

Resilient and proud, the Philippines takes off

With a new, business-friendly administration, the beautiful archipelago is growing fast

A stable economy that has weathered the economic crisis well — gross domestic product grew by a staggering 7.3 percent last year — the Philippines is a country of immense promise.

As well as rising consumer demand, a low dependence on exports and large remittances that flood in from the five million Filipinos working abroad, the Philippines is home to a growing business process outsourcing industry.

In June 2011, the Government of the Philippines' foreign and local currency long-term bond rating was upgraded to Ba2.

An archipelago of 7,000 islands — of which only 11 are inhabited — situated in southeastern Asia, between the Philippine Sea and the South China Sea, the republic of 103 million people has been ruled by head of state and head of government President Benigno S. Aquino III since June 30, 2010.

Committed to good governance and poverty reduction, the Aquino administration has prioritized spending on education, health, and other social programs, putting the onus on the private sector to finance significant infrastructure projects, and more stringent tax collection.

Incentives for business have grown, and in just one year, foreign direct investment grew from 87.5 billion PhP (\$2.06 billion) to 116.6 billion PhP, a third of which were from Japan. Some 89 percent of this went to manufacturing. Investment commitments in ICT (information and communications technology) in the fourth quarter of 2010 totaled PhP 23.9 billion, eight times the PhP 3 billion recorded in the same period in 2009.

Value for money

All of which is good news for the country and potential investors. In



Chairman of Government Watch
Raul T. Concepcion

efficient in terms of wages over labor standard expectations and low operational cost, with a vast pool of home-grown talents and highly adaptable resources

The Philippines has a very committed and supportive governance which, in the case of the Board of Investment translates into investor management solutions from prospecting and nurturing investment

In April this year, a high-level Philippine economic delegation visited China to encourage the flow of direct Chinese investments into the Philippines. The Chinese government and business leaders have signaled strong interest in the Aquino administration's PPP (public-private partnership) infrastructure projects in the Philippines worth \$12 billion.

This is extremely encouraging, and a large increase on the amount spent last year, which was \$100 million.

Fast-growing exports

China has been the fastest-growing export market for Filipino products and services in the past five years and

per, minerals, plastics, and electronic goods.

The China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement, launched on Jan 1, 2010, is the world's largest free trade zone, covering 1.9 billion people with a production value of \$6 trillion and a trade volume of \$4.5 trillion. As tariff and non-tariff barriers between China and ASEAN countries are slowly removed, the Philippines and China will experience an increase in mutual trade and direct investment.

Strengthening ties with ASEAN countries may also help ease tensions concerning territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

The number of Chinese tourists visiting the Philippines is already doubling year-on-year, and as business interest grows, the new presidency has promised to implement sweeping changes to the way the country is run. Benigno Aquino's administration has vowed to end corruption and improve the country's investment climate to lure more foreign investors, especially from China.

As Liu Jianchao, Chinese ambassador to the Philippines, said: "We work closely with the Filipino-Chinese business community and are proud that they are the main engines of the economic and social development of the Philippines today. The relationship of China and the Philippines is strengthening and I consider this to be the best moment in the history of relations between both countries."

"We welcome the influx of investments from Filipino businessmen, as we believe this is important for the development of the economy of both countries."

China has also provided the ASEAN community, of which the Philippines is a member, with a \$1.8 billion loan for the development of infrastructure projects.



Mount Pinatubo is an active stratovolcano located on the island of Luzon.

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championed consumer causes and especially with regards to power, fuel, and prices of prime commodities, and pulled for greater communication from power companies, Government Watch (Gov't Watch) has pledged to maintain a position of non-partisanship and objectivity.

The five main pillars include: advocating transparency and accountability in all government undertakings; pushing for revenue enhancement and anti-graft and corruption measures, particularly in the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs, participate in public hearings of both the senate and the house of representatives, especially as it pertains to fiscal matters and the economy, urge the government to revamp, strengthen and impose sanctions on regulatory bodies, for under compliance of functions, and continue its advocacy on matters that pertain to fuel, power and water.

As Raul T. Concepcion, chairman of Gov't Watch said: "The public looks to us to validate whether any price increases are reasonable. They usually accept any implemented price increase after we explained the reason behind such and the consumers agree that fair pricing with full transparency and disclosure must be the basis for price adjustment.

"We have also been an active participant in various legislative public hearings and policy meetings of different government agencies which we intend to continue during the term of President Aquino."

Offshore destination

In 2010, the National Outsourcing Association (NOA), a non-profit outsourcing organization in the United Kingdom awarded its Offshoring Destination of the Year award to the Philippines.

Its strengths were listed as abundant and quality labor force, stable infrastructure, and unwavering government initiatives.

In particular, the country is swiftly becoming the preferred choice for providing services in the fields of medical transcription, software development and animation.

The NOA made specific reference to the Philippines' greatest resource: its people. Around 450,000 of the 36 million-strong workforce have had college education, and the population's high literacy at 92 percent, puts the country way ahead of other competitors.

Its historic links with the US also mean the Philippines is a potential source of highly skilled English-speaking business person-

nel that Chinese companies can employ.

In the business and tourism province of Cebu, income grew a staggering 10 percent in 2010. With nine economic zones that offer help with company registration and other red tape, good incentives, plus culture of professionalism, Governor Gwendolyn Garcia noted in her State of the Province Address in July that Cebu "remains strong and gets stronger with each passing year."

Thanks to solid bonds between elected officials, business groups, the public and private sectors and the people of the province themselves, Cebu continues to draw investors. The province has many universities and other educational institutions that serve as a magnet to students from other provinces, a major factor of a highly skilled and efficient workforce in Cebu.

The province will showcase Cebu to the world, when it hosts the 12th East Asia Tourism Forum in September of this year. Delegations from 12 countries, including China and Russia, will come to experience the dynamism, beauty and unique charm that sets Cebu apart.

"We work closely with the Filipino-Chinese business community and are proud that they are the main engines of the economic and social development of the Philippines today."

LIU JIANCHAO
CHINESE AMBASSADOR TO THE PHILIPPINES

fact, the Philippines' reputation as a value for money destination has soared in recent years. Not only is it a strategic logistics access point in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region, its gross international reserves are at levels above international benchmarks, thanks to strong remittances.

On top of that the country is cost

is rapidly becoming the Asia Pacific country's second largest trading partner as Chinese businessmen look forward to identifying new investment opportunities in the country.

Exports reached \$51.39 billion in 2010, up 33.69 percent year-on-year, with top exports comprising electrical machinery and equipment, mechanical appliances, ores, cop-

Gov't Watch

In the meantime, having learnt from a regime that did little to address poverty and consumer rights, the Filipinos are keen that the Aquino administration abides by its campaign promises and leads with good governance.

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Tourism and real estate build up the economy

Global connections are growing in tourism, healthcare and processed fruit sales

Slated as one of the future pillars of the Filipino economy, tourism has grown increasingly important in recent years. A new tourism act has been introduced, which aims to give private investors more incentives to invest in the country and invent a new branding for the Philippines.

Secretary of Tourism at the Department of Tourism, Alberto Lim, takes up the story: "We need to project the country's many treasures, especially its people, who are one of our greatest resources as a very welcoming country. We have to develop and improve our product, we have natural beauty: sand, and sun, beach, culture and history."

With a growing number of Chinese visitors flocking to the Philippines' shores — around 300,000 visited in 2009 — the tourism chief is determined to develop this market.

"First we have to reduce the red tape within the visa system," he said. "Secondly, there must be an increase in flights to and from China, in order to offer more choices of timetable and fares. China could be a much bigger market if these two challenges were addressed."

Voted the most popular leisure destination of Asia two years ago by the World Travel Market, and having showcased its attractions successfully at the Shanghai World Expo in 2010, numbers of visitors have increased but the challenge of accessibility remains, as Lim explained:

"We are implementing an open sky policy within the Asian countries, and of course, we want to attract all the big markets such as China and India. We are just touching the surface of China, we have the potential to attract many more visitors, including Hong Kong. We get twice as many visitors from South Korea, which is a much smaller market, because we have a higher number of flights to and from there."

He continued: "I am probably the first secretary of tourism in this country with experience in the private sector and am dedicated to promoting a good product. I know how to develop the product first and market it later. We can make more of a difference in this administration toward the development of tourism for this country."

"We want to increase the numbers by 15 percent within five years; in order to do this, we have to have an extraordinary effect in infrastructure, ministers, policy, local community development, standard expectations and luck."

"Many Filipinos have Chinese roots, so there is a cultural connection but our culture is also influenced by Western civilizations, which makes us unique in Asia. We therefore invite people to come and see the influence of their own culture, but



President and CEO, Jaka Investments Corporation, Katrina Ponce Enrile

also the differences from the Spanish culture. We guarantee they will be surprised and return!"

Beautifying the country

Meanwhile, at JAKA Investments Corp, President and CEO Katrina Ponce Enrile is determined to contribute to real estate and tourism products with her forward thinking company.

"We have the most beautiful beachfront properties in the country," she said "and we would like to develop them with a responsible tourism, environmentally sustainable and with a long-term vision."

"Real estate is a very mutable market and when we started in 1995, the trend was flagship projects, with everyone wanting to develop extensive, massive projects. After the financial crisis in 1997, however, we had to be more realistic with our



President and CEO, Makati Medical Center, Rosalie Montenegro

and think: will it last? Sometimes the answer is no, other times it is a maybe, and you have to find out what will make your development be sustainable for years to come."

The Jaka formula, which has been to select beautiful properties that have nice views and are in accessible locations has to date been a successful one.

"Responsible tourism is all about not overworking or overloading a property just because it is beautiful and because you want a quick profit, to give back and wait. It is impossible to manufacture land, and if you own a beautiful property and protect it and develop it in such a way that it will just be enough, you will appreciate the long-term benefits."

"Everything we do has a social impact and all of us share a corporate social responsibility, including our shareholders. It is a constant balance

“We are just touching the surface of China and we have the potential to attract many more visitors. We want to increase the numbers by 15 percent within five years.”

ALBERTO LIM
SECRETARY OF TOURISM AT THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

visions, goals and aspirations.

"It was a difficult time for us, but we managed to fund all our projects internally; we finished our golf course, we had a joint venture for our residential side and began slowly selling all units for a condotel. We remember 1997 and we know exactly what Europe is going through."

"We were able to lower our expectations to continue on the path, the market for high-end properties exists, so you have to choose your niche. The goal should always be on differentiating yourself, how to be similar to the needs, but different on the approach so you are noticeable. Many trends come and go, such as minimalist, so you have to stand back

and we are always there, before and after natural catastrophes, education, health-wise, employment wise. It is 'give and take' and since our manpower is local, we understand the issues of the community."

"I am proud to be Filipino. I think we are an underrated nation, people abroad think of us as domestic helpers and services, but we are more than that. We are a country of people that are very giving and hospitable, truly caring for one another. That is the nature of the Filipino and that is what we have in our company. I run the company as my family and I genuinely care for each and every one of my executives and workers."

"My door is always open to them.

I do not see myself as a CEO but someone who is there to guide them along. I never studied business, my background is in political science.

"I would invite potential partners to come and see our country for themselves. Ideally, they should share our vision, and trust us to control the business as we are insiders in the market, while they could provide the technology and access to the international market. We are a local market with an immense potential to grow."

Makati Medical Center

In the business of delivering exceptional healthcare facilities — and with its sights set on becoming a key player in medical tourism within the Asia Pacific region — last year marked another year of progress for premier medical institution Makati Medical Center (MakatiMed) in its continued efforts in achieving a renaissance.

Focused on strengthening its critical infrastructure, MakatiMed is boosting its people, facilities, medical equipment, IT network, processes, and financials to face the challenges brought on by modern healthcare.

Amid a backdrop of unfolding technological advancements, developments in medical science and research, better informed, and therefore more discriminating patients, as well as the rapid rise of medical tourism, MakatiMed is strategically using its sustained profitability and plowing funds back to the hospital to enhance its medical capability and match this to the changing realities of the industry.

It all sounds terribly technical, but the country's leading hospital (also known as the 'Hospital with a Heart') is following this direction without losing sight of what it considers its foremost priority — delivering compassionate care to its patients. The steps that MakatiMed has taken, starting from the construction of its new building down to its latest

equipment, was done in order to build a patient-centered culture that provides a total and satisfying end-to-end experience for every individual passing through the hospital's doors.

"At MakatiMed, we see beyond age, gender, statistics or pulse rates. We don't see patients, we see lives — and that's our main motivation for pushing these changes," said MakatiMed President and CEO Rosalie Montenegro.

"What we're striving for is to be a hospital that has, in equal parts, the know-how, the facilities and the equipment to address current and emerging trends in medical treatment, technology and delivery, and



Beachfront property, Punagis Point, Palawan.

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the most proficient physicians and personnel to utilize these to provide the best service and the most compassionate care."

The plan has been put in place and is being filtered into all aspects of the medical institution. MakatiMed is harmonizing the medical and corporate sectors of its organization to ensure the implementation of global best practices in operations and service management.

Going global

Facilities are being beefed up, with the ongoing renovation of the hospital building to complement the new tower — which houses nine Centers of Excellence and shifts the focus from fragmentation to integration of medical care — and transform the entirety into a warm, friendly yet totally modern healthcare complex. These serve the health and wellness of both domestic and global patients as MakatiMed positions itself to go into the burgeoning medical tourism industry in Asia Pacific.

The hospital has started investing in new medical equipment to support doctors in their practice. It has broken away from the old paradigm and is harnessing the power and efficiency of ICT (information and communications technology) to create enhanced diagnostics and patient care, and a pleasant and convenient patient experience — from admission all the way to discharge.

Telecommunications are being upgraded to improve accessibility for patients, in order to promote not only face-to-face patient encounters but also remote access for their added convenience.

As part of the medical institution's rich heritage, its nursing school (a major source of the hospital's nurses and other healthcare staff) has been re-branded as the Makati Medical Center College of Nursing. It has implemented a new curriculum, forged international affiliations and will be relocated to new premises. Lastly, the hospital is continuously finding ways to help the community in which it operates via the thriving

Hospital Service Program (HSP) and the soon to be revitalized MakatiMed Foundation.

Montenegro emphasized that "the amalgamation of all these critical infrastructure components will pave the way for MakatiMed to become what it envisions itself to be — the leader in total patient healthcare. Our bottom line is that we aren't here to just treat patients, we are here to help lives get better."

Food for thought

Another global reaching name, Profood International Corp has grown from a small local provider of processed fruit products to be the standard bearer of Philippine's exceptional quality food exports around the world.

In fact, almost 90 percent of the company's produce is exported to 40 countries, with 60 percent of all gross income going back to the rural areas. President Justin Uy is proud of the fact the company has improved the living standards of the farmers.

"In 1982, a kilo of fresh mango cost only 1 peso," he said. "Today, it is 25 times that amount. We have been able to penetrate all markets over the last 30 years and are the leaders in the US and Japan."

Since import tariffs were removed last year, the Cebu-based operation has also been celebrating its entry into the Chinese market.

"We are targeting the progressive, coastal cities in southern China and the high-end customer as our product is still expensive because of the cost of raw materials," Uy said.

"But we believe the same will happen in China as happened in the US and Canada; they now make up half of our business because they have the purchasing power."

The company now boasts four manufacturing plants across the country and each one has multi-factories inside.

"We are investing in real estate now," Uy said. We have opened a shopping mall and will plow everything back into the Philippines."

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Business set to boom as extra links open up

Dynamic entrepreneurs develop energy and trade infrastructure to attract investors

Energy is seen by the Aquino administration as an instrument for poverty reduction and social equity, and with its "Energy Access for More" initiative, the government hopes larger sections of the population will receive reliable and affordable energy services that will fuel productivity and countryside development.

The Department of Energy has outlined the following three major pillars as its blueprint: (a) Ensure energy security; (b) Achieve optimal energy pricing; and, (c) Develop a sustainable energy plan, phased into short, medium and long term timelines.

Increased use of ICT (information and communications technology) and a more transparent process will, the government hopes, encourage more investors to look at the Philippines for energy opportunities.

The energy companies themselves are also providing an efficient and quality service and diversifying their products.

Engaged in the business of trading refined petroleum products, lubricants and other chemical products, operation of oil depots and storage facilities and allied services, Phoenix Petroleum has grown from a family venture to one of the most successful businesses in the retail oil industry.



President and CEO, Phoenix Petroleum, Dennis Uy

the company's capital outstanding stock. It initially acquired 2.83 percent for PhP42 million. As of the end of March 2010, it had 9.7 percent of shares.

As Dennis Uy, president and CEO said: "We have a good brand that is acceptable to the consumer. The Phoenix is a firebird with global acceptability and awareness. Secondly, we have logistic support, which includes the people, the depots and the tax."

"We also have the vision to grow. The initial capital was very low, so

us to plan our own supply chain integration, to make our operations more predictable and reliable.

"Slowly but surely, we organized ourselves with our initial vessel and purchased more with the earnings."

As it sets its sights on becoming the leading independent oil company in the country by 2012, quality and efficiency will continue to be the company's watch words.

Dynamic trade hub

One of the most accessible free ports in Asia, Subic Bay boasts of a strategic location that has placed the Philippines at the center of Asia's commercial activity.

And, being less than two hours' flight-time from Hong Kong, and two days' sailing time from Shanghai, the port city offers excellent opportunities for Chinese companies to work in partnership with their Filipino neighbors in a range of sectors, including renewable energies and resorts.

As Armand Arreza, administrator for the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority says: "The business infrastructure is here. Subic was designed to be a one-stop shop, so once we make a decision, we can fast-track projects very quickly. We have an airport directly accessible to China,



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An aerial view of Subic Bay Freeport, an emerging maritime hub and home of one of the world's largest shipbuilders.

A golden banking opportunity

Accounting for more than 80 percent of the Philippine's financial system's resources, the country's banking sector has continued to show resilience for the last decade.

Banco De Oro Unibank Inc (BDO), the leading commercial bank, has notably shown strong resilience in the market, celebrating a good clawback of income during 2010 from the recession years of 2008 and 2009.

The result of a merger heralded as unprecedented in size and scale in the Philippines' banking industry, BDO now represents a robust and forward-thinking bank, with an excellent track record for management, products and performance that have won it a string of prestigious regional and international awards in the last four years — most recently it received major citations from the The Asset Triple A Awards 2011 of the Hong Kong-based investment magazine The Asset.

With a strong regional and international presence, BDO has offices in southeast Asia, including Hong Kong, among more than 20 overseas subsidiaries and countless other partners for remittances.

Dynamic BDO President Nestor Tan said: "Most of our international business is focused on overseas Filipino workers to generate businesses. For southeastern Asia, our growth plan is to generate value

through cross border transactions with the Philippines. This includes trades remittances and inward/outward investments coming to and from the Philippines."

A member of the SM Group, one of the country's largest conglomerates, the bank provides a complete array of industry-leading products and services to the retail and corporate markets including lending (corporate, middle market, SME and consumer), deposit-taking, foreign exchange, brokering, trust and investments, credit cards, corporate cash management and remittances. It also offers leasing and financing, investment banking, private banking, Bancassurance, insurance brokerage and stock brokerage services through its subsidiaries.

"As a nationwide bank, we go after most of the market segments: the large corporate, the Filipino-Chinese community, the middle market, Filipino consumers; all of them have very different backgrounds."

BDO's institutional strengths and value-added products and services hold the key to its successful business relationships with customers. On the front line, its branches remain at the forefront of setting high standards as a sales and service-oriented, customer-focused force.

Through selective acqui-

sitions and organic growth, BDO has positioned itself for increased balance sheet strength and continuing expansion into new markets.

"Banking is a commodities business where everything stands on service and relationships. For us, it is a business of trust — we try to build relationships with clients from all sectors as much as we can and nurture that."

BDO also takes its corporate social responsibility seriously, with the BDO Foundation helping develop local communities through housing, education and work initiatives.

"I am proud of what our team has been able to achieve," Nestor said. "In 1997, for example, we were the 19th largest commercial bank. Now we have 26 percent of the market share. Our team is energetic, committed and competent."

To conclude, he said: "Investors should seriously consider the Philippines. We have a stable economy, a good workforce and a vibrant investment community. If they ever want to invest, BDO hopes to be their first port of call. We have expertise, our own network and contacts and we can guide them."

The bank recently added China UnionPay card to its payment network in the Philippines.

In less than five years, we grew to have 160 service stations and our revenues jumped from PhP1 billion to around PhP13 billion last year."

DENNIS UY
PRESIDENT AND CEO, PHOENIX PETROLEUM

A global mission

The company became operational in its current form under the name Davao Oil Terminal Service Corporation in January 2004, and was officially renamed Phoenix Petroleum two years later.

Phoenix became the first independent oil company to be listed on the Philippines Stock Exchange and its IPO was so successful that it was 15 times oversubscribed.

The IPO price offered at PhP9.8 (\$0.23) soared to PhP14.5, putting the value of the company at PhP2 billion at its peak. In November 2009, the government's pension fund purchased up to 10 percent of

we had to plan properly and we were lucky to be able to issue an IPO. This was a very successful transaction that enabled us to develop stations in some terminals and depots. We had plenty of courage, focus and determination to achieve this vision. In less than five years, we grew to have 160 stations and our revenue jumped from PhP1 billion to around PhP13 billion last year."

This achievement is all the more impressive due to the fact that the company had to invest in its own shipping company. "When we started, no shipping company would carry our products, we were not considered a priority, and this compelled

and there is no visa required to come here for 14 days.

"Only a fifth of the area has been developed so far, so we are doing all we can to attract the right investment and expertise to help us build the social infrastructure needed. There are a lot of areas, like agricultural and urban development, energy and tourism that we are looking at in order to grow with Chinese partners."

According to Arreza, cumulative investments in Subic rose to \$7.16 billion in 2010, an increase of 20 percent over the \$5.9 billion total in 2009. Around 92 percent of this was comprised of foreign investments.

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GOV'T WATCH works on behalf of Filipinos to ensure a better and progressive future for the country. We advocate transparency and accountability across the public sector, strengthened regulatory practices and fairness to the consumer in the provision and pricing of basic goods and services.

Raul T. Concepcion, Chairman, Government Watch

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Premium grade office space on the rise

Environmentally sensitive, personalized office buildings are the way forward in Manila's CBD

As the dominant office developer of the Bonifacio Global City (BGC) in the Philippines, The Net Group (TNG) pushes its expansion with The Net Metropolis, 5th Ave. development, conceived as a striking landmark to represent the developers' next generation of iconic and ecologically responsive buildings.

Leading international "green" architect, Chad Oppenheim, was selected to master plan and design the project — one of the nation's first under the Philippines' own green building rating system, Building for Ecologically Responsive Design Excellence (BERDE), which was conceived by the Philippine Green Building Council and supported by the World Green Building Council.

Oppenheim's designs for the The Net Metropolis, 5th Ave. master-planned development and its first tower, Net Lima, lead the way for the future of the country and answer the specific needs of its local environment. Because it is a pilot project, Net Lima was integral in the actual creation of the BERDE system.

"Net Lima is driven by our core social responsibility toward sustainable building practices," the president of TNG Carlos Rufino said. "We have combined Chad Oppenheim's visionary design with key learning on sustainability from the roll-out of our portfolio's first tranche of building developments."

The premium office tower, for example, features a dramatic high performance facade and sun shading system that reduces solar heat gain while providing maximum views and natural light to its occupants.

Careful attention is paid to the provision of vibrant public spaces, green amenity areas and sheltered arcades for circulation. Situated within the only central business district (CBD)

of the Philippines with a dedicated economic zone, the 1.2-hectare mixed-use The Net Metropolis, 5th Ave. project in BGC covers an entire city block and features three towers.

Two office towers, Net Lima and Net Park, will offer premium office space for corporate headquarters and worldwide support services. The third tower, the Ascott Bonifacio Global City (developed by The Ascott Limited), will feature 220 units of luxury services residences. Together, the towers will add another 1.5 million square feet of prime office, hospitality and retail space to the Bonifacio Global City.

Cutting edge design

The cutting edge design has brought another standing ovation for TNG, which boasts a 100 percent-leased portfolio in the BGC area with their NetOne Center, Net Square, Net Cube, Net Quad and Net Plaza developments — a total of 1.6 million square feet of leasable space that will accommodate up to 20,000 people by the end of 2011. Jacques Dupasquier, TNG's chairman, came up with the visionary boutique office concept in 1999 and seized on the potential of the BGC to make the vision a reality.

"Our idea was to offer a unique concept, a boutique office building where you can go every day, you are cared for, people know you by name and the service is ultra-personalized," said Dupasquier, a French Filipino who, with his family, also owns a string of boutique hotels in Europe.

All TNG buildings carry trademark details that make it easy for tenants to conduct their business. "For one thing, they have the freedom to make their own decisions on communications providers, which is not how other office developers work," Rufino said.

"Then we provide on-demand air conditioning 24/7 with units that are customized and controllable in each area so that you only pay for what you use" adds Dupasquier.

Other customized touches include polite, efficient and professionally trained service desk staff wearing the latest designer fashions, individually styled lobbies and décor in each building, art exhibitions and commissioned elevator music. On the business side, tenants benefit from excellent tax incentives as the portfolio is within the Information Technology Economic Zone of the BGC under the jurisdiction of the Philippine Economic Zone Authority.

Small wonder that TNG's portfolio is filled with Fortune 500 companies and large multinationals, such as JPMorgan Chase, Deutsche Bank, GE, Intel, Oracle, Ericsson and Quisumbing Torres (Baker and McKenzie.)

Dupasquier and Rufino both agree that TNG continues to redefine the workplace by making it more productive. They find that productivity fosters loyalty, and people tend to stay longer when they are satisfied. And keeping their clients satisfied in a boutique setting has brought about a fresh market brand that is in demand.

No doubt that when the project is finally completed, it will be a central landmark in one of Manila's most exciting central business districts, supplying premium-grade office space that will help fuel growth in the city and the country for years to come.

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Fueling growth with a social conscience

Powering a majority of industries, homes, schools and hospitals in Cebu Province, Vivant Corporation is a publicly traded company listed under the Philippines Stock Exchange, with its holdings focused on energy generation and distribution services.

Its flag-bearer, the Visayan Electric Company, Inc. (VECO) operates the country's second-largest electric utility, servicing the greater part of Metro Cebu and five other municipalities within Cebu Province.

Through its subsidiaries and affiliates, that include CPPC, which owns one of the largest diesel power plants in the country, CEDC, which owns a 246 MW coal-fired power plant, AHPI, an independent power provider that runs the 70 MW Luzon hydropower plant, and DPI, a leading independent power producer in Palawan, Vivant's energy portfolio has grown exponentially in recent years.

Driving the Filipino economy

Owned by the Garcia-Escaño family of Cebu, Vivant Corporation is committed to driving the Filipino economy and fuelling growth within the communities it serves. As such, it prides itself on being a good corporate citizen, and an innovator in sustainable energy sources, by adopting modern and clean technologies and sound business practices.

Despite being just under a decade old, the seeds that came to be Vivant Corporation were first sown in 1870, when Don Fernando Escaño set out to make his fortune in the abaca trade. Abaca, a species of banana native to the Philippines, was, at the time, used to make rope and cord and an important inter-land product, along with other agricultural crops, livestock, consumer products and other general merchandise.

The trading element of these important cargo items led the pioneering entrepreneur to branch out into shipping. A few years later, Escaño was running one of the biggest shipping companies in the Philippines. At the turn of the 20th century, as demand for abaca declined, Hijos de Escaño, as the company was now known, replaced the cash crop with copra (dried coconut kernel), sugar and other products, and maintained a strong shipping reputation, with stations in Bombay (Mumbai), Ormoc and Maasin. It was at that point the company relocated from the Sogod Bay area to Cebu, now the hub of shipping and commerce in central and southern Philippines.



A long history, a powerful future

In 1918, the Escaño and Garcia families took over the Visayan Electric Company Inc. (VECO) and were soon diversifying into other business areas. Under the new management, VECO's generating capacity rose significantly and services expanded throughout Cebu.

VECO also moved beyond its transmission coverage and held franchises and branches in Negros and Zamboanga del Norte. Both shipping lines and electricity continued to flourish until the second world war, picking up directly after. VECO resumed operations and financed an expansion that allowed it to increase staffing and machinery equipment requirements back to pre-war levels.

By 1968, Escaño Lines had nine ships, one of which, Escaño II, was one of the first inter-island vessels to introduce modern navigational devices and equipment as well as lifestyle facilities and comfortable accommodations for passengers. The firm also chartered out boats for various Philippine ports.

Today, Escaño Lines continues to operate in the Southern Philippines, although the family divested its interest in the business in 1989. As for VECO, it continues to lead the electric distribution industry. In 2004, amid pioneering regulation through the EPIRA Law, the Garcia-Escaño family forged a shareholders' agreement with the Aboitiz family to pave the way for the future.

In 2003, it acquired 99% of Philstar.com and infused its holdings in Hijos De F. Escaño Inc. (HDFE) and Visayan Electric Company Inc. (VECO) to this company, thus creating Vivant Corporation.

Contact Vivant or any of its subsidiaries at:

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THE NET GROUP



THE PHILIPPINES' LEADING DEVELOPER OF BOUTIQUE IT OFFICE BUILDINGS

Nestled in the prime center of the country's main central business district is the new development masterplanned and designed by Chad Oppenheim, world renowned, Miami-based green architect. This unique and iconic landmark represents both Taguig City's forward vision and The Net Group's newest generation of green and efficient buildings.

THE NET metropolis 5th AVE.



NETLIMA is one of the first buildings to be completed at The Net Metropolis, 5th Ave. It is also the flagship pilot project of the Philippine Green Building Council, the country's authority for the World Green Building Council. In contrast to other international "green building" certifications such as the US Green Building Council's LEED certification and the Green Building Council of Australia's Green Star rating, the BERDE rating adapts these and other international green practices into standards appropriate to the local environment. Its exceptional quality coupled with efficient cutting-edge technology makes Net Lima the ideal location for multinational companies, either as their local corporate headquarters or for their worldwide support services. Net Lima "leads" the standard.

NETLIMA has an exceptional floor plate with an average size of above 30,000 square feet totalling a leasable area of approximately 600,000 square feet. For inquiries send an email to marketing@TheNetGroup.ph or call +632 856 9999

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Norkis accelerates growth in the Philippines

A family-managed corporation that focuses on selling the dream of mobility, freedom and comfort to every Filipino through its impressive range of motorcycles and other vehicles, Norkis Group is a hugely successful group with a winning corporate personality.

As well as making a healthy profit by selling quality goods, chairman Norberto Quisumbing Jr. nurtures a meritocratic business environment; one where the staff feel equal to the directors.

"If you treat human resources like family, they have a sense of belonging and a sense of identity," he said. "They need to be recognized and rewarded to make sure there is a level playing field."

Since it sold its first batch of Yamahas from its base in Cebu in the early 1960s, Norkis has grown to boast a branch in almost every province of the Philippines, handling Yamaha, Suzuki, Kawasaki, Hoajue and Sunriser two wheel vehicles, as well as compact cars.

Convenience and support in sales, parts, customer service and instalment financing have inspired trust and confidence from both customers and partners, and it now does regular business with more than 6,000 clients. The group has an excellent reputation for delivering expert after-sales and support services through an extensive network of branches and dealers.

"We started as an exclusive distributor of Yamaha, but recently decided to go into dealership with all the Japanese brands," Quisumbing Jr. said. "Also exciting for us, however is that we are handling two brands of motorcycles from China. We are beginning to see a very healthy business partnership with these Chinese suppliers. ...the Chinese have the quality and they have the price. They know their market, and they have the know-how to market their products."

To illustrate the point, the chairman mentioned the Chinese-Thai brand Dayang has done particularly well in the Philippines, rising, under the Sunriser name to become a premier Chinese brand in the country.

Champions of innovation

The drive to get the Philippines on the move with multi-purpose and affordable vehicles led Norkis to develop its new line, the Legacy First. Combining style with practicality and durability, the hybrid car has emerged as a popular alternative for motorists.

A personal and business vehicle for private and commercial use, Legacy First doubles up as a mini pick-up truck with manual or automatic transmission. It uses a 660 cc 3-cylinder engine and can carry a maximum load of 350 kilograms.



Championing mobility, freedom and comfort for all

Affordable, easy to park, and able to run 15 kilometers on just one liter of fuel, the Legacy First is perfect for driving through the crowded thoroughfares of Cebu, Metro Manila and other key urban centers.

Building on solid foundations

Determined to develop into a global name, the Norkis group has also capitalized on its financial strengths by diversifying into real estate and I.T. projects.

Luis B. Quisumbing, Norkis Group's President, takes up the story.

"In regards to I.T., the Philippines is still underdeveloped compared to other countries in the ASEAN region; we are only breaking through. However, we have invested a lot in I.T. with IBM and SAP and the people dedicated to I.T. activities have matured.

"Filipinos are very, very talented and they are confident they can go into Business Processing Outsourcing. Not only do they speak English, they are also very technically oriented and creative. So we are moving them in that direction as an independent group already.

"As far as property is concerned, we have invested in strategic locations around the country, and over our 48 years in business, have developed many properties. That has been consolidated, and we are moving into tourism and horse racing. Boracay is not the only beauty spot on the island; there are many, many others and we have properties we are going to develop for tourism.

The company chiefs are keen for more joint ventures to bring this vision to fruition. "The Philippines is a good location, but we do not have the expertise nor the market. If there are people that want to join us in developing this, it will make us accelerate even faster," they said.

NORKIS Group of Companies

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