

There are many feedbacks and opinions from readers, who have decided to put their thinking caps on. Many of them requested anonymity for purposes of this series. I presented to them this conceptual framework of approach for making operational the Filipino “ **TMP.**”

Alfred Gilo, a retired geodetic engineer from Panama City, FL, says that perhaps the use of “**The Manhattan Project**”

(TMP) is timely. This reader, who originally hailed from Dingras, Ilocos Norte, says that there seems to be a universal consensus, even among the Overseas-Filipino contract workers and immigrants (OFCWI), for a drastic-and-crash campaign to combat global warming and generate economic activities.

Yes, I agreed with Engineer Gilo. I cited Newsweek’s Jonathan Alter’s use of the TMP in a comparative manner. Mr. Alter wrote in his column (Newsweek, Sept. 18, 2006, issue, page 35), “(Putting) the country on a Manhattan Project crash course to get off oil.”

Socioeconomic Ventures

Another reader asked how Filipino-American associations could turn their social events into socioeconomic ventures?

I said that instead of Filipino Americans making pilgrimages to Lourdes or Fatima in Europe or the Holy Land in Israel and Palestine, they could do them in the Philippines. Fil-Am associations from Batangas, Cagayan, Zambales, Rizal, Pangasinan and Camarines Sur can team up and organize Marian pilgrimages to their home provinces. There is the Lady of Piat in Cagayan (Northern Luzon). There are the shrines for the Lady of Manaoag (Pangasinan), the Poon Ina Bato in Botolan (Zambales) and Taal (Batangas). Then there is the Lady of Antipolo (Rizal). Then the pilgrims can end their holy mission by going to Naga City (Nueva Caceres), where the Virgin of Penafrancia is housed. Just imagine the impact on local tourism when busloads of Overseas-Filipino Marian pilgrims make the trek to these religious sites in the Philippines. The pilgrimages may lead to the restoration of Spanish-built churches and houses in the Philippines, so as to attract more Hispanic tourists. In the Bicol Region alone, there are at least 30 Spanish-built churches that need restoration and/or retrofitting.

Written by Bobby Reyes

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Still another reader asked a particular project that could best demonstrate how to fight global warming, create jobs and other endeavors for the suggested "Economic Development and Social Advancement" (EDSA) Evolution.

"Old Man" River Project

The best endeavor is doing an "**Old Man' River Project**" (OMRP), as I dub it for want of a better term. The idea is to make some rivers in the Philippines as Filipino versions of the Mississippi River. If indeed the sea level will increase to the projected levels by the turn of the 22nd century, then it may be prudent to start dredging rivers in the Philippines such as the Cagayan River (the longest river in the country). We have to make them navigable like the Mississippi River. Because housing and other needed buildings would have by then been constructed upstream and in mountainous areas along the river.

River Traffic

Dredging the river will allow traffic of barges and ferry boats, which are actually cheaper forms of transportation than trucks, buses or cars. Making the river deep enough will also allow the operation of paddle-wheel boats similar to those plying the Mississippi, which can become floating casinos and attractions for foreign tourists.

The OMRP can also provide more protection to residents along the river banks by constructing flood-control and sewage-treatment infrastructures. It is possible also to construct mini-hydro power-generating dams in the river's tributaries to generate electricity for the needed infrastructures, including pumping stations that can suck out the fresh-water back to irrigation canals, catch basins or man-made lakes, to provide reservoirs for drinking and/or fishing. The idea is to pump back the fresh water, instead of it emptying to the sea.

More power can be generated by constructing windmill farms and providing solar panels at the roofs of all homes and buildings constructed in the elevated areas. Massive reforestation can be done not only at the watershed areas along the river but also in the surrounding hills and mountains.

The target can be one-million hardwood-tree varieties, minimum, per year per region. Reforestation will assure more water year-round for the river, aside from increasing the already-abundant rainfall in the Philippines. Many provinces in the Philippines have an annual rainfall of more-than 60 inches per year (as compared to California's annual average of 13

inches).

Sand and Gravel □ □

As discussed earlier in this presentation, the **OFCWI** may provide the initial funding from their suggested "Overseas Filipino Monetary Fund." Secondly, the

OMRP

may be a self-liquidating (self-amortizing) business exercise. How?

The sand and gravel dredged from the river's fresh-water areas may be exported to Japan, Taiwan and/or Korea, so as to pay for the cost of dredging and other construction needs. The sand and rocks dredged at the mouth of the river, where it meets the sea, can be used to increase the elevation of areas along the seashore. As of now, silting is a big problem in towns like Aparri, Cagayan, where the mouth of the Cagayan River meets with the China Sea.

Then there will be more revenues from tourism-oriented projects and the operation of retirement homes and villages.

Pollution-credit Trading □

More funding can come from multilateral lenders and foreign-government entities such as the Export-Import Bank of the United States by pledging the harvest of the hardwood trees. After 25 years, we can harvest more-than a million trees per annum and every year thereafter, ad infinitum (as reforestation is done to replace the harvested trees). And to pay for the seedlings, their planting and the care for 10 years (at a dollar per tree a year), investments by, and/or subsidies can be obtained from, companies participating in pollution-credit trading.

It is also possible to negotiate with some of the foreign creditors of the Philippines to swap the debt for land to be reforested, as was done in Costa Rica in the 1990s by the American Express Centurion Bank, as orchestrated by its then chairman, James Robinson III. The bank turns around and sells the "pollution credit" to manufacturing companies that need them to comply with provisions of the **Clean Air Act**. # # #

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