

Laguna, Cavite promising areas for BPO

by LAWRENCE CARISAYA
Inquirer.net

LAGUNA and Cavite topped the list of the best outsourcing locations outside of Metro Manila and Cebu, government and industry executives said.

Rounding up the list of top 10 "next-wave" cities are—in order of ranking: Iloilo, Davao, Bacolod, Angeles-Clark-Mabalacat, Baliuag-Marilao-Meycauayan, Cagayan De Oro, Malolos-Calumpit and Lipa.

The ranking was released by the Business Process Association of the Philippines (BPAP), Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The ranking was based on availability of talent (or workers), real estate, infrastructure and business environment and regulatory metrics, which covers the presence of a local government-business ICT council and government-certified economic zones.

Some cities were lumped together based on proximity to each other in the case of Bulacan, Pampanga, Laguna and Cavite.

Metro Laguna covers Sta.Rosa, Calamba, Los Banos, Cabuyao and

San Pablo. Metro Cavite, meanwhile, includes Dasmariñas, Bacoor, Imus and Cavite City.

Talent carried the most weight (50 percent), an advantage for cities that have good presence or are near universities and colleges.

Davao and Cagayan De Oro are included in the top 10 although both cities scored low in the business metrics due to the prevailing travel advisory to foreigners owing to the Mindanao.

Davao, in particular, has attracted call center investments including US-based Sutherland, which employ more than 1,000 workers. Ayala Corp. is also building an IT park in Davao, according to the CICT.

"Despite this challenge, it doesn't stop local government executives from Davao, Cagayan de Oro even GenSan (General Santos City) from promoting," said CICT commissioner Monchito Ibrahim.

Ibrahim, who oversees the promotion of the country's so-called cyberservices sector, believes there will be more BPO investments in Mindanao within the next two years.

Meanwhile, BPAP chief executive officer Oscar Sañez reiterated the ongoing economic slowdown in US would have little effect on the country's outsourcing industry. ☞

Art snatched from the mists of time

by CONSTANTINO TEJERO
Inquirer.net

MARLENE Aguilar is obviously in love with her country and people. She has produced no less than four massive, award-worthy books on the Philippine environment and culture.

Fine Artists of the Philippines was nominated for the Hong Kong Print Awards in 1999. *The Philippine Coral Reefs* won the European Art for Environment Award in 2000. *Myths and Legends of the Philippines* received the Best Literature Award from the Children's Association of the Philippines in 2002.

That magnificent figure may soon be run down by urban development, commercialism, human carelessness and neglect, but its photographic image has been recorded forever. In this book, Aguilar has fulfilled her commitment to record or retrieve those vanishing images of Filipino culture.

It is almost all visuals, however, with practically no text except for the captions of the artworks and the artists' profiles at the back. Even then, the text of the entries is too brief, in the manner of a biodata or resumé.

Aguilar has come up with the first volume of her *Encyclopedia of Philippine Art*, which had been nominated for the Southeast Asian Print Awards.

This is an expensive-looking coffee-table book of glossy photographic reproductions of hundreds of artworks (paintings, drawings, sculptures) spanning over a century of Philippine art.

The sharp-resolution illustrations on first-grade paper are visually pleasing, indeed. Each page could work as a pull-out, and one can have it perfectly framed.

A major irritant is the typographical errors, such as one artist's name spelled as Kiko Escosa. A typical Kiko Escora drawing can be found in the book's main body, but the artist has no profile at the back.

And why is there an entry on the poet Recaredo Demetillo? Why not Cirilo Bautista or Nestor Torre, who are also into painting and drawing?

Also, space allotted to some personages is hardly proportionate to their actual achievements in Philippine art. A glaring example is the entry on José Rizal, which takes half a page while others get too few a line.

As suggested by its editor Mike Cassey, without books such as this, "many magnificent works of Filipino art would have been lost in the mists of time and would not exist for future generations to experience and enjoy."

On this note, the book opens to Solomon Saprid's bronze monument *Gumburza* and Napoleon Abueva's *Transfiguration*.

Vanishing images

Such public art is always in danger of being overtaken by the environment, as what's happening to Abueva's monumental masterwork in Eternal Gardens at Balintawak in Caloocan City. It used to serenely dominate the skyline at the start of the North Expressway, but now giant billboards and squatters' structures have taken over the place, obliterating the view of the Christ.

Rizal may be our greatest hero but no art critic would honestly claim he was a great artist. What's more, the sketch on him was largely taken from an American pastor's speech on Rizal's rôle in Philippine history, which is, of course, irrelevant.

Meanwhile, the entries on Juan Luna and Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo get a quarter of a page each.

This book is presumably meant to be no more than a visual record, as it has no textual analyses of the developments of Philippine art or evaluative essays on the artworks. It should be useful for art collectors, but not necessarily for art scholars.

It works, after all, more like a catalogue than an encyclopedia. Okay, a visual encyclopedia then. ☞

Angara: Times call for uplifting films

by CHRISTINE AVENDAÑO
Inquirer.net

IN times of despair, Filipinos need "psychological and cultural entertainment," according to Sen. Edgardo Angara, who has asked cultural institutions and the film industry to come up with "artistic and creative" projects.

"My advice to cultural institutions and the film industry is to provide us with psychological and cultural entertainment," Angara told reporters on Tuesday after the hearing on the budget proposals of agencies like the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP), Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) and Optical Media Board (OMB).

In light of the global financial crisis, the senator said he expected "more bad days than good days" ahead for the country. "We need some morale boosting," he added.

Angara said he would propose an increase in the budgets of cultural institutions and the film industry to encourage them to make "cultural, artistic and creative works that would provide psychological relief to the people."

Cut the budget

While he was keen on raising the budgets of these agencies, Senate President Pro Tempore Jose "Jing-goy" Estrada threatened to cut the

budgets of the FDCP and OMB.

This developed after Estrada, an actor and film producer, lost his temper while asking FDCP president Rolando Atienza how much his agency had received from the Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) through the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), which oversees the MMFF.

Atienza could not readily answer the question, but said the FDCP had received P1 million from the MMDA every year for the past three years.

Estrada then told Angara that he would propose that the Senate reduce the FDCP's budget next year by P1 million. He also threatened to cut the allocation of the OMB.

Both the FDCP and OMB are recipients of MMFF proceeds made possible through an executive order issued by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Reconsider proposal

Atienza and OMB head Edu Manzano asked Estrada to reconsider his proposal saying their agencies would need more funding as they were planning to expand their activities.

"My decision right now is no," the senator said.

Later, Estrada said he would study the budget proposals of the FDCP and OMB after the agency heads submit to him a list of their expenses from the MMFF proceeds. ☞

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