

PRIVILEGE SPEECH

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NEW YEAR OF HOPE

By Councilor Pilar C. Braga, PhD

As we welcome the New Year 2009, we bid the year that was 2008 goodbye with gratefulness in our hearts for all the past year's bounty in terms of work accomplished, goals achieved, growth in terms of meaningful relationships and outreach services. Politically, we are indeed happy that with Mayor Rodrigo Duterte and Vice Mayor Sara Duterte at the helm, the "ship of state" is steering very well in smooth and rough waters.

Davao City continues to enjoy an unprecedented peace and order, thus, making our beloved city a haven for investors and again one of the "Most Liveable Cities in Asia."

And on a personal note... allow me to thank you, my colleagues, especially our Vice Mayor, and all the people who have touched my life and have been the source of my strength and inspiration for me to be able to carry on with my duty as your public servant.

While we rejoice over our victories of 2008, the year just past caught us in a web of crisis (the rice crisis, the oil crisis, the economic crisis) and not to mention some scandals (ZTE scandal, fertilizer scam, etc.).

The oil crisis had badly hit every country in the world. Oil prices in the global market, which soared to \$147 in July 2008, has since plummeted to \$33 early last month which brought down the prices of pump gasoline, diesel and LPG drastically, a cause for rejoicing by all Filipinos. But a word of caution though.

We are not yet off the hook or we are not yet over the hump, so to speak.

This means that the Philippines remains in the shadow of the oil crisis spectre. And we cannot get out of the shadow by just waiting for oil prices to fall. The problem lies not only in the prices, which rise and fall beyond our control. I think the problem lies in our heavy reliance on imported fuels for our energy needs. We need to achieve energy security and energy self-sufficiency.

Thus, Madame President, in the light of the energy crisis, we have reason to rejoice for 2009 and beyond because finally Congress (the Lower House and Senate) has passed the Renewable Energy Bill into law, now known as Republic Act 9513, would boost the country's bid to become 60% energy self-supporting by 2010.

With the Renewable Energy Act, our government can now move more aggressively to develop our energy sources. The law provides the legal and institutional framework for harmonizing policies on the development of geothermal, hydropower, solar, biomass, wind and ocean energy technologies.

It seeks to encourage the use of such sources as a means to cut harmful emissions, and strike a balance between economic growth and environmental protection.

A study by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the University of the Philippines National Engineering Center showed that the country could save more than \$2.9 million from non-importation of fossil fuel by increasing the country's renewable energy share in generating power to 41 percent. The Renewable Energy Coalition said renewable sources could reduce by half the country's oil imports, which totalled \$7.5 billion last year.

In a statement, Von Hernandez, Greenpeace Southeast Asia executive director, said the law was a sign that the country was on track of achieving an “energy revolution,” which could wean the country away from its dependence on fossil fuels and move to a “low-carbon emissions economy.”

So while 2009 promises more difficult times ahead due to the global economic melt-down (and not to mention the on-going hostilities at Gaza), there is at least a glimmer of hope for us in Davao City because the City officialdom led by our Mayor has prepared a package of infrastructures and socio-economic programs and projects worth Php 3 Billion to address the onslaught of the economic hard times.

Thus, hope springs eternal that things will turn out right. We managed to survive 2008, and by God’s grace we will go through 2009 with flying colors.

Thank you, Madam President.

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