

PCC Newsletter

Official Publication of the Philippine Carabao Center of the Department of Agriculture
ISSN 1655-2496 • VOLUME 10 NO. 2 • April-June 2011

Genuflecting carabaos
in Pulilan, Bulacan

See story on page 12



CAR★BAOS,

too, are stars in

festivals

PCC Newsletter

Official Publication of the Philippine Carabao Center
of the Department of Agriculture • Volume 10 No. 2 • April-June 2011

Editorial Staff

Rowena Galang-Bumanlag Editor-in-Chief/Layout Artist

Joahna G. Goyagoy Managing Editor

Khrizie Evert M. Marcelo Editorial Assistant/
Circulation Manager

Marlowe U. Aquino Writers
Rowena G. Bumanlag
Joahna G. Goyagoy
Khrizie Evert M. Marcelo

Anselmo S. Roque Editorial Consultant

Eric P. Palacpac Chief, Knowledge Resource
Management Division

Libertado C. Cruz
Executive Director/Editorial Adviser

Call for Contributions

The PCC Newsletter welcomes industry-related articles not exceeding 800 words, with photos and corresponding caption.

Success stories of farmers, cooperatives, and other beneficiaries and stakeholders of the Carabao Development Program are preferred.

PCC encourages reproduction of articles from this publication with proper acknowledgment.

Topic suggestions and comments are also welcome.

Please send your articles and comments to email address pccnewsletteric@gmail.com or mail them to

THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
PCC Newsletter

Applied Communication Section
Knowledge Resource Management Division
Philippine Carabao Center

National Headquarters and Gene Pool
CLSU Cmpd., Science City of Muñoz
3120 Nueva Ecija

or call Tel. No.: 044-456-0731 (loc) 479

www.pcc.gov.ph

TABLE OF CONTENTS



ABOUT THE COVER

The cover photo (by RGBumanlag) shows one of the carabaos that were made perennial “stars” during the “Katigbawan Festival” in Catigbian, Bohol.

INDUSTRY NEWS

- 3** Dairying can make farmers truly proud of their profession
- 4** PH can now export livestock, pork products
- 5** *1st International Agri-Tourism Expo*
PH gov’t expects to boost economy thru agri-tourism
- 6** PCC scientist is NAST’s Outstanding Young Scientist awardee
- 7** *Toward sustainable dairy enterprise*
More dairy plants are in the offing
- 8** Dr. Atabay is new director of PCC-CLSU
- 8** PCC stays focused as an excellent institution for livestock R&D
- 10** *In Talavera town*
‘Gatas ng Kalabaw Festival’ is staged anew in N. Ecija

FEATURES



11 Carabaos, too, are stars in festivals

- 12** Kneeling carabaos regale, cajole throng in Bulacan
- 14** Carabao-Carroza Festival in Pavia, Iloilo: Thanksgiving for the Carabao
- 18** Turogpo Festival: A tradition of carabao joust in Leyte
- 20** In Katigbawan Festival: Hail, hail the king and queen carabaos
- 22** Carabao as living canvas
- 24** Pahiyas Festival: A mix of Lucban’s carabao-cart parade and grand decoration
- 28** Carabao as subject in Angono’s artworks



Dairying can make farmers truly proud of their profession

By ROWENA G. BUMANLAG

There is now great hope for Filipino farmers to emerge from having a mindset of having a lowly profession to a status of being profoundly proud of their contribution to the economy's backbone.

This development, according to Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala, can only be realized by empowering Filipino farmers through sustained government support that will strategically boost productivity.

Such is now happening due to the intervention being done in the case of farmers in the continuously booming dairy industry.

"Sa ating mga maggagatas, pwede na po tayong muling mangarap. Apat na taon na ang nakararaan ay nandito rin ako sa lugar na ito upang simulan ang isang makahulugang tunguhin at ito po ay ang pagsusulong ng Organic Agriculture Act. Sa lugar din pong ito, mangangarap tayong muli at manunumpang tutuparin ang pangarap na iyon (To our dairymen, we can dream again. Four years ago, I was in this same place to lobby a noble cause, which is the Organic Agriculture Act. In this same place, we will start another dream and we vow to make that dream a reality)," Secretary Alcala said.

Secretary Alcala delivered this message during the Dairy Congress

and Expo in Davao City last May 12-14. The event, which was the 14th since its inception, was attended by farmers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers in the dairy industry.

Secretary Alcala emphasized that the smallholder dairy farmers' dream to progress can only be done through the government's strengthened partnership with the private sector.

"Our [government's] partnership with the private sector is crucial in spelling out the success of programs in agriculture," he said.

He renewed his promise that he would be, at all times, conscious of the interest of farmers whose experiences are contributory to the determination of the policies in the government's agriculture sector.

"I will continue listening to our farmer folks. It is only through this means that progress can be felt more in the countryside," Secretary Alcala said.

He added that when the farmers' interests are considered in the government's decision-making process,

they will feel more involved and, thus, empowered.

In recognition of the important contribution of dairy farmers in the industry, Secretary Alcala continued, his administration will sustain the much-needed assistance to further ensure the development of a more vibrant dairy industry.

This recognition, he said, comes with the sustained support of the government to the dairy industry in terms of importation of animals, particularly pregnant, as a means of beefing up the existing dairy herd in the country, which is one of the components of the country's dairy industry.

Aside from the dairy herd build-up, other strategies include development of dairy-based enterprises, upholding assurance on milk quality and milk feeding for children, he said.

Secretary Alcala also said that funds will be allocated for the creation of a buy-back program for island-born dairy cattle and carabao with proven performance to conserve the best quality genetics.

A technical working group will be immediately formed for this purpose, he said.

Complementing these programs on conserving good quality genetics is the establishment of six additional liquid nitrogen tanks to support cryobanking of semen, the Secretary said.

Genetic traceability is another

continued on page 4

PH can now export livestock, pork products

Filipino livestock and hog raisers, and meat processors can now export 'Pinoy' livestock and pork products to the rest of the world, as the entire Philippines was recently certified free from the dreaded foot and mouth disease (FMD) without vaccination by the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) or World Organization for Animal Health.

Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala said the OIE certification declaring the country's remaining regions and provinces — collectively referred to as Zone 2 — enables the Philippines to finally export, particularly to nearby ASEAN and Asia-Pacific regions, livestock meat products, mainly pork. As the country is likewise free from avian flu, it has been exporting poultry products, mostly to Japan.

He said negotiations are ongoing to export pork products to Singapore and Malaysia. Selected swine farms, abattoirs and meat processing establishments, initially in Mindanao, are being accredited by the Department of Agriculture through its concerned

agencies, particularly the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) and the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS).

The OIE certification was received on behalf of the Philippine government and Sec. Alcala by agriculture assistant secretary for livestock Davinio Catbagan on May 26, 2011, in Paris, France, during the 79th general session of the OIE held on May 22-27, 2011. The certificate was signed by OIE president Dr. Carlos A. Correa Messuti and director-general Bernard Vallat.

Catbagan said the country's FMD-free status also augurs well for the domestic livestock industry, as livestock and swine raisers and meat processors can now freely transport and trade live animals and livestock and pork products within the country.

He said the free movement and transport will enhance productivity, particularly in improving, upgrading and increasing current livestock herd and swine population.

Zone 2 covers four regions (1, 3, 4-A, and NCR), particularly 12 provinces and 17 cities and towns in Metro Manila or NCR. The 12 provinces are Pangasinan (Region 1); Bulacan, Pampanga,

Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Zambales, and Bataan (Region 3); and Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon (Region 4-A).

The other four zones of the country were previously declared and recognized by OIE as FMD-free without vaccination, namely: Zones 1 and 3 on May 25, 2010; Visayas, Palawan and Masbate Zone in 2002; and Mindanao in 2001. The four zones are:

Zone 1 (North Luzon) - Cordillera Administrative Region – Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Baguio City, Ifugao, Kalinga and Mt. Province; Region 1 – Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur and La Union; Region 2 – Batanes, Cagayan, Isabela Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino; and Region 3 – Aurora.

Zone 3 (South Luzon) - Region 4-B – Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro and Romblon; Region 5 – Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes and Sorsogon; and

Visayas Zone (all provinces in regions 6, 7, & 8), including Palawan and Masbate.

Mindanao Zone (all 6 regions and 29 provinces and islands). **[DA Information Service]**

Dairying from page 3

direction that the dairy sector envisions to take, he added.

He said that putting in place a traceability system for livestock is an effective tool toward ensuring protection of animal health, public health and food safety as well.

This is one of the important initiatives of the government to protect the country's foot and mouth (FMD) disease-free without vaccination status, he said.

The Philippines was declared FMD-free without vaccination by the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) or World Organization for Animal Health during its 79th general session in Paris, France last May (*see related story above*).

With this good news, dairy animal raisers see an even brighter future in their livestock.

"I encourage every Filipino family to teach their children to consume milk every day," Secretary Alcala said. "Children who drink milk early on in their life grow faster and develop better," he added.

On the other hand, DairyCon president Danilo Fausto said in his message that the dairy industry has nowhere else to go but forward. He encouraged dairy farmers to expand their venture. This, he said, is attainable based on the growing demand for dairy products not only in the country but in other Southeast Asian countries as well.

Fausto, who is a successful entrepreneur, having put up the "Gatas ng Kalabaw" enterprise based in

Talavera, Nueva Ecija with established kiosks in big malls in Metro Manila, lamented that poverty is highest in the agriculture sector.

He emphasized that the answer to this is continuing education, improving quality for marketability of dairy products, development of youth toward dairy farming, encouraging dairy farmers to usher their children to dairying.

Dairying, he said, becomes the antidote to poverty in the countryside as it ensures the dairy farming family daily cash flow. Moreover, he said, it brings increased nutrition in the community, avoids migration, and generates jobs.

"We can move forward together as we create value in each segment of the dairy chain," Fausto said.

PH gov't expects to boost economy thru agri-tourism

By KHRIZIE EVERT M. MARCELO

As an agricultural country with exceptionally abundant natural resources, the Philippines can be a viable agri-tourism destination. Complimented with hospitable people and exciting cultural heritage, these attributes hold great promise in significantly contributing to the country's economy.

The growing demand of tourists all over the world for new attractions and more exciting adventure spurred the development of agri-tourism in the country. As such, rural farming is fast becoming a popular destination, especially among foreigners, which diverse tour and adventure packages, now offer to prospective clients.

This effort by many travel agencies in the country is seen as being beneficial to the latter's agri-tourism industry.

These were some of the observations made by the key players to the 1st International Agriculture and Tourism Expo (IATE). The event was held at the World Trade Center in Pasay City last June 30-July 2.

The exposition with the theme "Improving Economy through Agriculture and Tourism," was held to promote the agri-tourism programs of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Department of Tourism (DOT) in the local and international scenes.

"We have taken the first step towards realizing our potentials in achieving economic progress thru agri-tourism. We have discovered new opportunities that would empower each one of us to be part of this development," said Kenneth Dong, the event organizer and president of A-Linx Events, International.

Among the objectives of the event were to support the government's effort in generating sustainable economic

growth and development through agriculture and tourism, attract more tourists and investors to the country that will generate jobs and income for Filipinos, and to create awareness and encourage government agencies and the private sector to provide national development assistance in boosting agri-tourism in the country.

Major government agencies, such as the DA, DOT and Technical Education and Development Skills Authority (TESDA), supported the event. They also pledged support for other efforts in relation to this undertaking.

DOT Secretary Alberto Lim and Dong signed a Memorandum of Understanding last March 31 that committed both parties to further work on the development of agri-tourism through the promotion of "adventures" in the countryside.

Currently, the country is sustaining 32 eco-tourism sites including 27 protected areas such as the Tubbataha reef, a national marine park in Palawan.

According to TESDA director general Joel J. Villanueva, the Philippine tourism campaign has been rated as the most improved in Asia with 14% annual growth rate, which is the highest in Southeast Asia.

"Imagine the potential for jobs creation and economic development that the 7,107 islands of this country can bring. Our islands offer exciting diversity that can truly compete with other nations," Villanueva said.

In a speech of President Aquino, which was read by DA Undersecretary for Field Operations Joel Rudinas, he said: the parallel growth of agriculture and tourism is an appropriate and timely goal.

"We are fortunate to have such a large pool of talented manpower in our population who have the ability to communicate in English and who are hospitable beyond measure. Perhaps

that is the most important factor in the development of agri-tourism. Events, such as this exposition, serve as an apt venue to keep tab on industry prospects and trends and to craft strategies and forge partnerships that will give this niche market its much needed boost. This is indeed a good start", the President said.

"We also look forward to our investors' additional capital and initiatives in making agri-tourism truly an economically beneficial endeavor. I believe that their presence here today speaks for the commitment we all share towards the growth and development of the industry," he added.

Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan who is the Senate Agriculture Committee Chair, was the keynote speaker.

"This Agriculture and Tourism Expo is very significant. By addressing agriculture and tourism, they become two engine drivers that will help deliver the country to the road of economic development," Senator Pangilinan said.

Continuing, he said: "The challenge today is to continue to participate, mobilize and get involved in shaping our community. This Expo is an exhibit of participation and making a stand for progress and development in our country".

Government agencies, local government units and private companies which are engaged in various agriculture and tourism programs and related products, put up their respective exhibits. About 400 exhibitors participated in the event.

Aside from the exhibits of interesting products, seminars and other public fora were held for the benefit of interested parties.

PCC scientist is NAST's Outstanding Young Scientist awardee

By JOAHNA G. GOYAGOY

Dr. Claro N. Mingala, a scientist of the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), was adjudged recently as one of the "2011 Outstanding Young Scientist" awardees, a feat which proved once again that PCC is home to the finest young scientists in the country when it comes to livestock biotechnology endeavors.

The Outstanding Young Scientist (OSY) award is given to young Filipino scientists who made significant contributions to science and technology. The award is initiated by the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), the country's premier recognition and advisory body of S&T under the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

Dr. Mingala was selected based on his "exceptional ability to undertake scientific research as evidenced by papers published in reputable scientific journals". His selection was based on a) quality and number of scientific works and publications, b) contributions to the advancement of science in general and science in the Philippines, in particular, and c) contributions in the well-being of the Philippine economy and culture.

Dr. Libertado C. Cruz, executive director of the Philippine Carabao Center, nominated Dr. Mingala for the award. In his nomination paper, Dr. Cruz said in part: "The studies of Dr. Claro Mingala which mainly concern on the immunology of water buffaloes are some of the only few studies conducted across the world. These studies are indeed very important not only as baseline information with regards to water buffalo immunology but also toward the development of DNA-based technologies in producing vaccine, diagnostic tools, and therapeutic agents."

He added: "The identification of genetic factors, which influence disease resistance and susceptibility, may lead to development and wise formulation of effective disease prevention and control strategies to increase production and propagation of water buffaloes."

Dr. Mingala's research interest was focused on the development of gene-based diagnostic tools and analysis of the immune response to various stimuli leading to DNA vaccine production. His other research works dwelt on infectious diseases specifically on molecular immunology, virology, and epidemiology.

Dr. Mingala's award was in the field of infectious diseases.

His award included a trophy and a cash prize. He was also entitled to a research grant of Php500, 000 upon approval of a research/ project proposal from DOST.

The awarding rites were held on July 14 at the Manila Hotel.

Aside from the OSY award given by NAST, other awards also include TWAS (Third World Academy of Sciences) prize for young scientists in the Philippines, NAST Talent search for Young Scientist, Outstanding Scientific Paper, Outstanding Book and/or Monograph, pro Scientia Transformatix award, NAST-Hugh Greenwood Environmental Science award, and NAST-LELEDFI award for outstanding research in tropical medicine.

The OYS award was instituted in 1980 by the National Science Development Board (NSDB) to recognize scientists who are below 40 years of age, for outstanding contribution in their fields of specialization. Since it was first implemented, the NAST has been the screening and selection body for this award. In 1982, the OYS award became part of the recognition awards given by NAST.

Since its launching, a total of 252



Dr. Mingala at the Animal Health Laboratory in PCC. (Inset) Dr. Mingala poses with his trophy during the NAST's awarding ceremony at the Manila Hotel, July 14.

scientists were given awards in various fields of science.

Dr. Mingala is currently a Department of Agriculture-fellow scientist working on "Genotyping and molecular characterization of NRAMP1/-2 genes as location of markers for resistance and/or susceptibility to *Mycobacterium bovis* in swamp and riverine water buffaloes" under the DA Biotech Research Fellowship of the Applied Agri-Biotech Research.

His research specifically aims to identify genetic markers that will correlate with resistance or susceptibility to pathogenic infection in buffaloes particularly of *Mycobacterium bovis*, the causative agent of tuberculosis in cattle.

Other awards received by Dr. Mingala included the "2010 Outstanding Veterinarian in Government Service" given by the Philippine Veterinary Medical Association and "Exemplary Performance of its R&D Manpower" given by the Central Luzon Agriculture and Resources Research and Development Consortium (CLARRDEC) in 2010.

More dairy plants are in the offing

By JOAHNA G. GOYAGOY

Realizing the need to cater to the growing dairy enterprises in certain regional impact zones of the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), two more dairy plants are planned to be put up to ensure a steady supply of milk to the expanding market.

Such development can be seen and felt in Brgy. Santiago, General Trias, Cavite. A modern dairy plant was put up on March 5, 2010 in that village in collaboration with the local government of Gen. Trias, PCC at the University of the Philippines- Los Baños (UPLB), and the Korea International Cooperating Agency (KOICA). This modern dairy processing center has a 500-liter capacity fill line processing system. It is operated by the General Trias Dairy Raisers Multi-Purpose Cooperative (GTDRMPC).

Presently, the cooperative collects an average of 250 liters of milk per day from dairy farmers in General Trias which are processed into several dairy products such as kesong puti (white cheese), pastillas de leche, yoghurt, and fresh milk.

With the installation of this modern dairy processing center, milk quality is guaranteed as well as continuous daily cash flow among the dairy farmers.

“The plant symbolizes the phases of the development of the cooperative. It started in a kitchen-type operation with barely 20 liters of raw milk collected every day,” Dr. Arnel del Barrio, PCC at UPLB center director, said.

He added: “With the presence of this dairy processing plant, it further encourages the carabao raisers to sell their raw milk to the cooperative. Likewise, it also serves as an avenue for the farmers to have a sustainable income on a daily basis through the milk that they collect every day.”

To replicate this kind of

development, the construction of another dairy plant is underway in Sitio Llano, Brgy. Bayugo, Jalajala, Rizal. In this area, there are 456 carabaos, 367 of which are female as of 2009, which means that it is a potential area for installing a dairy plant.

The project is being put up by the National Economic Development Authority under the KR2 project that “focuses on productivity, income, and employment in the countryside”.

The Llano Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative, with 96 members, will be operating this soon-to-be finished dairy plant.

For a long time, Jalajala farmers are producing milk for processing in Laguna and other nearby municipalities of Rizal (Cardona, Tanay, Pililla, among others).

The installation of the dairy plant, Dr. del Barrio said, will make the dairy farmers earn more from their raw milk as in Sta. Cruz, Laguna, where white cheese makers are situated and where raw milk is sold at Php10-PHP15 per liter only. It will also provide them a sense of ownership of whatever profit they can earn from processing and selling the fruits of their own labor.

He added: “The expansion of the dairy plant and its volume of operation can be translated into more livelihoods among small-hold farmers. It will also provide significant source of income opportunities in the area. Likewise, the volume of milk processed can be translated to the availability of ready-to-drink milk in the locality and its adjacent communities.”

Under the PCC at Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU), another dairy plant is also planned for completion within this year.

The on-going construction of the collection center or dairy processing

The installation of dairy plants has proved to be a good avenue in ensuring quality control, expansion of product lines and market, providing opportunities for farming families to generate sufficient income, and further encouraging carabao raisers to collect more milk from their dairy carabaos.

plant in Sitio Cabaruan in Asingan, Pangasinan, is a collaborative effort between the PCC at DMMMSU and the local government of Asingan. The dairy plant, once completed, will be managed by the Bantog Samahang Nayon Multi-Purpose Cooperative.

Like the dairy farmers of Gen. Trias, the Bantog Samahang Nayon members said that the dairy plant will serve as an avenue for true development in their area. They said that carabao dairying equates to daily cash flow for their families, hence, no need for their children to leave the country to seek for greener pasture provided they have at least eight or more dairy animals.

The setting up of the dairy plant will also be used for the processing of milk from the adjacent cooperatives and other areas of Pangasinan and its nearby towns.

With the strong partnership of PCC at DMMMSU and the different LGUs, an ordinance restricting the slaughter of breedable carabaos in Pangasinan, La Union, and Benguet is currently up for passage. The PCC at DMMMSU is optimistic that once the resolution is passed, it will strengthen the further development of the dairy enterprise in these areas.

With the completion of the additional dairy plants in Laguna and Pangasinan, it is expected that more volume of raw milk or dairy products will enliven further the sustainability of the dairy enterprise.

PCC stays focused as an excellent institution for livestock R&D

By ROWENA G. BUMANLAG

Efforts of the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC) along its research and development (R&D) agenda are continuously being strengthened and refined with the overall objective of improving further the productivity and efficiency in the carabao industry and consequently for the improvement of its economic as well as the social status of thousands of smallhold farming families.

These efforts and their results are evident in the PCC's sustained focus in addressing the issues pertinent to its operations. The gaps identified still obtaining in the industry are bridged using strategies such as the annual in-house R&D review.

R&D is one of the critical components in PCC's program management. It is on this premise that research papers are reviewed to ensure that areas of research are consistently focused and aligned with the R&D thrust of PCC.

PCC, as usual, conducted its annual R&D review last May 23-25 at the PCC

national headquarters. The review was specifically aimed to assess ongoing research activities, achieve a systematic R&D management system through understanding and appreciation of the R&D process flow, identify potential technologies for verification and transfer to farmers, and motivate researchers to strengthen their interest in conducting researches along the agency's R&D agenda.

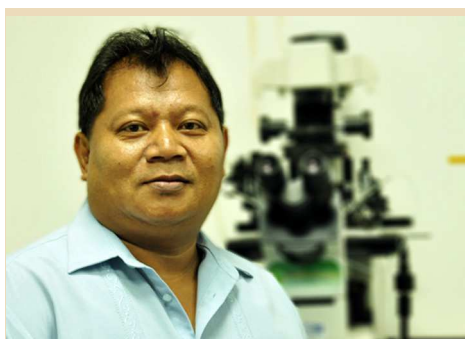
Scientists and researchers from the offices of the executive director and the PCC regional centers participated in the in-house review. Student researchers were also invited by PCC to present the

results of their scientific studies.

Thirty-three research papers were presented for evaluation. They were on priority thematic areas, such as animal health, reproductive biotechnology, reproductive physiology, improving forage and pasture, increasing milk production, increasing calf production, reducing calf mortality, production management, meat products, socio-economics, animal nutrition, and breeding and genetics.

The papers were evaluated for the purpose of selecting the best with corresponding citations and cash awards.

The research papers on reproductive biotechnology and meat products titled "Effect of All-trans Retinoic Acid during In-vitro Maturation on the Development, Carbohydrate Uptake and Midkine Expression in Water Buffalo Oocyte" by Lilibeth Cajuday, Annabelle Herrera and Danilda Duran and "Carcass Yield of Native and Crossbred Buffaloes Slaughtered at Two Years of Age" by Rosalina Lapitan, Arnel del Barrio, Jesus



Dr. Atabay is new director of PCC-CLSU

By KHRIZIE EVERT MARCELO

Effective May 1, Dr. Edwin Atabay is the new Center Director for PCC at CLSU.

"I need to work harder as I have been throughout my career, giving more emphasis on taking constructive steps to achieve our targets for this year," Dr. Atabay said as he assumed his new post.

Atabay emphasized that among others, there is a need to focus on the areas of Genetic Improvement Program (GIP), Carabao-Based Enterprise Development (CBED), and Artificial Insemination (AI) Program as the PCC National Headquarters and Gene Pool (NHGP) set higher output targets for the regional centers to achieve this year.

The PCC at CLSU is the largest center among the 13 regional centers of the PCC. Aside from the PCC Products Outlet at the CLSU Campus, it also manages the PCC Bull Farm in Brgy. Josen, Carranglan, NuevaEcija which is tasked

with the responsibility of producing more semen for the Carabao Upgrading Program.

"We need to produce 120,000 doses of semen per month. About 30% of the national AI target is expected from us, that is why we need to perform well to reach this output," Dr. Atabay explained.

Since it was almost mid-year when he was designated, Dr. Atabay say he would continue on the projects and targets planned by his predecessor and endeavor to achieve the said targets. Part of my strategies is to meet the staff in group once in a while to know their concerns or if they have issues and immediately address it if they have one, said Atabay.

Another priority in his work list, he said, is on milk and meat products development.

continued on page 10

PCC's national R&D coordinator, Dr. Eric Palacpac, gives a brief review of the R&D process to the participants of the agency's annual R&D in-house review on its second day, March 24, 2011.



The position of R&D in the management of the Carabao Development Program (CDP) was reiterated emphasizing on its functional interrelationship with other critical components such as planning, implementation (operations and extension), monitoring and evaluation, and applied communication.

Rommel Herrera, and Thelma Canaria won this year's "Best Paper" awards on the non-operations and operations category, respectively.

Animal nutrition expert Dr. Daniel Aquino was named Best Presenter for his presentation on "Augmented Feeding with By-pass Amino Acids and Slow Release Non-protein Nitrogen (NPN) Supplements for Dairy Buffaloes".

The panel of evaluators was composed of seasoned veterinarian Dr. Jose Arceo Bautista of the Animal and Dairy Science Cluster of the University of the Philippines (UP) at Los Baños, supervising science research specialist Dr. Synan Baguio of the Livestock Research Division of the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development; scientist Dr. Windell Rivera of the UP System, and developmentalist and economist Dr. Luzviminda Galang of the College of Agriculture of the Central Luzon State University. Dr. Bautista chaired the panel of evaluators.

The PCC R&D review was facilitated by incoming national R&D coordinator Dr. Eric Palacpac.

A quick overview of the R&D process was also presented for better appreciation of a systematic research management.

The presentation was highlighted by a review of the agency's R&D agenda.

Through its sustained efforts on R&D, Dr. Palacpac said: "The PCC recognizes the inevitable need to improve the level of productivity for meat and milk while reducing the cost of production with the objective of protecting the interest of thousands of smallhold farming families who depend on carabao-raising as a means of livelihood."

These efforts, he added, will be popularized, translated into tangible outputs, and communicated to the PCC's primary clientele, the farmers. Communication in this respect, he said, involves a series of negotiation toward an integrative agreement.

Dr. Palacpac pointed out that since 1997, PCC has focused its R&D program direction toward such areas like improving carabao productivity for milk and meat, increasing calf crop in water buffaloes in the villages, developing buffalo-derived products, developing sustainable village-based dairy enterprises, assessing the socio-economics aspect, and assisting in policy formulation.

The concept of operations research also came into the picture to address the

various issues encountered in the course of CDP implementation, he said.

A workshop followed after the presentation of the research papers in which the concerns relevant to a sound R&D program

implementation at the centers' level were discussed.

Among the apparent issues that called for the immediate formulation of policies from the PCC's program management committee were on motivating and bringing out the best asset of researchers, improving the technical capability of researchers to conduct researches that are aligned to the PCC R&D agenda and mentoring young researchers and retooling those who have not been engaged in research work for some time. The strengthening of the linkage with SUCs hosting the regional centers, strengthening of logistical and technical support for PCC researchers, and enhancing focus among researchers to carve time solely for conducting research out of their busy day-to-day routines were also among the issues presented that needed clear-cut policies from the program management committee.



In Talavera town

'Gatas ng Kalabaw Festival' is staged anew in N. Ecija

By MARLOWE U. AQUINO

Now on its 6th year, the "Gatas ng Kalabaw Festival", emphasizes stronger people partnership as an approach to rural development. Talavera Mayor Neri Santos with the help of the sanguniang bayan, organized the festival with the theme "Sa masustansyang gatas, may magandang bukas" held at the Municipal Town Plaza in Talavera, Nueva Ecija on May 12-15.

The staging of the 2011 "Gatas ng Kalabaw Festival" supports the Nueva Ecija provincial government's campaign toward becoming the "Dairy Capital of the Philippines".

The festival, as always, emphasized the importance of drinking fresh buffaloes' milk to improve the nutritional requirement

of every Filipino. Mayor Santos led the ceremonial toast together with the officials and staff of the different municipal offices, children of the Lingap Sagip Kabataan Center and the different key players in carabao and agricultural development.

Dr. Andrew Villacorta, Regional Executive Director of Department of Agriculture Regional Field Unit III, was the event's guest speaker. He pointed out that carabao should be considered still a living Filipino treasure that must be protected, promoted and conserved.

Specifically propagated and promoted for their economic value, he said this animal is given a new packaging for the farmers in terms of its meat, milk, and hide values.

The festival was complemented by the holding of an agricultural trade fair to showcase the bountiful

produce of the different barangays of Talavera, a farmers' forum that tackled the economic opportunities that the carabao offers like its meat, hide, hooves and horn, and business expansion of carabao dairy products.

On the final day of the event, a parade participated in by municipal and provincial government officials, national government agencies, like Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Agrarian Reform, and Department of Education; offices and members of the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC)-coordinated primary dairy cooperatives, and teachers and students of local elementary and secondary schools, who consequently served as the participants in the street dance competition.

Native breed of carabaos, Bulgarian and Brazilian pure breeds, and crossbreds, were also included in the parade.

This Nueva Ecija government's drive is strongly supported by the DTI's One-Town One-Product program, DOT for Agro-Tourism and the DA's food security, sustainability, productivity, and profitability program in addressing poverty alleviation, and the Department of Health's Health and Nutrition program for rural Filipinos.

Dr. Atabay from page 8

Dr. Atabay also underscored three goals that he wants to achieve as part of his priority areas.

One of the priority areas is enrolling the PCC at CLSU's herd to the GIP breeding and selection systems where performance or progeny-testing scheme is implemented. The program is also aimed at selecting the best dairy animals for breeding or propagation and cull out those that are no longer fit for breeding purposes.

He said he will institute mechanisms to raise to 50% the forage sufficiency in the bull farm's pasture area and at the same time, lessen the outsourcing of forage for the bulls.

Dr. Atabay also acknowledged that his center needs more research outputs as it works along with PCC at UPLB as the lead research centers of PCC. The other centers, he said, are considered the testing and validating sites when it comes to research.

The new PCC at CLSU director, who was cited as "Most Outstanding Vet Practitioner in Large Animal Practice by the Veterinary Practitioners Association of the Philippines" in its 2007 Annual Convention, and "Best Paper in Animal Biotechnology" awardee in the 47th Scientific Seminar and Annual Convention of the Philippine Society of Animal Science '10, hopes to manage the center effectively. "We need to meet the expectation of the national headquarters and do what is needed to attain our targets," he said.

To achieve that vision, he continued, "I will seek the dedication and commitment of my staff and do whatever I can do to run this center productively. Over the next months, I am planning to have more interactions with the staff and conduct a team-building activity in order to strengthen our bonds as co-workers and create a more balanced working environment."

Dr. Atabay succeeded Dr. Felomino Mamuad who ran the center as its director in concurrent position as PCC deputy executive director.



CARABAOS, TOO, ARE STARS IN FESTIVALS

For years, the carabao has been the farmer’s indispensable helper in the farm, it being the dominant force in the completion of major and herculean works such as plowing and harrowing, and hauling of products. In this context, naturally, the essential beast is accorded due importance and is still prevailing in the Philippine agriculture setting, even in the presence of farm machineries.

BY ROWENA GALANG-BUMANLAG

In addition to these traditional functions, there is now a gradual shift in the attribution of role for these animals from being a mere farmer’s ally to being an important source of income. In many villages in the country, carabao raisers, particularly those engaged in raising dairy-type buffaloes, are increasing in number owing to the new-found importance of this animal in the Philippine setting.

The Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), no doubt, has taken headways in its effort to upgrade the genetic potential of the Philippine swamp buffalo, which is the type commonly used for draft power, for

better productivity in terms of producing milk and meat.

These efforts have provided a very significant source of livelihood among farming families in the countryside. The proliferation of crossbreds, which is a direct result of the government’s intensified crossbreeding program, is a cause for a big toast as it brings home to the farmers not just a message but a concrete evidence that there is more in the carabao than meets the eye.

As PCC renews its 18 years of commitment to further its research and development efforts as the country’s lead

agency for livestock biotechnology, it does not miss on unraveling other facets of the carabao—such as its compelling role in the Filipino’s cultural heritage.

Annually, every 15th of May, for instance, local residents and tourists are regaled in different festivals by the presence of the mighty beast which is presented as the center of attention and attraction.

Outside of this date, many other places in the country are also holding in honor of the carabao.

continued on page 30

KNEELING CARABAOS

REGALE, CAJOLE THRONG IN BULACAN



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
JOAHNA G. GOYAGOY

Every May 14, residents of Pulilan in Bulacan, San Isidro in Nueva Ecija, and Angono in Rizal, commemorate the feast day of San Isidro de Labrador, patron saint of farmers, with the carabaos sharing celebrity status.

But while the three towns have similar cause for marking the day of the farmers' patron saint, it is Pulilan town that always come on top as a sea of curious spectators gather to witness the carabaos' special talents.



The select carabaos of Pulilan, on this special day, do not only display their enhanced “beauty”

but they also showcase their unusual but remarkably surprising talent---that of genuflecting or kneeling or gyrating or doing the jig while kneeling. Because of this display of talent, the observance of the feast day in Pulilan is also called “The Kneeling Carabao Festival”.

The carabaos are brought by their owners in front of the church on this special day and are made to display their famous trait. This peculiar show, no doubt, is a reason enough for the influx of local and foreign tourists in Pulilan town.

Known as the farmers’ best friend and indispensable ally in different kinds of farm works, the carabaos are given royal treatment on this day. In preparation for the festival, according to their owners, the carabaos are “retouched” starting early in the morning in order to be ready for the parade that takes off early in the afternoon on the same day.

Part of the preparation includes making the carabaos “kings and queens” wherein their “crowns” (horns) are rubbed with oil for a shining sheen; their backs are adorned with special clothes serving as their capes; their bodies are scrubbed, cleaned, and painted; their legs are designed with knee caps; and their

hooves, too, are either made shiny or painted with apt colors.

As in past celebrations, long before the clock ticked at 2:00 pm last May 14, which was the time set for the start of the event, the main streets of Pulilan town were already crowded with thousands of people, residents, and tourists alike. They were eagerly awaiting for the passing of

the parade and have a good look at the carabaos which later in the day would display their capability to kneel.

About that time, in the appointed assembly place in the town proper, about 450 individual carabaos and another 19 carabaos, which have been individually harnessed to pull a bull cart, were being readied for the parade. Aside from this, the parade also featured colorful and lively display of street dancing and drum and lyre exhibitions.

The cart-pulling carabaos, representing the 19 barangays of Pulilan town, came first followed by the individual carabaos. In contrast with the events in past years, wherein the carts displayed the process of traditional rice planting, this time, the carts were garnished with high-value crops of different vegetables and fruits which convey the message that Pulilan town is endowed with rich agricultural lands.

In the course of the parade, shouts and clamor erupted urging the owners to make their carabaos kneel. Due to this

incessant popular request from the throng of onlookers, the carabao owners could not do anything but oblige to the delight of the spectators.

The San Isidro Labrador church, of course, was the ultimate destination of the animals’ show of “religiosity”. The carabaos knelt at the signal of their master as they passed one by one in front of the church. The kneeling was for a few minutes with the carabaos not minding people and their reactions.

What appears to be more

interesting and greatly appreciated by the onlookers was not only the carabaos’ demonstration of their ability to kneel but also to “walk” on their knees like penitents in front of the church. This scenario left onlookers in a blaze of awe and surprise.

Honoring farmers’ patron saint

May 15, according to the Catholic Church’s account, is the day for the patron saint of farmers---San Isidro de Labrador (laborer) also known as Isidore the Farmer.

The account said that Isidore was a laborer who was always late in tending to his farm chores yet always finishes his job at the end of the day.

One day, his co-laborers complained to their master that Isidore was always late for work in the morning. Prompted with curiosity, the master went to the field and investigated the claim by himself. The master was astounded by what he

continued on page 27

Carabo-Carroza Festival in Pavia, Iloilo:

Thanksgiving for the carabao

BY **ROWENA GALANG-BUMANLAG**
PHOTOS BY **JAIME GIANCARLO RAMOS**

In its Anglo-Saxon name Tri-Milchi, the month of May was recognized as the period of the year in which there is abundance of new lush green that, in essence, signifies that cows could be milked three times a day. In the Philippines, it is known as the merry May because there is certainly one or two festivals happening elsewhere in the archipelago during this month.



The month is also when St. Isidore the Laborer, the Catholic patron saint of the farmers, is honored.

In the festivities honoring the saint, almost always, the carabao is an item if not the star of the gaiety.

While the fiesta-goers anticipate the grand display of usually stocky and polished beast of burden, the obliging animal, on the other hand, also seems to enjoy its cameo role by showcasing its distinct acts to the hooting cries of excitement by the animated crowd.

In Pavia town, in the province of Iloilo, however, the domesticated animal is simply catapulted to stardom every third day of May in honor of its reliable workmanship in the farm as the farmer's indispensable ally.

The rise to stardom status of this animal is happening in the "Carabao-Carroza Festival", which is regarded by the townsfolk as a "day's break" for the carabao. It is the oldest-of-its-kind festival in the heritage-rich province of Iloilo.

Truly a feast only for the carabaos, the people in the municipality have devotedly sustained the festival for almost four decades now, 39 years to be exact since its inception in 1972. Pavia mayor Arcadio Gorriceta, too, was eager and delighted to lead in the promotion and execution of the plans of the affair this year.

Pavia, then a scant parcel of land that served as a docile ground for city sophisticates and absentee landlords and was a third class municipality, has easily etched its eminence in the tourism scene as the host of the "Carabao-Carroza Festival".

Being an agricultural town covering 3,804 hectares of prime farmland, the town also prides itself for being the Regional Agro-industrial Center for Western Visayas. It is part of the Metro Iloilo-Guimaras metropolitan area and is only 9.6 km north of Iloilo City.

Pavia town was also recently hailed "No. 1 Municipality in Iloilo Province" in terms of good governance by the National Statistical Coordination Board.

Distinctively recognized as very appreciative people, Pavianhons are

grateful of the rich resources bestowed by nature on their town for their advantage.

It is no surprise then that they dedicate every third day of May each year to pay tribute to the carabao as it has helped them lighten the hard toil in their farms.

An expression of the creativity of Pavianhons, the festival is an exhibit of the townspeople's teamwork and pleasant nature as they participate in varied activities and compete for different awards. The municipality's 18 barangays covet for the awards: "most gaily-decorated carabao-carroza", carabao-carroza race, and "Carabao-Carroza Festival Queen".

The residents and visitors of the town, during the recent staging of the festival, had a good view of the whole pageantry in the parade as the line-up of local government officials, students and teachers, carabao-carrozas with the muses gracefully perched on them, paced the long route of barangays Ungka-I to Purok II which was a distance of about 2 km. The parade's endpoint, where the Pavia National High School grounds lay, was the venue of the program and the race that followed after the parade.

On the day of the parade, the carabao caretakers donned their animals with artistically tailored mantle of cover from the horns down to the knees and shanks. The cover was made of cloth or raw and indigenous materials, such as leaves, seeds, and other recyclable items, sewn together to make one lovable adornment.

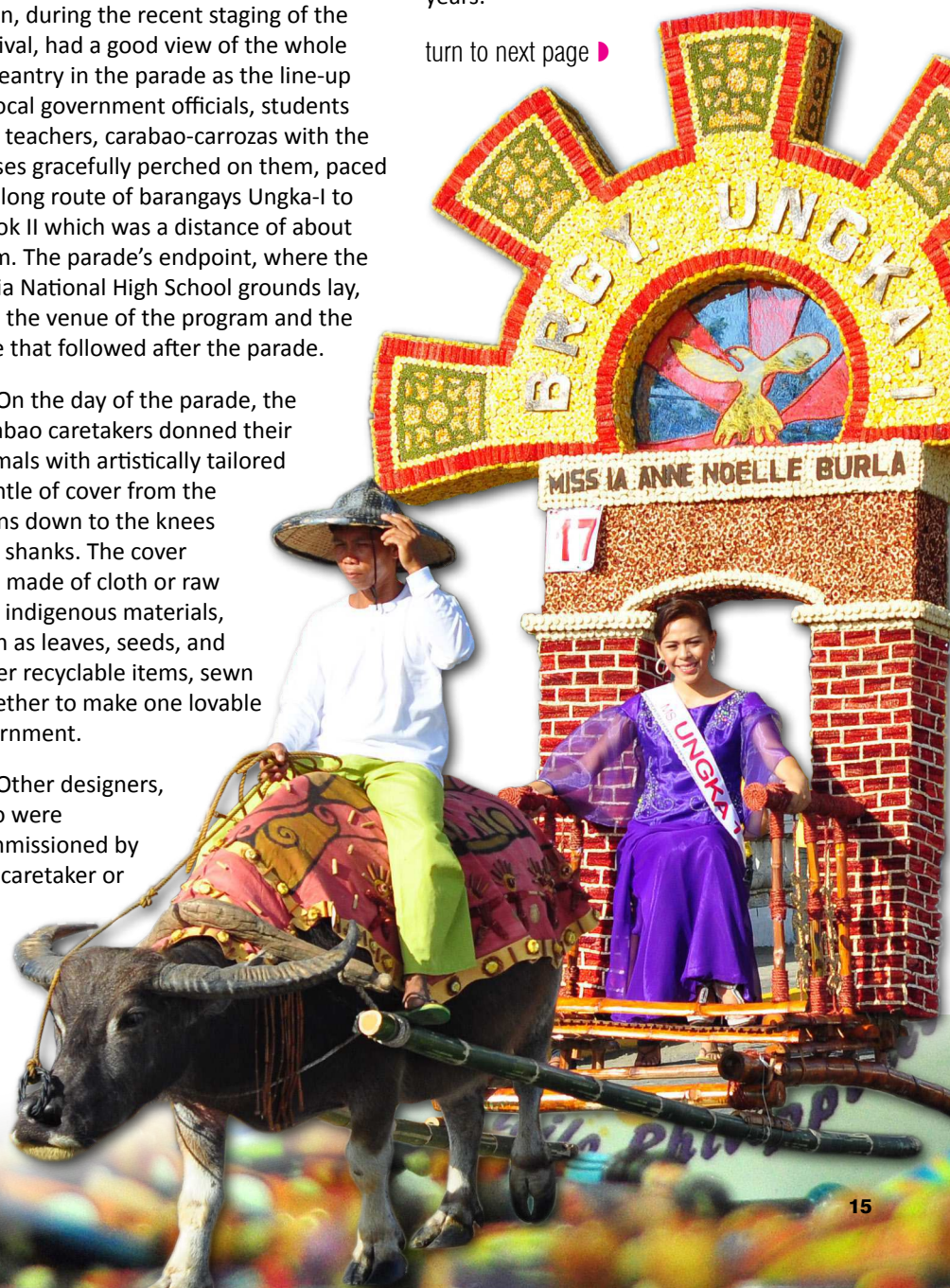
Other designers, who were commissioned by the caretaker or the

barangay officials, gave added touch to the ornamental coverings by accentuating the material with different colors of beads, florettes, and ribbons. To complete the animal's suave look, some added props such as crowns and masks.

Some of the animals were simply painted on their whole body with water-based paints. No matter how it was done, the spectators appreciate fully the make-over of the carabaos which they said were "truly a feast for the eyes".

While the carabao was being dressed up, the carroza or sled was also expertly decorated. The townsfolk have already mustered the art of utilizing their barangay's products for the festivity after they have been doing that in the last 39 years.

turn to next page ▶





Pavia's tourism officer Susan Jovero said the carrozas in the past were used to be decorated with vegetables and other farm products. Now, she said, they are decorated and presented depending on the agro-industrial products of a participating barangay.

In this year's festival, Iloilo governor Arthur Defensor Sr. graced the occasion as the guest of honor and speaker.

"This festival is meant to pay tribute to the carabao which has evolved in terms of its functions in our society. We only see the carabao then as our ally in plowing our ricefields but it is now transformed to become a significant instrument in changing the economic status of many farmers in the villages," Governor Defensor said.

He hailed Pavia as the most fast-growing municipality of



Iloilo. He particularly mentioned PCC's research and development efforts to improve the potentials of the native carabaos through the advances in science such as the use of reproductive biotechnologies.

The winners in the event were announced during the program. The "Most Gaily-Decorated Carabao-Carroza" award went to Barangay Pagsanga-an with its Arabian-inspired queenly sledge adorned with all-indigenous craftsmanship.

Barangay councilor Catalina Panaligan, who received the award in behalf of Pagsanga-an, said the materials they used to decorate the carroza were all indigenous to the barangay.

"The collection and gathering of the raw materials were done through our concerted efforts in the barangay. We used plants that are rarely noticed but can be used in the execution of our concept. The carroza was elaborately done in three months by three people. We had brainstorming sessions at the barangay hall before coming out with our winning design," Councilor Panaligan said.

She emphasized that winning the competition was an added bonus for them. She said they simply wanted only to join the

festival to continue what has long been practiced by their ancestors.

"The certificate and cash prize were just secondary to us. In fact, we spent more in making our carroza than the actual cash prize

we received. We just wanted to actively participate in our hometown's festivity," she said.

Barangay Pagsanga-an is now a "Hall of Famer" as it already won the competition three times in three consecutive years.

The program was capped with the introduction of the 18 festival muses. The carabao-carroza race followed. In this spectacle, the carabao was pulling a bare sled, not a carroza with elaborate decoration used during the parade.

Eighteen carabaos with their respective riders competed in the 100-meter race. Elimination was conducted in the preliminary race with the winner of the heat competing in the finals.

Champion carabao racer Anito Caña of barangay Cabugao Sur said that he had prepared his carabao months before the race. He said he seldom used it for farm works; days before the race, he gave it ample rest and sufficient food.

When asked if he has a secret to share about winning, Caña said that he just talked to his carabao that they should win the race and that they will do it together. The essential beast happily obliged and did not fail him, he said.

Tourism officer Jovero said the race during the first three years of the festival was done right at the bed of the Aganan-Tigum river. Some townsfolk, she said, are asking to do the race again in the old site. But, she added, it will be a matter to be considered in succeeding stages of the festival.

One of the new come-ons to the event, she revealed, will be a development of a tourists' spot in Pavia where visitors can leisurely enjoy a carabao-back riding and have a taste of fresh farm produce from the different barangays. This project will definitely be in collaboration with PCC, she said.

The carabao-carroza parade and



race usually ends before lunchtime. The townsfolk then rush home to accommodate their visitors.

In the evening of this special day, one more pageantry is held. The muses of the 18 barangays, who were paraded throughout the town in the morning, vie for honors.

This year, Kelly Binder, 14, of barangay Aganan, was adjudged "Carabao-Carroza Festival Queen".

A high school freshman, Binder bested the other candidates by wittily answering the finale question: "What is the greatest gift that you can give to your

mother?" She answered: "I will see to it that my mother will receive an ounce of appreciation from me in every moment I can."

A very appreciative young lady, Binder also said that the "Carabao-Carroza Festival" is a show of appreciation by Pavianhons to their own history and culture which she said are their greatest treasures.

"My biggest preparation for this contest was to get to know Pavia even better. Because of this competition, I got to appreciate Pavia and my history more. We consistently aim for modernization but Pavia still values its past through the Carabao-Carroza Festival," Binder said.

Binder was the run-away winner of the pageant bringing home five other minor awards, such as "Best in Production Number", "Best in Summer Wear", "Best in Evening Gown", "Miss Photogenic", and "Best in Interview".

Binder is a youth correspondent of ABS-CBN's regional network in Iloilo.

Aside from this carabao-starred festivity, Pavianhons will again get busy toward the last quarter of this year as they prepare for yet another festival, the "Tigkaralag", which is also easily gaining popularity among tourists.

"Tigkaralag," which means season of the souls, happens every October. This festival, a dance-drama competition that exhibits a storyline reflective of Halloween, is a celebration of the strong faith of Pavianhons and their love for those who passed away.

The rise to stardom status of the carabao is happening in the "Carabao-Carroza Festival", which is regarded by the Pavianhons as a "day's break" for the carabao. It is the oldest of its kind festival in the heritage-rich province of Iloilo.





Turogpo FESTIVAL

A tradition of carabao joust in Leyte

During the Holy Week, it is a tradition among most Filipinos staying elsewhere in the country to travel back to their respective home province to spend the Christian hallowed days with their families. Some take these opportunities to have their personal vacations. Others exercise their annual *panata* (vow) in the form of penitence and other acts of religiosity.

During this week, some religious festivals or activities are also held. As an essential event in their cultural life, they both serve as expression of belief and a sense of identity in the community. Festivals like them are very common in Northern

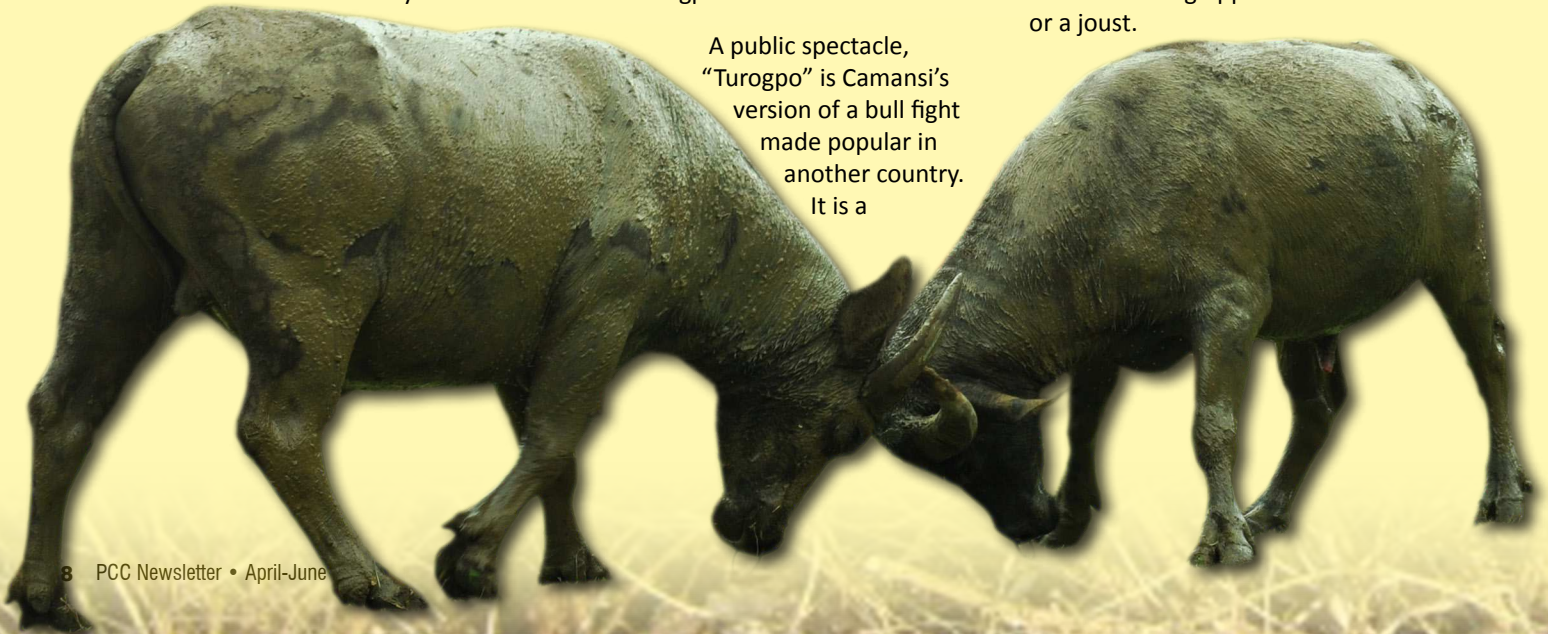
Visayas.

Brgy. Camansi, which is a small farming village in Carigara, Leyte, is filled with the ambience of a festivity during Black Saturday. On this day, which is observed by the Christian world as a day of sorrow, people in the area come together for their annual "Turogpo Festival".

BY **KHRIZIE EVERT M. MARCELO**
PHOTOS BY **RGBUMANLAG**

contest of strength between two native carabaos. The term emanates from the root word, "togpo", a waray word which means matchmaking. Usually, the term refers to matching two people for the purpose of marriage. But it could also mean matching opponents for a combat or a joust.

A public spectacle, "Turogpo" is Camansi's version of a bull fight made popular in another country. It is a





“Some 400 years ago, the first Turogpo festival was held on the lands of one Telesforo Bodo. He was our Ginahunan Puroy or chieftain that time and the founder of this historical event,” Vice Mayor Ulpiano Arpon Jr., shared.

He added, “Originally held on a Good Friday, this practice is an ancient tradition believed to be a reaction to the church’s negative actions during the Bankaw Revolt of 1621. Back in the days of Spanish rule in the country, the Turogpo then was a form of protest where resistance is expressed in an entertaining way.”

Arpon added that the festival was reset to Black Saturday upon the request of the late Palo Bishop Cipriano Urgel to maintain the holiness of Good Friday and piety among the people.

Today, he said, “It is a valued community tradition that has survived almost four hundred years of our history and we believe it will survive yet another four hundred years,” he added.

Unlike the bull fight in Spain wherein the battle is between the matador and the bull, the “Turogpo” is a joust or combat of two native carabaos. The fight is considered a test of endurance for both carabaos through locking of their horns and pushing one another until the losing animal starts to run away from its opponent. The carabao joust usually lasts

from 10 to 20 minutes and elicits much thrill and excitement among the spectators.

Through rounds of elimination, the best carabaos get to fight with each other as the most exciting clashes of which the fun-loving Kalgaranon and Leyeteños expect to witness every Lenten season. The entry that stays the longest and comes out still raring to joust is declared as the overall winner.

The owner of the winning animal gets the prize, while the losers are left to tend their wounded animals.

The prize for the champion is Php5,000. The second and third placers receive Php3,000 and Php1,000, respectively. Consolation prizes of Php600 each are given to the non-winners.

Undoubtedly, the festival is a much awaited event as it brings fun and excitement to people from all walks of life who love seeing intense display of power and skills by the carabaos in a different activity.

“Turogpo festival is becoming more and more popular every year as evidenced by the crowd that gets larger and larger,” Apolonio Ranin, village chief of Brgy. Camansi for 40 years, said.

“Before, the event was only attended by residents of Carigara and folks from nearby towns, but now, tourists, both local and foreign come to witness this annual gathering,” he added.

To fully appreciate this event, one needs to be at the venue very early as thousands of spectators usually congregate on the site on this special day.

Last April 23, close to 5,000 people watched in awe as the raging carabaos competed and vied for the coveted top honors. Some spectators including the children even climbed tall coconut trees to watch the colorful event.

To make the event more interesting, horse fights and cock-fighting (karambola) were included for additional amusement.

It was observed that almost everywhere in the festival site, the carabaos and horses were tied to a tree as they await their turn in the battle field.

The venue was a flat land in the village acquired by the barangay to serve as the arena for the carabao fighting.

continued on page 30

In Katigbawan Festival.

the King and Queen carabaos

Hail, hail

BY **JOAHNA G. GOYAGOY**
PHOTOS BY **RGBUMANLAG**

The carabaos are commonly regarded as “beasts” because of their gigantic size and usually dark and grey colors. Yet, in spite of their beastly appearance, they are much loved animals because of their vast contributions in farm works, hence, they are also endearingly regarded as “beasts of burden”.

In Catigbian, Bohol, the carabaos become the toast of the town a day in a year. They are transformed as “king and queen carabaos”. They become the ultimate stars, not only in the fields, but on the streets of Catigbian.

This is because of the annual celebration of the “Katigbawan Festival” held in connection with the town’s foundation day which is on June 17.

“Katigbawan” came from three root words which speak of the three significant things that Catigbian is known for. These are ‘katigbi’, ‘tigbaw’, and ‘kabawan’.

‘Katigbi’ refers to a grass native to the town where the name ‘Catigbian’ was derived. Also called as “job’s tears”, the plant bears berries used as beads for rosaries and decorative items like curtains, bags, trays, necklaces, and other accessories. Its stems are also utilized for weaving mats. Likewise, katigbi is also called as “tears of Mary” as indeed the fruit also resembles tear drops.

‘Tigbaw’, on the other hand, is a Visayan name for “caves”. Catigbian has five caves with some of them still unexplored and just waiting

for spelunkers. These caves are the Cantalina Cave, the Haguilanan Cave, the Candumayao Cave, the Bongbong Cave, and the Hagbuaya Cave.

‘Kabawan’, a Boholano term, refers to an auction market where carabaos and other livestock animals are traded. Catigbian town, though only covers an area of 11,302 hectares, houses the biggest livestock auction market in the whole of region VII. Livestock buyers from the different towns and cities of Region VII come over to Catigbian every Monday for the best buy of different livestock animals such as carabaos, cows, hogs, and goats.

The “kabaw”, local term for carabao, is the most sought-after animal in this auction market.

This livestock auction market started its operation in 1940. In 2006, it was institutionalized by the town’s council and alongside with it, the “Katigbawan festival” was initiated. The festival is celebrated every 16th of June, the eve of the town’s foundation day.

Of late, the “kabaw” became the centerpiece of the festival. This is because tigbi, although still growing in many areas of the town, has diminished in popularity, while the caves, naturally, could not be brought for the parade.

In this town, the carabao has emerged as one of the most important allies of farmers in the livestock and agriculture industries. Recognizing this enormous contribution of the carabaos, the “Katigbawan festival” highlights the carabaos as prime superstars in this colorful and amusing event.





Here, the “kabaw”, is dressed up to the nines using every material available, indigenous as well as artificial. The carabaos are attended in order to prepare them for the exquisite display of their “beauty” or “kingly” appearance.

They blaze in all their glory with their painted nails, grandiose ‘gowns’ and dresses, extravagant head dresses, colored eyelashes, and complete make-up at that. And like a beauty queen on a ramp, the carabaos are also provided with glittering crowns and fabulous earrings or in the case of the male, they are attired in capes.

After their paramount make-over, they are then summoned for the parade in which each marches grandly followed by barangay officials and some residents of the town. Like royalties, carabao marshals, selected for their big and strong bodies, lead the parade. Each of the 22 barangays has their “king” or “queen” carabao in the parade.

In the recent festival, roars of excitement and applause were heard from the crowd as the “beauty queens” and “mighty kings” gracefully and beautifully ramped along the main streets of the town.

Talent portion came next to the parade. Held at the athletic grounds, the carabaos and their respective handlers

were called to perform right before the audience simultaneously. As peculiar and unbelievable as it was, the carabaos did show-off their talents at the signal of their masters. Some of them knelt, some walked on their knees in forward, backward, and circling motions, and some wriggled. But what made the crowd filled with shrieks, laughter, and amazement was the carabao which danced the ‘cha-cha’ with her master.

In completing the repertoires associated with a ‘beauty pageant’, the judges announced the winners in “best in parade”, “best in costume”, “best in carabao guide”, and “best in talent”.

After the pronouncement of the winners, carabao racing came next to show that carabaos can also run well like horses or cattle.

What also makes the “Katigbawan festival” extraordinary among other carabao festivals is its purpose. Most of the carabao festivals held around the country speak of thanksgiving to the patron saint of the farmers, San Isidro

de Labrador. The Katigbawan fest, on the other hand, is celebrated to honor the carabao itself because of its big help for the farmers in particular and to the town in general.

“The carabao beauty pageant is one of the highlights of this festival to make them kings and queens for a day and receive the accolades of the people because of their big help. We want to give them a break from their daily activities in the farm and mingle with us freely,” Roberto L. Salinas (PN, retired), mayor of Catigbian, said.

“If the carabaos are not included in the festival, then the festival loses its very essence. This is because the carabaos are the ‘pets’ and ‘partners’ of our farmers in most of the farm works. Since Catigbian is an agricultural community, the carabaos are a big help to us,” he added.

The festival is also celebrated to further promote the town’s diverse agricultural products, tourism potentials, the livestock auction market, and cave explorations. 🌐

Every first week of May, the carabaos take the center stage for their importance in another kind. Their bodies become the living canvas of talented artists. The event is the annual “Karbo Festival” in Vigan City, Ilocos Sur.



CARABAOS *as living* Canvas

BY **KHRIZIE EVERT M. MARCELO**
PHOTOS BY **PCC-MMSU**

Vigan is the only World Heritage City in the Philippines recognized by UNESCO World Heritage List of Sites and Monument. It is home to a combination of historic culture and arts of the Biguenos.

Every year, since 1993, Biguenos hold the “Viva Vigan Festival of Arts,” which is a most-awaited summer festival in Northern Luzon.

A weeklong celebration (May 1-May 8), the “Viva Vigan Festival of Arts” include attractions such as “Binatbatan” street dancing, “Calesa” parade, traditional games, religious rituals in honor of the Black Nazarene, fashion shows, exhibits and trade fairs, and of course, one of the most awaited every year, the “Karbo Festival.”

CARABAO AND SEED

The “Karbo festival” is a carabao painting pageantry and an exposition of the abundance of the seed of life showcased in ‘Boklan’ artworks, a mosaic type masterpiece that uses different kinds of seeds as its medium.

The word ‘Karbo’ came from the word ‘karabao’ (carabao) and ‘bokel’ (Ilocano

term for seed).

The festival was conceptualized to recognize the contribution of people behind Vigan’s successful agriculture industry and to give importance to the hardworking carabao.

It was organized in 2004 by the College of Fine Arts of the University of the Northern Philippines in coordination with the City Agricultural Services Office of Vigan.

This year’s theme for the carabao painting activity, held last May 6 was “Kalikasan Alagaan: Pamana sa mga Kabataan”.

“The carabao is used as a medium or canvass where competing artists expressed their creativity in painting the annual theme of the festival,” Ms. Carmen Tacla, one of the event organizers said.

A total of 16 carabaos which came from the Vigan countryside were rented from carabao owners for the whole day’s duration of the festival.

“We tapped the carabaos of our local farmers here for a hiring fee of Php1,500

each, an amount farmers could not earn in a day’s work. We had participating farmers coming from far-flung barangays,” Dr. Liborio Arca, City Veterinarian, said.

He said that they make it a point to have a theme every time they conduct this activity. The theme for this year is about environmental consciousness.

The festival is promoted in tri-media. Artists from Angono, Rizal and other places are tapped to provide assistance to the local government in showcasing this activity and to serve as judges in this event.

The winning piece is adjudged based on the relevance to the theme, audience impact, and conformity to the city’s heritage.

COMPETITION PROPER

As early as six o’ clock in the morning, the carabaos were already being prepared for the big event.

Competing teams were composed of at least five individuals each. They were the local artists from different municipalities in the region and students



of Fine Arts from different schools and colleges.

Materials such as paints were provided to the participants. On the other hand, the teams participating in the contest already handcrafted the floats, made mostly of 'bokel' on a sled which is later pulled by the painted carabaos for the parade.

The contest proper started at 9:00 in the morning. The animals were transformed into a canvas with their body painted with white color as a base for the team's design.

For hours, the artists, using water-based paints labored for their art's design. They did it while the carabaos were lined up in the Nueva Segovia St. around Plaza Salcedo.

After eight hours of painting the artist's obra, the carabaos with different colorful designs, were displayed for the public's appreciation and for the judges' decision.

The winning piece was artistically designed by Efren Sotello, a graduate of Fine Arts at the University of Northern Philippines.

"Madali lang pintahan ang kalabaw. Latex ang ginamit ko. Water-based ito at hindi natatanggal agad, nagbibitak-bitak nga lang pag nagtagal (It's easy to paint on the carabao. I used Latex paint. It's water-based and cannot be removed at once, it just crack after a while)," Sotello said.

He said that he has been joining the contest for five years now. In those years, he only lost once. Included in his team were out-of-school youths in their area that have the passion for learning the art of painting.

His concept was about the conservation of water resources and marine life.

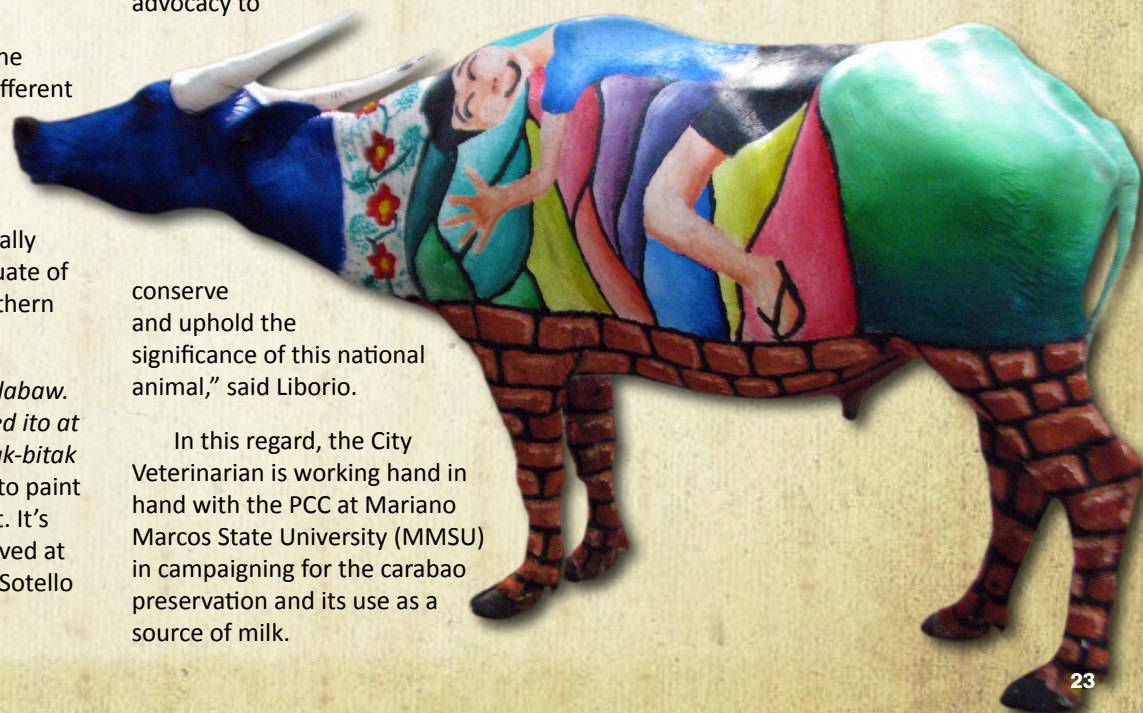
He won Php15,000. The second and third placers received Php10,000 and Php5,000, respectively. The other participants received Php1,000 each as a consolation prize.

"The carabaos seemed to be diminishing in number. The Karbo Festival is not only promoting the animal as a medium of art but it is a kind of an advocacy to



The City was a recipient of 30 dairy-type buffalos including some offsprings.

With the overwhelming public response even in this year's "Karbo Festival", the organizers are now conceptualizing a grander festival next year including the adoption of another appropriate theme. 🐮



conserve and uphold the significance of this national animal," said Liborio.

In this regard, the City Veterinarian is working hand in hand with the PCC at Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU) in campaigning for the carabao preservation and its use as a source of milk.



Pahiyas Festival

A mix of Lucban's carabao-cart parade and grand decoration

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
ROWENA GALANG-BUMANLAG

In Lucban town, in the province of Quezon, a bountiful farm harvest is heralded through the spectacle of a multitude of colors that emanate from various decorations and displays made up of farm products.

The streets are very lively and colorful and the people are in festive mood.

It's "Pahiyas Festival" once again, a century-old and prestigious gaiety held annually in Lucban which never fails to enthrall its audience with its amazing showcase of homegrown creativity immortalized from the Lucbanin's motto: "Yanong rikit, baling ganda".

It simply means "most beautiful".

During the festival period, like last May 15, the narrow and sloping streets of Lucban teemed with locals and tourists

who exuded such magnitude of different emotions in anticipation of witnessing one of the Philippines' grandest festivals.

Every house in the chosen route of the parade was elaborately dressed up with various agro-industrial products and draped with the must-see "arangyas" or chandeliers made of "kiping".

"Kiping" is the famous Lucbanin decoration made of rice dough. It is made by molding a very small quantity of the dough on a leaf to resemble its structure. It is then steamed on bamboo slats over boiling water then dried until

it can be peeled off from the leaf. The dried "kiping" is finally laid on a board and pressed with heavy object to obtain a thinly flat, brilliant-colored rice wafer or crispy.

If "kiping" is made to appear as a wonderful house adornment, the steps on how to make it are very easy, though, especially for Lucbanin experts. The conceptualization of how pieces of the "kiping" should be strung together to become an adorable home ensemble is truly a "Lucbanin's magic".



The usually two-storey-high houses look instantly and colorfully refurbished with the homeowners' touch of great ingenuity using "kiping" as a decor. Other houses are decked with all sorts of farm products such as fruits and vegetables, rice grains, coconut coir, cottage products including "buntal" hats and "buli" weavings, and the famous Lucban "longganisa" or sausage. On certain instances, a family would opt for a head of a suckling pig as the highlight of its masterpiece.

Aside from a piece that forms part of one exquisite house ensemble, "kiping", which is said to be inspired by the "tacos" product of Spain, can also be enjoyed when eaten, either fried or grilled.

Much to the awe of onlookers, the transformation of the houses in the route of the parade into sorts of creative pieces is also complemented by other artful "Pahiyas" displays such as the miniatures that are locally called "anok".

These efforts of the homeowners, from the best dressed-up houses to the best "arangya" and "anok", are rewarded with cash prizes in the friendly competition which they call "Timpalak Pahiyas".

The best dressed-up house or the winner of the "Gawad San Isidro Pahiyas" bags a hefty cash prize of Php100,000. The first, second, and third runners-up get Php50,000, Php40,00, and Php30,000, respectively.

A display of outstanding creativity

Aside from the picturesque view of the roster of dressed-up houses, the highlight of the "Pahiyas" is the grand parade participated in by the local government officials and employees, residents of Lucban, and sponsors of the festival.

For the excited onlookers and tourists who came to Lucban in droves in the last "Pahiyas", the whole stretch of the parade never lose its excitement and color as it was joined by the "parikitan" where the ladies and gentlemen in the town donned their most creative Filipiniana garments called "baro't saya" and "barong Tagalog".

The "parikitan" was followed by yet another showcase of the Lucbanin creativity—the "gayak karosa" and the "bikas gayak"—where carabaos, steered by their respective caretakers in "Pahiyas" uniform, pulled a skillfully-embellished "karosa" or bamboo sled. Just like the houses in the pre-determined "Pahiyas" route, the sleds were decorated with farm and cottage industry products.

Mightily, the carabaos pulled the sled without hassle even in steep slopes. The sleds were laden with lots of vegetables, farm animals such as chicken, fruits, and even kids dressed in their Filipiniana costume.

As its reward for gracefully and

willingly carrying a heavy load, the caretaker splashes cold water to the carabao to ease its discomfort from the scorching heat.

Before joining the parade, the caretaker usually prepares his best animal, polishes its horns, scrubs its body, and lets it rest for it to have the needed energy for the long stretch of the parade.

Some of the carabaos, which joined the parade, stirred a particular crowd due to their acts of genuflecting and turning their heads as if they recognized their hoots and applause. Once the carabaos were on their knees, the camera-toting visitors immediately vied for the best position to capture the moment.

A mirror of a Pre-Hispanic era

The "Lucban San Isidro Pahiyas Festival", which happens every 15th day of May every year, has truly become a period of merriment and healthy competition among Lucbanins. Essentially, though, it is traditionally the liturgical feast of thanksgiving by the residents in honor of Saint Isidore the Laborer for the good harvest.

Before it blossomed to become one of the country's most anticipated and grandest festivities, it used to be just a day of simple gathering of farmers to honor their patron saint. In that particular day, the farmers usually brought the best of their farm products in the church and enjoyed a sumptuous meal together at an appointed time. That practice symbolized a simple thanksgiving to the "anitos" or spirits, which are believed to provide guidance and blessings to the townspeople.

turn to next page ▶



As harvest seasons proved bountiful thereon, the townspeople's belief and devotion to Saint Isidore as God's intercessor in bringing them those blessings intensified.

As time passed by, the volume of farm products brought to the church could no longer be accommodated as they were in big volumes. The townsfolk then decided that their harvests were better placed at the doorsteps of their houses to be blessed by the parish priest during the procession of the images of San Isidro de Labrador and his wife Sta. Maria Toribia dela Cabeza.

That simple celebration of thanksgiving then evolved into bigger event over the years and has become a venue for the neighborhood to outdo each other's way of arranging their farm products. This then prompted the townsfolk to decorate the whole façade of their houses with farm materials.

The grand festival was started in the 1960s by the Art Club of Lucban with its founder and president Fernando Nañawa leading the way. He also coined the word "Pahiyas" which means decoration or to decorate.

The religious feast was then spiced up with an art exhibit, trade fair, parades, various contests and cultural shows. Since then, the initiative undoubtedly boosted

Mightily, the carabaos pulled the sled without hassle even in steep slopes. The sleds were laden with lots of vegetables, farm animals such as chicken, fruits, and even kids dressed in their Filipiniana costume.

tourism in the cool town of Lucban.

Lucban municipal agricultural officer Emerita Villenas said: "I have witnessed the Pahiyas since I was a kid. The festival then, though, was so simple that people were just happy to decorate their houses without vying for a prize."

She continued: "But since the townsfolk learned how to make kiping, the festival has never been as colorful as this."

The grandeur of the "Pahiyas", no doubt, will continue to flourish as the Lucbanins year in and out tirelessly and unselfishly share their spirit of deep love for their cultural heritage and latent creativity.

"Indeed," as Dario Metierre, president of the town's barangay councilors league, said, "when you come to witness the grandiose "Pahiyas" festival, you go home very satisfied and saying to yourself: I will keep coming back." 🗣️

Kneeling Carabaos from page 13

saw. He found Isidore at prayer while two angels were helping him with his field works thus making his work equal to that of three laborers. Struck with awe, the master knelt and prayed before the angels.

San Isidro de Labrador was also known for his goodness toward the poor and animals. He was then called the patron saint of farmers.

Family tradition

Among the residents of Pulilan town, nobody can really tell how this practice of making the carabaos kneel in front of the church started. However, the residents have been doing this practice for many, many years already.

Accounts said that the farmers took it upon themselves to make it a vow to participate in the parade, thus, they make big preparations for this occasion. In fact, many other residents from different towns in Bulacan come over to Pulilan

town just to participate. This tradition continues to be passed on among generations.

Like many other residents here, Augusto Geron, 51, and Renato Soriaga, 56, both from Brgy. Sto. Cristo, Pulilan, who are owners and trainers of kneeling carabaos, said that this tradition was passed on to them by their ancestors centuries back.

Geron owns 15 carabaos. Among his animals, he has a star carabao which he calls "Jamby". "Jamby" was trained for only a month when it was still a year old. Since then, "Jamby" became a "celebrity" not only during the "Kneeling Carabao Fests" but also on other big occasions such as the ASEAN Arts Festival in Clark, Pampanga and Paskuhan Village in Angeles, Pampanga. It was also included in the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Independence Day celebrations for four consecutive years.

Like Geron, Soriaga also owns four kneeling carabaos. He calls one of his star carabaos "Asero". But unlike Geron, he was able to train "Asero" to kneel in only 10 days. Soriaga said that training his carabaos how to kneel was as natural as raising his children.

As he wanted to pass on to his children the "honor and pride", he trained his children how to do it. They are now masters in teaching the carabao how to kneel.

Roberto Atayde, 48, of Brgy. Dulong Malabon, Pulilan, has five female carabaos, all of which were trained to kneel. One of his carabaos, which he calls "Jopay", was trained as early as five months old. "Jopay", Atayde said, was trained for less than a month and since then became one of the stars of the "Kneeling Carabao Festival" for 10 years now.

Normally, Atayde trains his carabaos by tying the left front leg of the animal and slowly pulling it backward letting the animal crouch and eventually kneel. "Jopay", however, only kneels at the signal of his master, Atayde said.

When asked how his carabaos respond to him by only a gentle tap on the animal's back, he said, "*Kailangan*

lang ng tender loving care (It only entails tender loving care)."

Like Soriaga, he also passes on the tradition of training the carabao and participating in the yearly event to his children.

"Dahil nakagisnan na namin ang pagpapaluhod sa mga kalabaw, itinuturo ko rin sa mga anak ko kung paano ito gawin (Since training the carabaos how to kneel has become our tradition, I also teach my children how to do the same), Atayde said.

Support from LGU

The local government unit (LGU) of Pulilan town has been giving its all-out support for this cultural event.

"The Kneeling Carabao Festival remains a tradition among the Pulileños to showcase their rich spiritual values and thanksgiving for a yearly bountiful harvest," Teresita D. Tetangco, municipal information officer of Pulilan, said.

She added, "The LGU supports this festival because it does not only draw major attraction from local and foreign tourists to our town but also, and more importantly, creates unity among its people. It also provides the link to our ancestors who started and nurtured this tradition."

Aside from ensuring security and traffic regulation during the parade, the LGU also provided incentives for those who have participated in the event. Likewise, in partnership with the Philippine Carabao Center, the LGU gave two Murrah buffaloes as a prize for the winners in the best float category competition.

But while the festival brought endless expressions of delight and amazement from the residents of Pulilan and tourists alike, some gave jolting comments.

One onlooker said, which turned the heads of other spectators, "*Mabuti pa ang kalabaw marunong lumuhod at magpasalamat. 'Yung ibang tao marunong pa kaya?*" (The carabaos are better because they know how to kneel and show gratitude. Do other people still care?). 🐾

Isidore was a laborer who was always late in tending to his farm chores yet always finishes his job at the end of the day.

Curious, his master went to the field to investigate what was happening. He was astounded by what he saw. He found Isidore in prayer while two angels were helping him with his field works thus making his work equal to that of three laborers. Struck with awe, the master knelt and prayed before the angels.

San Isidro de Labrador was also known for his goodness toward the poor and animals. He was then called the patron saint of farmers.



Carabao as subject in Angono's *Artworks*

BY **KHRIZIE EVERT M. MARCELO**
PHOTOS BY **JRAMOS**

The combination of great mountain view, fine weather, and other attributes of a great rustic town, must have rubbed on and contributed to the innate talents of many Angono personalities that made big names in the art and music worlds.

Thus, Angono came to be known as the “Art Capital of the Philippines”.

Known for having an excellent concept of artwork that are realistic and imaginative, it is also the hometown of the Two national artists –Carlos “Botong” V. Francisco and Maestro Luis D. San Pedro. They, like many other talented artists in the country, came from a specific place close to the very site where the famous petro glyphs were discovered.

Petro glyphs or stone etchings of human and animal figures found in Angono are considered the oldest known Filipino art stumbled upon by “Botong” Francisco in 1965.

Angono town, aside from being known as the great artists of the country, is also known for its unique religious celebration known as the “Higantes (Giant) Festival” which is carried out in connection with the observance of the “Feast of San Clemente”, the patron saint of town’s fishermen. This festival is held on November 22-23 every year.

Aside from the “Higantes Festival”, Angono also has another festival – a festival in which the town’s farmers, including their families and other residents who benefits from rice, vegetable and other crops farming, gladly participate. It is a festival carried out every May 15 in honor of the feast day of San Isidro de Labrador, the patron saint of the farmers.

This festival’s highlight is a colorful and joyous procession of carabao with their

respective owners riding on them and carabao-pulled carts loaded with myriads of farm products. The carts are adorned with flowers and bunting that made them very colorful.

What catches attention the most, though, is the inclusion in the parade of replicas of carabaos fashioned artistically and colorfully in paper maché.

The concept of parading paper maché-made carabaos originated from the “Higantes Festival”. The “Higantes Festival” is described as a parade of paper maché giants that according to history, was used by the Angono natives during the Spanish time as a form of protest against the Spanish oppressors. The “higantes” are depicted as beings as tall as 14 feet. Different places in the town display on festival day different configurations of “higantes” depending on innovative approaches and type of artworks applied by the residents.

The making of carabao replicas from paper maché was made popular by Jose Pitok Blanco, one of the well-known artists of Angono who was named as the town’s “Master of Folk Genre”.

“It started 15 years ago, when the Blanco family began advocating the feast of San Isidro Labrador as a way of reminding the people of the contribution of the carabao to the economic life of the people involved in farming,” Mayor Geraldo V. Calderon said.

He added that the celebration is a symbolism of how hardworking, patient and a great ally to the farmers the carabao is.

Angono town, Mayor Calderon said, was a big farming area and fishing community before. But because of the increase in population and continuous migration of people from nearby cities, some farmlands were eaten up by subdivisions and business establishments which resulted in the decreasing number of carabaos in the area.

“Evidently, the carabao population in our community are dwindling. Nevertheless, we find it appropriate to accentuate their importance and their great contribution to the economic life of

our farmers and we express it through this festival,” Michael Blanco, third child of the Blanco family and manager of the Blanco Museum, said.

He said they make it a point to join the event yearly to make it more vibrant by making colorful replicas of the carabao’s head and body.

Usually, it takes one week to finish the construction of the carabao replicas. The paper machés use bamboo and fiber glass frames, chicken wires, and papers. They are painted once the figures are completed.

Fabrics of different colors are also used to cover the body. Each replica costs Php5,000-Php6,000 to make. Michael usually shoulders the expenses as part of his contribution as an artist to the festival.

“It is a unique artwork found only here in Angono. We want the next generation to appreciate this endeavor and then improve it if they have new ideas to make it more interesting in the years to come,” he added.

The painter’s family housed its vast collection of paintings in the Blanco private museum. Some of these collections featured the carabaos and their owner as the painting’s subject.

The head of the clan has obviously handed down his talent and creativity to his seven children. His wife also paints and all of them are realism painters which means their artworks are depicted as they appear in everyday life.

In last May 15 celebration, the program included parade of carabao, and carabao carts carrying local produce, procession of their patrons, role-playing of the life of San Isidro de Labrador, pro-environment activities and kite fest and fireworks display.

As an advocate of tourism, Mayor Calderon assured that he will give his utmost support in promoting festivals like those being held in his town.

“Part of our strategies here is participatory governance. Since we are promoting art tourism and eco-tourism here in Angono, we see to it that we develop a strong partnership in our non-



A colorful paper maché of giant carabaos and vegetables are showcased in the Angono’s “San Isidro de Labrador Festival”, which depict its rich agricultural land.

government organization and private group that advocate programs like this,” he said.

He added that Angono, for sure, will continuously highlight the carabao in its festival as they give a lot of help for the people and community. 🌱

Carabaos, too, are stars in festivals from page 11

May 15, in the Catholic church's liturgical calendar, is the feast day of the farmer's patron saint, San Isidro de Labrador (Saint Isidore the Laborer).

In celebration of St. Isidore's feast day, the farmers see to it that their major products as well as the agro-industrial products that are either distinctively or commonly produced in the host town are showcased either in the parade or exhibits. Cottage industry products, too, are flaunted.

But as a natural course of action, the carabao figures prominently in these activities.

Some of the provinces that are showcasing the carabao during their annual religious festival include Pulilan, Bulacan; Angono, Rizal; and Lucban, Quezon.

In Pulilan, the popular "The Kneeling Carabao Festival" never fails to draw an influx of tourists due to the dramatic display of particular "talents" of the

carabaos participating in the festival. This particular festival is a "show of religiosity" of the townsfolk which they apparently passed on to their carabaos as the animals, with the signal of their caretaker, genuflect right in front of the church.

The "San Isidro Festival" in Angono is unique on its own. Aside from a parade of carabaos, pulling carts loaded with various farm products as their caretakers rode their backs, a showcase of the animal is done in an artful fashion—a parade of carabao's replica in colorful paper maché.

Another grand show of the arts, in which the carabao is the main star of the event, and perhaps the most prestigious and the grandest of all San Isidro de Labrador festivals, is the "Lucban San Isidro Pahiyas Festival."

The colorful parade, which is usually dominated by pastel and bright colors, is interspersed with a tint of a different color—jet black or sometimes dark brown and albino. That "other color" is provided by a convoy of the best carabaos in town.

Harnessed artistically to embellished carts loaded with farm products, the carabaos are ushered by their respective caretakers through the course of the parade.

At some anticipated moments in the long procession, some of the carabaos flaunt their talent in genuflecting, an act that never fails to stir further the already excited crowd.

Other carabao festivals on other dates, simply put the animal in the limelight of their annual fiesta as a tribute to and recognition of the animal's remarkable and reliable works as the farmer's dependable buddy in the farm.

Such occasions can be witnessed in the "Turogpo Festival" in Carigara, Leyte; "Carabao-Carroza Festival" in Pavia, Iloilo; "Viva Vigan Festival of Arts" in Vigan City, Ilocos Sur; and "Katigbawan Festival" in Catigbian, Bohol.

The "Turogpo Festival", another crowd-stirring show, is held every Black Saturday of the Lenten Season. It is a well-attended

Turogpo Festival from page 20

"We now limit the number of challengers to 10 pairs of carabao and three pairs of horses coming from the different barangays to maximize the prize awards," Rañin disclosed. "The qualified challengers are selected based on their strength regardless of age," he added.

From being merely an event for pure entertainment, the giving of prizes for the winner of the carabao fight started in 1982, the barangay captain said. The local government, he added, extend their assistance by providing financial support for this gathering.

Evidently, only bamboo-made fences were installed in the venue. This made

the people more prone to stampede and ever ready to scuttle for safety when the clashing carabaos start running away.

According to Mike Tades from Florida, USA, this was his first time to watch the "Turogpo festival." "I enjoyed watching it; it was very exciting. But I got worried for the people when the carabaos ran toward the crowd," he said.

Celestino Nagan, who is a native of Brgy. Piloro, Carigara who had won the event twice since he took part in this event for a decade got only the consolation prize this time.

"I entered a four-year old carabao in this festival. I started training it one month before the fight. I fed it with freshly-cut sugarcane leaves and did not

harness it for farm work for a month's time," Celestino said in his native dialect.

He added: "It was not for fame why I join this contest but more for the fun of it. But certainly, when you win, it means your carabao stayed longer than its opponent in the arena during the fight. Some of my carabaos were wounded before but the more they got hurt, the stronger they got," he said.

Virgilio Garcia, 38, said that his carabao has been competing in the festival for six years now and on each occasion, he took home prizes. "I join the festival for fun, and I feel proud every time my carabao wins the fight," he said.

Other farmers from his barangay (San Isidro, Carigara) joined the event. But no

These festivals, evolving from simple celebrations of thanksgiving to big town events, mirror the very soul of the townspeople. They are a culture passed through generations which the residents want to continue and which the tourists always raring to see.

The popularization of the accounts of these events only shows that the social role of the carabao will always be given prime importance and its glory will never cease to radiate, even as the grandeur of modernization sets in.

bull fighting event whose beginnings can be traced back to the 1600s as an entertaining way of protesting against the rule of the Spaniards in the country.

Pavianhons in Iloilo, on the other hand, give the carabao a “day’s break”. This gave birth to the occasion of the “Carabao-Carroza Festival”, which is now approaching its fourth decade of celebration. The event is a showcase of the Pavianhon’s ingenuity as they make use of local materials to decorate a carroza or sled harnessed to an equally dressed-up carabao.

Another artistic way of utilizing the carabao to illustrate the Filipino’s deep love for cultural heritage is seen in the “Viva Vigan Festival of Arts” in Ilocos Sur. In this festival, the carabao’s whole body becomes a canvass for Ilocandia’s finest artists where they demonstrate their exceptional talent and impressive creativity in a competition. The outcome is a masterpiece that is created out of genuine artistry.

Just like the Ilocandia region, Bohol also prides itself as a premiere tourist destination. In fact, in its Catigbian town,

the holding of its annual “Katigbawan Festival” has become a must-see event among local tourists.

In this festivity, the carabaos are hailed as “kings and queens”. They are dressed up with human garments and adorned with the most creative ornaments imaginable before they are paraded through the town.

Some designers even opt to provide the animal a few props, like sunglasses and handbag, to complete the animal’s fabulous look. 🐾

luck for Mang Virgilio this time as he only ramped off a consolation prize.

Dismissing the poor showing of his carabao as just part of the game, he is determined in joining next year’s “Turogpo”.

“I still look forward to joining the Turogpo next year and hopefully I will win,” Mang Virgilio said.

The carabao of Joel Inalisan, 30, was declared the overall champion of the carabao fight. His animal, however, was wounded near the eye.

“Even if I won the first prize, I would only use it to buy medicine for my animal’s injury,” he said. He said he would not use the animal for farm work in a month’s time to allow the wound to heal

first.

This one day affair also provides extra income to the residents of Camansi. Other than the main attraction, visitors tasted local delicacies sold at the improvised food joints made out of nipa shingles that sprouted near the bullfighting arena.

A feast to the eyes and even the nose were arrays of red-orange, juicy lechon (roasted pigs) and other products offered for sale to the public. Lechon, along with dishes out of carabao and cow’s meat, were favorite foods. Fish and halo-halo were also saleable.

A DOT-registered festival, Brgy.Capt. Rañin hopes to improve further the event and make the venue more comfortable for the enlarging crowd.

Officials of the Provincial Government of Leyte said they will continue supporting the development of tourism in promoting festivals around Leyte.

“We are asking you to support our festivals by spreading the word about them to your family and friends in other places in the country as well as in abroad. Tourism oftentimes works best through word of mouth and it entails no cost at all,” Mayor Trinidad Apostol said.

He said that after this festival, he hoped that the residents of Carigara would have a renewed sense of appreciation for the freedom and democracy that everybody now enjoys. “Turogpo”, he said, is just a sign of protest for the stepping on the rights and privileges of people during the Spanish time. 🐾



A herd of dairy buffaloes splurges in a pool of cool rain water at the range area of PCC at Ubay Stock Farm in Ubay, Bohol.

(Photo by RGBumanlag)