

FROM A LOCAL'S POINT OF VIEW

Despite the gloom of the world economy, the Philippines is doing relatively OK. We locals notice that right away. One reason is that most Filipinos are relatively poor to start with, and unlike those in America, have little credit card debt, mortgage or car payments, and therefore don't live on credit. And as to jobs, well, whatever few there are, they still are there; no massive layoffs. Recent news articles from the World Bank, Deutch Bank and a few others echo the same observation. The palpable fear that seems to pervade the US is not felt here.

During this Christmas season, it's all spend, spend, as it has been in the past - with the extra income from the mandatory 13th month pay. If Tanjay City is to be taken as any indication, then local government must have lots of money: city employees are getting anywhere from 10 to 30 grand extra bonus. And on top of that, GMA is giving an additional 10 grand to each and every gov't employee nationwide. Remittances from OFWs and the income from VAT helps keep the economy primed. Cost of fuel (gas, diesel, LPG, kerosene) has gone down, and even rice (from the highs of 6 months ago) has dropped considerably.

So life goes on, with its slow and easy pace.

Many sections on the provincial roads are undergoing upgrades, even if some sections appear perfectly good to start with. As we understand it, that's part of the scheduled infrastructure. As to whether some entities make extra money, that's part of the game it seems; at least more money circulates. Many of the asphalt hardtops are giving way to concrete ribbons of road, even in the byways and backways, where one sees surprising results.



The picture on the left shows rice being dried on mats placed on the concrete just 2 km from Tanjay towards the inland town of Pamplona. The one below shows the rough ride at one of the main roads in Dumaguete, and the lower left photo shows a bridge detour just before Tanjay.



But my best photo on the left shows who really is king of the road. Not a gaggle of geese, but a flock of ducks. This is just past the wet rice fields known as Palanguyan, which has the root word for swim.

Danny Gil, Dec 2008