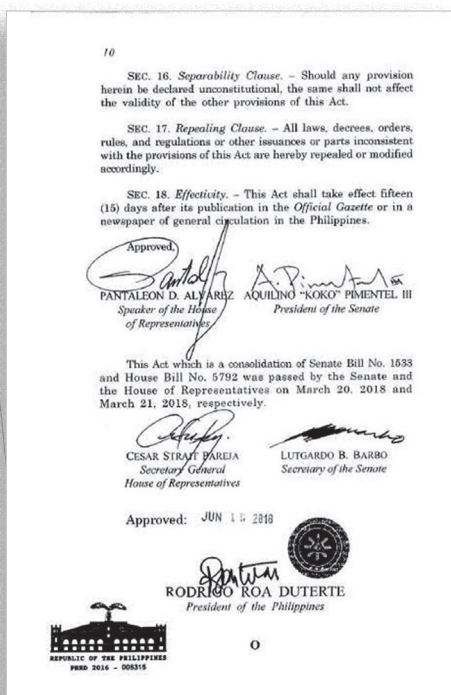
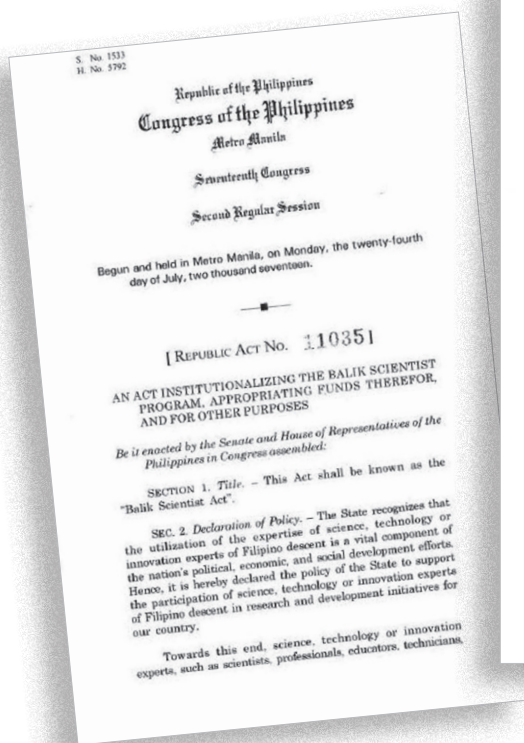


10 years of bringing
S&T good news

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President Duterte signs Balik Scientist Act

By Allan Mauro V. Marfal, DOST-STII



Science and technology in the country scored another milestone with the signing of the Balik Scientist law by President Rodrigo Roa A. Duterte on 15 June 2018. Republic Act No. 11035, also known as an “Act Institutionalizing the Balik Scientist Program,” would give more incentives to returning Filipino experts, scientists, inventors, and engineers who would share their expertise in the country.

The enacted law would strengthen the implementation of the Department of Science and Technology’s (DOST) Balik Scientist Program which was first established in 1975 through Presidential Decree No. 819 but was only implemented in 1986. Since its implementation, several scientists have

come back to the country on short- and long-term basis to mentor science and engineering students and faculty along their line of expertise through research and development, teaching, and other activities. This sharing of expertise significantly contributed to the acceleration of the scientific, agro-industrial, and economic development of the country.

Through the Balik Scientist law, a returning scientist can participate in DOST’s Grants-in-Aid research and development. A grant may be provided to the Balik Scientist and released through the host institution for the implementation of the project in accordance with relevant government regulations and the need of the program involved.

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DOST-NCR turns over therapeutic handlooms to Guanella Center

By Rodolfo P. De Guzman, DOST-STII

If music is soothing and has a calming effect on people, the art of weaving is also considered by some to have the same effect. By indulging in the art of weaving, just like any hobby, one creates a certain aura of creative satisfaction.

This is true for the children of Guanella Center Inc., who find meaning in the art of weaving colorful and intricately designed fabrics using modified therapeutic handlooms.

On 11 June 2018, the center received 10 units of the modified four-harness therapeutic handlooms from the Department of Science and Technology-National Capital Region (DOST-NCR), a project intended to assist the Guanella Center to enhance its educational program for children with special needs.

“The DOST-NCR looked for someone to fabricate the weaving machines using wood and stainless steel, and together with the Philippine Textile Research Institute of the DOST, we redesigned, tested, and redesigned it [again] to make it appropriate for our intended users,” said DOST-NCR Director Jose B. Patalinjug III.

DOST Secretary Fortunato T. de la Peña personally turned over the looms to Fr. Eduardo G. Cerbito, SDC, president of Guanella Center.

“With the use of technology and innovation, we get to help the specially-abled persons and provide them with many opportunities, like this therapeutic handloom that can create products that can be marketed so they also earn. The DOST is always here to support them in terms of design creation, training and many more,” said Sec. de la Peña.

The modified therapeutic handloom is an innovation from the DOST-Philippine Textile Research Institute (DOST-PTRI) that has been, for years, promoting the use of traditional weaving equipment especially designed for the users, and the adoption of natural fibers

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Aside from that, a Balik Scientist can also enjoy various compensations that include tax and duty exemptions to importation of professional equipment and materials, free medical and accident insurance covering the award period, reimbursement of expenses for baggage related to scientific projects, and even exemption from “renouncing their oath of allegiance to the country where they took the oath.”

The benefits also include special working and non-working visas, a round-trip airfare from a foreign country to the Philippines, exemption from local travel tax, and DOST-subsidized visa application.

Also under the bill, long-term Balik Scientist awardees can enjoy relocation benefits, such as support in securing job opportunities for the spouse of the awardee, and admission support for the children of awardees in preferred schools, relocation allowance and monthly housing or accommodation allowance, and funding for the establishment and development of a facility or laboratory.

“Malaking tulong ang batas na ito upang mahikayat ang mga Pinoy scientist na bumalik sa bansa at tumulong sa pagpapaunlad sa bayan at sa buhay ng mga Pilipino. Matutugunan din ng batas na ito ang kakulangan ng bansa sa scientists, upang makasabay na tayo sa ating mga kapitbahay sa Asya na mas marami ang nagtatrabaho sa research and development,” said Senator Paolo Benigno “Bam” Aquino IV, the principal sponsor and author of the said bill.

(This law is a big help in encouraging Filipino scientists to return to the country and contribute to improve the nation and people’s lives. This law addresses the problem on the low number of scientists in the country so we can fare better with our neighboring countries in Asia who have more people working in research and development.)

Meanwhile, after its passage in the bicameral session last March, Secretary Fortunato T. de la Peña said that it is very crucial to strengthen the Balik Scientist Program of the DOST because we have areas that lack experts such as space technology and artificial intelligence which are just starting. He believes that having enough

human resource in these fields would help the country in conducting various research and development projects in these areas.

The bill also states that the Balik Scientist Program will prioritize experts in the fields of space, technology, artificial intelligence, biomedical engineering, energy, agriculture, food technology, biotechnology, information and communications technology, pharmaceutical, disaster mitigation and management, environment and natural resources, electronics, genomics, health, manufacturing, nanotechnology, cyber security, and semiconductors.

The law also requires DOST to ensure that the results of scientific and technological activities are properly applied and used.

The counterparts of Sen. Aquino in the House of Representatives in sponsoring this bill are Zamboanga del Norte 1st District Representative Seth Frederick R. Jalosjos, Zamboanga del Sur 1st District Representative Divina Grace C. Yu, and Bohol 2nd District Representative and chair of Science and Technology Committee Erico Aristotle C. Aumentado.

DOST-NCR turns...

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and dyes. This equipment has four harnesses instead of the usual two and the physical dimension was modified to be easily operated, handled, and maintained.

The loom was fabricated by Danilyn’s Enterprises, Inc. with the design provided by DOST-PTRI and funded by the DOST-NCR. Incidentally, Danilyn’s is also one of the companies that the DOST-NCR assisted through its flagship program called the Small Enterprises Technology Upgrading Program or SETUP. This also mirrors the DOST’s thrust to synergize its development programs to achieve inclusive growth.

“This project provided a wonderful opportunity for collaboration and now it can be duplicated in other areas like in Albay and Tacloban. Like what we did in VSA (St. Francis School-VSA Arts of the Philippines, Inc.), it was very touching. Using the therapeutic handloom is meditative and the art of weaving gives you time for reflection also,” said DOST-PTRI Director Celia B. Elumba.

According to Dir. Elumba, the therapeutic handloom was first conceptualized some 20 years ago and was designed for soldiers who were paraplegic because it hastens the rehabilitation of the wounded soldiers by helping uplift their spirits.

Some senior citizens and handloom recipients also demonstrated the weaving process.

For the children of Guanella Center, the modified therapeutic handloom will surely



Josie Garlitos (center) of the DOST-PTRI assists one of the young weavers on how to operate the loom during the turnover ceremonies of the 10 modified therapeutic handlooms to the Guanella Center, Inc. by DOST-NCR. Looking on are DOST-NCR Director Jose B. Patalinjug III, DOST-PTRI Director Celia B. Elumba, and DOST Secretary Fortunato T. de la Peña. The DOST-NCR provided the funding requirements for the local fabrication of the looms while DOST-PTRI assisted in designing the four-harness handloom model tailor fit for differently-abled children of the center. (Photo by Gerardo Palad/ Text by Rodolfo P. de Guzman, DOST-STII)

open more opportunities both in overcoming their limitations and providing them with additional income as they create works of art for local and international buyers.

For the DOST-NCR and DOST-PTRI, this project affirms that science, technology, and innovation are powerful tools in creating positive change and in bringing new meaning to the lives of Filipinos.

DOST launches unified food safety training modules

By Sheila Marie Anne J. de Luna, DOST-STII



Dr. Alonzo A. Gabriel (left) and DOST Sec. Fortunato T. de la Peña (right) present the unified food safety training modules after the unveiling ceremony.

Food safety trainings nationwide will soon use modules that are unified across all agencies and regions. Said modules are the results of years of research and development by food safety experts in the country.

On 8 June 2018, the Department of Science and Technology DOST-CALABARZON launched the DOST Unified Food Safety Training Modules for micro, small and medium enterprise at the DOST-Metals and Industry Research and Development Center auditorium in Bicutan, Taguig City.

With funding from DOST-Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development, DOST-CALABARZON spearheaded the project which aimed to develop unified food safety training modules intended for (micro, small and medium enterprises) (MSMEs). According to DOST-CALABARZON, the main objective of unifying the food safety modules is to standardize the training materials that the 17 regions are using in their food safety trainings.

The modules are also a result of the project, "DOST Unified Safety Training Modules for MSMEs," which is a deliverable of the DOST participants in the "Training Program on Strengthening National Food Control System: Assuring Food Safety, Quality, and Traceability with Focus on Innovative Food Testing Technologies," held at the Nanyang Polytechnic Singapore.

In his keynote message, DOST Secretary Fortunato T. de la Peña said that the development of the unified training modules is an effort to

contribute to the attainment of numbers two and three of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, namely "Zero Hunger" and "Good Health and Well-being."

"DOST has made sure that the research and development (R&D) on food fall within our National Harmonized R&D Agenda," said Sec. de la Peña. He also sees the unified training modules as a factor that can help reduce inequality among people, with MSMEs benefitting from it.

Initially intended to be used by the DOST Food Safety Teams (FSTs), the unified training modules will also be translated to Filipino and Visayan dialects to improve teaching and learning.

DOST-CALABARZON Regional Director Alexander Madrigal said that they will also work for the recognition of the modules by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) as the preferred training modules for food safety compliance officers to comply with Republic Act 10611 or the Food Safety Act of 2013.

At the launch, Dir. Madrigal emphasized how various agencies collaborated to develop the training modules to help address the knowledge needs of food MSMEs. "Food modules are relevant to the needs of MSMEs in practicing food safety to ensure that the food they produce are safe," said Dir. Madrigal. He added that the unified food safety training modules will allow MSMEs to comply with the food standards mandated by

the Food Safety Act of 2013, which requires the provision of assistance to food supply chains for them to comply with the food safety requirements and regulations.

Dr. Alonzo A. Gabriel, professor from the College of Home Economics, University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman, shared the process that the project development team went through in developing the unified training modules. Dr. Gabriel said that the training modules developed were for Basic Food Hygiene, Food Safety Hazards, and Good Manufacturing Practices, and are composed of training presentations, teachers' manual, learners' manual, and examination booklet.

The unveiling of the DOST Unified Food Safety Training Modules was led by Sec. de la Peña together with officials and representatives from the DOST, DA, FDA, UP Diliman, and the Department of Trade and Industry.

FSTs and food safety trainers will have to wait a little longer before they can finally take hold of the manuals as the project team will still work for the application of copyright for the modules, finalize the translated versions, draft guideline for its use and distribution, and seek recognition of the manuals from the Food Safety Regulation Coordinating Board. (With information from DOST-CALABARZON)

ABOUT US

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AghamBayan, an industry-government-academe innovation collaboration

By Geraldine Bulaon-Ducusin, DOST-STII

AghamBayan, a recently concluded festival on technology and innovation brought together industry leaders, members of the academe, and government officials. The event, held on 21 June 2018, intends to showcase the contributions of the scientific community to nation-building. It was a collaboration between the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the University of the Philippines (UP).

The industry sector vouched for and commended DOST and UP for all the innovations they developed together that greatly impact the Filipinos' everyday living.

Abraham F. Pascual, chairman of the board of Pascual Laboratories, Incorporated, shared how in a large part their company is what it is today because of the trust and partnership he had with the government. The UP and Pascual Laboratories partnership started way back in the 1990s when DOST and UP first developed an herbal medicine which was hard to sell to the doctors in the beginning. But today, after two decades, the product has proven effective and more than fifty percent of the doctors now believe in the product.

The event also witnessed the partnership agreement entered into between UP and East-West Seed for the papaya F1 hybrid "Sinta," the



From L-R: DOST Undersecretary Rowena L. Guevara, DTI Secretary Ramon M. Lopez, DOST Secretary Fortunato T. de la Peña, UP Pres. Danilo L. Concepcion, and Ayala Corporation's Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala. (Photo by Henry A. De Leon, DOST-STII)

first Philippine-bred hybrid papaya. It is semi-dwarf in profile, yet sweet.

Aside from government and academic leaders, some of the major industry players who attended the event were Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala of the Ayala Corporation; Roberto C. Amores, chair of Agriculture and Fishery

Committee, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Atty. Mike T. Toledo, head of the MVP Group of Companies Media Bureau; Dan Lachica, president of the Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines Foundation, Inc.; and Philip Ong of the San Teh Feeds Corporation, among others.

inFocus



S&T Journey 60 Years and Beyond

Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Secretary Fortunato T. de la Peña delivers his keynote message before scientists, researchers, academicians, former and present officials, and employees of different DOST agencies and regional offices at the 60th anniversary celebration of DOST. The event, themed "S&T Journey 60 Years and Beyond," was held at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City on 13 June 2018. In his message, Sec. de la Peña emphasized the significant contributions of different projects and services of the DOST in the past six decades, particularly in the fields of science and technology scholarship, agriculture, healthcare services, disaster preparedness management, and enterprise development. These are all designed to bring inclusive development in all areas of the country. (Text by Allan Mauro V. Marfal and photo by Henry A. de Leon DOST-STII).