

DENR LEADS CLIMATE ACTION PARTNER-SHIPS IN RIZAL PROVINCE



The Province of Rizal's climate action programs are set to get a boost as the Department of Environment and Natural Resource (DENR) brings in eight (8) multistakeholder collaboration projects for environmental protection and disaster resilience.

DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga and Rizal Governor Nina Ricci Ynares launched today Project TRANSFORM (Transdisciplinary Approach for Resilience and Environmental Sustainability through Multistakeholder Engagement) with programs to enhance food and water security, waste management, and sustainable livelihood.

"Project TRANSFORM is a two-year-old initiative of the DENR that seeks to converge efforts and expertise of the government, academe, private sector, and civil society in the country's cities and municipalities nationwide to alleviate poverty through green and blue jobs, enhance community resilience to the impacts of climate change, and promote strong public-private partnerships," Secretary Loyzaga explained.

Project TRANSFORM originated as an offshoot of a panel discussion in the first multistakeholder forum of the DENR in 2022, with Ormoc City, Leyte, as the pilot implementation area. Last year, Project TRANSFORM was launched in the provinces of Bataan and Surigao del Norte. It is now being implemented in the municipalities of Limay, Mariveles, and Orion in Bataan province and in the cities of Malimono, San Francisco, and Burgos in the province of Surigao del Norte.

The province of Rizal, with a land area of 1,308.92 square kilometers and a population of over 3.3 million people, hosts five protected areas. These are the Hinulugang Taktak Protected Landscape, the Pamintan Protected Landscape, the Kaliwa River Forest Reserve, the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape, and the National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary and Game Preserve recognized under Presidential Proclamation 1636.

"These are immediate and actionable opportunities ahead of us and we look forward to seeing how we can link what has already been done and what else could be possible areas for collaboration," Secretary Loyzaga noted.

The strategic engagement and the activities under Project TRANSFORM are guided and supported by the National Resilience Council, Peace and Equity Foundation, Zuellig Family Foundation, Philippine Business for Social Progress, and First Philippine Holdings Corporation.

The signed projects for Rizal Province included sustainable water security, regenerative tourism, waterways and riverbank stabilization, sustainable solid waste management, nature trees preservation, greenhouse gas accounting, regenerative tourism, sustainable livelihood, and rainforest connect to be implemented in Antipolo City, Baras, Tanay, San Mateo, and Rodriguez (formerly Montalban).

During the launch, Prime Infrastructure Foundation Inc. Executive Director Dave Jesus Devilles signed the Memorandum of Agreement for the Sustainable Water Security Project together with Secretary Loyzaga, Governor Ynares, Antipolo City Mayor Jun Ynares, San Mateo Mayor Bartolome Rivera, Rodriguez Mayor Ronnie Evangelista and National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) CALABARZON Regional Director Dr. Carlos P. Buasen, Jr. The partnership aims to increase the forest cover of the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape, reduce its vulnerability to erosion and landslides, increase water supply in the lowland communities, and address poverty alleviation and food security in upland communities.

In the goal to shift towards more sustainable tourism for Tanay, the DENR launched the Regenerative Tourism for Resilient Tanay through another Memorandum of Agreement.

Together with the Tanay Mayor Rafael Tanjuatco, signatories for the project are the Bureau of Corrections Deputy General Gregorio Pio Catapang, Jr., Manila Water Corporation, Inc. President and Chief Executive Officer Jose Victor Emmanuel De Dios, A Brown Company, Inc. Executive Vice President Paul Francis Juat, and University of Rizal System Nancy T. Pascual.

To contribute to a resilient local economy, a Sustainable Livelihood initiative for the local communities in Tanay will be led by the Department of Education, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, WawaJVCo, Inc., Jollibee Group Foundation, and Eastern Rizal Miners Association. As part of the Project TRANSFORM, the project will contribute to the vision of sustainable, inclusive, and resilient development by empowering communities including the Indigenous People (IPs), through the provision of livelihood training and programs in collaboration with various stakeholders and partners.

The DENR has also secured the Pledges of Commitment to implement the Sustainable Solid Waste Management Project for San Mateo with SM Prime Holdings, Inc., International Solid Waste Integrated Management Specialist, Inc., Jollibee Group Foundation, and San Mateo Municipal College. Among the undertakings under this include the Trash to Cash Program, an educational program, community-based risk reduction training, and capacity-building on solid waste management and the Extended Producers Responsibility or EPR Act of 2022.

To ensure the safe access to essential infrastructure such as bridge slope protection, drainage and flood control, the Restoration and Maintenance of Waterways Project for Rodriguez has also been launched. Through the Pledge of Commitment signed by the Montalban Aggregates Producers Association, Olympia Violago Water Power, Inc., the project is seen to aid Rodriguez on restored waterways to prevent flooding in low-lying areas and reduced siltation due to vegetative cover on easement.

DENR TO ESTABLISH MARINE RESEARCH STATION IN STA. ANA, CAGAYAN



The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) through the Biodiversity Management Bureau has identified the municipality of Sta. Ana, Cagayan as one of the six project sites nationwide for the establishment of a marine stations to enhance ocean science, resource management and development strategies.

In her recent visit to Region, DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga appealed for the support of the local government unit of Santa Ana and other stakeholders to protect and preserve the coastal and marine resources as a scientific marine research hub will be established in the municipality where the famous Palau Island Protected Landscape and Seascape is located.

"Sta Ana, Cagayan will be the northernmost site to serve as sentinel covering the Northern Philippine Sea marine biogeographic region," said Secretary Loyzaga as she emphasized the island's beauty, diverse flora and fauna, and vast natural resources.

Secretary Loyzaga also said corals that live in the northern parts of the Philippines are resilient to climate change per extensive scientific research conducted by the University of the Philippines – Marine Science Institute (UPMSI).

"This project is so important that is why we are working with the UPMSI to create further studies in collaboration with the community, and we would like this to be a center of education so that we know why we need to protect the area," the top environment official added.

Regional Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan of DENR Region 2 expressed gratitude to the Environment Secretary for considering the region as one of the recipients of the said project.

"We also thank officials of the Philippine Navy, Cagayan Economic Zone Authority, local government unit, and other members of the Protected Area Management Board for their support in coming up with this new initiative of our Secretary," Director Bambalan underscored as she discussed developments implemented within the PIPLS such as construction of step ladders, information center, pasalubong stalls; and installation of water and solar-powered generation systems.

Photo4a PR DENR to establish marine research station in Sta web4During the visit, Secretary Loyzaga together with Undersecretary Juan Miguel Cuna, Undersecretary Augusto Dela Peña, and Head Executive Assistant Joaquin Loyzaga led the tree-growing activity within the green spaces at the Regional Government Center in Tuguegarao City.

Photo6 PR DENR to establish marine research station in Sta web3They also led the groundbreaking ceremony for the PENRO Cagayan building graced by Cagayan 3rd District Representative Joseph Lara who intervened with the necessary funding assistance; and conducted meeting with stakeholders of National Irrigation Administration, SN Aboitiz, the provincial government of Isabela, Cagayan State University, and local government unit of Ramon, Isabela for the strengthening of Magat watershed; and with Cagayan Governor Manuel Mamba and Tuguegarao City Mayor Maila Ting-Que for the improvement of the Department's priority programs implementation.#



WEDNESDAY CHRONICLE

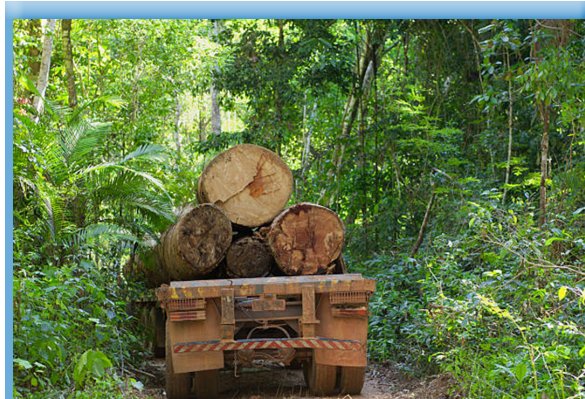
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Turn on page 3



DENR ANNOUNCES CONVICTION OF ILLEGAL LOGGER IN CAVITE

Turn on page 3



SENIORS, PWDS TO GET P500 MONTHLY GROCERY DISCOUNT

Turn on page 3



Turn on page 3

Not enough votes for 3/4 approval

MANILA, Philippines — It seems that not everyone in the Senate is on board with Charter change. Sen. Cynthia Villar said "there's a chance" that seven senators, including herself and four other allies of President Marcos, would vote against the proposed measure to amend certain economic provisions of the Constitution.

"They claim they are only after the economic provisions. But when they open up the Constitution, nobody can stop them from changing other provisions, including the political portions. That's not good," Villar noted over the weekend. Earlier, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel III said he and up to eight other senators had already decided to vote against

Resolution of Both Houses 6 (RBH6) – which seeks to amend select economic provisions of the 1987 Constitution – and among those who would definitely block its passage was Senate Deputy Minority Leader Risa Hontiveros.

Instead of amending the Constitution, Villar said that business groups want the government to focus on the effective implementation of the ease of doing business law and addressing the problem of corruption.

"I have talked to other businessmen. Actually, what they want is the ease of doing business and less corruption," Villar said. She maintained that the ongoing proposal to amend certain economic provisions of the Constitution would not really make an impact on the econo-



BFP: OVER 3,000 FIRES RECORDED IN FIRST 2 MONTHS

Turn on page 3

The K-Pop Craze: A Cultural Phenomenon Shaping Philippine Society

The Philippine cultural landscape has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years, largely influenced by the global phenomenon known as K-Pop. From the infectious beats of BTS to the captivating choreography of BLACKPINK, Korean pop music has captured the hearts of millions of Filipinos, transcending geographical boundaries and leaving an indelible mark on Philippine culture.

The rise of K-Pop in the Philippines can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the internet and social media have played a pivotal role in disseminating K-Pop content to a global audience, including Filipino fans who have embraced the genre with fervor. Platforms like YouTube and Twitter have enabled fans to connect with their favorite K-Pop idols, participate in online fan communities, and share their passion for Korean music and culture.

Moreover, the appeal of K-Pop extends beyond its catchy melodies and slick production values. The meticulously choreographed dance routines, elaborate music videos, and visually stunning performanc-

es have captivated audiences worldwide, including in the Philippines. K-Pop idols are not just musicians but also fashion icons, trendsetters, and role models for many young Filipinos.

The influence of K-Pop on Philippine culture is evident in various aspects of society. One notable impact is on fashion trends, as Filipino youth emulate the stylish looks of their favorite K-Pop idols, sparking a demand for Korean-inspired clothing and accessories. K-Pop's emphasis on beauty and grooming has also led to an increased interest in skincare products, makeup tutorials, and beauty routines inspired by Korean beauty standards.

Furthermore, K-Pop has become a catalyst for cultural exchange between South Korea and the Philippines. The popularity of K-Pop has led to greater awareness and appreciation of Korean language, cuisine, and traditions among Filipinos. Korean restaurants, language schools, and cultural festivals have proliferated in major cities across the Philippines, fostering cross-cultural understanding and friendship between the two nations.

However, the K-Pop phenomenon is not without its challenges and controversies. The intense scrutiny and pressure faced by K-Pop idols, particularly regarding their appearance, behavior, and personal lives, have raised concerns about the mental health and well-being of young performers. Additionally, issues such as cultural appropriation and the commodification of Korean culture have sparked debates about the ethical implications of K-Pop's global popularity.

Despite these challenges, the K-Pop craze continues to thrive in the Philippines, shaping the cultural landscape in profound ways. As Filipino fans continue to support their favorite K-Pop groups, attend concerts, and participate in fan events, the influence of K-Pop on Philippine culture shows no signs of waning. With its infectious energy, vibrant creativity, and cross-cultural appeal, K-Pop has become more than just a music genre—it is a cultural phenomenon that has left an indelible mark on Philippine society.

-ANG KABITENYA

SENATE...

my, and noted that efforts to improve the country's economy could be addressed through legislation. Pimentel agreed with Villar that the government could help improve the lives of Filipinos without the need to amend the Constitution. He said the government could initiate programs to promote the fight against corruption, ensure ease of doing business, improve food production to address inflation, organize the education of the youth so that they are prepared for the future, lower electricity costs and take care of the elderly, retirees, and people with disabilities.

"We have noticed that this already leads to a big change towards the progress of Filipino life. There is no need for constitutional amendments," Pimentel said in a Viber message to The STAR.

He added that the government should also ensure a very transparent budget process.

"Let's make the Philippines a manufacturing place, because manufacturing will surely create jobs," Pimentel pointed out.

Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri said RBH6 needs the votes of three-fourths or 18 of the 24 senators to pass before it could be submitted to a bicameral conference, and eventually, to a plebiscite for people's approval.

Experts in the technical vocational and private education sector will be invited in next week's public hearing of the Senate subcommittee on constitutional amendments tackling the proposal for Charter change, Sen. Sonny Angara said.

Angara, tasked to conduct hearings on RBH6, said several personalities and experts, from the technical-vocational (tech voc) and private education sectors, have been invited to the hearing tomorrow.

"It's a continuation of the session for higher education. More were invited from the tech voc and private education sector," he said in a Viber message to Senate reporters.

Angara's subcommittee had conducted three public hearings, and the first hearing had legal luminaries who had varying opin-

ions on RBH6. The second hearing was attended by business executives, and the third was participated in by private education institutions.

Earlier, Zubiri welcomed the statement of Commission on Elections Chairman George Garcia that the poll body is amenable to holding a plebiscite on Charter amendments alongside the 2025 mid-term elections.

In fact, the Senate president noted that a whopping P13 billion can be saved if the plebiscite was synchronized with next year's elections, a huge amount that can be used elsewhere for the welfare of Filipinos.

Repeal legally better than amendment

Retired chief justice Reynato Puno has offered a rather seamless solution to "ambiguities" that were inadvertently committed in the drafting of the 1987 Constitution, recommending that a "repeal" would legally be better than amending the Charter.

"Just repeal the three restrictive provisions, which we want to be out," Puno suggested to lawmakers, referring to Articles 12 (public utilities), 14 (education) and 16 (advertising).

"In addition, you just repeal Article 2 Section 19 of the Constitution which states 'the State shall develop a self-reliant and independent national economy effectively controlled by Filipinos.' Include that in the repeal," he proposed during the hearing of the committee of the whole.

"We are now on uncharted waters," Puno – a highly-respected constitutionalist who was also one of the framers of the Constitution – pointed out, warning that both efforts of the Senate and the House to amend the Charter may all be put to naught in a potential "constitutional challenge."

This is because the manner of voting, either separately or jointly, is vague in the Charter which runs the risk of being questioned in the Supreme Court; and the proposed insertion of the phrase "unless otherwise provided by law" may arrogate unto Congress the real sovereign will of the people.

"Once this case is before the SC, we do not know the time it would be decided

and we do not know how the court will decide. If that happens, all these wishes of us, all these desires of us, that we invite foreign businesses, will not come to reality," Puno warned, essentially due to uncertainty.

The "rigid" requirement of the Constitution – as succinctly and unequivocally stated in the phrase "sovereignty resides in the people, and all government authority emanates from them" – simply means the Filipino citizens are supreme, even more than elected public officials.

"This could be a waiver of the people to approve or disapprove any change to the Constitution, or as a delegation of the people's power to Congress," Puno emphasized, adding that such exercise of senators and congressmen will "only be valid" once the people approve it in a plebiscite. The referendum, or the "approval by the people cannot be set aside, cannot be short-circuited."

"So again, these are some of the constitutional problems. What is the way out? My respectful submission is to just do away with this phrase 'unless otherwise provided by law,'" he said.

The veteran jurist, who has always been known for his scholarly ponencias, also pointed out that the participation of the people, or them having the final say, has always been present in all of the country's Constitutions – from 1935, 1973, up to the 1987 or the post-Marcos Sr. era charter. Puno reiterated this is non-negotiable, since such power has "not been delegated" to Congress, and doing it will open the "floodgates to amendments" through ordinary legislation, "effectively short-circuiting the power of the people to approve or disapprove changes to the Constitution."

"Thus subverting their (people's) sovereignty," the 83-year-old veteran jurist, who spent half of his life and career in the judiciary, asserted.

He believes that if these provisions are repealed, then Congress can enact laws that could entice more foreign direct investments into the country. /PHIL-STAR.COM

Workers buck wage hike in installments

MANILA, Philippines — Stressing the need for a one-time significant wage increase to effectively stimulate the local economy, labor group Federation of Free Workers (FFW) has rejected the proposal by some legislators and the business sector for an installment-based legislated wage increase.

"Such a method would considerably weaken the potential economic stimulus that a one-time increase could achieve," FFW Women's Network vice president Arta Maines said.

The FFW is pushing for a P150 legislated wage increase for all workers, as it noted that it is critical to boost the purchasing power of the workforce and delivering an immediate uplift to economic activities.

Some legislators are proposing a gradual increase of P100 over three years for the National Capital Region (NCR), Calabarzon and Central Luzon – P40 in the first year, P40 in the second and P20 in the third year. A P35-P35-P30 increment is being eyed for other regions.

"This is lower than some of the wage orders promulgated by the RTWPBs which unions earlier criticized as insufficient," Maines said, referring to Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Boards.

She said the installment-based increase diminishes the immediate impact that a significant wage boost could have on the economy.

"It's crucial, now more than ever, for our workers to receive this adjustment to handle the rising living costs and to kickstart economic activities from the grassroots," Maines pointed out.

She said that a substantial wage hike implemented on May 1 would convey a strong message of support for the country's workforce and aid in the swift recovery of local economies.

She added that studies have shown a positive correlation between worker morale, effort and wage satisfaction. The FFW official cited as an effective precedent the P25 wage increase in 1989.

"Despite substantial wage hikes and the political unrest following coup attempts, the feared massive job losses did not materialize. Instead, GDP (gross domestic product) growth soared to 5.8 percent from that period until the Asian financial crisis in 1997," she said.

Maines noted that the proposed P150 wage increase represents 24.59 percent of the current P610 daily wage in the NCR, compared to the 39.1 percent legislated increase in 1989.

In the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, where the daily wage is P341, the increase would constitute 43.99 percent.

Employers and other business groups are against a legislated wage hike, preferring to leave wage setting to the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Boards as mandated by law./PR

"Ugnayan sa Barangay"

Cavite Provincial Government's "Ugnayan sa Barangay" program led by Governor Jonvic Remulla was conducted on various dates in February in multiple areas, including Paliparan 1 and Paliparan 2 in City of Dasmariñas, Tres Cruces, Sanja Mayor and Biga in Tanza, San Francisco in the City of General Trias, and Kalubkob and Batas in Silang. Its aim is to enhance community bonds and convey a vision for a prosperous future by engaging residents and local leaders.

During his interaction with the people, Governor Remulla presented the provincial government's comprehensive programs for 2024, emphasizing key sectors

such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and social services. The event included a raffle draw to add excitement and promote community spirit. To address basic needs, the provincial government also distributed rice to families.

The Ugnayan sa Barangay program serves as a model for actively involving and empowering local communities, showcasing the Provincial Government's dedication to positively impacting the growth and well-being of Cavite residents in the upcoming year./PR



Continuous healthcare services for locals of Tanza.



On February 28, 2024, Cavite provincial government's commitment to accessible healthcare services was demonstrated through a medical mission organized by the Office of the Provincial Governor's medical mission team and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer in Barangay Julugan III, Tanza.

Esteemed medical professionals from GEAMH, namely Dr. Millicent S. Fojas and Dr. Denise Anne R. Alcausin, along with dedicated medical staff, rendered essential medical services to cater to the well-being of 363 residents. Vital medical supplies such as prescription medicines, multivitamins, and mosquito repellent lotion were also distributed to the beneficiaries.

Furthermore, the mission extended its reach by providing free eye check-ups to the residents. This additional service highlighted the comprehensive approach taken to address various health concerns within the community.

The success of the medical mission was made possible through the collective efforts of various stakeholders particularly the Kabalikatan Civicom Tanza Chapter led by Mr. Nickard H. Presnillo, which played a vital role in organizing and facilitating the event. Collaborating with

organizations like the Samahan ng mga Kababaihan ng Tindera ng Isda, the non-government organization Lady Eagles, and the Emergency Response Team, alongside the dedicated Barangay Health workers and staff, ensured the harmonious execution of the mission./PR

A Successful Medical and Dental Mission in GMA.

The Office of the Provincial Governor, in collaboration with the office of the Provincial Health Officer conducted a medical and dental mission in Barangay Poblacion V, GMA, on February 27, 2024 benefitting a total of 488 individuals.

Joined by GEAMH doctors Keanu Augusto Manguiat and Merry Louise L. Bautista, alongside the medical staff, and the Carsigma District Hospital team composed of Ms. Nerissa V. Arandia and Ms. Lorna M. Castillo, the event aimed to address the healthcare needs of the community.

The medical services extended encompassed various aspects of healthcare. Notably, 420 individuals received thorough medical check-ups, while 50 individuals availed tooth extraction services. Additionally, 9 individuals underwent Electrocardiogram (ECG) examinations, and 7 individuals received X-ray diagnostics, reflecting the mission's commitment to delivering holistic healthcare solutions. Maintenance medicines, supplements, multivitamins and mosquito repellent lotion were also distributed to the community.

In addition to medical and dental provisions, the program included free eye check-ups, underscoring its dedication to addressing a spectrum of health concerns within the community.

The success of the mission can be attributed to the collaborative efforts of the local government, under the leadership of Punong Barangay Edwin Carl Ugay. Furthermore, the unwavering support of barangay staff, council members, and volunteers from the 402nd CDC RRIBM Tanza Cavite, led by Sgt. John Earl C. Villarica PA (Res), significantly contributed to the mission's seamless execution./PR



ECHOES OF PROGRESS

Philippine School for the Deaf equipped to empower the next generation

A school renovation project amplifies the potential of deaf community



A dedicated teacher from PSD provides a hands-on lecture inside their newly rehabilitated school building

Being hearing-impaired is a challenge in itself, navigating a world where communication relies heavily on spoken words.

In the Philippines, this challenge further creates a gap, as opportunities for the deaf are limited, particularly in education and employment. The struggle is intensified as only a few secondary learning institutions are catering to their unique needs, with affordability and facility conditions further hindering their pursuit of skills and knowledge.

A personal advocacy

Shery Funcion, the Principal of the Philippine School for the Deaf (PSD) in Pasay City, is no stranger to these challenges.

Her dedication to the cause began with her college thesis, focusing on job opportunities for deaf learners. Since then, she has immersed herself in various organizations and volunteer activities, gaining firsthand insights into the limited opportunities available to deaf learners.

She eventually became a SPED teacher, before taking on the role of principal in PSD.

“The immersive experience really showed me how important these projects are for our students—kung gaano kahalaga ang pagbibigay ng mga pasilidad sa mga mag aaral lalo na sa mga bingi,” she underscored the importance of providing facilities for students with hearing impairment.

A facility that produces opportunities



JFF is also supported by the Film Development Council of the Philippines, JT International (Philippines) Inc., and the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines.

In the century-old PSD, their senior high school laboratory building serves as the training ground for students. Its classrooms and halls, no matter how old, have always played their role in honing and preparing deaf students to have solid career prospects after PSD.

Amidst the competing priorities within the school and the broader Philippine educational system, the facility barely had enough funds for the rehabilitation and major repairs it needed. For years, students and teachers worked around issues ranging from dim lighting and leaking roofs to uneven floors. These not only presented structural concerns but also hindered the overall learning experience of students.

“Our deaf learners need special accommodation to fulfill their special educational needs. They need to have a conducive learning environment so we can optimize the activities and learning programs,” Funcion stressed.

Funcion further shared that the 2023 collaborative project of the Henry Sy Foundation, SM Foundation (SMFI), and the Department of Education’s Schools Division Office of Pasay City could not have come at a better time.

“The rehabilitation of the Home Economics (HE) laboratories is crucial because students need to fulfill their performance tasks. These are vital components of our senior high school program to ensure that they acquire essential skills and competencies for employment post-graduation from PSD.”

Through the collaboration, PSD has been provided with the much-needed facilities in dressmaking, beauty care, cookery, electrical, bartending, food and beverage preparation, ICT, and dance.

For Funcion, their Henry Sy, Sr. building serves as a great beginning that will help pave equal opportunities and create a future where deaf students’ abilities will shine within and beyond the four walls of classrooms.



Through the collaboration, PSD has been provided with the much-needed facilities in dressmaking, beauty care, cookery, electrical, bartending, food & beverage preparation, ICT, and dance.

The Japan Foundation Manila, in partnership with SM City Baguio, recently launched the Japanese Film Festival (JFF) with guests from Baguio Tourism Officer Mr. Alec Mapalo and Deputy Director Japan Foundation Manila Mr. Yojiro Tanaka.

Baguio film enthusiasts warmly welcomed the much-awaited annual showcase of Japanese cinema which opened with “The First Slam Dunk,” an animated sports film written and directed by Takehiko Inoue, from the hit anime franchise, ‘Slam Dunk’. On top of the amazing animation and heart-pounding basketball action, the film also resonates with heartfelt emotions./PR

SM2SM RUN 12: OVER 13,000 RUNNERS STRONG!



The 12th edition of the SM2SM Run, held on March 3, witnessed an impressive turnout of over 13,000 enthusiastic runners hailing from various corners of the country. This remarkable figure surpasses last year’s record of 9,500 participants, setting a new milestone for the event.



Commencing from the sprawling SM Seaside City Cebu complex at the South Road Properties, the race course led participants through iconic landmarks, including Plaza Independencia. Runners in the 8K category traversed S. Osmena Street, while those in the 12K category made their turnaround at SM City Cebu. Meanwhile, participants in the challenging 21K category journeyed all the way to Brgy. Banilad in Cebu City.

Renowned for its lucrative prizes in the Visayas region, SM2SM Run 12 distributed over 2 million pesos in cash and raffle prizes. The prizes included 12 Smart TVs, 12 smartphones, SM Gift Certificates, and brand new Suzuki car as grand prize.

“This is truly unbelievable, and you make this year’s run happen. Thank you for joining us today. I will see you all next year during the SM2SM Run 13 on March 2, 2025,” expressed Marissa Fernan, Vice President of SM Prime Holdings, Inc.

The SM2SM Run in Cebu City is an annual running event organized by SM Prime Holdings, Inc. It aims to promote health and fitness while bringing together communities through the spirit of running. With each edition, SM2SM Run continues to attract participants from across the Philippines, making it one of the most anticipated running events in the region. /PR



UNITED...

MANILA, Philippines — The United Nations has issued a global alert over a shortage of teachers, with the lack greatest in secondary education.

The UN alert was issued last week at a meeting of the International Task Force on Teachers for Education in Johannesburg, South Africa. Seven out of 10 teachers at the secondary level will need to be replaced by 2030, along with over half of all teachers who will have left the profession by the decade’s end, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said. The agency said the effect of a worldwide teacher shortage is profound, creating larger class sizes, overburdened educators, educational disparities and financial strain on school systems, impacting educational quality and access.

According to a UNESCO report, the world needs 44 million teachers by 2030 in order to make the Sustainable Development Goal of quality and equitable education a reality. The high-level panel’s recommendations are focused on core aspects: dignity, humanity, diversity, equity and inclusion, quality, sustainability, innovation and leadership.

Responses to the challenge include recommendations to cultivate an environment where teachers can drive educational change, foster critical thinking and promote modern learning skills.

The UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession advocates for teachers to be collaborative partners rather than mere purveyors of knowledge. Adequate funding for education systems and technology integration are key, with a focus on supporting the use of digital learning and other technology.

Attrition rates among primary teachers almost doubled from 4.62 percent globally in 2015 to 9.06 in 2022, with teachers often leaving the profession within the first five years, the report revealed.

According to recent estimates, financing additional teachers will cost \$12.8 billion for universal primary education and \$106.8 billion for universal secondary education.

The annual additional financing needed to cover salaries at primary and secondary levels by 2030 is estimated at \$120 billion. ‘Drop K-12 curriculum’

With only 20 percent of the country’s senior high school graduates landing employment, the Marcos administration should treat this as an indicator to abandon the K-12 curriculum instead of integrating skills training into the curriculum, according to the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT). In a statement, the group said President Marcos’ order to increase SHS graduates’ employability through the integration of skills training would only replicate the program’s failures as it “only aims to produce cheap and docile labor force for foreign employers that is bound to be underpaid, contractual or unemployed.”

“There is no point in continuing a program that not a single study has found to be effective. K-12 only aims to make the Philippines competitive against underdeveloped countries in producing a steady stream of semi-skilled labor force for foreign capital. These jobs are largely contractual in nature and the lowest paying in different industries,” ACT chair Vladimer Quetua said over the weekend.

During an education sector meeting led by Vice President Sara Duterte at Malacañang last month, Marcos ordered concerned state agencies to work closely with industries to align skills and education with companies’ demands.

Marcos had also ordered the creation of a technical working group to study the proposed embedding of technical vocational education and training or TVET into the K-12 curriculum. The proposal would strengthen the K-12 program by adding a practicum component, according to the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Citing a study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, TESDA said the measure would address the low employability rate of SHS graduates.

Quetua said the majority of K-12 graduates “only add up to the huge number of unemployed.”

“TESDA itself admitted the starkly low employment rate of our K-12 graduates and attrition rate of those employed is high,” he added. /PHILSTAR.COM

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SENIORS...

MANILA, Philippines — The monthly grocery discount for senior citizens and persons with disabilities (PWDs) will be increased to P500 in March.

A trade official hinted that Speaker Martin Romualdez’s request to increase the discount may be carried out next month.

“We’re working so that the usual P65 per week discount for senior citizens and PWDs may be increased to P125,” Trade Undersecretary Carolina Sanchez said, which means an increase to P500 from the current P260 monthly discount on groceries and other commodities.

Romualdez earlier sought a hike in the five percent grocery discount that seniors and PWDs enjoy weekly, currently capped at a total purchase value of P1,500 or a P65 weekly discount. He said this is no longer

appropriate, given the rising cost of living.

“I am delighted to welcome the imminent implementation of increased discounts for our senior citizens and PWDs,” he said.

Sanchez noted that while the process of consultation with stakeholders is still ongoing, the necessary inter-agency circular to implement the additional discount would likely be issued and take effect in March.

“It’s a joint issuance between the DA (Department of Agriculture), DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) and the DOE (Department of Energy),” she said.

The discount covers basic goods and prime commodities such as rice, corn, bread, meat, fish, chicken, eggs, cooking oil, sugar, vegetables, fruits, onions and garlic, as well as fresh and processed milk except

213 more, the latest BFP data showed.

Smoking was the top cause of fires, with 191 incidents.

A majority of the fires were accidental in nature with 1,704 incidents, but there were also 20 intentional fires and 29 natural fires recorded for the period.

For the full year 2023, the BFP said that electrical fires were the leading

medical-grade milk, she added.

Manufactured goods like processed meat, sardines and corned beef are also covered, except for premium brands.

Basic construction supplies like cement, hollow blocks and electrical supplies, including bulbs, are also covered.

Premium items, including non-essential food such as cakes and pastries, are not discounted, Sanchez noted. Sanchez and other DTI officials met with Romualdez on Tuesday night to discuss the proposal.

Seniors will enjoy a back-to-back bonanza as President Marcos just signed into law the Expanded Centenarian Act, granting a P10,000 cash gift to citizens who reach the age of 80 and every five years until age 95, Romualdez said.

cause of incidents, comprising 40.72 percent out of the 16,433 incidents.

The BFP kicked off the observance of Fire Prevention Month yesterday with a civic parade of fire trucks, emergency vehicles and other equipment.

Fire incidents usually occur most in the months of March and April as it coincides with the warm and dry season in the country.

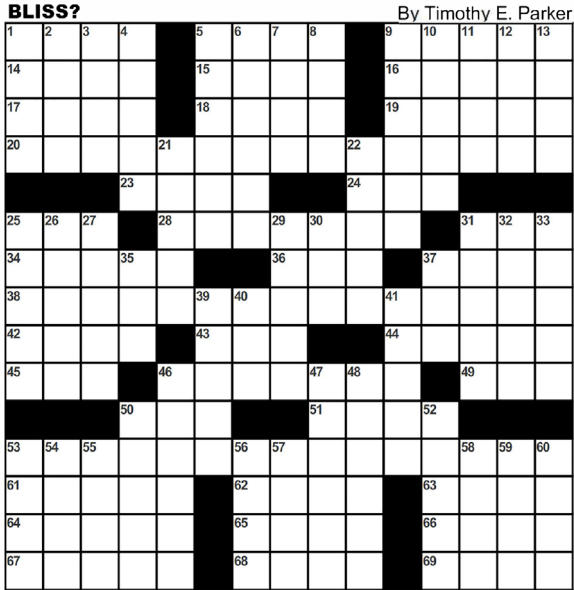
The BFP advised the public to have their electrical connections checked by licensed professionals every two years.

It is implementing its Oplan Ligtas na Pamilyanan, its flagship program in fire prevention, by immersing firemen in communities and providing fire safety education and pre-fire planning. /PHILSTAR.COM

promoting responsible stewardship of natural resources in the province of Cavite.” (PB/ DENR CALABARZON)



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ACROSS

- 1) Lockable fastener
- 5) Hue fit for a duck
- 9) Toyota of old
- 14) "... happily_ after"
- 15) Continental cash
- 16) Judge, at times
- 17) Big name in building blocks
- 18) Indeterminate long time
- 19) Crosswise to a ship's middle
- 20) Accepts a proposal
- 23) Telling sign
- 24) Buddhist discipline
- 25) Scratch, as furniture
- 28) Persevere
- 31) Cobbler's need
- 34) Belittle
- 36) Basker's quest
- 37) Skin lotion ingredient
- 38) Unwanted welcome
- 42) Like Mr. Claus' cheeks
- 43) Profit ender?
- 44) Implant snugly
- 45) Vein glory?
- 46) Involve deeply
- 49) Recognizes
- 50) Royal flush card
- 51) Lifted, as an anchor
- 53) Things issued before peoples' "big day"
- 61) Ferric_ (rust)
- 62) Connect
- 63) Turn over_ leaf
- 64) Icicle sites
- 65) Clarinet kin
- 66) Pepsi, for one
- 67) Nobody's fool
- 68) "Ahem" alternative
- 69) Cookbook abbr.

DOWN

- 1) "SOS!"
- 2) Affirmatively allege
- 3) Lily variety
- 4) Trailer, briefly
- 5) Relative of 4-Down
- 6) Oregon city
- 7) "Iliad" deity
- 8) Type of cause
- 9) Pollen-bearing organ
- 10) Like city residents
- 11) Dock
- 12) Raise, as young'uns
- 13) Private organization?
- 21) Move forward
- 22) Ultraviolet index factor
- 25) Computer shortcut
- 26) Dislike, and then some
- 27) Aggressive poker bet
- 29) Metric unit of volume
- 30) Bunt that moves one along, briefly
- 31) Accused's need
- 32) Courted
- 33) Advances
- 35) Using trickery
- 37) Where to get your balance
- 39) Aden's country
- 40) Sleep cycle acronym
- 41) Annoy
- 46) Superlatively slipperiness
- 47) Thick-skinned behemoths, briefly
- 48) Bulb's place
- 50) Snake that puts two and two together?
- 52) Legislate
- 53) Travails
- 54) Academic challenge
- 55) Opera star
- 56) Hardly haute cuisine
- 57) Ad_ (improvises)
- 58) High-hatter
- 59) Congers
- 60) Cashless deal

CITY OF BACOR NEWS

Kasunduan ng Pamahalaang Lungsod ng Bacoor at ng Pamahalaang Bayan ng Tiaong, Quezon, Mas pinagtibay sa ginanap na MOA Signing



Opisyal nang nilagdaan ng Pamahalaang Lungsod ng Bacoor at ng Pamahalaang Bayan ng Tiaong, Quezon ang Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) para sa pagtatatag ng kanilang Sisterhood Agreement na naglalayong mas palakasin ang ugnayan at pagtutulungan sa iba't ibang aspeto ng kaunlaran.

Ang nasabing seremonya ay pinangunahan ni Mayor Strike B. Revilla kasama sina Vice Mayor Rowena Bautista-Mendiola, City Administrator Atty. Aimee Torrefranca-Neri, Sangguniang Panlungsod members, at mga Department and Unit Heads.

Malugod ding sinalubong ang mga espesyal na panauhin mula sa Tiaong, Quezon, na sina Mayor Vincent Arjay Mea, kasama si Municipal Administrator Atty. Sergio T. Eulogio, at ang kanilang mga Department at Unit Heads.

LGBTQ Member Richard Bato of Brgy. Ligas I to represent the City of Bacoor at the 2024 Reyna ng Turismo – Cavite Pageant

Congratulations to Richard Bato of Brgy. Ligas I for being selected by LGBT Pilipinas – Bacoor Chapter and Strike Bacoor Rainbow Community as the sole representative of the Marching Band Capital of the Philippines at the 2024 Reyna ng Turismo – Cavite pageant!



Last week's solution:



Paete recognizes local artists in National Arts Month

PAETE, Laguna (PIA) -- Known as the Carving Capital of the Philippines and the Arts Capital of Laguna, the town of Paete continues to honor Paeteños who excelled in the arts and culture to mark National Arts' Month. Kasingang Paete's Night of Recognition for Artists, organized by the local government, fosters appreciation for local artists and signifies their support in their crafts. Paete Mayor Ronald Cosico emphasized the importance of integrating the national celebration of Arts Month into the community to honor the local artists for their legacy and contribution to arts.

"The town of Paete is recognized as the Carving Capital of the Philippines by virtue of Proclamation no. 809. Proclaimed also by Sangguniang Panlalawigan ng Laguna as Arts Capital of Laguna, so it is just right to recognize the artists in our town," Cosico explained. He added: "We adopted the celebration of National Arts' Month in our town. We have come a long way. Tonight, a new set will be recognized here in our town as they bring honor not only in our town but to our country, the Philippines."

Councilor Joshua Ryan Alvarez said that the recognition ceremony's goal is to acknowledge and celebrate the diverse talents of its residents and to also open the door of opportunities for future generations of artists who will continue the tradition of excellence in the arts. These efforts, Alvarez believes, helps to strengthen the sense of community pride and identity while also promoting cultural tourism and economic development in their town.

"It is held to give appreciation to the Paeteños who elevate the art and culture of our town in various fields such as carving, making paper mache, drawing, writing literature, and others. It is important to do this because Paete is called the Arts Capital of Laguna because of our town's contribution to the total arts in the Province of Laguna," Councilor Alvarez said.

Seven awardees in different fields of arts were awarded after a series of deliberations and review done by the committee members and municipal council.

Emersan Baldemor, awardee for Pambayang Alagad ng Sining sa Musika at Panitikan, expressed his gratitude to the LGU.

He said that more than the award and recognition, he treats this as a responsibility to be a voice for his fellow artists.

"To be awarded and recognized as an artist is not only an honor and privilege, it is a responsibility to be the voice of fellow creators who always yearn for recognition and appreciation; and challenge society to ask them the true meaning and importance of art and culture, and love for the country," he said.

Baldemor is a teacher who bagged awards and recognition on the national level as a 3-time grantee of NCCA Gawad Bagong Biswal and Gallery and Exhibitions Program. He is also a registered writer and author in the National Book Development Board of the Philippines.

He commits to continuously value education as a tool to inspire the youth in arts and culture appreciation, to actively participate in different culture and arts-based programs that will give opportunity to support his fellow local artists, and to be part of the advocacy that aims to preserve Paete's culture and tradition.

Baldemor added: "I promise that I will continue to fight for and be proud of our culture and arts, and serve as a loyal supporter of projects that will strengthen our town as Arts Capital of Laguna and Carving Capital of the Philippines."

Other awarded local artists include Neil Ricci F. Bagamano (carving), Ron Michael C. Adea (member of

Autism Spectrum Disorder Band who joined Canada's Got Talent), Caroline Cagahastian (oil/acrylic and spray painting), Lord Alvin B. Madridejos (tv directing), Mark Pagalanan (fashion designing) and Joey M. Sasa (PWD charcoal portrait artist). (AM/PIA-4A)

PBBM arrives in Melbourne for ASEAN-Australia Special Summit



MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. arrived Sunday night in Melbourne where he was warmly welcomed by Australian government officials. The President is accompanied by First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos and the Philippine delegates for the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit.

The plane carrying the President and his entourage landed at Melbourne Airport at 7:15 p.m. local time (4:15 p.m. in PH).

President Marcos will participate in the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit where he will reiterate the position of the Philippines on the regional and international issues and thank the Australian government for its unwavering support for the rule of law.

He is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with Prime Ministers Samdech Hun Manet of Cambodia and Christopher Mark Luxon of New Zealand; meet with the Filipino community in Melbourne and promote business through the Philippine Business Forum of the Department of Trade and Industry; and deliver a keynote speech at the Lowy Institute where he will highlight the Philippines' role as an active participant in world affairs and a contributor to the rules-based regional security architecture.

The bilateral ties between the Philippines and Australia was established on July 4, 1946.

President Marcos and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese signed an agreement in September last year, elevating the bilateral relationship of the Philippines and Australia from comprehensive to strategic partnership. Australia continues to support the Philippines as the country's 11th largest source of total Official Development Assistance with grant commitments amounting to USD180.4 million.

It is home to some 408,000 Filipinos and Australians of Filipino descent.

The Australian government's official guests, aside from Marcos, are Prime Ministers Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia, Sonexay Siphandone of Laos, and Pham Minh Chinh of Vietnam.

"Australia is proud to be ASEAN's first Dialogue Partner, sharing 50 years of mutual respect and cooperation with our friends in Southeast Asia," Albanese said a statement.

"Building Australia's links with the countries of Southeast Asia is a priority for the Government. The Special Summit commemorates our shared history and focuses firmly on the future -- on how we can deepen our ties and Australia's engagement with our region." (PND/PNA)

DBM: P175.9 million for DOST scholars, researchers OK'd

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has approved the release of P175.902 million for the implementation of the Grants-in-Aid (GIA) program of the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (DOST-PCHRD).

The additional notices of cash allocation amounting to P175.902 million to cover the cash requirement were approved on Feb. 13 and 27, according to Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman.

The requested amount will be earmarked for the implementation of GIA programs in research and development, capacity strengthening, financial support for various researchers, the conduct of forums and conventions, stipends for scholars and financial assistance to state universities and colleges, she added.

"The field of research and development is very close to my heart, as it is with my mentor, the late Senate president Edgardo J. Angara," she said.

The amount forms part of the P678.512 million released for the GIA program.

The DBM previously released P25.646 million to the DOST-PCHRD for its regular operating requirements in the first quarter of the year.

Under the FY 2024 General Appropriations Act, P828.955 million inclusive of automatic appropriations has been allocated to the DOST-PCHRD.

