

## TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA

■ Polo



## The Rub of Oregonians, settled and new

Portland is an American gateway. Sure we are. This city, our confluence of two generous river matriarchs — just 60 urgent salmon miles from that grand clockwise Pacific sweep of peoples, products, and ideas — has been circulating a world of wealth since memory began. Ask all those Indian nations already living and loving here 14,000 years ahead of President Jefferson's Corps of Discovery showing up. Hungry and wet and looking for the sea.

So every now and then, especially times like now — times when terrorized Latin-Americans kids are asking Oregonians for asylum; times when West African Ebola fills morning news; when our state's first lady admits to fraudulently marrying an Ethiopian student — we really need to reaffirm this old-old reality. River City is a global hub. We always have been.

And naturally, every hub has a lot of rub. Contrary cultures elbow to elbow, make

some beautiful noise. It's the contagious joy of Mexican salsa and Eire river dance. It's the serenity of Vedic chants slipping out of hip yoga studios and onto our morning city streets. According to 2012 data from the Migration Policy Institute, the rub of our state's free market with Oregon's shamelessly ambitious Asians adds \$6.1 billion and 26,779 jobs to our region's rapidly globalizing economy. Every year. Our stubbornly optimistic Spanish-speaking families' annual rub adds another \$8.4 billion dollars and 13,916 jobs to our noisy lives.

Having said all this about what's always been true about our gateway for resourceful dreamers and doers, let me set out a simple roadmap for integrating Oregon's 70 ethnic streams into our robust mainstream. It's what our raucous crew does daily.

It is, of course, a work-in-progress on a noisy two-way street. Our work is a

mélange made of messy homegrown American democracy, plus Old World civility — the sincerity and resilience so culturally central to our immigrants' sending countries, no matter how mean or meaningless the governments that sent us packing.

Daily, in some of Portland's grimmest neighborhoods, partnerships of city staff, immigrant and refugee elders and civic activists, deliver two kinds of very valuable products. The first is democracy. The second is critical and kind city services — the product of what city commissioner Amanda Fritz calls "all of us participating in democracy." Our mainstream/ethnic-stream rub. Each partnership is a hub.

About democracy. Refugees chased out by Somalia's warlords, refugees fleeing gangsters ruling the failed states of Mexico as badly as those running republics of the former Soviet Union: Love this stuff. This noise.

Participating in local governance is a dream come true. It's my wife and tireless teachers together securing our kids' wealth; it's our civic activists developing recreation services, ensuring our neighborhood's health; it's our ethnic-stream elders and our city's careful watershed stewards cultivating far-eastside community gardens, to make up for no grocery stores in sight. Democracy is well-lit sidewalks during Oregon's dark winter.

Democracy energizes America's dreamers, even after a long day of hammering shingles and scrubbing others'

hotel bathrooms. It's a high shared by local government's very best public servants.

Portland-style democracy is our fundamental first big bite into integrating our many energetic ethnic streams and our robust mainstream. It is the beautiful two-way rub of our newcomers and those of us taking democracy for granted.

On an overcast 1805 afternoon, the Corps of Discovery showed up wet and hungry in a metro area more populous than St. Louis, Missouri, the city that sent them off. U.S. Army captains Lewis and Clark walked into politics and economics characteristic of every complex cosmopolitan hub, everywhere.

There was rub, lots of it, among already robust American nations and neighborhoods. Then came the 150-year rub of an ethnocidal *modus operandi* no longer acceptable. Not even possible. Not here, not on our blessed corner of this grand continent.

Better than all that bad history is doing what Americans settled and new, already want to do. The full-body contact sport of participatory democracy. The beautiful noise of our differences working toward accord, toward harmony.

*Nota: Ronault L.S. "Polo" Catalani coordinates Portland's immigrant and refugee integration programs out of the City of Portland's Office of Neighborhood Involvement. In 2014, the work mentioned above received seven community-building honors from organizations such as the Muslim Educational Trust, Know Your City, the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, the City of Portland, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, and others.*

## AirAsia's CEO in spotlight after Flight 8501 accident

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an estimated net worth of \$650 million.

AirAsia Flight 8501 vanished from radar the morning of December 28 about 42 minutes after taking off from Surabaya en route to Singapore.

The missing jet was the third major airline incident this year involving Malaysia. First came Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which disappeared on its way to Beijing from Kuala Lumpur on March 8 and has not been found. A few months later, Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 was shot down over Ukraine.

But this marks the first tragedy for Malaysia-based AirAsia, which has a strong safety record. Flight 8501 was operated by AirAsia Indonesia, a subsidiary that is 49 percent owned by AirAsia Malaysia.

Last year, AirAsia flew 42.6 million people across the region.

Earlier this year, AirAsia boasted in its

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### Korean Air to be sanctioned for nut rage cover-up

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according to Yonhap.

The incident also highlighted the risks of investing in family-controlled companies where the primary goal is to further the interests of the family, not that of the shareholders or employees. Shares of Korean Air closed 0.3 percent lower after dropping nearly 6 percent in Seoul after the government announced its plan to sanction the airline.

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### Japan runs short of butter as dairy farms dwindle

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should give him at least two more years, and possibly more, to tackle such issues, according to Uri Dadesh, an associate with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"Whether he will do the structural reforms is a different matter," he said in a conference call with reporters. "Let's remember that this is a man who already has a massive majority of the parliament on his side."

in-flight magazine that its well-trained pilots would never lose a plane. The airline withdrew the magazine and Fernandes apologized for the article, which was written before Flight 370 disappeared. Fernandes also courted controversy on the day that flight lost contact. An active Twitter user with more than a million followers, he tweeted that the plane's radio had failed and that all on board were safe. He later deleted the tweet.

A 50-year-old Malaysian of Indian-Portuguese descent and a serious music buff — he plays keyboards and the drums — Fernandes earned a finance degree in the United Kingdom and rose quickly in the music industry, first at Virgin Group and later at Warner Music International. He was appointed Warner's chief in Malaysia in 1992 at age 28, the youngest person to hold that post.

Warner CD sales jumped during his tenure, but he left after Time-Warner's merger with AOL to enter the airline business, a longtime dream.

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### McDonald's in Japan limits orders of fries

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The powerful dockworkers union and multinational shipping lines have been negotiating a new contract for about 20,000 workers on the west coast. In the meantime, labor disruptions have slowed shipments and driven costs higher.

Japanese are also facing a shortage of butter that has prompted grocery stores to limit shoppers to one or two packages apiece. That shortage stems from declining domestic production plus trade barriers and other restrictions that limit imports.

The restrictions are meant to ensure that local farmers who face high costs are protected from foreign competition to ensure Japan maintains some self-sufficiency in its food supply, but supply doesn't always meet demand.

"It's a bit sad," said Hiroko Inomata, 34, clutching the bag of small fries and a teriyaki burger she bought for lunch. "But it is so that everyone can have some."

*Associated Press video journalists Kaori Hitomi and Emily Wang contributed to this report.*

Fernandes got together with three other investors, mortgaged his house, and withdrew his savings to get the floundering AirAsia running after buying it on September 8, 2001 for a symbolic 1 ringgit, or about 25 U.S. cents. Three days later, New York and Washington were hit by terrorist attacks.

But AirAsia coasted through the crisis. With its tagline "Now Everyone Can Fly," it revolutionized cheap air travel in the region and repaid its 40 million ringgit (\$11.4 million) debt in less than two years.

Today, it has more than 8,000 employees and flies to 132 destinations in Asia. AirAsia is now a major competitor to full-service carriers such as Singapore Airlines and Thai Airways, which have since set up budget offshoots to vie for a bigger share of passengers.

In many ways, Fernandes' career echoes the empire Richard Branson created at Virgin Group — both in terms of how the men love attention, and how they have expanded across industries.

From short routes of up to four hours, AirAsia has expanded into long-haul flying through its sister airline AirAsia X. Through his Tune Group, which owns AirAsia, Fernandes also started a hotel chain and offers car rental, insurance, and credit cards in tie-ups with banks.

He was, in many ways, ahead of the industry curve, sensing a need for low-cost flights in what is now the world's fastest-growing region for airlines.

"Air travel is made for Asia," Fernandes told The Associated Press in 2002. "You can generally drive from one end of Europe

to another or take a train, but that's not the case here. You want to try driving from Kuala Lumpur to Bangkok? Good luck, mate!"

Fernandes is a vocal leader who enjoys interacting with the public at airports and on social media. AirAsia passengers often tweet him photos of their vacations, images Fernandes then shares with his followers.

In 2011, Fernandes stepped into the sports world when he bought a majority stake in the Queens Park Rangers, an English Premier League soccer club. The same year, Britain honored him as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire and France made him an Officier de la Legion d'Honneur.

He also has funded a Formula One racing team, making lavish bets with owners of competing teams. But he sold his shares in the F1 team last year.

In 2013, Fernandes further put AirAsia in the spotlight by hosting the Asian version of the reality TV series "The Apprentice." Filipino Jonathan Yabut won and now works for AirAsia in his country.

Since the disappearance of Flight 8501, Fernandes has focused on encouraging his staff not to buckle under the pressure.

"Be strong," he told his staff in another Twitter message. "Continue to be the best. Pray hard."

*Associated Press writers Scott Mayerowitz in New York and Tim Sullivan in New Delhi contributed to this report. At press time, the bodies of 34 victims had been recovered and a few more pieces of the plane were discovered. Bad weather continues to hinder search efforts.*

Behind the wheel there is no such thing as a small distraction.

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