

## VICE GANDA FOR GO NEGOSYNATES



TV host Vice Ganda poses with Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion and host Gretchen Ho at the Balik-Bayan 2023 held last December 2, 2023 at the Music Hall of the SM Mall of Asia in Pasay City. The TV host shared with the audience of more than a thousand OFW and OFW families his entrepreneurial journey as the child of an OFW, and his fondness for cosmetics, which he parlayed into a thriving business. He also shared the importance of good financial planning and discipline, especially for OFWs and their families.

Go Negosyo's Balik-Bayan 2023 was specially organized to encourage Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to pursue entrepreneurship. featured informative discussions with industry leaders, inspirational and learning sessions featuring successful entrepreneurs, and free onsite mentoring sessions. Twelve OFWs and OFW families were given an Inspiring Balik-Bayan Award for their accomplishments in reintegrating into the Philippines as entrepreneurs.

## LESSONS FROM THE PAST AND VISIONS OF THE FUTURE



It was a successful 18th anniversary party for us at Go Negosyo. Last Monday, Nov. 27, I had the pleasure of hosting Vice President and Department of Education Secretary Sara Duterte and no less than former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the party marking our 18th year.

The two represent the past and the future of Go Negosyo. GMA was the reason I began my journey in MSME advocacy; without her, I wouldn't be here. Back in 2005, she asked me to be a Presidential Consultant for Entrepreneurship. I will admit that I was iffy about it, knowing what a government position might entail. But knowing what I know about GMA, and her being mentored by my father, JoeCon, when he was DTI secretary, I put aside my misgivings and dived headlong into what is now nearly two decades of work with the Phil-

ippine Center for Entrepreneurship, more popularly known by our advocacy, Go Negosyo. You might say we came full circle when she mentored me in my work with MSMEs.

And now, with VP Sara at the helm of the Department of Education, we are charting the future of entrepreneurship in the Philippines. We recently signed with them an MOA to pursue programs and initiatives to promote an entrepreneurial mindset among Filipino youth. Specifically, it will be three programs: school gardens, the free entrepreneurship mentoring event Youthpreneur and the training of teachers in basic entrepreneurship concepts.

And with President Bongbong Marcos expressing time and again his support for our advocacy, we can look forward to more years of support for current and future MSMEs. As they grow, we can help build an economy that is not only strong and vibrant, but also inclusive.

Few people realize this, but as small businesses grow, so do big businesses. At every step of the way, private sector can lend a hand in developing the next generation of entrepreneurs.

For the school garden project, for example, we are looping in our big brothers from the Kapatid Angat Lahat sa Agri Program. I am told that agriculture education in the country can use private sector help, especially in providing students with practical knowledge and the resources they need.

And this is an important point: The partnership between government and the private sector is evident in how much we at Go Negosyo have accomplished over the years. I only need to cite our efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic to illustrate how a public-private partnership is more than the sum of its parts. Together, government and private sector were able to come up with a solution that gave us vaccines, allowed our businesses to safely reopen and saved the MSMEs.

There are many in the private sector and the government with a passion to serve. Over the years, we in the private sector developed productive relationships with the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Agriculture and the Agricultural Training Institute; during the pandemic we worked with the Department of Health, the Metro Manila Development Authority, the Department of the Interior and Local Government and with the reopening of the economy, with the Department of Tourism, the Department of Migrant Workers and now with our initiative for the youth, the DepEd.

Partnerships can work and this is why I feel I owe a lot to many people. This is especially true when it comes to the Go Negosyo pool of mentors. They give up their weekends and volunteer their time, resources and expertise to teach strangers. That is generosity. Without our mentors, there would be no Go Negosyo. It would be impossible to reach as many people as we do, to hold our free entrepreneurship mentoring events and guide the many Filipinos who want to better their lives by putting up small businesses.

I see it every time we have these public events. When you see for yourself just how many MSMEs are out there and how basic their problems are – where do I go to learn more about this product I have in mind, where do I get the capital to start my business, how do I effectively market it – and you have all the resources to answer these questions, the urge to help becomes even stronger.

And I had to see it for myself when we held an entrepreneurship event for students. I had my doubts at first because as a student, I didn't want to give up my weekends to study. But at the Youthpreneur we held last Nov. 25, hundreds of students turned up and the interaction with the mentors was phenomenal. You could feel that they were driven to succeed in life. Some of the young people I spoke to had their plans clearly outlined in their minds: work first as an employee then slowly build up the experience and capital to start a business; study the market for milk tea and vegetable burritos; find the perfect skin whitening cream to manufacture and become its brand ambassador.

This is where it all starts. We plant the seed of inspiration in these young minds and nurture them by giving them hope that anything is possible, and then clearing the path so that nothing is impossible.



# WEDNESDAY CHRONICLE

NEWS PUBLISHING SERVICES

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VOL. I • NO. 11 • Dec. 13 - Dec. 19, 2023 • P 10.00

## UK CONDEMNS CHINA'S 'UNSAFE, ESCALATORY' ACTIONS IN WEST PHILIPPINE SEA



Turn on page 3



## CSOS TO PHILIPPINE DELEGATION: PUSH BACK VS 'UNACCEPTABLE' COP28 DRAFT TEXT

Turn on page 3

MANILA, Philippines — Climate and clean energy campaigners called on the Philippine delegation at the COP28 climate talks to push back against a draft deal that stopped short of calling for a phase-out of planet-warming fossil fuels. A draft of the potential COP28 climate deal released Monday included options countries could take to reduce emissions, but did not include a phase-out of fossil fuels, disappointing climate campaigners, the United States, the European Union, and low-lying islands most vulnerable to climate change. The groups said the Philippines, which has traditionally played a vital role in United Nations climate negotiations, should actively advocate for a swift and equitable fossil fuel phase-out as COP28 heads into the final stretch. "At this critical time, we urge the Philippine delegation to exhaust all means to push back and hold the line," Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development executive director Gerry Arances said. He noted the Philippines "bravely battled and emerged victorious" in advocating for the global goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius in the Paris Agreement, and in asserting loss and damage reparations and the delivery of resources owed to climate-vulnerable countries. "Its failure to assert greater ambition in the outcome of the global stocktake is a regression on that. Not doing so falls short of the climate leadership exhibited by the Philippine climate movement, is a disgrace to all victims of climate disasters, and is an abandonment of 1.5°C," Arances added. In a briefing organized by civil society groups present at the COP28 talks in Dubai,

## GIFT-BEARING BOAT REACHES LAWAK ISLAND — CHRISTMAS CONVOY ORGANIZER

Turn on page 2

## NO EXTENSION FOR PUV CONSOLIDATION DEADLINE AFTER 2-DAY STRIKE ANNOUNCEMENT

Turn on page 2

## BEHIND PHILIPPINES' POOR PISA PERFORMANCE: WORST LONG-TERM ABSENTEEISM IN THE WORLD

Turn on page 2

## SENATE APPROVES BILL WAIVING COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAM FEES FOR QUALIFIED STUDENTS

Turn on page 3

### Navigating the Economic Storm: Unpacking the Growing Inflation in the Philippines

In recent months, the Philippines has found itself grappling with an economic challenge that has been a cause for concern among citizens and policymakers alike—growing inflation. As prices of goods and services continue to surge, the Filipino people are left to navigate the complex web of economic repercussions. This editorial aims to shed light on the factors contributing to the inflationary pressures, assess the impacts on various sectors, and explore potential strategies to mitigate the adverse effects.

**Factors Driving Inflation:** Several factors contribute to the rising inflation in the Philippines, creating a perfect storm that challenges the nation's economic stability. Key drivers include:

- Supply Chain Disruptions:** The global supply chain disruptions triggered by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have caused shortages and increased production costs, directly impacting the prices of imported goods.
- Rising Oil Prices:** The surge in global oil prices has a cascading effect on transportation costs and the prices of goods and services. As the Philippines heavily relies on oil imports, any increase in global oil prices amplifies domestic inflationary pressures.
- Weakened Peso:** The depreciation of the Philippine Peso against major currencies contributes to the higher costs of imported

goods, as businesses need more pesos to purchase the same quantity of foreign currency.

**Pandemic-induced Labor Market Challenges:** The disruptions caused by the pandemic have led to labor market challenges, affecting incomes and contributing to reduced consumer spending power.

**Impacts on Various Sectors:** The growing inflationary pressures reverberate across various sectors, impacting both businesses and households:

- Consumer Burden:** Everyday essentials such as food, fuel, and utilities become more expensive, placing a heavy burden on the average Filipino household's budget.

**Business Challenges:** Rising input costs for businesses squeeze profit margins, leading to potential challenges such as reduced investment, job cuts, and a slowdown in economic growth.

**Government Response:** The government faces the dual challenge of addressing inflation while ensuring social welfare programs remain effective. Balancing fiscal and monetary policies becomes crucial to stabilizing the economy.

**Mitigation Strategies:** Addressing inflation requires a multi-faceted approach that combines short-term measures with long-term structural reforms:

Monetary Policy Adjust-

ments: The Central Bank may consider adjusting interest rates to manage inflation. However, this must be done cautiously to avoid negatively impacting economic growth.

**Supply Chain Resilience:** Enhancing the resilience of supply chains through diversification and innovation can help mitigate the impact of global disruptions.

**Social Safety Nets:** Strengthening social safety nets, such as targeted subsidies for vulnerable populations, can help cushion the impact on those most affected by rising prices.

**Investment in Agriculture:** Addressing food security concerns by investing in agricultural productivity and supply chain efficiency can help reduce reliance on imported goods.

**Conclusion:** The growing inflation in the Philippines demands a coordinated and strategic response from policymakers, businesses, and citizens alike. By understanding the root causes and implementing a comprehensive set of measures, the nation can navigate these economic challenges and emerge with a more resilient and stable economy. As the Philippines grapples with the complexities of inflation, unity and proactive measures will be the key to ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for all. -ANG KABITENYA

### CSOS...

Philippine Movement for Climate Justice national coordinator Ian Rivera expressed concern that there seems to be a lack of clarity from the Philippine delegation on fossil fuel phase-out.

"It's important for the Philippine government to be clear and put pressure," Rivera said.

"Death sentence" COP28 president Sultan Al Jaber released a text aimed at bringing consensus between nearly 200 countries, which include Saudi Arabia and other oil and gas producers seeking to preserve their economic lifeline. But for John Silk, Marshall Islands' minister of natural resources and commerce, the draft deal is "unacceptable." Climate change threatens the

very existence of residents of small-island states like the Marshall Islands.

"We will not go silently to our watery graves. We will not accept an outcome that will lead to devastation for our country, and for millions if not billions of the most vulnerable people and communities," Silk said.

Krishna Ariola, lead convenor of Negros-based Youth for Climate Hope, called the text a "death sentence to vulnerable peoples." "But movements won across the globe have shown that the fight for survival will continue to intensify. There is no road to take for those most affected by this crisis, except toward a victory that includes real solutions, with no one

From Page 1

### Behind...

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines has the highest rate of long-term absenteeism among students compared to all nations, the latest PISA results showed, pointing to one of the factors contributing to the country's flatlining performance in the international assessment. Around 30% of students from the Philippines reported having been absent from school for more than

three consecutive months at least once in their education, according to the PISA 2022 results. This indicates at least a third of 15-year-old Filipino students missed almost half of the school year at some point in their education. Highest among all PISA-participating countries with available data, the Philippines' long-term absenteeism rate is nearly

four times higher than the average of all other participating countries (8%).

Beyond poor student attendance, long-term absenteeism also dramatically worsens students' academic performance as months' worth of missed lessons tends to balloon to years' worth of gaps in knowledge, the PISA report noted.

### UK...

MANILA, Philippines — The United Kingdom called out China for what it called "unsafe and escalatory tactics" against the Philippines over the weekend.

Britain's foreign office said in a statement Monday that it "opposes any action which raises tensions, including harassment, unsafe conduct and intimidation tactics which increase the risk of miscalculation and threaten regional peace and stability." "Both China and the Philippines must adhere to the findings of the 2016 Arbitral Award proceedings, which are legally binding on both parties," it added.

China claims almost the entire South China Sea, including waters to the immediate west of the Philippines. It has ignored the arbitral tribunal's ruling that its assertions have no legal basis. In response, China's

embassy in the UK said Beijing "firmly opposes and strongly condemns" Britain's remarks, and has lodged "stern" representations with the UK side on this.

The Philippines said Monday it had summoned China's envoy to Manila following a spike in tensions in the disputed waterway over the weekend. National Security Council spokesperson Jonathan Malaya called the actions of Chinese vessels a "serious escalation."

Manila said Sunday that the China Coast Guard (CCG) rammed and fired water cannons at Philippine vessels during a resupply mission to BRP Sierra Madre at Ayungin Shoal. The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said China's actions left one of its ships with "severe engine damage" and put

From Page 1

### FROM CHALLENGES TO CHANGE: SM FOUNDATION AND SM PRIME BUILD NEW SCHOOL FACILITY IN LAGUNA



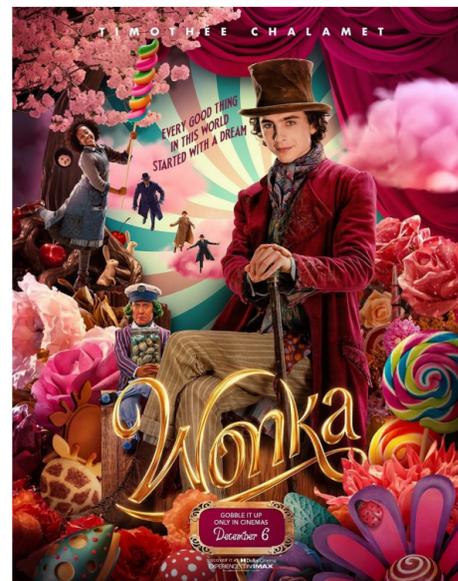
The center features a mobile play cabinet with gender-neutral toys to nurture comfort and promote coping in the face of illnesses.

"Masaya," she smiled as she looked around the new SCRHU. "Dati, nakakapaghatid kami ng serbisyo kahit hindi conducive to working ang lugar. Kaya't itong renovation mas magiging fulfilled kami dahil maganda 'yung environment na aming gagawalan. Mas mapapaigting pa namin ang pagsisilbi namin sa komunidad."

"Iba kasi pag maganda ang surroundings mo. Minsan, 'yun lang ay sapat na para gumaan ang pakiramdam mo. Ngayong comfortable na ang center, mae-enhance na ang communication namin. Sa tulong ng organized at good environment, maipaliwanag ng mabuti at magagawa kung ano ang nararapat na treatment para sa pasyente," she added.



SM Foundation's Senior Project Manager Albert Uy places the 200th Wellness Center marker as they complete the final stages of the renovation.



The new two-floor school building of Laguna Resettlement Community School features four fully equipped rooms with PWD-friendly facilities.

Overcrowded classrooms, insufficient learning time, inadequately designed learning spaces, and teacher dissatisfaction pose challenges to the Philippine education system.

The challenges faced by the Philippine education system are multifaceted. With inadequate time for instruction, students are unable to grasp concepts thoroughly, leading to a compromised educational experience. Non-conducive learning environments contribute to an atmosphere that hampers intellectual growth. These challenges not only impact students' academic performance but also the job satisfaction of teachers, who navigate these obstacles daily.

Believing in the power of education, the SM group, through the collaboration of SM Prime and SM Foundation, continuously builds school buildings to help address the challenges faced by the education system in the Philippines. A testament to this is the school building they recently built at the Laguna Resettlement Community School (LRCS).

Beyond the structure LRCS has a sheer number of over 2,600 students packed into 52 classrooms, which Principal Rosalie Mabale says affects the performance of the learners and the job satisfaction of teachers.

The school day for some pupils in grades 1 and 2 extends until 6 pm, an unusually late hour for elementary school. This extended schedule leads to long working hours for teachers, leaving them with limited time to provide additional support to students who need it most. "The intervention classes are very important as we intervene with the problems that may come along the way of learning. Ginagawa natin ito para hindi pa man dumarating ang problema, nabibigyan na natin ng solusyon," Principal Rosalie shared, adding that lack of facilities hamper them from providing the quality of education they hope to give.

"Let's say you have learners who are non-readers or non-numerates at natutukan sila dahil mayroon kang maayos na silid-aralan. Through this, masasabi mong you were able to make a difference in the lives of the learners kapag natuto silang magbasa at magsulat. Maboo-boost natin ang kanilang academic

performance at maiwasan natin ang bullying, na siyang makakatulong sa kanilang mental health," she added.

By providing spacious and well-equipped facilities, students now have room for growth, fostering an environment conducive to effective learning. The expansion of school infrastructures has allowed LRCS to end class shifts in second grade, ensuring that students receive the adequate learning time necessary for a more comprehensive education.



LRCS ends the class shifting for second grade, providing pupils ample time for learning activities and helping enable job satisfaction among teachers.

"Napakalaking factor na makakauwi na ang mga bata ng mas maaga at makakapahinga ang mga teachers sa tamang oras. Malaking factor ito sa mental health, quality of education, academic performance, and overall wellness of the children and teachers," she smiled.

For LRCS, their new school building goes beyond the physical structure—it's a symbol of something that is built to last.

"This building is not just about the school structure or the conducive learning environment. Ang pinakamalaking epekto nito ay nasa pagkatao ng mga bata. Through this building, they will be reminded that they are the next generation and the future leaders of the country, and they, too, can help the community they belong to," she shared.

"Through their programs, they are making a difference in the lives of every Filipino learner, especially here in LRCS. Having this building helps nurture better individuals as they see that they belong to a community that genuinely cares for them. Initiatives like this help them learn about civic responsibility. When learners achieve their goals in the future, they will remember the value of giving back to the community," she added.



SM Prime and SM Foundation turns over the new school building in LRCS, helping the students receive adequate learning time necessary for a more comprehensive education.

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**WEDNESDAY CHRONICLE**  
NEWS PUBLISHING SERVICES

**GAPE**  
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Wednesday Chronicle News Publishing Center is published weekly every Wednesday

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## SM FOUNDATION SERVES NEARLY 1,800 BENEFICIARIES IN LEYTE MEDICAL MISSION

SM Foundation recently concluded its two-day medical mission in Leyte, bringing essential healthcare services to nearly 1,800 beneficiaries.

The missions, held at Alang-Alang and Tanuan, aimed to address the medical needs of the underserved population and underscored SM Foundation's dedication to making healthcare accessible to all.

The beneficiaries received a range of services, from basic check-ups and consultations for various health concerns to free blood tests, medicines, and vitamins.



Meanwhile, SM Foundation's Mobile Clinic, a state-of-the-art facility on wheels that brings healthcare services, played a key role in providing free Electrocardiograms (ECGs) and X-rays to attendees, enhancing the diagnostic capabilities available during the mission.



SM Foundation was joined in this initiative by partners from DMIRIE Foundation (MX3), Leyte local government units, and volunteer medical professionals from various groups.

The SM group's foundation, through its Health and Medical Programs, upgrades public health centers in its host communities, complemented by its medical caravans across the country.

To date, it has renovated more than 180 health and wellness centers and served over 1.2 million patients during its medical missions.

## 200 REASONS TO SMILE

SM Foundation's 200th health center brings new hope to Laguna



Rural health centers are more than just buildings—they're lifelines, offering a comprehensive range of health services at a minimal cost or even free to the most vulnerable. The presence of dedicated healthcare providers, who truly grasp the local struggles and share the community's cultural fabric, imbues these centers with a profound sense of purpose, fostering genuine trust. Underscoring its firm belief in the power of health centers to improve lives and strengthen communities, the SM group's foundation has recently unveiled the revitalized Santa Cruz Rural Health Unit (SCRHU). This marks a significant milestone for the organization, representing its 200th health center nationwide.

### Service amidst challenges

SCRHU lies in the bustling landscapes of Laguna province, serving nearly 140,000 residents. Its reach extends beyond the immediate community, welcoming those from neighboring municipalities, primarily from low-income households.

For nearly a decade, Dr. Elmina Montesa has been the guiding force behind the old SCRHU. For years, she and her fellow health workers continued to extend services amidst the cramped spaces, inadequate facilities, and timeworn structure.

"Marami kaming programa na hindi namin malagyan ng lugar kasi kulang ang space kaya't naghahagilap kami kung saan ito ipu-pwesto. Minsan, dahil sa challenge ng space, napapaisip kami kung sa labas na lang ba namin gagawin ang ibang programa. May kakulangan din po sa furniture noon," she shared.

"Napupuno po kami lalo na pag may diabetic clinic—puno sa labas. Bagamat may tent, hindi sapat ito lalo na kapag umuulan. Hindi namin sila mapapasok dahil wala silang pu-pwestuhan. Hindi namin mai-provide ang comfort na nararapat para sa mga pasyente," she added.

Despite the challenges, Dr. Montesa and her dedicated team of health workers report for duty daily, their hearts set on serving the community, particularly the most vulnerable—because for them, public service wasn't just a job; it was a calling.

"Iba 'yung nararamdaman mong fulfillment sa trabahong ito. Napakasaya tuwing natutulungan mo ang pasyente at kita mo sa mga ngiti at mata nila na thankful sila dahil binigay mo sa kanila ang pangangailangan nila ng walang kapalit," she said.



### Uplifting community anchors

Dr. Montesa emphasized the value of health: "Kayamanan ng tao ang kalusugan. Kahit wala kang masyadong pera, pero intact ang kalusugan mo, maituturing mo nang kayamanan iyon."

One with Dr. Montesa, SM Foundation collaborated with Sta. Cruz, Laguna to provide the best possible care to communities to increase access to healthcare and boost the morale of modern-day heroes.



From the once cramped center, the SM Foundation elevated SCRHU, following DOH's guidelines. It now has clearly defined areas for different programs and functions, including patient consultation, examination rooms, treatment rooms, utilities, and staff areas. It improved the center's layout to ensure accessibility, ample lighting and ventilation, and spacious walkways to avoid congestion and contamination.



It is equipped with a rainwater catchment facility for non-potable purposes to help lessen their reliance on municipal sources and contribute to water conservation efforts.

Beyond this, through the much-needed rehabilitation, the center now exudes warmth, with comfortable waiting areas for patients and reception area for health workers. Ensuring that the center remains community oriented, SCRHU has designated facilities for breastfeeding mothers, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. It also has a mobile play cabinet with gender-neutral toys to nurture comfort and promote coping in the face of illnesses.

As SM Foundation turned over the health center, Dr. Elmina and SCRHU turned over a new leaf in health care.



## Senate....

MANILA, Philippines — Qualified students applying for admission to private colleges and universities will no longer be required to pay for entrance exam fees under a new Senate bill greenlighted on final reading.

Senate Bill 2441 — unanimously approved on Monday — waives all college admission fees for college applicants from the top 10% of their graduating batch who fall below the poverty threshold.

To be exempted from paying admission fees in private colleges and universities, graduating high school students must have the following requirements:

- Part of the top 10% of their graduating class
- Belongs to a family whose combined household income falls below the poverty threshold as defined by the National Economic and Development Authority or cannot

afford in a sustained manner to provide for their minimum basic needs of food, health, education, housing and other essential amenities of life duly certified as such by the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Must apply for college entrance examination to any private HEI within the country

Must satisfy all other requirements as specified by the private HEI concerned

Under the proposed law, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) would be able to impose penalties against private higher education institutions (HEIs) that will fail or refuse to comply with the guidelines.

The measure is aimed at benefiting "disadvantaged graduates or graduating students who show potential for academic excellence," as noted by Sen. Chiz Escudero, chairperson of the Senate higher,

technical and vocational education panel.

"This free exam can be a recruiting tool aimed at the best and the brightest," Escudero added.

Since the implementation of Republic Act 10931 or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act in 2018, there has been a noticeable shift in the distribution of enrollment in private and public colleges and universities, according to CHED.

The ratio used to be 70-30 in favor of private schools, but currently, more than 50% of students flock to SUCs, CHED Chairperson Popoy De Vera said in August.

This is even as private schools outnumber public colleges and universities sevenfold: there are 1,729 private universities compared to 112 SUCs and 121 local colleges and universities, as of 2019 CHED data.

**/PHILSTAR.COM**

From Page 1

## Gift....

MANILA, Philippines — A smaller supply boat managed to deliver provisions to troops and fishers on Lawak Island in the West Philippine Sea early Monday morning, according to the organizers of the civilian-led convoy.

Atin Ito Coalition said that ML Chowee, one of its supply boats, "slipped past Chinese marine vessels" and arrived on the Philippine-occupied Lawak Island at 5 a.m., hours after it announced that it would abort its trip to the West Philippine Sea.

Lawak Island is part of the Spratlys Island. **ADVERTISING**

The coalition said: "Nakalusot!" (We got through!)

"Hinaharass! Tinatakot! Pero hindi palulupig!" it added.

(Harassed! Intimidated! But will not be defeated!)

The "Christmas convoy" planning to deliver provisions and gifts to fishermen and troops in the West Philippine Sea left El Nido before dawn Sunday.

But Atin Ito Coalition said hours later that it was "erring on the side of caution" and had decided to return to Palawan after its main vessel, TS Kapitan Oca, was being "constantly shadowed" by Chinese Navy ships.

It had already changed course after a confrontation between Philippine vessels on a resupply mission to Ayungin Shoal and Chi-

nese ships. Manila and Beijing traded accusations over the collisions of their vessels.

The Philippine Coast Guard accused the China Coast Guard of firing water cannons and ramming its patrol boat and supply vessels during a resupply mission to troops stationed on BRP Sierra Madre. However, China claimed that a Philippine vessel deliberately collided with its ship.

The objective of the civilian-led convoy was to highlight living and working conditions of Filipino fishermen and troops, as well as to defend the maritime territorial rights of the country, according to Atin Ito Coalition.

**/PHILSTAR.COM**

From Page 1

## No Extension...

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. announced that there will be no more extension of the December 31 deadline for public utility vehicle (PUV) consolidation.

This comes after progressive transport group Piston announced an upcoming transport strike from December 14 to 15 to protest the impending phaseout of traditional jeepneys and UV Express units.

"Today, we held a meeting with transport officials, and it was decided that the deadline for the consolidation of public utility vehicles (PUV) operators will not be extended," said Marcos on Tuesday.

"Currently, 70% of all operators have already committed to and consolidated under the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP)," he added.

The government stood firm on its deadline after the Land Transportation Franchising Regulatory

Board (LTFRB) earlier gave into some of Piston's demands such as waiving penalties, extending franchise validity to five years, and removing certain challenging parts of the Omnibus Franchising Guidelines.

According to transport groups, those with individual franchises who fail to consolidate before 2024 will no longer be allowed to operate, plunging thousands of drivers operators into unemployment.

Last November, the Department of Transportation claimed that they have already clarified "misconceptions" about the phase-out of traditional jeeps, emphasizing the provision of financial assistance for cooperatives.

This aligns with the DOT's initiative to shift traditional jeepneys to eco-friendly alternatives like minibuses and electric vehicles. Yet, transport groups argued that these vehicles can cost up to P2.8 million.

Transport Secretary Jaime Bautista earlier tried

to "correct" talks about a possible phaseout, despite LTFRB chairperson Teofilo Guadiz III's acknowledgment that a jeepney phaseout would be the "last stage" of the PUV modernization program.

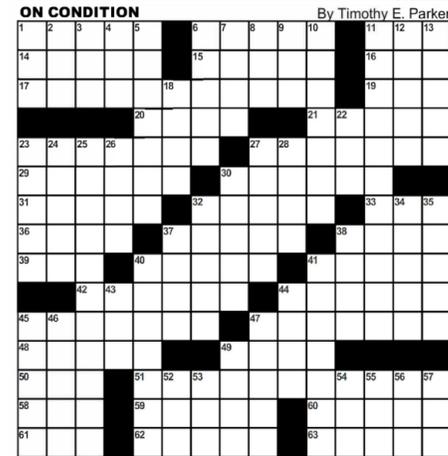
"We cannot let the minority cause further delays, affecting majority of our operators, banks, financial institutions, and the public at large," Marcos said.

"Adhering to the current timeline ensures that everyone can reap the benefits of the full operationalization of our modernized public transport system. Hence, the scheduled timeline will not be moved," he added. Strike continues; 70% data 'misleading'

Piston said that they will go ahead with the planned transport strike, saying that DOT and LTFRB themselves said that 70% of public utility jeeps and 60% of UV Express units would not be allowed to operate should the December 31 deadline push

From Page 1

CROSSWORD



freedailycrosswords.com

ACROSS

- 1) Killed, gangster-style
- 6) Montezuma, for one
- 11) Dashboard abbreviation
- 14) Key in Florida
- 15) \_cotta
- 16) "I can't believe my eyes!"
- 17) Prepare to stop crying
- 19) Charged particle
- 20) Bank heist units
- 21) Indian social class
- 23) \_ oblongata (brain part)
- 27) Simple shelters
- 29) Humiliates
- 30) Martin with an Oscar
- 31) Easy wins
- 32) Audacity
- 33) Backstabber
- 36) First-rate
- 37) Ratty or flea-bitten
- 38) Booby trap component
- 39) Leave white tracks
- 40) Dude kin
- 41) Certain mast (var.)
- 42) Arrange tidily
- 44) Mum
- 45) Some socks
- 47) Vast frozen expanses
- 48) Runway figure
- 49) Andean land
- 50) Busy bother
- 51) Be seductive, in a way
- 58) Use a needle and thread
- 59) Come to mind
- 60) Spooky
- 61) Member of the family, often
- 62) Marina sight
- 63) All-out attack

DOWN

- 1) Way past voting age
- 2) Wide's partner
- 3) Swelter
- 4) Teamwork inhibitor
- 5) Computer attachments
- 6) Baffled on the Pacific?
- 7) Zorro's marks
- 8) "Don't give up!"
- 9) Before, in poetry
- 10) Rush down in vast quantities
- 11) Certain skin cream
- 12) Quick snap
- 13) Fine-tunes
- 18) Slithering sea creatures
- 22) "Santa" tail
- 23) Convenient places to shop
- 24) Digital novel
- 25) Discouraging or dis-suading
- 26) They often deliver good news
- 27) The "L" of XL
- 28) Jealousy
- 30) He's there late in Red Square
- 32) Directory contents
- 34) "Gladiator" setting
- 35) Army shelters
- 37) Bit of dust
- 38) Uncontrolled
- 40) Bedroom separator, often
- 41) Some simple math signs
- 43) CBS logo
- 44) "Certainly!"
- 45) Accumulate
- 46) Event with lots of bucks
- 47) Article of faith
- 49) Fancy-schmancy
- 52) Victorian, for one
- 53) First syllable of a simple game
- 54) Hawaiian giveaway
- 55) Anger
- 56) County fair animal
- 57) "Comprende?"

CITY OF BACOOR NEWS

**Kalinga sa Matatanda: Pamaskong handog para sa Senior Citizen ng Brgy. Real 1 at Habay 1**



Noong Disyembre 10, 2023 ang Kalinga sa Matatanda para sa senior citizen ng Brgy. Real 1 at Habay 1 na pinangunahan ng ating Mayor Strike B. Revilla kasama ang City Social Welfare na pinamumunuan ni Ms. Lilianne Ugalde at ng Office of the Senior Citizen Association na pinamumunuan ni Atty. Venus De Castro.

Nilahukan ito ng higit 2,000 na matatanda kung saan sila ay umuwi ng masaya sa maagang aginaldo ng Pamahalaang Lungsod. Sila rin ay nagkaroon ng pagkakataong mabalo sa masasayang palaro, sayawan, at pa-affle.

**Kalinga para sa Matatanda: Pamaskong handog para sa mga Senior Citizen ng Barangay Sinbanali at Poblacion**



Namahagi ng maagang Pamasko kamakailan sa Bacoor Strike Gymnasium para sa mga mahal nating senior citizen sa lungsod. Pinangunahan ng City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWD) sa ilalim ni Mayor Strike B. Revilla at Vice Mayor Rowena Bautista-Mendiola, layunin ng event na ito na ipakita ang malasakit at pagmamahal sa mga nakatatandang mamamayan ng Bacoor.

Dumalo sa nasabing okasyon si Mayor Strike B. Revilla, na personal na nagbigay ng suporta at pagmamahal sa mga senior citizen. Kasama rin nila ang CSWD Head na si Ms. Liliane Ugalde, at ang OSCA Head na si Atty. Venus De Castro. Nagbigay rin ng kanilang suporta sina Kap. Caridad Sanchez at Kap. Randy Francisco, kasama ang kanilang mga konsehal mula sa Barangay Sinbanali at Barangay Poblacion.

Mahigit 2,000 senior citizen ang dumalo sa event na ito na nagmula sa dalawang barangay, ang Barangay Sinbanali at Barangay Poblacion. Nagkaroon ng pagkakata-

Last week's solution:



on ang mga senior citizen na makisaya sa mga palaro at sayawan na handog ng Pamahalaang Lungsod. Layunin ng pagdiriwang na ito na magbigay ng kaligayahan at pagmamahal sa mga senior citizen ng Bacoor. Bilang bahagi ng pamaskong handog, nagkaroon rin ng raffle draw kung saan nagbigay ng tig-500 at tig-1000 piso si Mayor Strike B. Revilla sa mga nagwagi. Ang nasabing pagdiriwang ay idinaos noong ika-9 ng Disyembre 2023 sa Bacoor Strike Gymnasium. Ito ay nagpamalas ng pagkakaisa at malasakit ng buong komunidad para sa ating mga minamahal na senior citizen.

**GAD AB ALL: A STEP TOWARDS GENDER RESPONSIVE SOCIETY**



Trece Martires City National High School's Social Hall became the center of change on November 28, 2023, when it hosted the groundbreaking seminar, "GAD AB ALL: A Step Towards Gender Responsive Society". The event, which celebrated a community free of violence, was organized by the Provincial Government of Cavite through the Office of the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer. It featured motivational speakers committed to creating a better future.

The event was hosted by Ms. Danica Pontimar, setting the tone for an impactful gathering and welcoming participants from different cities and municipalities of Cavite. Ms. Aura Fuentes of PSWDO and Mr. Rading Rodis Jr., the representative of the Board Member Romel R. Enriquez, extended warm welcomes to the participants. Their opening messages resonated with a shared commitment to creating a community free from Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC). Mr. Reynaldo Gutierrez De Guia, Chairperson of Men Opposed to Violence Everywhere (MOVE) delivered a thought-provoking discourse on the theme "GAD AB ALL: A Step Towards Gender-Responsive Society," urging the audience to actively participate in fostering an inclusive and equal society.

The highlight of the event was the moment when all participants took a collective oath, pledging to uphold the "Panata Upang Wakasan ang Karahasan sa mga Kababaihan at Kabataa" (Pledge to End Violence Against Women and Children). This symbolic act emphasized the attendees' dedication to being champions of change in their community.

As the event concluded, it left an indelible mark on the participants, sowing the seeds for a more aware and compassionate community. "GAD AB ALL" not only symbolized a step forward in the fight against VAWC but also acted as a catalyst for broader conversations and actions essential for building a truly gender-responsive society in Cavite.

**CAVITE GREENING PROGRAM: A SUCCESSFUL TREE PLANTING ALONG TVPL**

On November 24, 2023, the Office of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (OPENRO) took the lead during the 3rd Cavite Arbor Day, organizing a tree planting activity along the Taal Volcano Protected Landscape (TVPL) in Barangay Iruhin East and Central, Tagaytay City. The initiative is part of the Cavite Greening Program aimed not only to enhance the city's natural beauty but also to contribute significantly to environmental conservation and sustainability. The event was joined by a diverse group of participants, including provincial government employees, uniformed personnel, barangay officials and local residents. The collective goal was to plant more than 400 fruit bearing and forest trees along the Banauan Road, promoting a



greener and healthier environment for both current and future generations.

The program started with a brief opening ceremony, featuring speeches from key figures in the environmental sector and local government, emphasizing the importance of reforestation efforts in mitigating climate change, preventing soil erosion, and preserving biodiversity. They also highlighted the role of communities in sustaining these efforts beyond a one-time event, fostering a sense of responsibility among participants.

**DISABILITIES (PWDS) ENTREPRENEURS, OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVING SUCCESS**



The Adaptive Technology for Rehabilitation, Integration, and Empowerment of Visually Impaired, Inc. (ATRIEV) in partnership with the Office of the Provincial Persons with Disability Affairs Officer facilitated "The Power of Perseverance: The Rise of PWD Entrepreneurs", an entrepreneurship event for PWDs held at Tagaytay Summit Ridge Hotel on November 23, 2024. The event marked a significant stride towards inclusivity, recognizing the untapped potential within the PWD community and providing a platform for them to thrive as entrepreneurs.

Provincial Administrator for Community Affairs, Mr. Alvin S. Mojica, graced the event on behalf of Governor Jonvic Remulla. With sincerity and commitment, he conveyed the provincial government's steadfast support to the initiatives and programs aimed at empowering individuals with disabilities.

One of the highlights of the program was the sharing of success stories by accomplished PWD entrepreneurs. The stories not only served as a source of inspiration but also demonstrated the diverse range of businesses that can be successfully managed by individuals with different abilities. From technology start-ups to artisanal crafts, the entrepreneurs showcased the limitless possibilities within the PWD community.

Networking played a crucial role during the event, fostering connections between aspiring PWD entrepreneurs, mentors, and established business leaders. The event facilitated an environment where participants could exchange ideas, seek advice, and explore potential collaborations. This networking aspect aimed to create a supportive ecosystem that extends beyond the program

itself. Government sectors including Bureau of Internal Revenue, Department of Trade and Industry, TESDA, Department of Science and Technology and Department of Information and Communications Technology and private sectors such as PLDT and Smart Communications engaged in comprehensive discussions, shedding light on their respective programs and services aligned with the realm of entrepreneurship. The event also saw commitments from both governmental bodies and private sector representatives to foster a more inclusive entrepreneurial environment.

Overall, the event not only showcased the entrepreneurial potential within the PWD community but also emphasized the importance of ongoing support, mentorship, and a collaborative effort from society at large.

**TEEN TRAIL CAMP**



The U4U Teen Trail Camp unfolded its transformative agenda at the Daluyan Resource Center in Naic, Cavite on November 24-25, 2023. This initiative, a joint venture by the Office of the Provincial Population Officer (OPPO), Rural Health Unit and the Nutrition Office of Tanza, HEPO Cavite Province, and the DepEd Division of Cavite, gathered 80 enthusiastic students from four local schools.

The inaugural day kicked off with Ms. Eloisa L. Comia, the Officer-in-Charge of OPPO, extending a warm welcome to the participants. The atmosphere was charged with anticipation as Ms. Dorothy Ramirez from the Nutrition Office of Tanza and Mr. Andy Pejjs from the Regional Office of the Commission on Population shared invaluable insights, setting the stage for a weekend dedicated to the holistic well-being of the youth.

The first day's agenda was a dynamic mix of educational and engaging activities, starting with the Teen Exhibit, Teen Color, Teen Code, and Teen Chat sessions. Post-lunch, the camp delved into more profound discussions with Teen Wait and Teen Choice, focusing on the critical issue of teenage pregnancy. The gravity of the topic was met with thoughtful conversations and reflections from the participating students.

The creative spirit soared in the latter part of the day with Banner Making, fostering artistic expression and communication. The adrenaline-pumping Amazing Race tested the participants' teamwork and problem-solving skills, while the Boogie Fight and Cheering Competition not only showcased unity but celebrated the diversity of talents among the schools.

Day two unfolded with Ms. Dorothy Ramirez's enlightening lecture on Teenage Nutrition, providing students with practical knowledge essential for their physical and mental well-being. Following this, Mr. Paul Mark M. Fernald guided participants through the empowering discussion titled "You are Special," emphasizing the importance of embracing individuality.

As the camp drew to a close, the hard work and dedication of the students were acknowledged with the awarding of certificates and tokens to the winners. The ceremony not only celebrated achievements but also marked the culmination of a weekend dedicated to fostering a sense of empowerment, education, and unity among the youth.

The U4U Teen Trail Camp in Naic, Cavite, stands as a testament to the positive impact that collaborative initiatives can have in shaping the future of the youth, paving the way for a community-driven approach to holistic well-being and empowerment.