

#WECANBEEQUALL: PCW CALLS TO DOUBLE DOWN ON GENDER EQUALITY, PARTNERS WITH MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS TO KICK OFF NATIONAL WOMEN'S MONTH CELEBRATION



Women and Everyone (WE) can be EquALL! This is the call of the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), national entity for gender equality and women empowerment, as it marked the beginning of the month-long celebration of Women's Month on March 1, 2024 at the SM North EDSA Skydome, which was supported by its partners from the United Nations, SM Supermalls, and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

The PCW, headed by its Officer-in-Charge Atty. Khay Ann Magundayao-Borlado, kicked off the National Women's Month Celebration with a series of activities such as the conduct of the second nationwide Safe Spaces Act (SSA) Orientation, the illumination of the SM North EDSA LED tunnel as part of its Purple Your Icon campaign, and the launch of the Walk in Her Shoes Exhibit.

In her opening message during the SSA Orientation, Atty. Borlado shared that this year's sub-theme of the Women's Month "Lipunang Patas sa Bagong Pilipinas: Kakayahan ng Kababaihan, Patutunayan!" calls for a Bagong Pilipinas, a thrust of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., where women are given equitable opportunities and not hindered by gender biases and discriminatory stereotypes.

"Kakayahan ng Kababaihan, Patutunayan: It aims to showcase and harness the full potential of women and girls in actively engaging in and benefiting from national growth and development. In order for women and girls to maximize their full potential, we, as duty bearers, have the obligation to ensure that public spaces like SM Supermalls are a safe space," Atty. Borlado explained.

She commended SM for being an active partner of PCW in making public spaces such as their malls safe spaces for all regardless of gender and hopes that more private companies and individuals will follow their lead.

"Indeed, you are a trailblazer in the private sector, and we hope that other players and personalities will follow in raising the awareness and consciousness of their employees, tenants, and other stakeholders on how we can really make public spaces truly a safe space for every Juana and Juan," Atty. Borlado added.

Ms. Jessica Bianca T. Sy, Assistant Vice President and Program Director of SM Prime Holdings, Inc. supports PCW's call for gender equality and encourages her colleagues at SM to continue their commitment to create a welcoming environment in their malls and a more equitable world for all.

"Our continued collaboration with esteemed partners such as the Department of Labor and Employment and the Philippine Commission on Women including the United Nations underscores our dedication to creating a world where every woman feels not only safe but truly empowered," she stated.

Ms. Sy also recognized that there are women systemic challenges that Filipino women continue to face today both in the workplace and in society. Nonetheless, by actively engaging with the public sector to educate their own women and their own people on the Safe Spaces Act, she said that SM remains committed to uphold the rights and dignity of women.

"At SM, our dedication to empowering women goes beyond mere rhetoric, it is ingrained in the very fabric of our organization. There is no more glass ceiling for women in SM and no barrier in supporting women-led businesses in our malls, showing how women can find success and growth with us," Ms. Sy concluded.

Through SM Cares, the corporate social responsibility arm of SM Supermalls, SM further seeks to uplift women from all walks of life by providing them with access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, which is aligned with the "Lipunang Patas sa Bagong Pilipinas" that the PCW envisions for Filipino Women and Everyone.

Bawal Bastos sa Bagong Pilipinas: The Safe Spaces Act Orientation

The Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act No. 11313) supplements RA 7877 (or the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995) and provides mechanisms for the protection of both sexes against any form of gender-based sexual harassment (GBSH) in all kinds of spaces such as streets and public spaces, educational and training institutions, cyberspace, and workplaces. It was signed on April 17, 2019, was published on July 19, 2019, and finally took effect on August 3, 2019.

PCW, SM, and DOLE jointly conducted a nationwide orientation on SSA in October 2023 to a total of 7,614 participants who were taught to help eliminate GBSH against women in their homes, workplaces, and respective communities.

"Ngayong Marso, pinalalawak natin ang aming saklaw para isama ang mga mall tenants at pinalalalang aming pag-unawa kung paano itaguyod ang Safe Spaces Act, ngayon naman sa pakikitungo sa aming customers," Engr. Junias M. Eusebio, Vice President for Mall Operations said.

The second Safe Spaces Act orientation recently conducted by the three partner agencies was another milestone and a record-breaking event, as it was attended by more than 10,000 SM mall employees, tenants, security guards, and janitorial personnel at the SM North EDSA Skydome and online across all over 85 SM malls nationwide.

"Kaya kami po ay nagpapasalamat sa SM for continuously organizing this learning session for you to better understand what GBSH is because just like in any other places, sa mga malls po puwedeng magkaroon o puwede po tayong makaranas o puwede po nating masakshian ang isang sitwasyon kung saan mayroon pong GBSH. No exception. Kahit po sa mga opisina ng gobyerno, kahit po sa simbahan, puwede pong mangyari ang gender-based sexual harassment," Atty. Benjo Santos M. Benavidez, Undersecretary for Workers' Welfare and Protection Cluster of DOLE stated.

Usec. Benavidez, also the resource speaker for the two nationwide SSA Orientations, discussed all about SSA also known as Bawal Bastos Law, what constitutes GBSH and where it may be committed, what are considered public spaces, the penalties for committing GBSH, the zero-tolerance policy, as well as where

can victims of GBSH in street and public spaces seek assistance. He even made his discussion interactive by asking the audience to participate in the online pre- and post-tests and by answering their questions during the open forum, which was joined in by more male participants.

"Ang Women's Month ay hindi lamang isang selebrasyon ng kababaihan; ito rin ay isang pagkakataon para bigyang-diin at importansya ang mga issue ukol sa gender at women's rights pati na rin ang paghimok na palawigin pa ang Safe Spaces, gender equality, at ang pagiging ingkusibo para sa lahat sa bawat antas ng ating lipunan," Engr. Eusebio reminded.

The participation of more than 10,000 attendees, according to Engr. Liza B. Silerio, Vice President of the Corporate Compliance Group, has empowered and enabled them to appreciate the Safe Spaces Act; thus, she is hopeful that they can share all the learnings with their colleagues, co-workers, friends, and relatives because "Bawal bastos sa SM!" and "Bawal bastos sa Bagong Pilipinas!"

Purple is Power: Purple Your Icon Campaign and #PurpleFridays Movement

As part of the 2024 Women's Month celebration, the PCW also launched Purple Your Icon, an advocacy initiative that encourages everyone to light up or decorate their offices, landmarks, and places in purple.

"Why purple? The color purple has a special connection to the fight for women's rights. Though not used by all groups, it holds special meaning for many. In the past, purple was associated with royalty and power, things women were often denied. Feminist groups, like the British women's suffrage rights activists and the American National Woman's Party, chose purple to show their own strength and demand equal rights. While different groups within the broader movement might have used varying color schemes, the symbolic use of purple by prominent organizations cemented its connection to the feminist advocacy for equality and empowerment, a legacy that continues to resonate today," Atty. Borlado explained during the illumination of the SM North EDSA LED tunnel also held on March 1.

The PCW expressed its gratitude to SM for illuminating the facade of its six malls in purple, showcasing the celebration's theme at its nine malls, and featuring the advocacy in its directories across all 85 locations. Aside from SM, many government agencies and private entities joined the campaign through illuminated buildings, landmarks, and even personal spaces including the Malacanang Palace, National Museum, Rizal Park, Cultural Center of the Philippines, and the Philippine International Convention Center, among others.

"Today, as we kick off the month-long celebration of women, we stand together in this Purple Your Icon advocacy to illuminate not just buildings and landmarks, but also the path towards a gender-equal Philippines. Adorning our surroundings this month serves not only as a beautiful tribute, but also as a powerful symbol. Purple signifies the spirit of women's rights, highlighting the fight for equality and empowerment. It represents a future where limitations and stereotypes are transcended," Atty. Borlado added.

Through this Purple Your Icon advocacy, the PCW hopes to spark conversations about women, champion their rights to carve their own path and be free from the constraints of societal expectations, and remind everyone that true progress lies in dismantling the root causes of gender inequality.

In addition, the PCW invites every Juana and Juan to join #PurpleFridays movement by wearing something purple every Friday of the month of March to stand alongside women and advocate for their rights.

Aside from its purple campaigns, the Women's Commission will lead the International Women's Day celebration on March 8 with the theme, "Investing in Equality toward Gender-Inclusive Prosperity", which is anchored in the IWD theme, "Invest in women: Accelerate progress". The focus for this event will be on addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing through a gender perspective.

Her Story Matters: The Walk in Her Shoes Exhibit

Capping off the National Women's Month Celebration kickoff in the Philippines, the PCW partnered with UN Women, UN Gender Thematic Group (GTG), and SM Cares in launching the Walk in Her Shoes Exhibit at the SM North EDSA.

"Being the national entity for gender equality and women empowerment and the lead agency of the National Women's Month Celebration and the 18-day Campaign to End Violence Against Women (VAW), the PCW advocates the importance of letting the voices of Filipino women be heard especially about the things that matter to them including personal experiences that may have involved a form of violence due to their identity as women," Atty. Borlado stated.

The Commission on Women believes that in order for VAW to be eliminated, it should be first seen and understood from the perspective of women themselves; hence, women's voices and priorities should take center stage at last.

"Women of today cannot wait any longer. Violence against them must end now. Otherwise, the cycle of hurt will continue to affect even the women of tomorrow thus, creating more stories of untold sorrow" Atty. Borlado explained.

The PCW added that initiatives like the Walk in Her Shoes Exhibit can help raise awareness that VAW is not just a special concern nor a sole problem of women, rather, it is a universal concern.

Moreover, Atty. Borlado shared five roots and truths about VAW and emphasized the importance of ending this phenomenon as it is a barrier to gender equality: (1) VAW is an offshoot of gender bias, (2) VAW is violence against humans, (3) VAW is a social development issue, (4) VAW is a global health crisis, and (5) VAW is a culture that can start at home.

"Because VAW hurts not only women and girls, but also men and boys, and the society as a whole. Thus, every Juana and Juan must work hand in hand to help end VAW, to dig up the roots of pain and sorrow, to plant new seeds of healing and freedom, and to create a safe space that will encourage and empower women to speak up and stand up, not just for themselves but for the next generation of Juanas and Juans," Atty. Borlado said.

She ended her speech with a powerful and inspiring message: "Like any other stories, her story matters too. And you will never know what a woman is going through until you walk in her shoes."

Atty. Pearl Jayagan Turley, Assistant Vice President of the Corporate Compliance Group and Program Director for the Women's Committee of SM Cares, echoed what Atty. Borlado said.

"Indeed, stories matter more so if they are about women. And the Filipino Women's trials and struggles that are woven into the fabric of this Walk in Her Shoes Exhibit remind us of the diverse challenges that women face and the importance of standing in solidarity with them," she said.

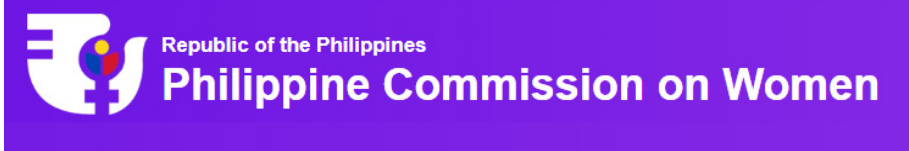
Walk in Her Shoes is an audio visual exhibit organized by the UN GTG featuring five stories of VAW victim-survivors including an Overseas Filipino Worker, a single mother, and a woman in armed conflict.

In conclusion, partners from the United Nations expressed their support for the PCW's advocacy to end VAW and all forms of gender-based violence because they, too, believe that Women and Everyone can be equal and should work hand in hand to achieve a gender-equal society.

"Women and girls represent half of the potential of a society. There is no society or there is no chance for any society in the world if it is not able to harness and develop this half of the potential that we have." (Gustavo Gonzalez, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Philippines)

"If we want to go fast, we go alone. If we want to go far, we go together. Please, I invite all of us to ask 'What more can I do?'" (Janelle Weissman, Head of Regional Partnerships and External Relations for the Asia and the Pacific Region of UN Women)

"May this Women's Month signify a turning point where we collectively invest in shaping a future where every woman, every girl is free, safe, and empowered." (Dr. Leila Saiji Joudane, UNFPA Country Representative and Chair of the UN GTG)



For we walk by faith, not by sight

2 Corinthians 5:7

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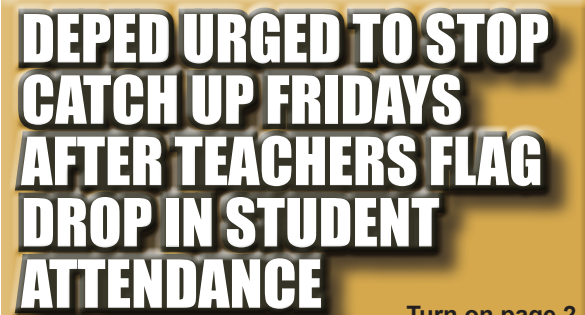
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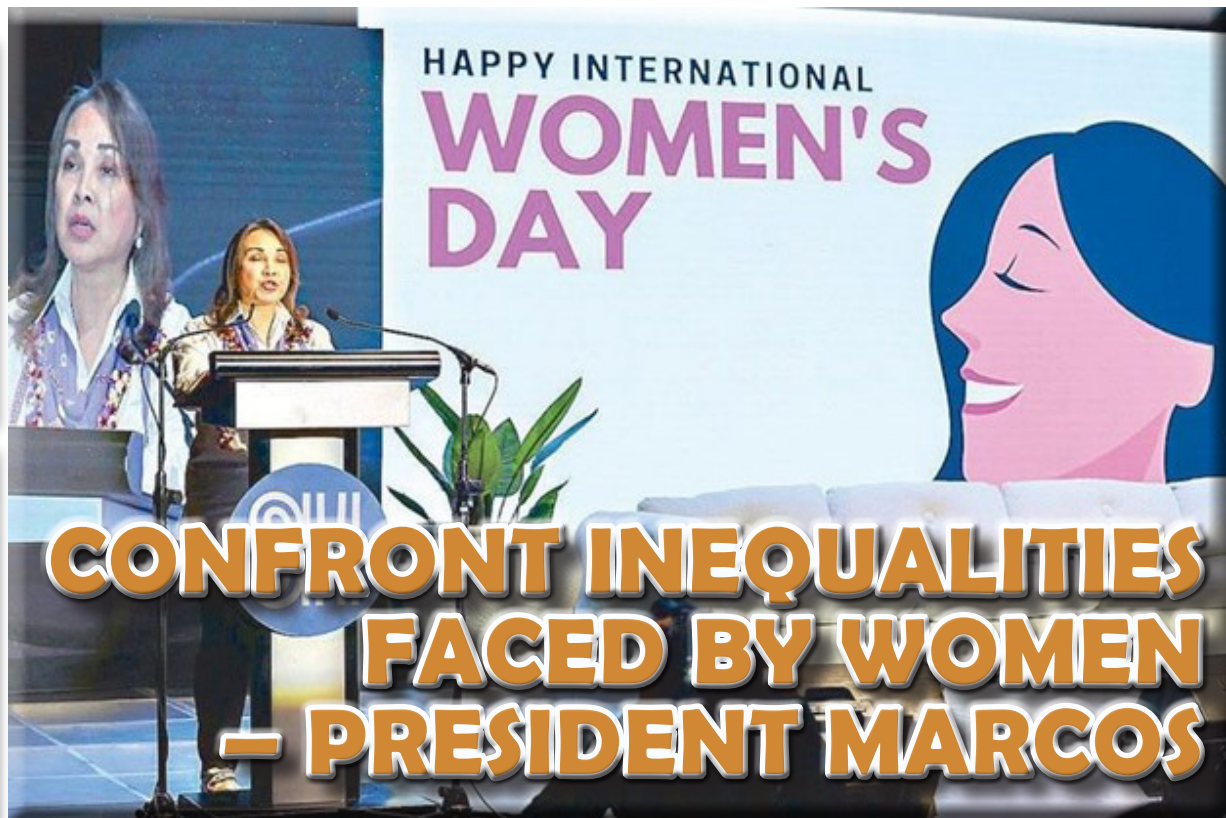
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MANILA, Philippines — Lamenting that inequalities and disparities involving women still persist, President Marcos yesterday called on Filipinos to help in attaining a more inclusive society.

In his message on the observance of International Women's Day, Marcos acknowledged the invaluable role that women play in society that drives progress.

"In an age marked by rapid growth and transformation, it is imperative for the global community to honor the incalculable worth of women's contributions across all facets of society and sustain the gains that have emerged from their countless struggles and sacrifices," he said.

He also called for an end to the violence and discrimination continuously faced by women.

"Yet, within our relentless pursuit of progress, we must confront the inequalities and disparities

that still persist. By ending gender-based violence, discrimination and biases that cast shadows over the realization of women's dreams, we actively engage in a mission that nurtures equity, inclusion and empowerment," Marcos said.

"Through our collective efforts, have faith that we will bring about a kind of change that stands the test of time, resonates across borders and reverberates in the core of our societies," he said.

"Always remember that, by amplifying the voices of women, championing their rights and reinforcing their fundamental freedom, we, in turn, elevate entire communities and nations, propelling ourselves towards a stronger, more equitable and more progressive world for all," he said.

In a separate message on the celebration of the National Women's Month this March, Marcos urged Filipinos to embrace their

civic and moral obligation to make sure that every Juana feels free and safe to use her voice with courage and compassion.

"This annual commemoration is also a salient reminder of the paths yet uncharted, especially for the protection of women in the marginalized communities," he said.

For her part, Vice President Sara Duterte on Friday gave tribute to Filipino women as she called for their protection against violence and the supposed "rotten" ideologies of the New People's Army.

In a video message posted on Facebook in celebration of International Women's Day, Duterte said the occasion is a great opportunity to highlight the contribution of women in the country's progress.

At the same time, Duterte said International Women's Day as well as National Women's Month are also opportunities to tackle and address the plights and

challenges that women are facing, including violence and tragedies in their families.

Senate President Pro-Tempore Loren Legarda lauded the role of women in nation-building, as she highlighted the pro-women legislation passed in Congress to protect women from abuse and to advance their rights.

"We have consistently upheld policies and cultural practices that prioritize women's rights and recognize their role in nation-building," Legarda said, citing the Magana Carta of Women, the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act, Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and the Domestic Workers Act.

The senator said she filed a bill in the Senate — the proposed Unpaid Care Workers Welfare Act, which seeks to assist home caregivers and lighten the household work imposed on women.

Reflecting on International Women's Day 2024: Progress, Challenges, and Commitments

Title: Reflecting on International Women's Day 2024: Progress, Challenges, and Commitments

International Women's Day (IWD) has been celebrated globally for over a century, serving as a rallying point to advocate for gender equality and honor the achievements of women. As we mark IWD in 2024, it's an opportune moment to reflect on the progress made, acknowledge the challenges that persist, and reaffirm our commitments to advancing women's rights and empowerment.

Over the years, significant strides have been made in the pursuit of gender equality. Women have shattered glass ceilings in various fields, from politics and business to science and sports. Laws and policies aimed at promoting gender parity and protecting women's rights have been enacted in many countries. Furthermore, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion in workplaces and society at large.

However, despite these advancements, significant disparities and obstacles remain. Women continue to face systemic barriers, including gender-based discrimination, violence, unequal pay, and limited access to education and healthcare. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of these issues, disproportionately affecting women and girls worldwide. From job losses to increased caregiving responsibilities, the pandemic has laid bare the existing inequalities and underscored the urgent need for action.

One of the critical areas that require attention is women's representation in leadership positions. While progress has been made, women remain underrepresented in political offices, corporate boardrooms, and other decision-making roles. Achieving gender balance in leadership is not only a matter of fairness but also essential for driving inclusive policies and fostering sustainable development.

Furthermore, addressing gender-based violence is paramount. It is a pervasive violation of human rights that affects women of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Ending this epidemic requires concerted efforts from governments, civil society, and communities to strengthen laws, provide support services for survivors, and challenge harmful gender norms.

Happy International Women's Day!
-Ang Kabitenya

An Affiliated of



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DEPED...

MANILA, Philippines — Two teacher groups have urged the Department of Education to stop the implementation of Catch Up Fridays as more students have reportedly been skipping school on Fridays due to a lack of engagement with the program, especially in schools with limited reading materials.

In separate statements and interviews, the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) and the Teachers' Dignity Coalition (TDC) criticized DepEd's lack of provision of reading materials for teachers to carry out the weekly reading intervention program, leading to its uneven implementation in schools.

"After a month of implementing Catch-Up Fridays, it is the teachers who bear the brunt of the additional workload in preparation and implementation. Due to the lack or insufficiency of books or materials, teachers are forced to spend on photocopying reading materials," ACT Chairperson Vladimir Quetua said. "Absence of guidelines leaves room for interpretation, resulting in a variety of activities deemed as 'Ready Activities'. Reports also indicate an increase in student absenteeism and tardiness on Fridays, posing challenges for teachers in achieving the objectives of Catch-Up Friday," Quetua added.

Similarly, TDC Chairperson Benjo Basas said that students' waning interest in reading every Friday have made them skip school instead, including students who can read and do not

see the importance of still participating in the program.

"They think, 'Might as well just be absent.' That's the reports received by members of TDC," Basas said in Filipino.

Launched by DepEd in January, Catch Up Fridays is a weekly learning intervention program that requires schools to dedicate half of the day to reading activities and the other half to values, health and peace education.

The reading intervention program targets both non-readers and students who can read through "differentiated instruction," a teaching strategy that aims to benefit a wide range of students by tailoring lessons to students' specific interests and needs. However, based on EDCOM 2's initial assessment of the program, teachers struggle to implement differentiated instruction in class due to lack of training.

DepEd last week flagged reports that some school personnel have resorted to selling books and workbooks and requiring parents and students to buy these. The department urged parents not to "patronize such transactions" as the weekly program should not require out-of-pocket expenses.

Basas said this only indicates that the responsibility of providing students with reading materials had been passed onto teachers and school personnel.

"This is the symptom, and not the illness. This happened perhaps out of the necessity and passion to

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Water levels in Luzon dams below normal

MANILA, Philippines — The water levels of eight dams in Luzon continued to drop amid the impact of the El Niño phenomenon, the latest monitoring of the hydro meteorological division of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) showed.

As of 6 a.m. yesterday, the water level of Angat Dam had dropped by 0.23 meters after it reached 203.25 meters from the previous level of 203.48 meters. This is 8.75 meters below the normal high water level of 212 meters.

But even with the decrease, Angat Dam is still 23.25 meters above its minimum water level of 180 meters. The dam supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs and provides for the irrigation needs of 25,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga provinces.

The hydro meteorological division monitoring report also shows a decline in the water elevations of seven other Luzon dams.

The La Mesa Dam in Quezon City reached 76.95 meters or 0.15 meters less compared to its previous level of 77.10 meters. In Benguet province, the Ambuklao Dam is at 747.74 meters, or 0.07 meters less compared to its previous level of 747.81 meters, while its Binga Dam in Benguet is at 570.67 meters or 0.24 meters less compared to its previous level of 570.91 meters.

The San Roque Dam in Pangasinan province is at 239.02 meters, or 0.29 meters less compared to its previous level of 239.31 meters.

Pantabangan Dam in Nueva Ecija also dropped to 182.66 meters or 0.34 meters less compared to its previous level of 183 meters. Isabela province's Magat Dam is at 172.12 meters, or 0.25 meters less compared to its previous level of 172.37 meters. The Caliraya Dam in Laguna is at 286.20 meters, or 0.04 meters less compared to its previous level of 286.24 meters.

PAGASA said the El Niño has started to weaken and may return to neutral conditions starting next month and lasting until June, when the La Niña phenomenon develops. Its model forecasts suggest an increasing probability of the La Niña to develop in June until August.

"La Niña is characterized by unusually cooler than average sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific," PAGASA said. It added that a pre-developing La Niña, historically, is characterized by below-normal rainfall.

"Therefore, the possibility of a slight delay in the onset of the rainy season is likely with the combined effects of the ongoing El Niño," PAGASA said.

Heat index to intensify

The heat index is expected to intensify in April with the end of the southeast monsoon or amihan and will be further aggravated by the peak of El Niño, according to PAGASA.

"At present, we are still experiencing the peak of El Niño where there is a significant reduction in the rainfall in different areas and these (areas) will further increase in April," PAGASA Climatology and Agrometeorology Division officer-in-charge Anna Lisa Solis said in a radio interview.

Areas affected by the drought will also increase to 40 provinces next month compared to the current 24 provinces, she added.

Aside from the 40 provinces, at least 25 areas will be under dry spell, she noted.

The southeast monsoon continues to bring cold temperatures in many areas.

"After this, once PAGASA officially declares the termination of amihan, we should expect high temperatures," Solis said.

Based on PAGASA's projection, General Santos City could experience a heat index of 42 degrees Celsius on Tuesday.

Bacoor LGU, LTO establishes first inter-connectivity program outside Metro Manila

BACOR CITY, Cavite (PIA) – The city government of Bacoor, Cavite and the Land Transportation Office (LTO) signed a memorandum of agreement for the implementation of a pioneer interconnectivity system outside of Metro Manila.

The LTO-LGU Interconnectivity Program or the Single Ticketing System, plays a vital role in enforcing traffic laws, where real-time data from the LTO's database is now accessible through the handheld devices used by Bacoor's traffic enforcers.

Under the agreement, Bacoor's traffic aids can now issue On-the-Spot Traffic Violation Receipts (OVRs) that will be directly linked to the motorist's record with the LTO.

The integration ensures that demerit points are promptly assigned to the driver's license subsequently after committing a traffic violation.

According to LTO guidelines, drivers who have accumulated demerit points or traffic violation records are no longer eligible for the 10-year validity of driver's license and could face suspension or revocation depending on the severity and frequency of violation. Mayor Strike Revilla together with Vice Mayor Rowena Bautista-Mendiola and other city officials signed the agreement on behalf of Bacoor, while Assistant Secretary Atty. Vigor D. Mendiza II – Regional Director Atty. Noreen Bernadette San Luis-Lutey represented LTO.

Asec. Mendiza delivered the message on behalf of Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista, where the secretary noted that the digitization of government processes is in line with the mandate of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., under the Bagong Pilipinas brand of governance. "The Department of Transportation, through the Land Transportation Office, intends to streamline traffic violations and fines throughout the country by institutionalizing this system. This is also a part of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s program of digitalizing government systems and processes to establish better interconnectivity among agencies," the statement reads. LTO believes that the single-ticket system will bring convenience and improve compliance for motorists, and will lessen the corrupt practices of some traffic enforcers.

"We can see that the single-ticketing system will bear many benefits, not just for the local governments but for motorists as well. In this way, we can fight corruption and the wrongdoings of motorists who test our traffic enforcers, and the traffic enforcers who don't have integrity," Mendiza added.

Meanwhile, Revilla said that the program will expedite the process of delivery services to motorists in the city and will establish a more efficient system for paying fines and other traffic-related transactions which promotes transparency and efficiency.

"The LTO-LGU Interconnectivity program not only streamlines the ticketing process but also introduces a more accessible approach for violators to pay fines online, thereby reducing the inconvenience of physical transactions," the local chief executive said.

Once implemented, the DOTr and LTO said that the local single-ticketing system of Bacoor may become the model of observation for the future implementation of the same traffic system to other cities and municipalities nationwide. (RF/PIA-Cavite; with reports from Bacoor City Information Office)

BFP tells public in case of fire: Call first before you go live

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) – Call us first before you go live.

An official of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recently made this call as she advised the public, particularly social media users, how they can effectively help in fire incidents. In an interview with the Philippine Information Agency Sulong Calabarzon program, Chief Insp. Nerissa Eugenia Panergalin, chief of the BFP Calabarzon Fire Safety Enforcement Division, reiterated that authorities do not prohibit the public from posting images of fire incidents on social media, but they strongly encourage them to use the time to immediately call the nearest fire station and alert them on the incident so they could respond faster.

"We always remind the public to call their local fire stations before taking a video. We are in a democratic country, we are free to do this, however it would be more helpful if they call the fire stations first," Panergalin stressed.

She added that the urgent tip from the public will help fire responders and volunteers to be aware of the situation and immediately take action to extinguish the fire, save lives and find out its cause after the investigation.

In an interview with the Philippine Information Agency Sulong Calabarzon program, Chief Insp. Nerissa Eugenia Panergalin, chief of the BFP Calabarzon Fire Safety Enforcement Division, reiterated that authorities do not prohibit the public from posting images of fire incidents on social media, but they strongly encourage them to use the time to immediately call the nearest fire station and alert them on the incident so they could respond faster.

During the height of COVID-19 pandemic, Panergalin reported a decline in the number of fire cases and incidents in Calabarzon.

From January 1 to February 26, 2023 there were 271 reported fire cases in the region, but during the same period this year, it has since increased to 412 reported fire cases.

Panergalin said: "We observed a noticeable decrease in fire statistics during the pandemic and post-pandemic period and perhaps the presence of people in their residences contributed to the decline in fire incidents. However, now that we have returned to our regular activities, it is disheartening to say that the statistics are gradually increasing again". The fire bureau has since launched the 'Oplan Ligtas na Pamayanan' campaign to intensify their public awareness efforts and disseminate crucial information to the public regarding the significance of fire safety tips and to empower them with knowledge that can effectively prevent fire incidents.

In addition to this, BFP IV-A also established the Handang Pamayanan Program which actively involves the barangays in community fire protection planning sessions. They also formed the Community Fire Auxiliary Group (CPAG), composed of barangay members trained to be the first responders to fire incidents under the guidance of the BFP. Through this, they assess each barangay and determine fire hazards in their respective areas in order to ensure prompt response in the event of a fire incident in their area.

As the nation commemorates the National Fire Prevention Month every March, Panergalin once again urged the public to adhere to basic safety tips to prevent fires as fire incidents tend to rise every March based on historical data. Some precautionary measures laid out by the BFP include: Ensure to unplug any electric appliances after use, use high-quality outlets and extensions, avoid octopus connections that may lead to short circuits or overheating, store matches or lighters in a place inaccessible to children, and conduct a personal Exit Drill in the Home or EDITH for the safety of everyone at home. (CO/PIA-4A)

SM GROUP EXTENDS AID TO DISASTER-HIT COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE PHILIPPINES



SM volunteers distribute Kalinga Packs in Davao.

Amidst the heavy floods that inundated the Davao Region, SM supermalls in Davao distributed more than 3,000 Kalinga Packs to flood-hit communities in the region, extending much-needed aid amidst the challenging time.

Most recently, on March 3, the SM Group also aided and provided Kalinga Packs to fire victims in Brgy. Pandan, Angeles City, Pampanga.



Operation Tulong Express in Angeles City, Pampanga



Continuing its commitment to providing immediate relief to communities affected by disasters, the SM Group, through SM Supermalls, SM Markets, and its social good arm, SM Foundation, has extended aid to various areas hit by fires and floods in recent months.

SM Center Angono distributed over 60 Kalinga Packs to fire victims in Kalayaan Angono, Rizal, early this year, while SM City Puerto Princesa handed over 230 Kalinga Packs to fire victims in the city on February 7. Similarly, SM City Sta. Mesa provided 250 Kalinga Packs to Brgy. 598, Manila City, fire victims on February 21, and SM City Sucat distributed 238 Kalinga Packs to Brgy. San Isidro, Parañaque, after a fire ravaged the area on February 28.

La Niña refers to the cooling of sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific. /PHILSTAR.COM



SM volunteers distribute Kalinga Packs in Davao.

Amidst the heavy floods that inundated the Davao Region, SM supermalls in Davao distributed more than 3,000 Kalinga Packs to flood-hit communities in the region, extending much-needed aid amidst the challenging time.

Most recently, on March 3, the SM Group also aided and provided Kalinga Packs to fire victims in Brgy. Pandan, Angeles City, Pampanga.

The distribution of the said Kalinga Packs, containing essential items and provisions, aims to alleviate the immediate needs of those affected by these calamities. Through these efforts, SM Foundation remains steadfast in its commitment to being a partner in nation building, ensuring that care and assistance are extended, particularly during times of crisis.

YOUR GUIDE TO CONQUERING THE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION SEASON



SM Scholar Jane Sison and her family celebrate as she receives the acceptance of her SM College Scholarship program.

The college scholarship application season can be a whirlwind of excitement and pressure. Staying organized and focused can feel overwhelming with numerous applications, deadlines, and requirements.

However, take a step back to make this once-in-a-blue-moon opportunity count. Navigate this important phase with confidence by following these handy tips from the SM Foundation:

Find the scholarship for you
Explore scholarships aligned with your career and academic aspirations, background, demographics, hobbies (volunteering, niche interests), and more. Research online scholarship databases, connect with your guidance counselor, and explore scholarship websites for specific opportunities.

Is the scholarship program of your choice sponsoring your target major or program? Do you meet their preliminary qualifications? Do they offer other benefits that

will help hone your skills and interests?

It's never too late to prepare
Procrastination is your enemy. Begin organizing as soon as you decide to pursue scholarships. Create a system to track deadlines, required documents, and your progress. Utilize a spreadsheet, checklist, or install a productivity app to stay on top of everything. This proactive approach will alleviate last-minute stress.

Keep tabs on the dates, deadlines
Just like schoolwork, treat deadlines with the utmost respect. Set reminders well in advance, allowing ample buffer time for unexpected technical issues. Whenever possible, submit your applications early to ensure your submission is successful and to demonstrate your commitment.

Conquer the interview
The interview is one of your chances to show your grit and passion for education. Showcase your passions, challenges overcome, and aspirations for your family and community. Be genuine, articulate, and confident as you share your journey and future goals.

Attention to detail is key
Scholarship applications often have specific requirements regarding requirements. Scrutinize the application instructions and adhere to them meticulously. Double-check for typos, ensure proper file formats, and submit all necessary documentation to avoid application disqualification due to technicalities.

Embrace the journey
The scholarship application process can be challenging, but remember, it's an investment in your future and a valuable learning experience. Stay positive, and persistent, and celebrate your achievements along the way.

By following these tips and showcasing your unique qualities, you'll have a smooth-sailing scholarship application season that could pave the way for your academic and professional success.





International Women's Day Celebration:

Investing in Equality toward Gender-inclusive Prosperity

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Scan the QR code or go to this link to register: bit.ly/wdip2024





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This caused the initial effects of the generation charge to be “wiped out,” Zaldarriaga explained. “If this did not happen, the total electricity rates would have decreased,” he said. Meanwhile, charges from Power Supply Agreements (PSA) decreased by P0.3045 per kwh due to lower energy payments for the South Premier Power Corp. emergency PSAs and the resumption of operations of the San Buenaventura power plant. Charges from Independent Power Producers also decreased by P0.1443 per kwh, following deductions of incremental Malampaya gas costs for First Gas Power Corp.-Sta. Rita under a new gas sale and purchase agreement, said Meralco. This resulted in a generation charge decrease

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DROUGHT...

MANILA, Philippines — Thirty provinces in the Philippines are likely to face drought by the end of March due to El Niño, with weather bureau PAGASA forecasting below-normal rainfall conditions for most of the country. El Niño, a phenomenon associated with extreme heat and drought, is gradually weakening, but its impacts will continue in the coming months. It is expected to persist from March to May, coinciding with the start of the warm and dry season this month. “The rainfall forecast for March shows that most parts of the country will likely experience way below to below-normal rainfall conditions and the probability is high,” the weather agency said in an advisory released Wednesday.

DENR...

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) -- The Philippine Information Agency (PIA) IV-A has formally launched its grassroots communications program, which aims to communicate the various programs and services of the government directly to the barangays and members of different sectors and organizations. Entitled ‘Bagong Calabarzon Barangay Forum’, it is in line with the Bagong Pilipinas campaign of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., which serves as the national government’s branding and communications strategy. During the inaugural program held in Barangay Palingon, Calamba City, Laguna on February 29, PIA Calabarzon Deputy Regional Head Fredmoore Cavan said that the forum intends to get the suggestions, views, and attitudes of different sectors towards the national government, which the PIA conveys to appropriate government agencies. “Bagong Calabarzon Barangay Forum aims to inform and explain the programs, projects and also the services of the national and local governments as we take the path towards the Bagong Pilipinas” Cavan said in his message. The Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) served as the first special guest of the forum, where in they presented the agency’s projects and initiatives aimed at the development of fisherfolk communities around Laguna de Bay and the conservation efforts being done for the largest freshwater lake in the country. Fisherfolks from 10 lake-shore barangays in Calamba City were also invited to witness the program and inquire about LLDA’s services for their sector. Catherine Buena, LLDA’s Department Manager III for Management Services Department extended the agency’s gratitude to PIA CALABARZON for its initiative to conduct a barangay forum. “This PIA project is really good for LLDA to share our programs and projects. This is our chance to inform the public about the numerous projects we are working on that our barangay colleagues under Laguna Lake Development Authority are currently unaware of,” she said. LLDA Department Manager III for Management Services Catherine Buena extended the agency’s gratitude to PIA CALABARZON for its initiative to conduct a barangay forum which gave them the opportunity to communicate with Calamba-based fisherfolks their programs and services for the sector. (Anna Mole/PIA-4A) Among the recent programs mentioned by the LLDA is the 100-hectare

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Leyte, Camiguin, Lanao del Norte, Misamis Occidental, Misamis Oriental, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, and Zamboanga Sibugay may experience dry spell, defined as three consecutive months of below-normal conditions. Dry conditions, or two consecutive months of below-normal rainfall condition, may affect Albay, Batanes, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Marinduque, Quezon province, Romblon, Sorsogon, Aklan, Northern Samar, Agusan del Norte, Dinagat Islands, Lanao del Sur and Surigao del Norte. The ongoing El Niño has caused over P1 billion in damage to the agricultural sector, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) reported. Up to one tropical cyclone

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floating solar farm to be installed in Barangay Looc in Calamba City which will provide energy to surrounding communities as the country faces pressure to transition away from fossil fuels, after they have concluded that it will have little to no significant effect on the lake. Barangay Lingga Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Council (FARMC) Chairman Nexter Talatala expressed appreciation for the initiative, which enabled them to engage with decision-makers and share their perspectives on important issues affecting their livelihood, fostering meaningful dialogue and driving positive change at the local level. Talatala also pledged his support to the initiatives of the national and local government for the fishing industry. “To the Philippine Information Agency, thank you for your support and care for the fishermen. Thank you for your continuous support to us. On behalf of FARMC, we thank you and will continue to support all the programs that LLDA will carry out” he said. Fisherfolks who attended the forum expressed appreciation to the program for giving them a direct platform to engage with decision-makers and share their perspectives on important issues affecting their sector, fostering meaningful dialogue and driving positive change at the local level. The Bagong Calabarzon Barangay Forum will be rolled-out in all five provinces in Calabarzon in a bimonthly manner, with the intent of discussing timely and relevant local issues that need meaningful dialogue, dismissing disinformation, and formulating positive change and eventual solutions from concerned government agencies. (AM,CH/PIA-4A) /PIA

LIMANG...

From Page 1

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna , Philippines — Arestado ang dalawang babae at tatlo nilang kasabwat na lalaki sa magkahiwalay na anti-illegal drug operation sa Dasmariñas City, Cavite, kahapon. Kinilala lamang ng pulisya ang mga naarestong drug pushers sa mga alyas na Ge, 26; Tisay, 45 at ang kanilang mga kasabwat na sina alyas Paul, 42, Rudy, 47 at Dhix, 23. Dalawa sa limang suspek ay nasa ilalim ng kategorya ng mga high value

individual at ang iba pa ay HVI sa antas ng street level. Nakuha sa mga suspek ang limang piraso ng sachet na naglalaman ng 25 gramo na tinatayang nagkakahalaga ng P170,000 at 15 gramo na nagkakahalaga ng P102,000. Sinabi ni Brig. Gen. Paul Kenneth Lucas, Calabarzon police director, ang limang suspek ay nadakip sa magkahiwalay na drug bust operation sa Brgy. Sta. Lucia at Brgy. Salawag sa Dasmariñas City.



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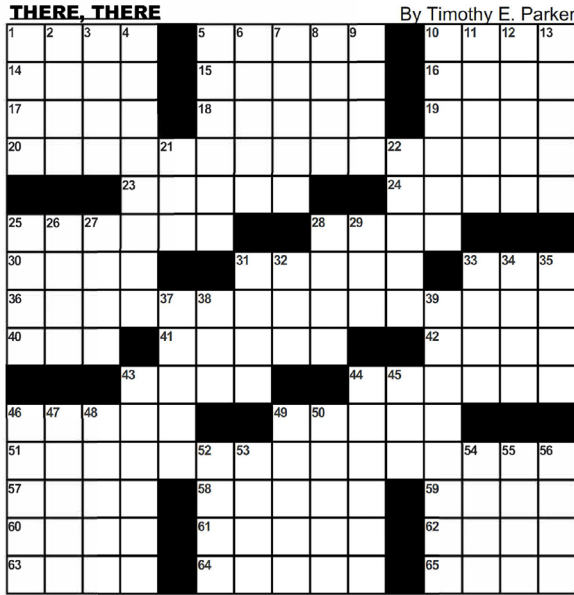
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99 Manggahan-Lawin, Binakayan, Kawit, Cavite



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- ACROSS
- 1) "X" may mark it
 - 5) Food quality
 - 10) Haifa fl. oz.
 - 14) Three Bears patri-arch
 - 15) Ninth rock from the sun, once
 - 16) Like word-of-mouth
 - 17) Significant periods of history
 - 18) Spritely tunes
 - 19) Long skirt
 - 20) Easygoing attribute
 - 23) Female family nick-name
 - 24) Silly goose
 - 25) 15-Across, once
 - 28) Like a shepherd's staff
 - 30) Indian dress
 - 31) Immature egg
 - 33) Barnyard bellow
 - 36) Longtime beau
 - 40) Some submerged leaves
 - 41) Train lines?
 - 42) Chanel of fashion
 - 43) Far from bored
 - 44) Adolph Coors, famously
 - 46) Not on the level
 - 49) Infant's abdominal woe
 - 51) Nonmoving picture
 - 57) The Hawkeye State
 - 58) Major blood line
 - 59) Mark's replacement
 - 60) "That's an order!"
 - 61) Piece for nine
 - 62) Bone-dry
 - 63) "What_ can I say?"
 - 64) San Antonio hoop-sters
 - 65) Fancy wheels
- DOWN
- 1) On _ (with an eye toward selling)
 - 2) "Legal" prefix
 - 3) Gemstone for many Libras
 - 4) Island off Australia
 - 5) Fracture immobilizer
 - 6) Choice invitees
 - 7) Like dime novels and some orange JUICe
 - 8) "Beetle Bailey" dog
 - 9) One of the "Friends"
 - 10) Small songbird
 - 11) You can't join Men-sa without one
 - 12) Anglo-
 - 13) The Elder or Younger of Roman history
 - 21) Expected in
 - 22) Word with "strength" or "city"
 - 25) Quiet "Check this out!"
 - 26) Fit for night owls
 - 27) Length x width, for a rectangle
 - 28) Accepts as true
 - 29) Lego las of Middle Earth, e.g.
 - 31) Final notice?
 - 32) Remote control abbr.
 - 33) Siamese-speak
 - 34) More than never
 - 35) Nose wrinkler
 - 37) Trait of a Southern-er's speech
 - 38) Big, fat mouth
 - 39) Common dessert
 - 43) Empathize
 - 44) Swells out of pro-portion
 - 45) Convoy member
 - 46) "All kidding _ ..."
 - 47) Bar fixture
 - 48) Fuzzy fruits
 - 49) Hom-shaped thing
 - 50) Freshwater carniv-orous mammal
 - 52) Some kitchen utensils
 - 53) Target for Carmelo
 - 54) Psychic's read, supposedly
 - 55) Bluenose
 - 56) Mortar troughs

WOMEN'S MONTH CELEBRATION GINANAP SA LUNGSOD NG BACOR



Isa sa pinaka malaking selebrasyon ng mga kababaihan ay ang buwan ng Marso, dito ipinapakita ng mga samahan ng mga kababaihan ang kanilang pwersa para ipakita ang kanilang kakayahan sa kahit anong pang palakasan, trabaho at iba pa.

Ang Lungsod ng Bacoor sa pangunguna ni Mayor Strike B. Revilla, Cong. Lani M. Revilla, Vice Mayor Rowena B. Mendiola at ng Sangguniang Panlungsod Members ang silang nanguna sa selebrasyon ng Provincial Women's Month na dinaluhan ng mahigit anim na libong kababaihan na galing sa dalawampung tatlo na Bayan at Lungsod sa Probinsya ng Cavite.

Ang Chairperson ng Provincial Council of Women-Cavite na si Ms. Anne Ferrer ay nagbigay ng kanyang pasasalamat sa mga kababaihang dumalo sa kanilang programa. Nagpasalamat rin ito sa Lungsod ng Bacoor dahil sa matagumpay na selebrasyon para sa mga kababaihan ng Cavite.

Sa mensahe ni Cong. Lani M. Revilla, binati nito ang mga Bayan at Lungsod na dumalo sa selebrasyon ng kababaihan. Isa sa kanyang mahalagang mensahe ang isinabatas na Centenarian Law na makakatulong sa mga Lolo at Lola na nasa edad 80, 85, 90, 95 Years old na makatanggap ng 10,000 pesos galing sa National Government, ang batas na ito ay pinanukala ni Cong. Lani M. Revilla, Agimat Partylist Bryan Revilla, Cong. Jolo Revilla na siyang pinag tibay ni Senator Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. sa Senador na ngayon ay pirmado na ni Pangulong Bong-Bong Marcos.

Ang mensahe naman ni Vice Governor Athena Tolentino para sa mga kababaihan ay nag bigay inspirasyon para ipagpatuloy ang pagiging mat-

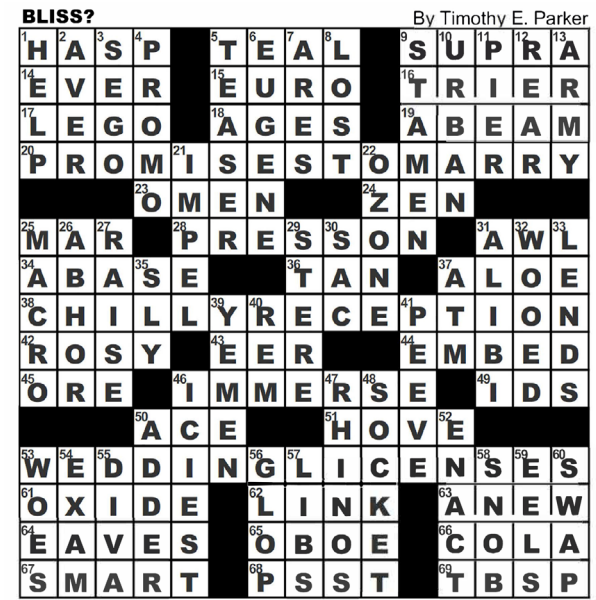
ibay, matatag at malakas na Ina sa isang pamilya. Nagbigay rin ng Minsahe si Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. sa mga kababaihan ng Cavite, gayun din ang Pangulo ng UGNAY ng kababaihan ng Lungsod ng Bacoor na si Ma'am June Cheryl "Chaye" Cabal-Revilla na siyang nagpaalala na ang kababaihan ay mahalaga sa ating lipunan.

Dumalo rin ang nag-iisang Ms. Regine Tolentino na siyang nanguna sa Zumba, Bradley Holmes ng The Voice Philippines, at Bossrakk Band.

Sa huli, ibinigay ng bawat grupo ang kanilang galing sa pag-sasayaw at tumanggap ito ng 10,000 pesos galing sa pondo ng Provincial Council of Women-Cavite.

Patuloy naman ang pakikiisa ng Lungsod ng Bacoor sa mga Lungsod at Bayan para sa mas maayos at magandang serbisyo sa bawat Caviteño.

Last week's solution:



Cavite Career Caravan:
Nurturing Opportunities.

In an era where career advancement and professional growth are pivotal, the Office of the Provincial Public Employment Service Manager (OPPEM) in partnership with Cavite Provincial Sangguniang Kabataan Federation spearheaded the Cavite Career Caravan on March 8, 2024 at GMA Sports Complex in Gen. Mariano Alvarez. The initiative showcased a remarkable platform for talent acquisition and career development.

With more than 50 participating companies spanning various industries, the Cavite Career Caravan served as a convergence point where job seekers could explore diverse career pathways and interact directly with potential employers. From multinational corporations to local enterprises, the event offered a broad spectrum of employment opportunities, catering to individuals with varied skill sets and aspirations.

Out of 171 eager applicants, an impressive 66 individuals were hired on the spot. This turnout highlights the tangible impact they have on bridging the gap between job seekers and employers.

Moreover, the presence of representatives from government agencies like SSS, Pag-ibig, PSA, BIR, TES-DA, OWWA, NBI and PhilHealth added another layer of value to the event. These stakeholders not only provided valuable insights into career pathways and skills development but also underscored the importance of collaboration between the public and private sectors in driving sustainable economic growth.

The event not only attracted job seekers and employers but also garnered significant support from key leaders and stakeholders. Among those present were Board Member Chelsea Jillian Sarno, SK Federation President, Provincial Director Marivic Martinez of DOLE 4A, and GMA Mayor Maricel E. Torres, who expressed their support and highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships in addressing employment challenges and fostering economic growth.

Furthermore, the event underscored the province's commitment to supporting its workforce and fostering a conducive environment for economic prosperity. By proactively engaging with both employers and job seekers, initiatives like these contribute to reducing unemployment rates, boosting productivity, and driving overall socio-economic development.



PGC Facilitates Capacity-Building Workshop for Provincial Council for the Elderly



PGC Facilitates Capacity-Building Workshop for Provincial Council for the Elderly

The Provincial Government of Cavite, through the Office of the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer, organized a transformative Capacity Development event aimed at strengthening the Provincial Council for the Elderly (PCE). Held at Fynn Boutique Hotel in Bacoor City on March 7-8, 2024, the event brought together over twenty-five PCE members, including some Provincial Federation of Senior Citizens and Office of the Senior Citizens Affairs presidents across the province.

The event commenced with a warm welcome from Ms. Felipa G. Servañez, head of the OPSWDO, setting the tone for an enriching two-day program. The event featured insightful discussions led by resource speaker Mr. Wilfred B. Quizon, focusing on the vital roles and purpose of the Provincial Council for the Elderly.

Central to the discussions was the development of a strategic planning cycle, culminating in the formulating of a comprehensive 3-year action plan dedicated to enhancing the welfare and support systems for senior citizens in Cavite.

Also presented during the event was the exchange of best practices, programs, and services for senior citizens by the Federation of Military Retirees Association of Cavite Incorporated, as well as representatives from the local government units of the Cities of Bacoor and Imus.

On Day 2, the momentum continued with the presentation of workshop outputs and an engaging open forum, fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing among participants.

In a message addressing the significance of the event, BM Romel R. Enriquez, Chairperson of the Committee on Social Services, Family, Women, Children, and Elderly, emphasized the commitment of the provincial government to prioritize the well-being of senior citizens, underscoring the importance of such initiatives in ensuring a dignified and fulfilling life for the elderly population in Cavite.



Orientation Seminar Empowers Senior Citizens in Drug Abuse Prevention Education

A significant milestone in the ongoing battle against drug abuse was achieved as more than 100 participants consisting of senior citizen leaders in Cavite gathered at the Bayleaf Hotel in the City of General Trias on March 1, 2024 for an Orientation Seminar on Drug Abuse Prevention Education for Senior Citizens. Organized by the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) in collaboration with the Provincial Government of Cavite through the Office of the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer (OPSWDO), the seminar aimed to raise awareness of the dangers of drugs and substance use, and to encourage the active participation and support of the senior citizens in the prevention of anti-illegal drugs.

This event was graced by esteemed personalities including Mr. Alvin S. Mojica, Provincial Administrator for Community Affairs, who delivered the message that the seminar is not just about imparting knowledge but also empowering senior citizens to be agents of change by harnessing the influential role of the elderly in disseminating crucial information on drug prevention within their families and communities. Assistant Secretary Maria Belen Angelita V. Matibag, Deputy Executive Director for Operations at DDB, shared a powerful message emphasizing the importance of collective action in combating drug abuse among senior citizens.

Throughout the seminar, participants delved into critical topics such as the Effects of Drugs on the Human Body, Treatment, and Rehabilitation Programs, presented by Dr. Jose Bienvenido M. Leabres from the Department of Health-Las Pinas Treatment and Rehabilitation Center. Asec. Matibag shed light on the National Household Survey's findings on drug abuse patterns and trends, while Atty. Ferdausi B. Masnar elaborated on the provisions and penalties outlined in RA 9165, also known as the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

The seminar also featured a comprehensive presentation on the Philippine Anti-illegal Drugs Strategy (PADS) and the current drug situation in the country. Asec. Matibag led discussions on overcoming the social stigma associated with drug abuse prevention, underlining the importance of empathy and support in rehabilitation efforts.

The event concluded with a post-test and evaluation, followed by the distribution of certificates of participation to acknowledge the commitment of attendees towards promoting a drug-free community.

