

RP out of 3rd world status by 2024

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"We are all here because Boston plays a great role in America's history, and it will play a great role again in our history as a Filipino people. GK as an Asian model of development is now capturing global attention," Meloto told the *Asian Journal* in a chat moments after the reception which also celebrated the 111th Philippine Independence Day.

Vice President Noli de Castro delivered the keynote during the reception, and welcomed patriots from all over who have not forgotten to help the motherland. De Castro even managed to sing *Wonderful World*, the Louis Armstrong classic. "*Para sa GK, itataya ko ang reputasyon ko*," (For GK, I will bet my reputation) he remarked.

The historic event also gathered a veritable who's who in the worlds of Philippine politics, business and civil society.

Senators Francis Pangilinan and Miguel Zubiri, Agriculture Sec. Arthur Yap, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, Taguig Mayor Freddie Tinga, Parañaque Mayor Jun Bernabe, Cagayan de Oro 2nd District Congressman Rufus Rodriguez, Camarines Sur Governor LRay Villafuerte, former Globe President Gerry Ablaza, Pilipinas Shell President Ed Chua, Seafood City's Steve Go and other personalities mingled with the almost 700 delegates who trooped to Boston to attend this three-day summit.

Former Cabinet secretaries Avelino Cruz (Defense), Elisea Gozun (Environment and Natural Resources) and Cito Lorenzo (Agriculture) also participated.

"GK has become a testament to what our future will be as a nation. We will not allow despair to triumph over genuine change. Through the synergy of the government and private sector, we will be able to change the quality of life of our people," Sen. Pangilinan told the audience during the last plenary.

For about six hours on Friday, June 12, Kendall Square in Cambridge was transformed into a small Filipino town fiesta, with colorful performance arts, exhibitions and culinary samplings. Earlier in the morning, Vice President Noli de Castro, Philippine public officials and leaders of Fil-Am organizations raised the Philippine flag and sang *Lupang Hinirang*, the Philippine national anthem.

Meloto also launched the book called *The Builder of Dreams*, a first-hand account of the Gawad Kalinga journey, its history and the dream to end poverty for five million poorest Filipinos and build a first-world Philippines. Copies being sold at \$25 sold out immediately.

During the last day, seven signed copies of the book were auctioned, with prices ranging from \$250 to \$440 per book. Danny Javier of the Apo Hiking Society helped during the auction. World-class Filipino artists led by maestro Ryan Cayabyab, Joey Albert, Louie Reyes and Stephanie Reese entertained the delegates on both evenings.

Response to the UN-MDG
"We are on the first phase of a three-phased campaign, starting with social justice from 2003 to 2010. We are happy to say that as of 2009, we have enough land for 700,000 families all over the country," Meloto added.

Apart from the plenary sessions, there were also four breakout workshop sessions where the delegates were divided into groups.

Two of the sessions were held at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. One focused on GK as social artistry and a global template for development and the other dwelled on GK leading a culture of change not just in the Philippines but around the world as well.

Dr. Alex Brillantes, Dean of the UP-National College of Public Administration and Governance (NCPAG), said that GK could be an emerging and possible template for development in the Philippines.

"If we look at the UN Millennium Development Goals that seek to reduce poverty by half by 2015, among others, we can see that each of these goals has a counterpart among the various programs of GK, almost a one-to-one correspondence," Brillantes remarked.

The model that Brillantes discussed refers to the convergence of the state/public, business sector and the civil society in order to come up with the solution to the pressing problems in the Philippines, key among them poverty.

"What we have here is a nascent indigenous Philippine development model for public administration and good governance, one which has become a converging point for partnership and a usable template for others," he added.

GK as a genuine model of poverty alleviation vehicle and para-

digm has all the ingredients to become a template since it meets the most basic criteria, according to Brillantes.

"From the leadership of Tony Meloto as the transformative and credible leader, to the network of donors and supporters, to the fact that the organization is both local and faith-based, something that is very Filipino and ingrained in our culture, those make up for a very workable model," he added.

Meloto turned over the reins of GK a couple of years ago to Luis Oquiñena, who has been working with him when the latter was just 16 years old.

Oquiñena represented GK when it was chosen as the lone Filipino non-governmental organization to participate in the Clinton Global Initiative in the New York in 2007, a gathering of key people and reputable organizations addressing pertinent global issues among them poverty. Strictly by invitation only, the Clinton conference back then saw Gawad Kalinga as an emerging successful template for development which could be adopted by other developing countries such as Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, and Indonesia where there are now existing GK communities.

"GK in its simplest form is *bayanihan*. It is all about engaging without judging, embracing without secluding. Both the public and private sectors have the transformative capacity to collaborate and develop programs to eradicate poverty, and we will all do it the GK way," Oquiñena said.

Change

The historic Boston summit gathered partners from all over the world, including Singapore, Brazil, Colombia, Philippines and Canada. Each one, through a piece of paper, proclaimed their resolve to end poverty of the five million poorest families in the country by 2024 and gave their pledges.

Among those who gave their pledge was Su-Cheng Ong, a resident of Singapore and the director of GK Hope Institute, who is a strong believer in the project.

"There may not be poverty in Singapore, but we want to bring GK and make it relevant there. What we have there I think is emotional poverty, and through giving to GK, we can address that," she said.

As the organization grows exponentially, so does its network of partners. This is one of the reasons why the organizers thought of bringing the first global summit to Boston.

"Boston is the most prestigious city as far as education is concerned, it is home to Harvard and MIT, and we would like all these great minds here to study what we have here in the academic setting so that we can grow properly," Meloto said.

Since its launching as a patriotic movement for nation-building in 2003, GK has evolved into an international organization where competing brands and corporations have collaborated to work

on a singular goal. McDonald's and Jollibee, ABS-CBN and GMA, Ateneo and La Salle, Smart and Globe, among other rival corporations have banded to support the cause.

"People need to be inspired to rise above partisanship and parochial interests and whatever rivalries we have because as Filipinos, we keep on dividing, whether it is politics or religion," Meloto added.

UP and Ateneo are also working together with GK on research ventures to bring the science into the spirit of community development. The partnership aims to form an academic curriculum to bring organizational and technical expertise to the GK villages.

GK has become a transcendent cause, and through the numerous villages and homes that have been built around the country, it has also successfully bridged the Muslim and Christian communities and fostered a closer relationship among the partner organizations.

Various Filipino-American organizations have also come together to sponsor villages in the Philippines and have been doing so immediately after GK was launched in the Philippines.

"We are also here in the summit to honor the outstanding GK partners starting with the GK village builders of North America, who have made heroic sacrifices to grow the GK movement and to attract more patriots and partners to our cause of nation building," Meloto said. "You were among the first communities who responded to our call and we would like to thank all of you," he added.

Changing lives

"The past seven months have been the most fulfilling I have ever experienced," said Jonah de Lumen, who left a lucrative job as a global brand manager at Unilever in New York to pursue a full-time GK work. "I did global work with Unilever and I thought that was big but doing small things that make big impact on people's lives is really amazing," she added.

For now, De Lumen has to contend with what she considers as her primary challenge: dealing with the bureaucracy in the government.

"I am still getting used to it," she said. "There are gems in the rubbles and there are people who are really out there to help."

"The calling became very strong probably a year ago through a conversation. I really felt very blessed that I wanted to give back to the country especially when I know that there's a lot of people who do not have enough," De Lumen added.

Earlier this year, GK and the Department of Agriculture launched Bayan Anihan, which is GK's food sufficiency program. De Lumen is helping in this project, through its food sufficiency program.

"The whole idea is to empower communities by teaching the families to farm. We give them the seeds and we teach them how

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Overseas Filipino voters...

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at 28,770, followed by the Americas at 21,386, then by Middle East and Africa at 18,627, then Europe at 12,618, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration offices at 13, 588, the Ninoy Aquino International Airport at 8,757, and the Commission on Filipinos Overseas at 729.

The same report shows that the top ten countries in terms of OAV registrants are: the United States of America with 17,262; China with 11,250; United Arab Emirates with 7,297; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with 5,176; Singapore with 4,577; Taiwan with 4,136; United Kingdom with 4,066; Canada with 4,009; Japan with 3,510; and Italy with 2,799.

The Philippine consulate general in Hong Kong has reported the highest number of registrants at 10,455 followed by the Philippine consulate general in Los Angeles, California with 6,534 registrants.

In the Middle East, 5,571 Filipinos in Dubai have registered with the Philippine consulate general thus taking the number one spot among the different posts in the said region.

The Philippine embassy in London leads the different posts in Europe with 4,066 registrants.

According to the OAVS, registration activities are ongoing in all 93 foreign service Posts, three Manila Economic and Cultural Offices (MECO), and one Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO).

A Memorandum of Agreement between the DFA-OAVS, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, and the Commission on Elections-Committee on Overseas Absentee Voting was signed on June 4 to increase the participation of overseas Filipinos to register as absentee voters. These include Filipino permanent migrants or permanent residents abroad, Filipinos overseas who have become citizens of other countries, and Filipino spouses and fiancées of foreign nationals leaving the country. (*Inquirer.net*)

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