

PRESS RELEASE**Briones to NFOT hopefuls: Don't forget you are Filipinos**

DAGUPAN CITY, January 30, 2019 – Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones urged the approximately 3,500 delegates of this year's National Festival of Talents (NFOT) from the 17 regions of the country to never lose their identity and soul as Filipinos.

"As you exhibit your works—the works of your hands, the works of your minds, the expression of your souls, don't forget you are Filipinos," the Education chief emphasized during her keynote address for the NFOT 2019 opening ceremonies held at the Jimmy L. Fernandez CSI Stadia in Dagupan City.

Hard and soft sciences

Briones likewise pointed out that there is, indeed, a lot of catching up to do in science and technology, physics, engineering, and mathematics, which she referred to as the "hard sciences." These, she stressed, should always be balanced with the "soft sciences," which include literature, history, culture, and the arts.

"We have to maintain our soul—that which makes us different from the robots, and that which makes us different from other life forms," she told the participants consist of technical-vocational-livelihood (TVL) specialists, young artists and performers, language enthusiasts, and other talented learners.

Briones also emphasized the Department's commitment to the development of 21st century learners who are not only into science, technology, robotics, space, and genetics, but also express themselves through music, dance, and other artistic means and platforms.

Sharing of soul, culture

In conclusion, the Education secretary encouraged the NFOT hopefuls to have a good time, meet fellow Filipinos with different cultures, learn from each other, and share their souls, music, and works of art: "And what makes the Filipino soul? Of course, it's our culture, our talent, our history, and our capacity to survive."

True to its theme, "Celebrating Diversity through the Performance of Talents and Skills for Sustainable Inclusive Education," the NFOT 2019 opened with *Bayle sa Kalye*—a street dance skills exhibition reflective of the regions' culture, history, and legacy.

The individual and group contests on Technolympics (TVL education), *Sining Tanghalan (Music and Arts)*; National Population Development for Social Studies (*Araling Panlipunan*); *Pambansang Tagisan ng Talento sa Filipino*, the Nationwide Song Writing and Choral Group Competition co-sponsored by DepEd and the Rotary Club of Manila, and *language skills competitions* (Special Program in Foreign Language) were conducted in various venues in Dagupan City including the CSI Stadia, Dagupan City National High School, and the Division Training Center. Other venues include the University of Pangasinan-PHINMA and West Central School I. Another highlight of the NFOT's opening day include the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the regional bazaars held at the CSI Stadia helipad.

The opening festivities were also attended by Undersecretary Lorna Dig Dino, Assistant Secretary Alma Ruby Torio, Bureau of Learning Delivery (BLD) Director Leila Areola, Bureau of Curriculum Development (BCD) Director Joyce Andaya, Bureau of Learning Resources (BLR) Director Edel Carag, Bureau of Educational Assessment (BEA) Director Nelia Benito, Region I Director Malcolm Garma, Dagupan City Schools Division Superintendent Lorna Bugayong, Dagupan City Mayor Belen Fernandez, and other DepEd and local government officials.

Led by the BLD-Student Inclusion Division (SID), NFOT continues to serve as a venue to showcase the richness of Filipino culture and the diversity of learners' skills and talents through their products, services, and performances.

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