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## BALAYEÑOS HAIL THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

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*Celebrating fiesta is part and bundle of Filipino culture. Through good times and bad times, the fiesta must go on to honor the local Roman Catholic patron saints and pay homage to the barrio`s namesake for good harvest and health and to feel the happiness of camaraderie.*

Balayan`s town fiesta is on the feast of Immaculate Conception held annually on December 8, it is a festive of pageantry. The Immaculate Conception was the conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her womb free from original sin. When December 8 falls on Sunday the feast of Immaculate Conception is celebrated on December 9 instead.

December 8, is a holy day of obligation for Filipino Catholic. In Balayan, Batangas, this special day is popularly known as "Fista ng Bayan" connoting the religious celebration which culminates in an event called "Feast of Immaculate Conception." As the first day of December started, different activities were held every day/ night, until day of celebration come. Some of the activities were the DepEd night, and novena mass where in the school administrators, teachers, and pupils were involved. Mutya ng Balayan, Ms. Teen, and Kalle Basa were also the awaited activities during this feast. The activities exemplify the vitality of Balayan as they cater various talents and being a religious one which shows the richness of our culture.

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# INSTABRIGHT e-GAZETTE

ISSN: 2704-3010

Volume V, Issue IV

May 2024

Available online at <https://www.instabrightgazette.com>



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Procession of the saints was the highlight of the celebration, while Our Lady of Immaculate Conception was wearing a very expensive ivory colored dress with a blue mantle and brilliant sequence. After the procession, there was a "LUWA" and a mass in Immaculate Conception Parish Church, a major religious structure of Balayan, to honor Our Lady of Immaculate Conception.

In the unexpected day that the occasion is also the day when the typhoon Ruby resulted in the apprehension of the people that made them to evacuate from their homes. Even though the celebration faced a lot of challenges, the Balayenos survived from the threat brought by nature.

It is in God's grace, the solemnized feast of our Virgin Immaculate exemplifies goodness and mercy, the typhoon just dropped by to shower the devotees with overflowing love and blessings. With God's abiding power, the feast brought the people into a safe and calm place to celebrate.

Suffice and proud to say, the feast was successfully perfect indeed.

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