, deliberate, and always anchored in principle. When students disagreed, he invited dialogue, not division. When others sought applause, he sought understanding. It was the beginning of a lifelong habit: to build consensus before commanding action.

In these years, the world beyond the campus was shifting. The post-war optimism of the 1950s was giving way to the complexities of modernization. The Philippines was awakening to industrial possibilities, but also confronting the shadows of inequality. For Tong, the classroom became a training ground for the conscience. He immersed himself in the study of economics not as an academic pursuit but as a preparation for nation-building.

Ateneo's emphasis on "*cura personalis*" — care for the whole person — left an indelible mark on him. It taught him that leadership without empathy is hollow, and that brilliance without humility is dangerous. In philosophy class, he learned about Aristotle's golden mean; in theology, about St. Ignatius's spiritual exercises. But what truly stayed with him

was a single Jesuit maxim: *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam* — for the greater glory of God. It was not just a motto to recite; it was a compass to live by.

He began to understand leadership as vocation, not ambition. The Jesuits demanded excellence, but not for its own sake. They taught their students that greatness was meaningful only when it



A young Felicitto "Tong" Payumo during his graduation year at the Ateneo de Manila University, where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Economics, *cum laude*, in 1959. As a student, he served as President of the Student Council and was active in several campus publications, including *The Guidon* and *Heights*. His years at the Ateneo were marked not only by academic distinction but also by the emergence of his leadership and sense of public duty — qualities that would later define his lifelong service to the nation.

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served something larger than the self. Tong absorbed this lesson deeply. In a world obsessed with achievement, he began to define success differently: **as the alignment of intellect with integrity.**

During his final year, Tong completed his thesis on regional economic development — a subject that foreshadowed the work he would later champion in Congress. His analysis combined technical precision with moral purpose. He argued that a nation's growth must begin at the margins, that prosperity must radiate outward from the provinces, not trickle down from the cities. Decades before “inclusive development” became a policy term, he had already grasped its essence.

He graduated *cum laude*, his academic excellence matched by the quiet respect of his peers and mentors. But the distinction that meant the most to him was not written on his diploma — it was the sense of responsibility that came with it. He knew that education was not a trophy but a trust. His father's words — “*You belong to this place*” — echoed louder than ever.

After commencement, while many of his classmates celebrated with plans for careers abroad, Tong went home to Dinalupihan for a short visit. The town was much as he had left it — simpler, slower, but alive with the same warmth. Walking the narrow roads, he greeted

farmers by name, paused to speak with vendors, and visited the chapel where his family prayed. To them, he was still “Tong,” the son of the mayor, the boy who studied hard. Yet within him, something had changed. He had seen what education could do — and what it demanded in return.

He spent that summer teaching arithmetic to children in a small community school, volunteering not out of obligation but gratitude. He found joy in the faces of students who learned to read their first English words. It reminded him that the true purpose of learning was to multiply it.

That same year, he received an offer to join **Procter & Gamble Philippines** as a junior executive. For many, it was a coveted start — a doorway into the corporate world. But Tong hesitated. His instincts leaned toward the public good. Yet he understood that to lead later, he must first learn to manage; to reform systems, he must first understand them. And so, with the blessing of his parents and the counsel of his professors, he accepted.

In Manila's business district, surrounded by the hum of progress, he began to see another side of the country: the complexity of commerce, the discipline of organization, and the immense responsibility that came with stewardship. At night, he would often

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reflect on how these systems — if guided by ethics — could transform lives.

Years later, he would describe this period as his **apprenticeship in leadership**. The Ateneo had formed his mind; the corporate world would test his principles. Between the two, he was forging the kind of equilibrium that would define his entire career: intellect married to conscience, pragmatism balanced by faith.

Looking back, it was clear that his time at Ateneo had not only educated him — it had refined his sense of destiny. It gave him the tools to navigate a complex world and the courage to challenge it when needed. It turned the boy from Dinalupihan into a man ready to engage the nation, one who understood that service is not a sacrifice, but an extension of gratitude.

When he left Ateneo, Tong carried with him more than a degree. He carried a conviction — that the mind is at its noblest when it serves the heart, and that education, in the end, is a lifelong bridge between wisdom and compassion.

And so, the young economist stepped forward into the next chapter of his journey, unaware that the path laid before him — from the classrooms of Loyola Heights to the boardrooms of Makati and beyond — would one day lead him back to his roots, to build not

only bridges of concrete and steel, but bridges of hope, opportunity, and faith.

Harvard Horizons

In the summer of 1965, the air in Boston carried the scent of rain and intellect. The Charles River shimmered under the light of ambition, reflecting the brick towers of Harvard and the restless minds within. Among them walked a young Filipino named **Felicit Payumo**, his steps measured, his purpose clear. He had come not merely to study, but to understand the architecture of progress — how nations were built not by chance, but by design.

The journey from Dinalupihan to Harvard was, in itself, a testament to perseverance. Few from his province had ever reached so far. With an **S.C. Johnson** scholarship, made possible by a woman named **Florence Glynn** whose generosity he never forgot, he entered **Harvard Business School**, where the world's most demanding classrooms awaited him.

The rhythm of Harvard was relentless. His mornings began before dawn. He delivered newspapers through the biting autumn wind and the merciless New England winter, earning enough to survive the months ahead. “I sold the franchise,” he would later joke, “because I didn’t want to deliver papers in the winter anymore.” Case studies replaced

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lectures; arguments replaced recitations. It was not enough to memorize answers — one had to defend them before a jury of peers.

In his second year, when funds ran short again, family came to his rescue. His elder brother, **Jose Jr.** or “**Tito Pito**,” as the family called him, sent proceeds from the family’s rice harvest. His sister **Laarni**, a medical practitioner in Wisconsin, traveled to Boston to cook for him and keep him company. That gesture of sibling solidarity became one of the few emotional anchors of his life. From that bond grew the closeness that would ripple across generations — the enduring camaraderie among cousins who inherited their parents’ devotion to one another.

In that crucible of thought, Tong flourished. He was not the loudest in class, but his words carried weight. When he spoke, it was with clarity and restraint, distilling complexity into principle. The professors noticed — not only his analytical skill, but the moral undertone of his reasoning. For Tong, business was never about conquest; it was about contribution. He believed that prosperity without ethics was a form of poverty.

The world was shifting rapidly outside the ivy walls. The 1960s were an age of upheaval — civil rights marches, the Vietnam War, the Cold War’s ideological

chessboard. Many of his classmates debated capitalism and communism with abstract detachment. Tong saw beyond



Tong Payumo’s graduation portrait in 1967, taken upon earning his Master in Business Administration from the prestigious Harvard Business School. A recipient of the S.C. Johnson Scholarship, he completed the program with distinction, joining an elite circle of Filipino scholars who pursued advanced studies at Harvard during the postwar era. His time in Cambridge refined not only his understanding of global business and management but also deepened his conviction that leadership, at its core, must serve both industry and nation.

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the ideologies; he saw people. He understood that the real question was not which system prevailed, but which one preserved human dignity.

Harvard sharpened his intellect, but more profoundly, it reaffirmed his values. The **case method**, with its insistence on moral judgment under pressure, prepared him for the ethical ambiguities that would later define his public life. He learned that leadership was not about having all the answers, but about asking the right questions — and standing by the truth, even when it was inconvenient.

In evenings spent at the library overlooking Soldiers Field, he would pore over development models, tracing how post-war nations rose from ruin through planning, innovation, and integrity. He admired Japan's discipline, Singapore's pragmatism, and America's drive — but he also saw that each success was rooted in moral coherence. Without trust, systems collapsed; without vision, wealth corrupted. It was a realization that would later shape the laws he wrote for his own country.

Harvard also broadened his view of the Filipino identity. Surrounded by the world's brightest, he carried the quiet confidence of someone who knew where he came from. He was not intimidated; he was inspired. The contrast between Harvard's resources and the scarcity back

home strengthened his resolve to return. He did not dream of permanence in America — he dreamed of possibility for the Philippines.

When he received his **Master of Business Administration** in 1967, it was more than an academic milestone. It was a commissioning. Harvard had taught him the language of global leadership — efficiency, strategy, innovation — but his heart translated it



A rare class photo from 1967 shows a young Felicitito “Tong” Payumo with his peers on the stately grounds of Harvard University, where he earned his MBA from Harvard Business School. As an S.C. Johnson Scholar, Tong embraced the demanding pace and intellectual energy of Harvard — learning from the best minds in business and policy. Those formative years in Cambridge would shape the disciplined yet compassionate leader he would become, bridging Western management principles with a deeply Filipino sense of service and integrity.

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into a local dialect of service. He had learned how to manage corporations; soon, he would learn how to rebuild institutions.

In Harvard's lecture halls, he had once debated whether business could serve both profit and purpose. Years later, standing at the helm of a company that employed thousands, he found his answer in lived experience: it must.

Harvard's imprint never left him. The discipline of preparation, the humility before facts, the insistence on principle — these became the hallmarks of his later governance. He would recall those lessons not with nostalgia but with gratitude, recognizing that education's highest purpose was not to elevate the individual, but to empower the collective.

The Executive Years

After graduation, recruiters sought him out. The corporate world beckoned with salaries and prestige, yet he remained deliberate. He wanted to work where the intersection of industry and nationhood was most alive. That led him first to **Procter & Gamble**, then **Mobil** in New York, and later with **Engineering Equipment Incorporated (EEI)**, a company already established as a cornerstone of the country's construction and engineering industries. It was an enterprise that built not only structures but confidence — bridges, power plants,

refineries, and factories that defined the Philippines' infrastructure landscape. For Tong, the decision was more than career strategy; it was apprenticeship for nation-building.

What Harvard had refined in theory, the corporate world now tested in practice. Tong learned to navigate the friction between idealism and reality — between what could be done and what should be done. He discovered that progress required not only intellect, but courage: the courage to hold one's ground in a boardroom, to protect fairness in negotiations, to lead without arrogance.

In those years, the Philippines was beginning to assert its industrial potential. The oil-rich economies of the Middle East were rising, demanding construction expertise, and EEI was positioning itself as a player on the global stage. Tong saw in this not only an opportunity for the company but for Filipino labor itself. He believed that exporting skill was different from exporting bodies — one uplifted the nation's reputation, the other eroded it.

At EEI, he began as a procurement manager, a role far removed from glamour yet close to the pulse of the enterprise. Procurement demanded discipline, judgment, and foresight — the ability to see how every small decision shaped the architecture of larger outcomes. It was in those details that

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Tong excelled. He knew that the strength of any system lay in its foundation: integrity in process, precision in execution, and clarity in purpose.

His Harvard training soon became evident. Where others saw transactions, he saw systems. He streamlined supply chains, introduced accountability measures, and fostered collaboration across departments long accustomed to silos. Efficiency, for him, was not about speed but about alignment — of people, resources, and values. Within a few years, he was promoted to executive vice president, and eventually, to **president** and worked closely with the visionary **Jimmy Ongpin**, who would later become Finance Secretary.

The 1970s proved to be a defining decade. Under his leadership, EEI expanded beyond domestic projects into international ventures, securing contracts across the Middle East, where the oil boom had unleashed unprecedented demand for skilled construction. Filipino engineers and craftsmen, once confined to local sites, now found themselves building the cities of the future — Riyadh, Jeddah, Doha, Abu Dhabi. Tong viewed this expansion not as mere business growth, but as a statement of national capability. Every project completed abroad was, to him, a flag planted quietly in global recognition of Filipino excellence.

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But even as he led the company through prosperity, he remained deeply conscious of the human element behind every blueprint. He introduced employee welfare programs that were rare at the time — training scholarships, health benefits, and profit-sharing incentives. To him, loyalty was earned not through command, but through care. “A company’s greatest asset,” he would say in board meetings, “is not its machines, but the men and women who believe in its purpose.”

Under his direction, EEI became a model of corporate stewardship. While other firms measured success by quarterly margins, he measured it by sustainability — how long a company could endure while doing what was right. He saw business as a living organism that thrived only when its conscience was intact.

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Still, the challenges were formidable. The Philippine economy was volatile, buffeted by political turbulence and external shocks. Inflation rose, contracts fluctuated, and the temptation to cut corners grew strong. Yet Tong refused expedience. He was unwavering in the belief that transparency and discipline were not luxuries but necessities. In moments when compromise seemed convenient, he chose caution over convenience, principle over profit.

His leadership style was deliberate rather than dramatic. He did not raise his voice; he raised standards. Meetings under him were orderly, thoughtful, and punctual. He valued preparation and despised improvisation without insight. His staff learned quickly that he noticed everything — the tone of a report, the accuracy of a figure, the logic of an argument. Yet his criticism was never cruel; it was corrective. He demanded excellence, not ego.

As the company grew, so did its influence. EEI's ventures in the Middle East brought not only revenue but prestige, as Filipino engineers earned reputations for reliability and resilience. To many, Tong was not just a corporate leader but a mentor who proved that ethical management was not idealism — it was good business.

Outside the walls of EEI, the country was changing. The late 1970s and early 1980s

saw increasing unrest, as Filipinos began to question the concentration of power and wealth. For Tong, whose life had been shaped by balance and fairness, the widening social divide was troubling. He had built his career on the principle that growth must be inclusive, that opportunity must reach the margins. The inequality he witnessed around him stirred something deeper — a sense that reform was needed beyond the corporate sphere.

His success had afforded him comfort, but not complacency. Though he lived among Manila's elite, his heart remained tied to Dinalupihan, to the ordinary workers whose lives mirrored those of his employees. Each visit home reinforced the same question: what good is progress if it leaves people behind?

By the early 1980s, Tong had become one of the most respected executives in the country. He had steered EEI through global expansion, economic headwinds, and industry transformation, earning a reputation for both competence and integrity. Yet he felt an unease that success alone could not silence. He had learned how to build organizations; now he wondered how to build institutions.

He began to think of leadership not as position but as responsibility — an obligation to use what one had learned for the greater good. The lessons of Dinalupihan, Ateneo, and Harvard

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converged in his conscience. He could no longer separate enterprise from ethics, or economics from governance. The bridge between business and nationhood had to be crossed, and he knew he was meant to walk it.

In time, that conviction would pull him out of the boardroom and into the halls of Congress, where laws were crafted and the nation's direction debated. But before that leap, the executive years left him with an enduring truth: that excellence without integrity is transient, and that leadership, at its highest form, is stewardship.

When he finally decided to leave EEI, he did so without fanfare. There were no grand farewells, no orchestrated tributes — only quiet gratitude. He walked away from the company he had shaped not because he was weary, but because he was ready. The foundations of his next calling had been laid in every policy he had crafted, every principle he had upheld, every life he had touched within those walls.

In hindsight, those two decades at EEI were more than a prelude to his political career — they were a rehearsal for statesmanship. The structures he built in concrete were echoes of the systems he would later build in law. The people he led in business were reflections of the citizens he would serve in government.

And as he stepped beyond the gates of EEI for the last time, he carried with him not titles or trophies, but something infinitely rarer in public life: the credibility of a man who had proven that progress, when pursued with principle, could indeed endure.

The Call to Serve

Unknown to many, one of Tong Payumo's earliest legacies of leadership emerged not in the halls of Congress, but in the realm of civic service. During his term as President of the **Makati Jaycees** in 1972, he conceptualized a nationwide movement that would later be known as "*Hakbang ng Bayan*," more popularly called "*Alay Lakad*." What began as a simple idea to raise funds for the education and welfare of out-of-school youth quickly evolved into a phenomenon that stirred the social conscience of an entire generation.

The initiative impressed then First Lady **Imelda Romualdez Marcos**, who saw in it a unifying act of compassion and discipline — a march of citizens walking for a common cause. Under her encouragement, the project was adopted by the National Government, setting a precedent for future public-private collaborations in social mobilization. The Makati Jaycees' success with Alay Lakad soon inspired similar fund-raising activities across the country, bridging civic spirit with national action.

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For this pioneering achievement, the Makati Jaycees was conferred multiple honors, including the **Ramon V. Del Rosario Award** as the “**Most Outstanding Local Chapter of the Philippines,**” as well as citations for the “**Most Outstanding Public Relations Project of the Philippines**” and “**Most Outstanding Project in Extension.**”

These recognitions stood not merely as trophies, but as affirmations of Payumo’s lifelong philosophy — that great ideas need not be grand to be transformative, and that leadership begins with empathy translated into motion.

By the mid-1980s, Tong’s life seemed firmly anchored in success. He had mastered the corporate world, steered Engineering Equipment Incorporated toward international growth, and gained the respect of an entire generation of professionals who regarded him as a model of integrity. Yet beneath that calm exterior, an unease had begun to stir — a quiet awareness that the problems of his country demanded more than efficiency; they demanded engagement.

His decision to leave the private sector did not arise from ambition, but from loss. In 1986, his older brother, **Jose Jr.**, who had served as mayor of Dinalupihan, was assassinated. The tragedy struck like lightning — sudden, senseless, and irrevocable. It shattered the family’s peace and pierced the veil of

comfort Tong had built through years of disciplined work. It was the first time his children saw him cry. For days, he withdrew in silence, grappling with grief and the deeper question it awakened: ***What good is leadership if it does not protect the lives of those it claims to serve?***

That moment of mourning became a turning point. He understood, in a way that only suffering can teach, that there are wounds too deep for private comfort



The mango trees in Tong’s farm in Parapal, Dinalupihan, Bataan — a living legacy planted decades earlier by his father, Jose R. Payumo. What began as a simple family orchard grew into a cherished symbol of heritage, patience, and continuity. Each tree, lovingly tended through the years, carries with it the memory of a father’s hard work and a son’s enduring devotion to the land. For Tong, the farm was more than a property; it was a sanctuary where he reconnected with his roots, the rhythm of nature, and the quiet wisdom of his father’s hands.

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to heal. The only balm, he decided, was service — not as an abstraction, but as a living responsibility. His brother's unfinished work would become his own.

In the months that followed, friends and local leaders urged him to run for Congress. At first, he resisted. Politics, he believed, was too often a theater of noise where sincerity was drowned out by ambition. But as he looked at the towns and people of Bataan — the farmers without irrigation, the schools without books, the roads that led nowhere — he realized that change could not be wished into being. It had to be written into policy, anchored in law, and sustained by will.

And so, in **1987**, he entered the race for **Representative of Bataan's First District** — not as a politician, but as a reformer. His campaign was marked by simplicity. He spoke not of promises but of principles: good governance, inclusive development, and the honest stewardship of public funds. The people recognized in him a different kind of candidate — one who carried no entourage, no theatrics, only the quiet authority of competence. They saw in him not a stranger to power, but a steward of its purpose. When the votes were counted, he won by a wide margin. His entry into the **House of Representatives** coincided with the nation's rebirth. The 1987 Constitution

had just been ratified, and the Philippines stood at the threshold of democratic restoration. It was a time of rebuilding — politically, morally, economically. And in that fragile dawn of freedom, Tong Payumo found his calling.



Inside the august plenary halls of the Philippine Congress, Tong stood as the duly elected Congressman of Bataan's old First District — a public servant shaped by humility, conviction, and a deep sense of duty. Surrounded by the echoes of history and debate, he carried with him the hopes of his province and the lessons of his hometown. In every bill he supported and every word he spoke, his purpose was clear: to serve with integrity, to lead with conscience, and to leave behind a legacy of principled leadership rooted in love for Bataan and the Filipino people.

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What followed was a second career defined not by profit margins but by public good.

From his first day in Congress, he approached legislation with the discipline of an economist and the conscience of a servant. He studied the rules, mastered the process, and sought to understand the machinery of lawmaking not as ritual, but as design. He would later say that Congress was like a construction site: ideas were blueprints, debates were scaffolds, and consensus was the cement that held everything together.

He soon became known for the precision of his bills and the seriousness of his intent. His focus was infrastructure and economic reform — tangible pathways for national growth. Among the laws he authored, several would reshape the Philippine development landscape.

Foremost among them was the **Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Law**, which opened the door for private sector participation in infrastructure projects. It was a bold idea at a time when government finances were constrained and public trust in bureaucracy was thin. The BOT Law became a catalyst for the highways, power plants, and airports that would later transform the nation's landscape.



Campaign materials from Tong's runs for Congress — reflecting his enduring commitment to public service and his vision for progress in his hometown and province. His campaigns emphasized integrity, development, and the empowerment of ordinary citizens. Every poster, flyer, and slogan carried his message of hope and action, resonating with communities who knew him not only as a leader, but as a man of sincerity, discipline, and compassion.

Then came the **Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) Law** and the **Bases Conversion and Development Act**, both of which bore his signature as principal author. These measures turned former U.S. military bases into special economic zones —

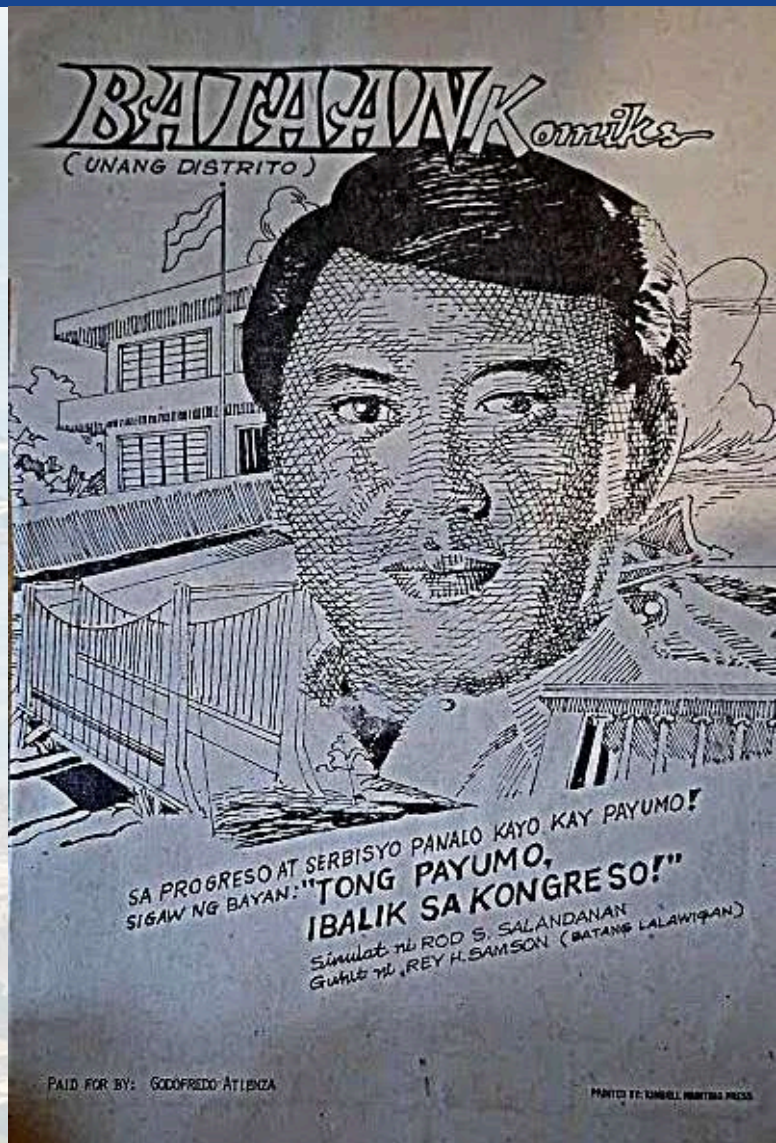
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places where investment could flourish, jobs could multiply, and local communities could thrive. What had once been symbols of dependency became engines of independence.

In the halls of Congress, Tong's reputation grew quietly but steadily. He was neither flamboyant nor partisan. His speeches were measured, his arguments grounded in data, and his votes guided by principle. He preferred substance over spectacle. Journalists who covered the legislature often referred to him as one of its "ten most outstanding congressmen," a recognition he neither sought nor advertised.

His philosophy was simple: *policy must serve people, not power*. He believed that legislation divorced from moral intention was hollow — that every law must be weighed not only by its economic outcome but by its human consequence. In committee hearings, he listened more than he spoke, but when he did, his words carried the authority of thought. He once remarked, "A lawmaker's duty is not to be heard, but to make a difference."

Even as his stature rose, he remained grounded. On weekends, he returned to Bataan, visiting barangays, inspecting schools, and talking to farmers and teachers. He was not there to campaign — his constituents already knew his heart. He went to learn, to stay tethered to the realities that legislation too easily



A vibrant piece of campaign art from a bygone era, this illustrated cover immortalizes Felicito "Tong" Payumo not merely as a statesman, but as a people's champion whose story was told in both words and pictures. Issued during his bid for another term in Congress, the Bataan Komiks captured the imagination of his constituents through vivid panels that blended political vision with Filipino storytelling flair. In the drawings, Tong stands as both hero and servant — firm yet approachable, an embodiment of intellect anchored in humility.

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abstracts. He had an instinct for seeing the invisible — the small inefficiencies that cripple progress, the quiet injustices that erode faith in governance.

During his tenure, he also prioritized education. He filed dozens of bills to build classrooms, establish science laboratories, and improve teachers' welfare. He believed that education was the only form of infrastructure that could never decay. In one session, when a colleague asked why he focused so much on schools rather than more visible projects, Tong replied simply, "Because education builds what roads cannot reach — the mind."

By his third term, he had become one of the intellectual pillars of the House. Presidents sought his counsel; his colleagues respected his integrity. Yet through it all, he maintained a monk-like modesty. He refused to enrich himself from politics and often funded small community programs from his own resources. His office became known for efficiency and transparency — rare traits in a system often dulled by complacency.

The man who had once built bridges of steel was now building bridges of trust. For Tong, public service was never theater; it was engineering at a higher level. It required precision, patience, and above all, purpose. He believed that corruption was not merely theft of money, but theft of hope.

When asked later in life what he considered his proudest achievement, he did not mention any specific law or project. He said, *"I served without betraying the people's trust."*

That was the standard he lived by — the invisible line between ambition and integrity that he never crossed. He entered politics not to extend his influence, but to redeem it, to prove that governance could still be noble when led by conscience.



Amid the tranquil beauty of Bataan National Park, Tong spends time with Arnel Casanova, Co-Administrator of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) around a campfire. The visit symbolized more than an official duty — it was a reaffirmation of their shared belief that progress must walk gently upon the earth. Surrounded by the forests' timeless calm, they reflected on how development and preservation could coexist, ensuring that the green heart of Bataan continues to breathe life into future generations.

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By the time his three terms ended in 1998, he had left an indelible mark on the nation's legislative history. His authorship of transformative economic laws would continue to generate growth long after his departure. And yet, his journey in public service was far from over. Fate was about to summon him again, this time to a post where vision met execution — where the blueprint of policy would become the infrastructure of a nation.

As he looked back at his years in Congress, Tong understood that the true call to serve was not answered once, but continually. The halls of legislation had taught him that reform was only the first bridge. What came next would demand not only intellect, but courage — the courage to build amid resistance, to lead without fear, and to serve without condition.

He was ready.

Engines of Growth

When Tong walked out of the halls of Congress in 1998, he left behind not a mere ledger of legislation, but a map of transformation. He had authored laws that redefined how the Philippines built, invested, and grew. Yet the work he began on paper was far from complete. For him, law was only the first bridge. It had to lead somewhere — to tangible progress, to communities uplifted, to lives changed.

That opportunity arrived swiftly. The newly inaugurated President **Joseph Ejercito Estrada**, recognizing Tong's vision and record of competence, appointed him as **Chairman and Administrator of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA)**. The role was formidable. Subic was no ordinary territory — it was the vast remnant of an era; a former American military base transformed into a symbol of national aspiration. To lead it was to inherit both promise and tension.



Taken during a brief recess in one of the administration's high-level meetings, this rare photograph with Tong, President Joseph Estrada, and other cabinet officials offers a glimpse behind the formalities of governance. Amid the coffee cups, quiet exchanges, and light laughter that punctuated the break, the image reveals the camaraderie and mutual respect shared among men and women entrusted with shaping the nation's course at the turn of the millennium.

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Inside one of Subic's modern industrial facilities, Tong meets with Japanese locators whose presence formed part of the Japanese and Taiwanese Technopark — a symbol of Subic's growing reputation as a world-class investment destination. His visits to these plants went beyond courtesy; they were opportunities to connect cultures, nurture confidence, and ensure that development remained people-centered and sustainable. In those years, Subic became a living example of how vision and collaboration can turn a once-idle base into a thriving global hub for innovation and industry.

The appointment came at a delicate moment. The country was still recovering from the **Asian Financial Crisis**, investors were cautious, and the freeport's leadership was in flux. Tong approached the task not as a politician, but as a planner. To him, Subic was a living blueprint — a chance to prove that Filipino management could rival global standards, that discipline could triumph over disorder, and that progress, if built on integrity, could be sustained.



A proud moment in Subic's continuing story of progress — Tong joins Japanese locators at a groundbreaking ceremony that would pave the way for new industries and shared prosperity. The occasion reflected his unwavering belief that development thrives on partnership, respect, and global cooperation. Through alliances like these, Tong helped shape Subic into a living testament to international collaboration — where the values of hard work, discipline, and trust transcend borders and endure through time.

He began his tenure the way he had begun every chapter of his life — with listening. Before drafting any new policy, he walked through the port, met with workers, and studied the flow of operations. He visited the locators' factories, spoke to small business owners, and sat with engineers who understood the terrain. *"You cannot govern what you do not understand,"* he often said. And in Subic, understanding meant immersion.

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The Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power Project established a temporary offshore platform in Subic Bay — one of its strategic staging points before the full deployment to Palawan. This remarkable engineering operation brought together global expertise, cutting-edge technology, and local cooperation, with Subic serving as a vital logistical and construction hub. Tong, then overseeing developments in the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, witnessed firsthand how this project positioned the Philippines at the forefront of energy independence, marking a milestone in the nation's pursuit of sustainable power and industrial capability.

One of his earliest initiatives was the **privatization of the power distribution system** — a bold move that stabilized costs, improved reliability, and signaled to investors that Subic was open to innovation. He sought not quick revenue but long-term viability. “Short-term success is the enemy of national progress,” he once wrote. *“What matters is not who starts a project, but whether it endures.”*

A contract signing by the harbor, held in front of the Chairman's Office at the Subic Bay Freeport Zone — symbolizing yet another milestone in Subic's continuing journey toward progress and partnership. Overlooking the calm waters that once served as a naval anchorage, the ceremony captured the spirit of renewal and growth that defined Tong's leadership. Each agreement forged in this setting was more than a document; it was a promise — one that carried the shared vision of building Subic into a hub of innovation, commerce, and opportunity for the Filipino people.

His stewardship transformed Subic from a transitional experiment into a lasting institution. He championed transparency, streamlined the permitting process, and insisted that every locator — whether foreign conglomerate or local entrepreneur — was to be treated with equal fairness. Under his leadership, Subic became a model of economic governance, drawing attention not only from neighboring provinces but from regional partners who saw in it a replicable formula for growth.

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But Tong's vision extended beyond numbers. To him, economic zones were not enclaves for elites; they were laboratories for national reform. The rules that worked in Subic — efficiency, meritocracy, accountability — could work anywhere if the will existed. He saw Subic as a mirror held up to the country, showing what was possible when competence guided power.

Still, his years at SBMA were not without storms. Political winds shifted, priorities changed, and transitions came with friction. Yet through every upheaval,

Tong stood firm. He had weathered far greater uncertainties before, and he knew that endurance, not enthusiasm, defined true reform.

When his term at Subic ended in 2004, he left quietly, as he always did, but his imprint remained unmistakable. The freeport's foundations were stronger, its investments steadier, its governance cleaner. The zone he had once walked through in study had become a thriving community of commerce and opportunity.



Under Tong's leadership, the Subic Bay Arts Center became a vibrant cultural landmark, breathing new life into what was once an old, unused building. Transformed into a state-of-the-art theater, it hosted some of the country's most celebrated performers — among them Pilita Corrales, Celeste Legaspi, and other icons of Philippine music and stage. Through his efforts, Subic not only thrived as an economic and industrial hub but also emerged as a center for arts and culture — proving that true progress embraces both the mind and the spirit.



A contract signing by the harbor, held in front of the Chairman's Office at the Subic Bay Freeport Zone — symbolizing yet another milestone in Subic's continuing journey toward progress and partnership. Overlooking the calm waters that once served as a naval anchorage, the ceremony captured the spirit of renewal and growth that defined Tong's leadership. Each agreement forged in this setting was more than a document; it was a promise — one that carried the shared vision of building Subic into a hub of innovation, commerce, and opportunity for the Filipino people.

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Seven years later, in **2011**, destiny called again. President **Benigno Simeon Aquino III** appointed him **Chairman of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA)** — the very institution created by the law he had once authored. Few public servants experience the rare symmetry of writing a vision and then bringing it to life. Tong did.

At BCDA, he confronted the monumental challenge of turning former military reservations into engines of civilian prosperity. Fort Bonifacio, Clark, and other base lands represented not just hectares of idle property, but the potential to redefine how the Philippines grew — sustainably, inclusively, and strategically.

Tong's leadership at BCDA was defined by clarity. He believed that the conversion of bases was not a mere exercise in real estate development but an act of national redemption: turning spaces once dedicated to conflict into places that nurtured peace and progress. Every contract signed under his watch was guided by transparency; every project approved was measured against one criterion — public good.

He often worked late, reviewing proposals line by line, calculating not only profits but the social value they would yield. He saw in those base lands the continuation of a lifelong mission: to



The lush forests of Subic and Zambales — once home to Aeta communities and part of a former U.S. naval reservation — stand today as a living testament to the region's rich biodiversity and natural heritage. Protected through decades of conservation efforts, these forests have become the green heart of the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, sheltering countless species of flora and fauna. Under Tong's stewardship, great care was taken to balance development with preservation, ensuring that the progress of Subic would always coexist in harmony with the rhythm of its ancient trees.

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transform inertia into motion, dependency into enterprise. His approach was methodical, his demeanor calm, but his purpose unrelenting.

During this period, one of his grandest ideas took shape — the **Bataan–Cavite Interlink Bridge**, a 38-kilometer marvel envisioned to connect Central Luzon to Southern Tagalog across Manila Bay. For Tong, it was more than an infrastructure project; it was a metaphor made

manifest. The bridge represented everything he had spent his life pursuing: connection, unity, and the transcendence of barriers.

He sketched its concept in meetings and spoke of it not with vanity but conviction. The project would, he said, decongest the capital, redistribute growth, and symbolically unite the islands of Luzon. Years later, when feasibility studies began and funding prospects emerged, it stood as a testament to his foresight — a vision so vast that it outlived its dreamer.

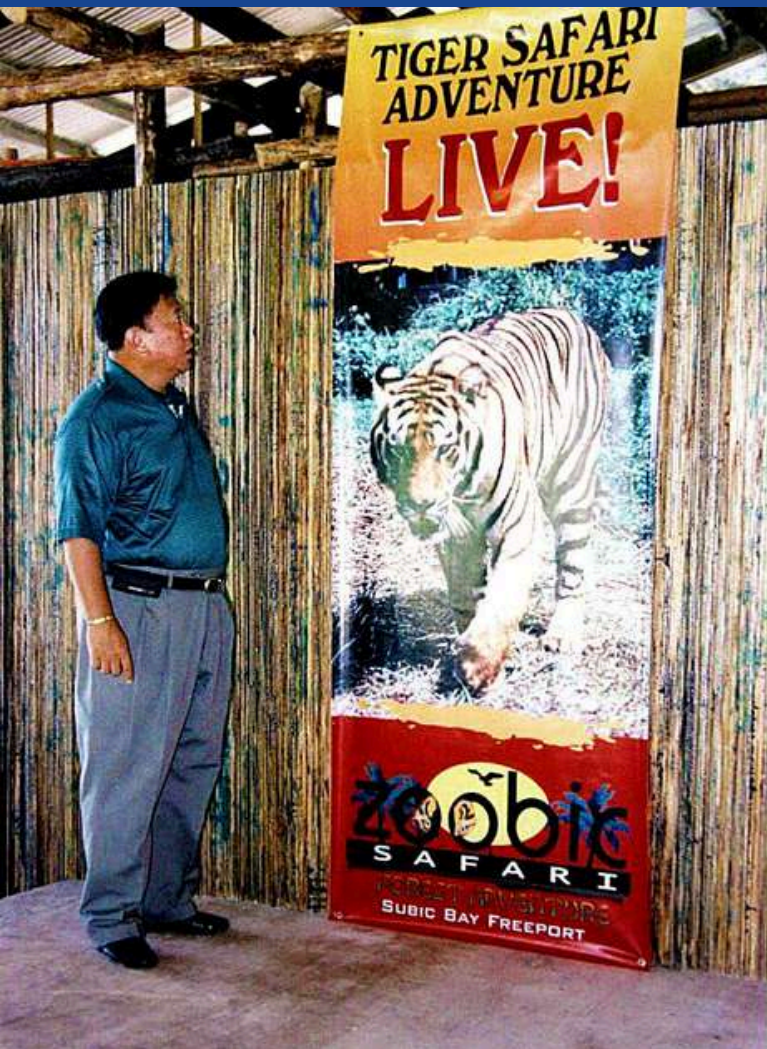


Tong visiting and touring the theme park locators of the Subic Bay Freeport Zone (SBFZ) as part of his continuing efforts to promote local tourism and economic development. His visits reflected a hands-on approach to leadership — engaging with operators, understanding challenges, and ensuring that Subic's attractions met both global standards and community needs. By fostering collaboration between private investors and local stakeholders, Tong helped position Subic as a premier destination for leisure, learning, and sustainable tourism in Central Luzon.



Tong inspecting construction sites along the forested areas of Subic — a testament to his hands-on leadership and commitment to responsible development. Balancing progress with preservation, he ensured that every infrastructure project respected the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the Subic Bay Freeport Zone. His work reflected a guiding principle he often lived by: that true advancement must never come at the expense of nature, but rather exist in harmony with it.

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Zoobic Safari, the brainchild of entrepreneur Robert Yupangco, became one of the landmark locators in the Subic Bay Freeport Zone — a major addition to its growing portfolio of tourism and leisure destinations. Established during Tong's tenure, Zoobic represented a bold step in diversifying Subic's economy beyond industry and trade, bringing in eco-tourism and family recreation as key growth sectors. Its establishment strengthened Subic's reputation as a premier destination where business, nature, and adventure thrive side by side, reflecting Tong's vision of inclusive and sustainable development.

In both Subic and BCDA, Tong displayed a distinctive form of leadership — firm but never forceful, confident but never arrogant. He carried himself with the grace of one who knew that authority was borrowed, not owned. When subordinates faltered, he corrected without humiliation. When successes came, he shared credit freely. He believed that leadership was a moral duty, not a privilege.

His tenure in these institutions revealed a consistent pattern: wherever he went, systems improved. Corruption receded. Processes became predictable. Trust, once elusive in public offices, began to return.



Tong Payumo reviewing concept drawings for the Dinosaur Park, Subic. Captured in a moment of thoughtful focus, Tong examines the design plans for what would become one of Subic's most imaginative tourism attractions. Long before eco-tourism became a national buzzword, Tong already recognized the importance of blending education, recreation, and environmental stewardship to revitalize former military lands into spaces of wonder and learning.

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To the people who worked under him, he was a quiet revolution — a proof that governance could be both competent and compassionate. To the communities affected by his projects, he was a builder whose structures stood not only on steel but on sincerity.

When he finally retired from government service, Tong looked back not on titles but on continuity. The laws he had written,

the zones he had developed, the bridges he had envisioned — these were not isolated achievements. They were parts of a single narrative: the belief that nations rise when men of conscience translate principle into policy and policy into progress.

He once described his philosophy in a single line: “Development is not a race for wealth, but a journey toward dignity.” In that sentence lay the essence of his life’s work. He had turned blueprints into cities, ideas into opportunities, and institutions into legacies.



With a twinkle in his eye and a paintball marker in hand, Tong helps establish the paintball arena at JEST Camp — a project designed to add excitement and outdoor recreation to Subic’s renowned Jungle Environment Survival Training center. Though the photo might suggest otherwise, it wasn’t a real machine gun — just part of the lighthearted fun that reflected his down-to-earth nature and youthful spirit. Beyond the laughter and games, it was Tong’s way of promoting eco-adventure tourism and showing that learning about nature could also be engaging and fun.



Tong at the inauguration of the Butterfly Garden in Subic’s JEST Camp (Jungle Environment Survival Training). This milestone moment celebrated not only environmental preservation, but also the deep respect and admiration for nature that Subic has long embodied. With butterflies taking flight around him, Tong stood as a champion of eco-tourism, education, and sustainable stewardship — reinforcing his belief that true progress honors the natural world and preserves it for generations to come.

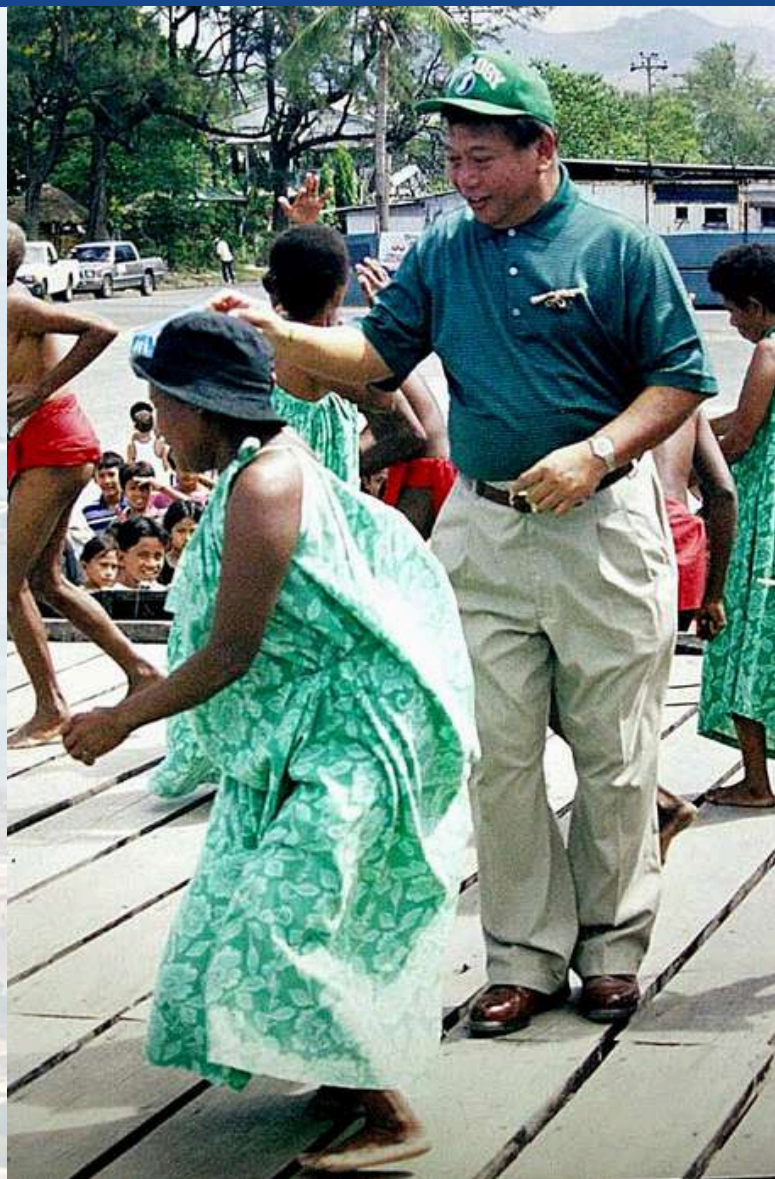
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As he stepped away from public life, Subic's ports continued to hum, BCDA's projects continued to grow, and his dream of the bridge across the bay began to take form in the minds of a new generation of planners. The engines he had built kept running, sustained by the discipline and integrity he had instilled.

For Tong, service was never an episode. It was a continuum — a current that began in the fields of Dinalupihan and flowed through the nation's arteries of commerce and governance. He had proven that in the right hands, power could build rather than break, and that in the right heart, vision could endure long after the lights of office faded.



The inauguration of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) Airport, a landmark event symbolizing progress and renewed connectivity for Central Luzon. Tong joins then Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alberto G. Romulo during the ceremony, marking a new era of development for the Freeport and its surrounding communities. The occasion reflected the country's commitment to transforming Subic into a vital hub for trade, tourism, and international cooperation.



During his SBMA days, Tong spent time with the Pamulaklakin Aeta community — moments that reflected his deep respect for indigenous culture, heritage, and resilience. Beyond the formal duties of leadership, he found purpose in listening to their stories, learning their ways, and supporting their livelihood programs. These encounters in the forests of Subic reminded him that true progress honors the roots of the land and the people who have long cared for it.

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A moment of grace and prestige in 1999 — Tong welcoming Her Royal Highness Princess Anne to Subic Bay. The visit brought an air of global distinction to the Freeport Zone and celebrated the shared values of service, resilience, and humanity. Known for her tireless philanthropic work, the Princess took great interest in Subic's community initiatives and development programs. For Tong, it was a proud moment of exchange — a meeting between two leaders committed, in their own ways, to improving lives and inspiring others through service.



At the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Tong welcomed President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo with his signature humility and poise — a meeting that marked a pivotal chapter in his public service career. Recognizing his exemplary work in transforming Subic into a thriving hub of commerce and industry, President Arroyo extended his term of office from 2002 to 2004. The gesture was more than an administrative decision; it was a vote of confidence in a man whose leadership combined vision, integrity, and compassion — guiding Subic toward sustained progress and national pride.



In 1999, Tong had the rare privilege of welcoming Prince Albert II of Monaco to Subic — a historic visit that brought royal prestige to the Freeport Zone and symbolized its rising global stature. The Prince, known for his passion for ocean conservation, was deeply impressed by Subic's pristine environment and its transformation into a thriving hub for eco-tourism and investment. For Tong, it was a proud moment — to share with an international dignitary the story of how a once-idle naval base had been reborn into a living example of Filipino resilience, vision, and sustainable progress.

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Building Beyond Concrete

When the applause of public life faded and the corridors of power grew distant, Tong did not retire into silence. He simply changed the terrain of his service. For a man who had built physical structures that reshaped cities and economies, the next chapter of his life was devoted to constructing something far more enduring: the architecture of the human mind.

He had always believed that education was the most powerful form of infrastructure — a foundation that, once laid, could support generations. In his speeches as legislator and administrator, he often returned to this conviction: that schools are the truest monuments a society can build. Now, unburdened by the schedules of bureaucracy, he turned that conviction into action.

In 2014, he founded the **University of Nueva Caceres–Bataan (UNC–B)**, an institution conceived not as a replica of old academies, but as a model for modern learning in the provinces. The idea had taken root years earlier, while he served in Congress, drafting education bills to expand access for rural communities. He had seen too many talented students denied opportunity simply because geography stood in their way.

“Intelligence is not concentrated in the cities,” he used to say. “It is dispersed — we must simply make the pathways to cultivate it.”

The university began humbly, with limited classrooms and a modest faculty. But as with every venture he led, Tong’s vision was both meticulous and expansive. He envisioned a campus that would blend technology with tradition, offering programs that bridged theory and practice — engineering that engaged with industry, business that understood ethics, and education that transcended instruction. He wanted graduates not merely employable, but purposeful.



Tong conducting site visits to various offices and locators around the Subic Bay Freeport Zone (SBFZ) — part of his hands-on leadership approach during his years of service. These visits were more than just courtesy calls; they were opportunities to engage with business leaders, address operational needs, and strengthen partnerships that contributed to Subic’s transformation into one of the Philippines’ most dynamic investment hubs. His commitment to accessibility and collaboration helped foster confidence among investors and reinforced the Freeport’s reputation for excellence and growth.

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He poured into the university the same discipline he had applied to national development. Processes were streamlined, resources carefully managed, and every initiative tied to long-term sustainability. Yet beneath the systems lay something more intimate: a paternal presence that could be felt in every corner of the campus. Students would see him walking the grounds quietly, pausing to greet them, sometimes sharing a few words about perseverance or curiosity. For them, he was not an untouchable founder, but a living symbol of what education could achieve.

The university's early years were not easy. Funding was scarce, infrastructure modest, and skepticism common. But Tong's resolve was as unyielding as ever. He believed that every great endeavor began with faith — not blind optimism, but faith anchored in preparation. Slowly,



Tong during the renewal of FedEx's contract as a key locator at the SBMA Airport — a milestone that reinforced Subic's status as a vital regional logistics hub. At the time, FedEx's Asia-Pacific Gateway in Subic stood as one of the country's proudest symbols of international partnership and efficiency. The contract renewal reflected the strong confidence global investors placed in the Freeport's infrastructure, governance, and people. Before the company's relocation to China in 2000, FedEx's presence in Subic significantly advanced trade connectivity, employment, and the modernization of Philippine logistics.

the institution grew. New buildings rose, programs expanded, partnerships flourished. And with each milestone, his conviction deepened: that progress measured in minds was far more lasting than any monument of steel.

UNC-B soon became a hub for scholarship in Central Luzon, offering quality education to hundreds of students who might otherwise have left home to pursue their dreams. For Tong, this was not charity; it was nation-building. Each diploma handed out was a quiet victory — a promise that knowledge could indeed equalize opportunity.

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Beyond the university, his advocacy for education rippled through Bataan. During his congressional years, he had filed numerous bills to establish schools, repair classrooms, and strengthen teacher training. Now, in retirement, he continued to champion these causes with undiminished passion. He donated land for learning facilities, supported scholarships, and encouraged local governments to invest in education as a catalyst for economic growth.

One of his most personal gestures was the donation of a parcel of land to host a **farm school** — a place where students could learn agriculture by doing, reconnecting knowledge with the soil that sustained their families. To Tong, this was symbolic closure: the boy who once watched carabaos till the fields of Dinalupihan was now enabling future generations to rediscover dignity in the same earth.

His understanding of education was deeply moral. He viewed learning not as a ladder for personal advancement, but as a covenant of responsibility. “Education,” he would often tell young audiences, “is not about leaving your roots; it is about deepening them.” His message resonated because it reflected his own life. He had studied at the nation’s finest institutions, trained at Harvard, led in Manila, and advised presidents — yet he never abandoned the small-town clarity that grounded him.

At UNC–B, Tong fostered a culture of meritocracy and mentorship. He encouraged teachers to think of themselves not as dispensers of knowledge but as cultivators of conscience. He urged students to see their success not as an escape from hardship, but as a chance to serve those still in it. Under his guidance, the university’s mission statement expanded beyond academics: to nurture competence, compassion, and character — the three pillars of true nationhood.



The SBMA Chapel, formally known as the Chapel of San Roque, stands as a spiritual sanctuary within the Subic Bay Freeport Zone — a place of solace and reflection for workers, residents, and visitors alike. Built to serve the growing community that rose from the former naval base, the chapel became a symbol of faith and renewal amid Subic’s transformation into a thriving economic center. Its simple yet graceful architecture and peaceful surroundings remind all who enter that even in progress, there must always be room for prayer, gratitude, and grace.

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A cheerful day at the office — Tong welcoming Mickey Mouse himself! The visit came at a time when exploratory discussions were underway for the possible establishment of a Disneyland in Subic. Though the global entertainment giant ultimately chose Hong Kong, the talks placed Subic among Asia’s most promising development sites. For Tong, it was both a whimsical and meaningful encounter — a reminder that the vision for Subic was big enough to capture even Disney’s imagination.

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As the years passed, the institution began to mirror its founder's philosophy — efficient yet humane, visionary yet humble. Alumni would later speak of how his presence shaped them, not through grand speeches, but through example. He embodied the lesson that integrity is not taught; it is demonstrated.

Outside academia, Tong remained a sought-after voice in development policy. Invitations to speak at conferences and forums continued, but he accepted only those that aligned with his purpose: to promote education, good governance, and ethical leadership. When he did take the podium, his talks carried the authority of lived experience. He spoke in paragraphs, not slogans, and always returned to one refrain: “The purpose of power is not to rule but to uplift.”

Yet even as his influence extended across institutions, his daily life was remarkably simple. He began his mornings in quiet reflection, often reading scripture or writing notes on ideas for community programs. Visitors were welcomed with warmth but never ceremony. His home in Bataan was open to teachers, local officials, and students who sought counsel. He was happiest when discussing ideas — how to improve rural education, how to make industries sustainable, how to align governance with conscience.

The bridge he had once envisioned across Manila Bay had now become a metaphor for his twilight years. In his youth, he had built tangible connections — roads, ports, freeports — linking regions and economies. In his later life, he built the invisible bridges that link minds to purpose and knowledge to virtue. Each student who walked the halls of UNC–B was, in essence, a traveler across those bridges, carrying forward his belief that education is the ultimate act of nation-building.



A joyful celebration at the University of Nueva Caceres–Bataan (UNC-B), where faculty, students, and colleagues came together to honor Tong's remarkable 85th birthday. The campus that once stood witness to his decades of mentorship and leadership now echoed with gratitude, laughter, and stories of a life dedicated to education and community service.

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When asked about retirement, he would smile and say, *“I have simply changed classrooms.”* It was true. The nation had always been his classroom; the people, his students; and service, his lifelong curriculum.

His last years in public life were marked not by rest but by reflection — the kind that sharpens gratitude rather than regret. He could look back and see continuity: the boy who dreamed of progress in Dinalupihan had become the man who built the mechanisms for it. The same



Tong captured here in a rare moment of quiet joy, surrounded by lady visitors amid the lush sanctuary of fluttering wings and tropical blooms. The scene reflects a gentler side of the seasoned statesman — a man whose decades of public service were matched by an enduring appreciation for nature, learning, and human connection.

hands that once drafted blueprints and laws had raised schools and nurtured scholars.

In time, the university became both monument and mirror — a testament to his faith in human potential, and a reflection of the values that defined his journey: discipline, humility, and the unwavering belief that the truest progress begins in the mind and heart.

If Subic and BCDA were monuments to his intellect, UNC-B was the monument to his soul. It was here that his lifelong



Tong Payumo sits among patients and medical volunteers during an eye-care mission organized by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) — a project that blended compassion with civic duty. Far from the corridors of power where he once helped draft national policy, Tong is seen here in his most natural element: among the people he served, listening, smiling, and lending both presence and encouragement.

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A timeless moment of fellowship and joy — Tong singing “My Way” alongside fellow Manila Rotarians at the home of Tito Boy Guevarra. The evening was filled with laughter, music, and camaraderie, a true reflection of the Rotary spirit that celebrates not just service, but also friendship and the shared rhythm of life well-lived.

vision of nation-building found its most personal expression. For Tong, education was the quiet revolution that outlasted all others — a bridge that neither time nor politics could erode.

And so, as he walked through the campus on afternoons, watching students hurry between classes, their laughter rising like birds in flight, he saw in them not just the future of Bataan, but the fulfillment of a life’s purpose. He had built beyond concrete — he had built legacies of light.

The Rotarian Creed

The measure of a man, it is said, lies not in the heights he reaches but in the lives he touches. For Tong Payumo, that measure was found not in power or wealth, but in service — the kind of quiet, enduring service that leaves no signature yet shapes the soul of a community. In the years after his government tenure, he found his natural home in the **Rotary Club of Manila**, an institution whose creed mirrored his own lifelong philosophy: *Service Above Self*.

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Rotary, to Tong, was not an extracurricular pursuit; it was a spiritual continuation of his public service. Long before titles and offices, he had already lived by its ideals — truth, fairness, goodwill, and benefit to all. These were not abstract virtues to him, but habits of thought, woven into every decision he made. When he joined Rotary decades earlier, he recognized in it a fraternity not of status, but of purpose. It was a community bound not by ambition but by a shared faith in humanity's better possibilities.

Within the Rotary Club of Manila — the oldest and most prestigious in Asia — Tong was both participant and pillar. He attended meetings faithfully, not as a guest of honor, but as a fellow servant among equals. He saw in every gathering a forum for ideas, a meeting of hearts dedicated to transforming compassion into action. Whether the topic was education, health, or sustainable development, he brought to the table the same rigor that had defined his years in Congress and the cabinet.

He believed that Rotary's genius lay in its simplicity — that it did not promise miracles, only measurable kindness. It worked quietly, through projects that repaired, restored, and renewed the small details of human life: a child's eyesight corrected, a community's water supply restored, a village's school rebuilt. Tong gravitated toward these efforts because

they reflected the same philosophy that had guided his entire career: **real progress is not loud; it is lasting.**

In every Rotary undertaking, he applied his signature discipline. Projects were to be planned as carefully as infrastructure — budgets transparent, goals realistic, results measurable. He often reminded younger Rotarians that goodwill, without management, risks becoming waste; but management, without goodwill, becomes empty bureaucracy. The key was balance — the same balance he had once practiced in lawmaking and administration.



Tong Payumo joins Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo, Speaker Jose de Venecia, and Vice President Salvador "Doy" Laurel in a diplomatic meeting with Spain's Prime Minister Felipe González during the Philippine delegation's official visit with King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain.

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Yet beyond systems and strategy, Tong infused his Rotary life with faith. He saw service not merely as civic duty but as moral worship — an act of gratitude to the Creator who had blessed him with opportunity. He prayed before every decision, often quoting scripture to underscore that charity without humility is vanity. To him, leadership within Rotary meant stewardship: the privilege of guiding others toward a shared light.

The Club, in turn, regarded him with quiet reverence. He was not the kind of leader who commanded attention, but the kind whose presence calmed rooms and sharpened minds. Younger members sought his counsel, and he offered it with patience and precision. He taught them to view every project through a wider lens:

What good will this do ten years from now? Will it uplift the human spirit as much as it helps the human need?

These questions, gentle but profound, became the moral filter for many initiatives that followed.

Tong believed that service and spirituality were inseparable. His approach to Rotary was the same as his approach to life — ordered, purposeful, and rooted in faith. His notebooks from those years were filled with reflections on stewardship and gratitude. One entry read, *“The heart that serves is never idle; even in stillness, it is preparing for the next act of giving.”*



A moment of grace and humility — Tong meeting Pope John Paul II during an official state visit to the Vatican with President Fidel V. Ramos. The encounter transcended diplomacy; it was a deeply personal experience that strengthened Tong's faith and reaffirmed his belief in service guided by moral conviction. Standing before the Holy Father, he carried with him the prayers of a grateful nation and the quiet pride of a Filipino called to serve with compassion and integrity.

He viewed Rotary not as retirement but as refinement — the distillation of a lifetime's lessons into wisdom for others. While he no longer built bridges or authored laws, he now built people: mentoring young Rotarians, supporting scholars, and encouraging professionals to see service not as extracurricular, but essential. In his presence, altruism was never sentimental; it was practical, disciplined, and transformative.

He also found in Rotary a community of faith that transcended religion. Though grounded in his Catholic upbringing, he respected all paths that led toward goodness. He once remarked, *“It does*

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not matter by which name you call the Divine. What matters is whether your work makes others believe He exists.” In those words, he captured the essence of his creed — that faith is best expressed not in prayer alone, but in practice.

Service, for Tong, was a way of sanctifying daily life. He saw God not only in churches, but in classrooms, clinics, and community halls where help was rendered without fanfare. His spirituality was quiet yet profound — more in deeds than declarations, more in constancy than ceremony. It was this inner stillness that gave him strength, a serenity that seemed to flow from his very presence.

Rotary gave him the platform to continue what he had always done best: to lead by example, to serve with dignity, and to inspire without intent. He supported projects that strengthened education — from scholarship grants to literacy programs — echoing his lifelong belief that the mind is the best tool for liberation. He championed environmental initiatives, understanding that stewardship of the earth was a moral responsibility, not a political cause.

His generosity was never performative. He gave quietly, preferring anonymity over applause. Those who worked with him knew that his name appeared on few plaques, but his influence appeared

everywhere. He funded programs, encouraged donors, and, most importantly, modeled the humility that keeps charity pure. “Good works,” he once said, “must be done as if unseen — for if you seek the light of recognition, the light of grace will dim.”

As the years advanced, Tong’s presence in Rotary took on a symbolic gravity. He embodied the club’s ideal — the man who had risen high yet knelt low, who had led nations yet listened to neighbors. When he spoke during gatherings, members would fall silent, not out of obligation but reverence. His words were not grand but grounded, always circling back to integrity, gratitude, and the sacred duty of service.

Even as his health began to slow him, he remained steadfast in attendance. He never regarded aging as retreat, but as refinement — the ripening of wisdom meant to be shared. He often reminded his peers that legacy was not built in marble or metal, but in habits that outlive us. To serve, he said, is to become part of a current that flows beyond one’s own life.

In Rotary, Tong Payumo found the convergence of everything he had ever believed: that intellect must be joined with conscience, that success must return to service, and that faith must be proven in action. His life within the organization

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Official visits to the White House with U.S. President Bill Clinton — a defining chapter in Tong's years of public service. These visits reflected the strengthening of diplomatic ties between the Philippines and the United States, as well as the growing recognition of Filipino leadership on the world stage. In a remarkable coincidence, one of the executive secretaries serving several U.S. presidents at the time was also a native of Dinalupihan, a proud reminder of how global achievement can spring from humble hometown roots.

was not an appendix to his career; it was its culmination — the flowering of a lifelong creed that had guided him from Dinalupihan's classrooms to Congress's halls, from the boardrooms of industry to the sanctuaries of faith.

When he finally received recognition for his decades of service, he accepted it not as a reward but as a reminder. Standing before his fellow Rotarians, he said, *"I did not serve to be remembered. I served to*

An official visit to the White House with U.S. President George W. Bush — a proud moment that underscored the enduring alliance between the Philippines and the United States. The meeting reflected a shared commitment to strengthening diplomatic relations, advancing security cooperation, and fostering economic growth between the two nations. For Tong, it was an unforgettable experience — standing within one of the most historic seats of power in the world, representing the Filipino spirit of partnership, service, and global engagement.

remember — to remember that I was given much, and therefore must give."

In that single line, he summarized the heart of Rotary, and indeed, the essence of his life.

For some, retirement means the dimming of purpose; for Tong, it meant illumination — the steady glow of a life that had found its perfect rhythm between thought and action, between faith and

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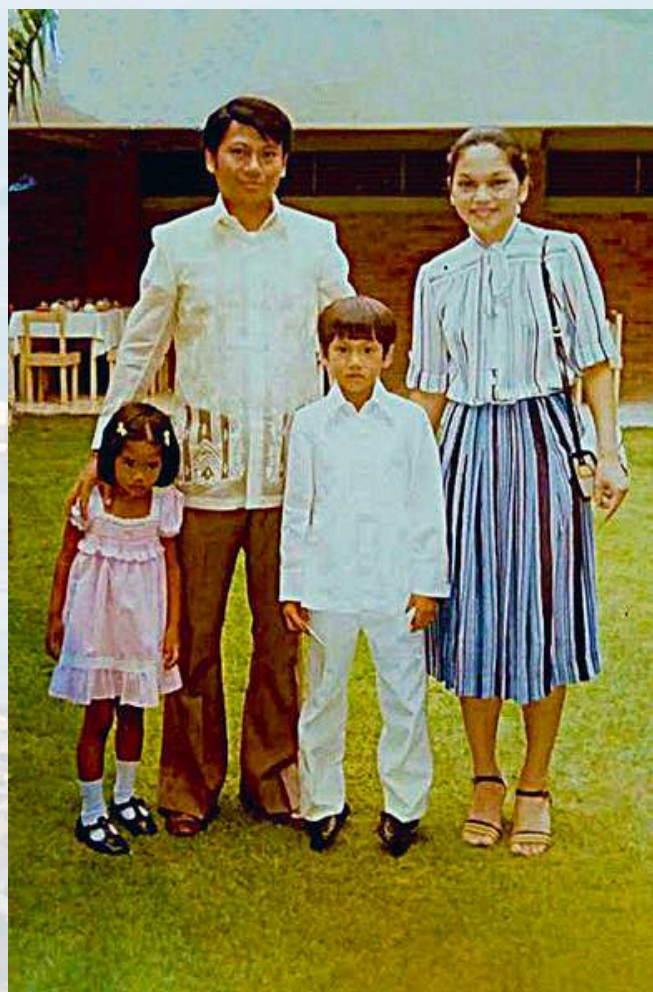
reason, between love of country and love of God.

And as he looked around the room filled with familiar faces — leaders, friends, believers — he saw not the end of his journey, but the continuity of its mission. Rotary, to him, was not an organization. It was the world as it ought to be: people, joined in kindness, doing good quietly. In that circle of service, Tong Payumo had found his home, his faith, and his legacy.

The Private Patriarch

Behind the titles and triumphs, there was always the man simply known to family and friends as **Tong** — a husband, father, and patriarch whose gentleness and integrity defined the rhythm of his private world. If public life was where he built legacies, home was where he nurtured them.

At the heart of that world stood **Daisy**, his beloved wife and lifelong companion. Theirs was a partnership that spanned decades, grounded not in grandeur but in grace. Daisy was the quiet center of his orbit — steadfast, wise, and patient. Where his life was marked by motion and responsibility, hers was marked by constancy. Together, they formed an unspoken equilibrium: his vision balanced by her warmth, his precision softened by her understanding.



A portrait of a young and growing family in 1980 — a time filled with hope, laughter, and the gentle chaos of raising children. The photograph captures Tong and his wife in the early years of building both a home and a legacy, surrounded by the boundless energy and innocence of their children. Every smile tells a story of love's beginnings, of sacrifices made quietly, and of dreams nurtured together. It was a season of building foundations — not just of walls and roofs, but of values, faith, and the enduring bond of family.

A BRIDGE WELL BUILT: The Life and Legacy of Felicito Cruz Payumo



A rare and treasured moment of togetherness — Tong with his beloved family during Christmas of 1989. Gathered around the warmth of home, the scene captures more than just a holiday celebration; it reflects the enduring bond, laughter, and love that have always defined their family through the years.

To those who saw them together, it was evident that their marriage was built not merely on affection but on shared faith. They prayed together daily, often beginning mornings in reflection and ending nights in thanksgiving. For Tong, prayer was not ritual but renewal — a way to reset his compass toward humility. He often said that Daisy's prayers were his anchor, her calm the mirror that reminded him of who he was beneath the accolades.

Their home in **Bataan** was both sanctuary and school. There, Tong's principles were not recited but lived. The dining table doubled as a classroom where discussions on history, ethics, and current affairs intertwined with laughter and family stories. He taught by example — through punctuality, patience, and presence. To his children, he was both disciplinarian and mentor, demanding excellence yet gentle in correction. He never raised his voice, only expectations.

He taught them that success without integrity was failure, and that gratitude was the beginning of wisdom. When he returned from trips abroad, he did not bring luxuries but lessons — books, letters, or reflections scribbled in neat handwriting. His children remember that he never boasted of his accomplishments; instead, he asked what they had learned, how they had helped someone that week.

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His leadership at home reflected the same principles that guided his public life — discipline, fairness, and faith. Yet within those walls, he shed the formality of office. He loved humor, good conversation, and the simple ritual of meals shared. He delighted in the small details of domestic life: tending the garden, playing with grandchildren, and writing notes on yellow pads while birds called from the trees outside.

As a father, he was both exacting and affectionate. He believed that love must teach as much as it comforts. He urged his children to think critically, to read widely, and to remember always that humility is the truest measure of greatness. *“Do not chase recognition,”* he told them. *“Let your work speak — and if it must whisper, make sure it whispers truth.”*

Faith bound their family together. Sundays were sacred — not merely for Mass, but for reflection. Tong would lead his household in prayer before meals, always giving thanks not for what they had, but for what they could share. He saw in the family a reflection of nationhood — a small republic of trust, order, and compassion.

When he became a grandfather, a gentler side emerged. The same hands that once signed laws and blueprints now turned pages of storybooks. He listened to children’s tales with the same attentiveness he once gave to congressional



Taken in 1993, this studio portrait of Tong and his family commemorated his last campaign for Congress — a fitting symbol of both closure and continuity. As he prepared to transition from the halls of politics to broader endeavors, his family remained his constant source of strength. The image reflects a life of service anchored in love and loyalty — a reminder that every leader’s greatest foundation is the family that stands steadfastly behind him.

debates. To his grandchildren, he was not a statesman but **“Lolo Tong,”** whose laughter was quiet yet contagious, whose advice came in stories that lingered.

The Payumo home was often filled with visitors — relatives, former colleagues, students, and parish friends — drawn by Tong’s humility and Daisy’s hospitality. Meals were simple but abundant in warmth. Guests found themselves in long conversations about faith, governance, or gratitude, often leaving with a sense of renewal. Tong’s ability to listen — deeply,

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In 2016, Tong and his wife Daisy traveled to Greece — a well-deserved escape filled with history, beauty, and renewal. As they walked hand in hand through the storied streets of Athens and gazed across the blue waters of the Aegean, they celebrated decades of shared dreams, challenges, and triumphs. This journey, like so many they had taken together, reflected a partnership anchored in respect, affection, and faith — a love that deepened with every passing year.

without interruption — was his most disarming quality. He made every person feel seen, every voice significant.

His values were woven into the daily fabric of his home. He abhorred waste, valued punctuality, and held honesty sacred. *“Truth,”* he often said, *“is the only inheritance that increases when shared.”* These were the quiet commandments by which his family lived.

Even in illness, he remained serene. He faced physical frailty with the same dignity that had marked his public service. He never complained, never succumbed to self-pity. When asked once how he endured pain, he smiled and replied, *“By remembering that gratitude is stronger than suffering.”* It was typical of Tong — to transform hardship into reflection, to turn even decline into grace.

Daisy remained by his side through it all — faithful, composed, and prayerful. Their love deepened not through grand gestures but through quiet constancy. She was his confidante, his nurse, his final audience. In the stillness of those years, their companionship acquired the texture of something eternal — love refined by endurance.

When visitors came to see him during his later years, they found him surrounded by symbols of a well-lived life: books neatly

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stacked beside his chair, family photos on the table, a rosary by his bedside. He greeted each guest with the same calm courtesy, as though public office had never left him, or perhaps, as though it had never mattered as much as this — to serve in small ways, to inspire by simply being.

In those twilight days, he reflected often on legacy. He said once, *“I built many bridges in my life — some of steel, others of trust. But the bridge that matters most is the one that leads back home.”* It was a fitting metaphor for a man who had spent his career connecting regions, institutions, and lives — only to find, in the end, that the truest connection was the love of family.

The Measure of a Life

In the final reckoning of a man’s journey, it is not the applause that endures, but the echo of purpose. **Tong Payumo** lived such a life — one that moved quietly yet deeply, bridging the distance between intellect and conscience, power and humility, ambition and grace. His name now belongs to history, but his spirit remains among the living: in the laws that continue to empower, the bridges that continue to connect, and the minds that continue to awaken.



Family vacation in Balesin, 2016 — a cherished time of rest, laughter, and togetherness. Far from the routines of daily life, Tong and his family enjoyed the island’s tranquil beauty, turquoise waters, and golden sunsets. For him, it was not just a getaway but a celebration of blessings — the joy of being surrounded by loved ones, sharing stories over meals, and creating memories that would be treasured for years to come.

He was, above all, a **builder** — though not merely of structures. He built systems of trust where cynicism had taken root. He built opportunities where poverty once prevailed. He built integrity in spaces too often corroded by compromise. The bridges and institutions that bear his signature are visible symbols of his genius, yet they are only the outer scaffolding of something greater — the moral architecture he left within those he touched.

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The wedding of Ela and Max in the picturesque town of Schladming, Austria, 2013 — a celebration filled with love, laughter, and breathtaking mountain views. Against the backdrop of snow-capped peaks and alpine charm, family and friends gathered from near and far to witness two hearts become one. The day radiated warmth and joy, blending Austrian elegance with Filipino grace. For Tong and the family, it was not just a union of two souls, but a reaffirmation of love's enduring power to bridge distances, cultures, and generations.

From Dinalupihan's humble soil to the halls of Harvard, from the boardrooms of industry to the floor of Congress, and from the sanctuaries of Rotary to the classrooms of his university, Tong's life traced a single, unbroken arc — that of a man who believed that service is the highest form of success.

There are men who seek to be powerful, and there are men who seek to be good. Tong Payumo proved that one could be both — that goodness, when disciplined by wisdom, becomes a form of power more enduring than any office or accolade.

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In an age often defined by noise, he stood for clarity. In a culture that glorified speed, he embodied stillness. He was proof that progress need not be loud, that the truest revolutions begin in silence — in the decision to do what is right, even when no one is watching.

Tong Payumo passed away unexpectedly on **October 19, 2025** during a family vacation in Hong Kong, leaving behind a legacy that continues to echo through the hills of Bataan and the harbors of Subic Bay. The tributes that poured in did not speak of grandeur but of goodness. Colleagues remembered his fairness; students, his faith in them; Rotarians, his constancy. To them all, he had been what he had always aspired to be — a builder of others.

The legacy he leaves behind cannot be measured by titles alone. It lives in the rhythm of institutions he strengthened, in the moral infrastructure he constructed within his people.

His example offers a quiet but profound challenge to future generations: that greatness is not defined by the scale of one's achievements but by the integrity with which they are pursued. His life stands as evidence that morality and modernity can coexist, that one can lead with both competence and conscience.

He was a husband who loved faithfully, a father who led gently, a grandfather who



Walking his daughter Angela down the aisle in Austria, 2013 — one of life's most tender and unforgettable moments. With every step, Tong's heart brimmed with pride and gratitude as he accompanied his daughter toward a new chapter in her life. Against the stunning European backdrop, the occasion was filled with joy, love, and quiet reflection — a father's blessing, a daughter's radiant smile, and a moment that beautifully captured the bond between parent and child.

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A doting Lolo, Tong shares his love for books with his granddaughter, Alisha — a tender moment that beautifully bridges generations. Seated side by side, their shared curiosity turns the pages into portals of imagination and learning. For Tong, reading was never just a pastime but a lifelong companion, and passing that joy to his granddaughter became one of his greatest pleasures. Through these quiet moments, he imparted not only knowledge but the deeper lesson that wisdom, like love, grows when it is shared.

listened deeply. In the intimacy of home, as in the vastness of his public work, he was the same man — disciplined, compassionate, unpretentious. His family was his first and final institution, the one from which all others drew their spirit.

In Rotary, he found his spiritual fraternity — proof that service transcends profession.

Under the soft afternoon light, Tong tosses a ball to his grandson, Tomas Felicito — a small, beautiful moment suspended in time. The leader becomes a teacher once more, the teacher a doting grandfather, showing that love and legacy often find their purest expression in play. Each throw carries a quiet lesson, each laugh a memory that bridges generations. In that simple game of catch lies the essence of Tong's life — faith in family, joy in the present, and hope for tomorrow.

In education, he found his immortality — proof that ideas outlast lifetimes. And in faith, he found his compass — proof that leadership without prayer is direction without purpose.

The bridges he built — across bays, across boundaries, across lives — stand now as metaphors of his soul. They remind us

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Tong delivering his heartfelt father-of-the-bride speech at Aileen and Ryan's wedding in Bohol, 2012. As emotions filled the air, he paused, his voice trembling slightly, and began to sing: "Is this the little girl I carried? Is this the little girl at play?" — the beloved lines from Fiddler on the Roof. In that tender moment, there wasn't a dry eye in the room, as his song bridged a lifetime of love, pride, and bittersweet memories between a father and his daughter.

that a nation's progress depends not only on its infrastructure but on its integrity. Tong's bridges were both literal and moral: paths that connected the possible with the just, the prosperous with the humble, the powerful with the voiceless.

And yet, the truest bridge he built was invisible — the bridge between **what is** and **what ought to be**. It was the same bridge he crossed each day of his life, with faith as his compass and service as his stride.

When history remembers him — and it will — it will not do so in the language of monuments, but in the language of



A moment every father dreams of — Tong beams with pride and quiet joy at the wedding of his beloved daughter, Aileen, in the island paradise of Bohol, 2012. It was a day filled with love, family, and memories that would forever be etched in his heart.

memory: in the student who rises because of a scholarship he endowed, in the worker whose dignity is restored by a job his policies created, in the Rotarian who learns that service can be sacred.

In these lives, his own continues — quiet, enduring, luminous.

And perhaps that is the truest measure of a life: not how brightly it burns, but how gently it continues to give light long after the flame is gone.

For in the end, **Felicit Cruz Payumo** did not simply live well.

He lived rightly — and in doing so, built not just a nation's future, but a legacy of faith, integrity, and love that time itself cannot erode.

INTERCLUB EVENT

Rotary Club of Imus East's 30th Handover and Induction Ceremonies



President Raoul Creencia attended the 30th Handover and Induction Ceremonies of the Rotary Club of Imus East (RCIE).

In photo: President Raoul Creencia with RCIE President Ryan Fulgencio



President Raoul Creencia with PDG Rudy Bediones

FELLOWSHIP

Aleco Monday breakfast



A Aleco Monday breakfast fellowship was held on November 17, 2025 at Manila Polo Club, hosted by Past Director/Internal Auditor Nick Locsin.

Present were Past Director Pepo Nuñez, Past Director Beda Fajardo, Past Director Abe Pascual, Rtn. Cris Acosta, Past Treasurer Chito Tagaysay, former member Mr. Jorge Salazar, Past Director/Internal Auditor Nick Locsin, Past President Archibart Bartolome, former member Mr. Tony Montinola, Past Director Ner Lonzaga, and Past President Ebot Tan.

DISTRICT EVENT

Rotary District 3810 Executive Committee and District Officers Lead the Rotary Delegation at the Alay Lakad 2025



DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra with Rotary District 3810 Executive Committee and District Officers leading the Rotary delegation at the Alay Lakad 2025 last November 23, 2025 along Roxas Boulevard in Manila.



DISTRICT EVENT

Rotary District 3810 Executive Committee and District Officers Lead the Rotary Delegation at the Alay Lakad 2025



DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra with Rotary District 3810 Executive Committee and District Officers in a group pose during the Alay Lakad 2025 last November 23, 2025 at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila.

DISTRICT EVENT/FELLOWSHIP

Phenome Night Club Christmas Party of the Phenomenal Leaders Team of Rotary District 3810



DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra, Special Assistant to the Governor-Manila SDG Albert S. Alday and Online Tools SDG Aries Balanay attended the Phenome Night Club Christmas Party of the Phenomenal Leader Team of Rotary District 3810 for RY 2022-2023 last November 21, 2025 at the Hydro Super Club in Quezon City.



DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra, Special Assistant to the Governor-Manila SDG Albert S. Alday and Online Tools SDG Aries Balanay as part of the group picture during the Phenome Night Club Christmas Party of the Phenomenal Leader Team of Rotary District 3810 for RY 2022-2023 last November 21, 2025 at the Hydro Super Club in Quezon City.



DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra delivering a message during the Phenome Night Club Christmas Party of the Phenomenal Leaders Team of Rotary District 3810 who led the district during RY 2022-2023.

Phenome Night Club Christmas Party of the Phenomenal Leaders Team of Rotary District 3810



DGND/DSG
Hermie Esguerra
as DJ during the
Phenome Night
Club Christmas
Party of
Phenomenal
Leaders Team of
Rotary District
3810



Rotary Club of Jinju Jeil Invites the Rotary Club of Manila to its 30th Anniversary Celebration

An invitation card with a dark green background and a gold border decorated with ginkgo leaves. The text is in white and gold. It includes the Rotary logos for District 3590 and the Club of Jinjujeil. The main text reads: "The Rotary Club of Manila is cordially invited to JINJUJEIL ROTARY CLUB'S 30th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION". The date and time are "DEC SAT | 06 | 18:00 2025" at "MBC CONVENTION JINJU". It concludes with "Let us show our support to our Sister Club and attend this milestone celebration." and contact information for ES Lhea Lozano.

Rotary District 3590 Rotary Club of Jinjujeil

The Rotary Club of Manila
is cordially invited to

JINJUJEIL ROTARY CLUB'S
30th
ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION

DEC
SAT | **06** | 18:00
2025
MBC CONVENTION JINJU

**Let us show our support to our Sister
Club and attend this milestone
celebration.**

Please confirm your attendance by sending a message to:
ES Lhea Lozano
(+63) 995 991 2933 | rotaryclubofmanila@gmail.com

PUBLIC IMAGE

Unveiling of Rotary Club of Manila's Four-Way Test Marker at Arroceros Forest Park in Manila



OPLAN KALINGA: Surgical Outreach Program

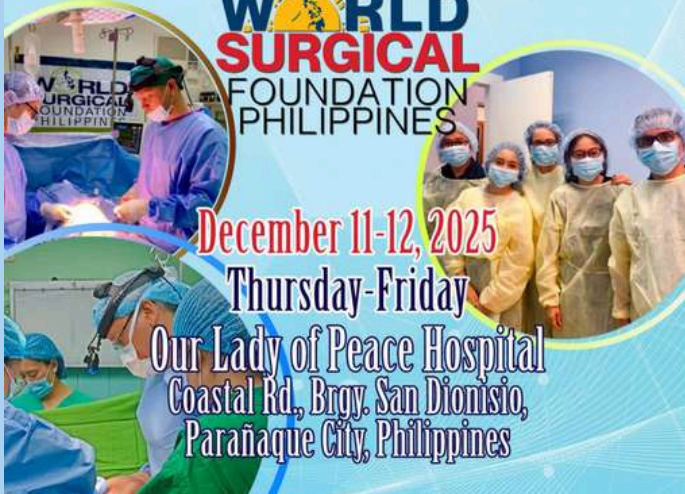
Rotary Club of Manila | UNITE FOR GOOD | RCMANILA FOUNDATION, INC.

OPLAN KALINGA: SURGICAL OUTREACH PROGRAM

in partnership with

WORLD SURGICAL FOUNDATION PHILIPPINES

December 11-12, 2025
Thursday-Friday
Our Lady of Peace Hospital
Coastal Rd., Brgy. San Dionisio,
Parañaque City, Philippines



Rotary Club of Manila | UNITE FOR GOOD

RCM Christmas Party

SAVE THE DATE
December 4, 2025
THURS | 5PM
HEXAGON LOUNGE
4TH FLR. RCBC BLDG., AYALA AVENUE





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