

GO NEGOSYO TO STEP UP ENTREPRENEUR MENTORING IN 2024 AS PHILIPPINE ECONOMY FACES BRIGHT PROSPECTS



2024 will be a good year for the country's MSMEs, said Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion. The non-profit PREPARES to hold its first entrepreneurship event for the year, 3M on Wheels, at the TriNoma Mall in Quezon City this Saturday, January 20, 2024.

"The free entrepreneurship mentoring event this Saturday demonstrates how our efforts for MSMEs will intensify this year, especially considering the bright prospects for our country's economy," Concepcion said, referring to how experts and economists expect the Philippine economy is poised for continued progress this year despite global economic challenges, as well as the affirmation of the Philippine delegation to the 2024 World Economic Forum that the Philippines is the best place in the region for foreign investments.

"I am glad that Speaker [Martin] Romualdez reiterated the President's message, that the Philippines is ready, and that we are a bright spot amidst the global recession," he said.

In response, Concepcion said that Go Negosyo plans to hold at least 50 of its free entrepreneurship mentoring events this year and double the number of small entrepreneurs they can help start and grow their businesses.

For the event this Saturday, MSMEs from Quezon City and nearby cities are expected to flock to the TriNoma Mall's Activity Center to receive free entrepreneurship coaching from veteran mentors and top business executives. They can also explore available marketing options and financing services from the various participating companies during the event. Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte will be on hand to welcome the participants.

"For the Philippines to rise above poverty, we really have to scale up our MSMEs," Concepcion said.

A special part of the program will be a short talk by entrepreneur and content creator Isabel Magalona Go, who founded her business But First Coffee during the pandemic. She will share how small entrepreneurs can use readily available social media tools to promote and market their products and services.

3M on Wheels is a program of the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship (Go Negosyo). In addition to free one-on-one coaching for active and aspiring entrepreneurs, financing and market solutions are also made available to them at the event.

3M On Wheels promotes the three M's for successful entrepreneurship, namely Mentorship, Money, and Market. All three form the foundation of Go Negosyo's mission to promote entrepreneurship among Filipinos. The event was inspired by the growing number of Filipinos turning to entrepreneurship, and fills the learning gap in the entrepreneurial journey of active and aspiring entrepreneurs. The program is held in cooperation with LGUs, government agencies including the Department of Trade and Industry, business organizations, and private sector sponsors who support the program's advocacy.

SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS, TOP BUSINESS LEADERS MENTOR MSMEs AT GO NEGOSYO'S FIRST ENTREPRENEUR EVENT FOR 2024



Some of the country's top business executives and founders of successful businesses showed up to mentor MSMEs at Go Negosyo's first salvo for 2024, the 3M on Wheels free entrepreneurship mentoring event at the TriNoma Mall in Quezon City last January 20, 2024.

Joey Concepcion, founder of Go Negosyo and also chairman and CEO of RFM Corporation, welcomed the contingent of mentors and led the one-on-one mentoring of active and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Volunteering to coach the MSMEs were some of the biggest names in Philippine business and the founders of successful businesses. They included George Barcelon of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), Bernie Liu of Penshoppe, PCCI-NCR's Tess Ngan Tian of Lots'a Pizza, prolific restaurateur Ricky Dee, Wildflour's Ana de Ocampo, AstraZeneca's Lotis Ramin, Richie Cuna of Fiorgelato, The Manila Times's Blanca Mercado, Ovation Productions's Renen and Cel de Guia, Eric Teng of Resto.ph, Myrna Yao of RichPrime Global, Richard Sanz of Bibingkitan, Chris Lim of Phil. Franchise Association, Rhoda Caliwara of PALSCON, and Marife Zamora of Filipina CEO Circle.

"The success of this first 3M on Wheels free entrepreneurship mentoring event gave us more reason to intensify our campaign to reach as many MSMEs nationwide this year, especially considering the bright prospects for our country's economy," said Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion.

Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte opened the event, and in her speech reassured the entrepreneurs in attendance that "building businesses is number one in our city's agenda." She emphasized the city's efforts in ease-of-doing-business, saying it makes entrepreneurship accessible in the city. Coupled with mentoring and access to capital, Belmonte said this is key to business success. Atty. Arnel Mateo of PCCI Quezon City, who also delivered the chamber's message of support for the event.

Concepcion personally mentored several MSMEs, including single mother Magdalena Ramos, who runs a distributorship business of Kettle Korn; Denise Caranto, who founded the snacks business Konu, and Marjorie Barcelona, who grew her lemonade business into franchising.

A special part of the program was a short talk by entrepreneur and content creator Isabel Magalona Go, who founded her business But First Coffee during the pandemic. She shared how small entrepreneurs can use readily available social media tools to promote and market their products and services, and how she was able to grow her business with only Php6,000 in seed capital.

3M on Wheels is a program of the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship (Go Negosyo). In addition to free one-on-one coaching for active and aspiring entrepreneurs, financing and market solutions are also made available to them at the event.

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NEGOSYO

For we walk by faith, not by sight

2 Corinthians 5:7

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BIDA RUN HIGHLIGHTS 'WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACH' IN CURBING ILLEGAL DRUGS IN IMUS

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PHILIPPINES, VIETNAM SIGN DEALS ON MARITIME INCIDENT PREVENTION, RICE TRADE

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MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines and Vietnam agreed to prevent maritime incidents in the South China Sea and enhance cooperation among their coast guards, Malacañang announced Tuesday. Manila and Hanoi signed a memorandum of understanding on incident prevention and management in the South China Sea during the state visit of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to Vietnam.

The Presidential Communications Office said the two countries agreed to enhance coordina-

tion on maritime issues "bilaterally, within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and with other dialogue partners, with both sides intensifying efforts to promote trust, confidence, and understanding, through dialogue and cooperative initiatives." Despite overlapping claims in some parts of the South China Sea, the Philippines and Vietnam maintain generally friendly relations. The two nations also agreed to develop a joint coast guard committee to discuss common issues and interests

between the Philippine Coast Guard and the Vietnam Coast Guard. A hotline communication mechanism will be established between the two coast guards. "Vietnam remains the sole strategic partner of the Philippines in the ASEAN region, and I am hopeful that this meeting will provide fresh opportunities to reinforce our bilateral relations with the aim of fostering peace and prosperity between our two countries and in the region," Marcos said in a bilateral meeting with Vietnamese President Vo Van Thuong.

Rice trade The Philippines and Vietnam also inked an agreement on rice cooperation to ensure sustainable food supply in the face of climate change. Vietnam committed to a five-year trade agreement to supply white rice to the Philippine private sector, amounting to 1.5 to 2 million metric tons per year. According to the US Department of Agriculture, the Philippines is projected to remain the world's top rice importer, reaching a record 3.8 million tons in 2024. Manila and Hanoi are

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PIRMA CONFIRMS COORDINATING WITH ROMUALDEZ FOR PEOPLE'S INITIATIVE SIGNATURES

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SENATE TO START TACKLING ECONOMIC CHA-CHA

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Navigating the Crossroads: Cha-Cha and the People's Initiative in the Philippines

The Philippines stands at a critical juncture in its political history as discussions about Charter Change (Cha-Cha) and the potential use of the People's Initiative unfold. These twin endeavors carry the weight of shaping the nation's future, prompting both optimism and concern among citizens. It is imperative to scrutinize these initiatives, as they hold the key to the country's governance structure and the safeguarding of democratic principles.

Cha-Cha: A Controversial Voyage:

The prospect of Charter Change has long been a subject of debate. Proponents argue that revisiting the constitution is essential for adapting to the evolving needs of society, fostering economic growth, and streamlining governance. However, skeptics fear that it could lead to unintended consequences, such as a concentration of power or the erosion of checks and balances.

The challenge lies in striking a delicate balance between progress and preserving the core tenets of democracy. While economic considerations are crucial, the protection of individual

freedoms, civil liberties, and the democratic process should not be compromised. The public's role in these discussions is paramount, as they hold the key to ensuring that any constitutional amendments reflect the collective will and aspirations of the Filipino people.

People's Initiative: Empowering the Citizenry?

The concept of the People's Initiative, allowing citizens to directly propose changes to the constitution, adds an intriguing layer to the Cha-Cha discourse. On the surface, it appears to be a powerful tool for democratic participation, giving the people a direct say in shaping the nation's fundamental laws. However, its success hinges on factors like accessibility, inclusivity, and the capacity of citizens to make informed decisions.

For the People's Initiative to truly empower the citizenry, there must be robust mechanisms in place to ensure that the process is transparent, free from manipulation, and accessible to all sectors of society. Adequate public education on the proposed changes and their implications is imperative to prevent uninformed decisions that could have far-reaching

consequences.

Transparency and Inclusivity: Pillars of a Successful Transition:

Regardless of one's stance on Cha-Cha, the underlying principles of transparency and inclusivity must guide the entire process. Open dialogue, public consultations, and the active involvement of various sectors of society are essential components to guarantee that the constitutional changes truly reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of the Filipino people.

Conclusion:

As the Philippines embarks on the uncertain journey of Charter Change and contemplates the potential of the People's Initiative, it is crucial to tread carefully, guided by the principles of democracy and the collective wisdom of the citizenry. The nation's ability to navigate these crossroads will determine the course of its future, and it is the responsibility of both the government and the people to ensure that this journey leads to a stronger, more inclusive, and resilient democracy.

- ANG KABITENYA

PHILIPPINES...

also expected to exchange information on policies, plans and regulations, and other rice trade-related activities. An agricultural memorandum of agreement also seeks to strengthen collaboration between the two countries in 19 areas, including high-value crops, live-

stocks, aquaculture, smart agriculture, and farm management and sustainability. The formal diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Vietnam started in July 1976. The two countries elevated their relations to a strategic partnership in 2015.

His state visit to Vietnam marks Marcos' second foreign trip this year, following his attendance at the royal wedding of Prince Maateen in Brunei. Since taking office in 2022, this is his 19th international trip. /PHILSTAR.COM

BIDA...

IMUS CITY, Cavite (PIA)

— The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) underscored the crucial role that societal and spiritual leaders play in the government's efforts to combat the dangers of illegal drugs, particularly among the youth, under the Buhay Ingatan, Droga'y Ayawan (BIDA) anti-illegal drugs campaign.

During the BIDA Fun Run held here on Jan. 20, Interior Secretary Benhur Abalos emphasized the proactive collaboration between the DILG and the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) in organizing seminars for Parent-Teachers Associations (PTA). These seminars aim to equip parents with the knowledge to recognize signs of drug abuse and provide effective strategies for addressing such concerns. "We are partnering with the Dangerous Drugs Board, and we would like

to conduct seminars with the PTA so parents would know how to identify red flags and how to approach the problem," Abalos said. In partnership with the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM), Abalos highlighted the DILG's active engagement with religious groups to connect with grassroots communities.

He said the joint effort seeks to identify areas where the illegal drug trade is prevalent, fostering a comprehensive approach to address the issue at its roots.

"We will strengthen our ADAC (Anti-Drug Abuse Council). We are currently working with the NAPOLCOM for our religious groups where they will identify areas where there are drugs. This should be people power from the grassroots, and the only way to defeat this menace is through us coming together."

Describing the drug problem as being passed down through generations, Abalos emphasized the importance of acknowledging its existence.

"We have many challenges; we inherited these problems. But it doesn't mean we will give up. What's important is that we acknowledge that there is a problem, [so] let's not turn a blind eye to the issues."

Abalos added that seven out of every 10 persons deprived of liberty face drug-related charges.

"This means that one out of every three freed PDLs goes back to jail. The BJMP has estimated that 70 percent of PDLs face drug-related cases, while seven out of 10 are involved in [illegal] drugs. And that speaks to the gravity of the drug problem in our country," the DILG chief said. (RF/PB, PIA Cavite)

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Editorial Office

OFFICE : 64 Pinahan St., Mabolo III, Baco City
Mobile No. 09218534676

Email add: wednesdaychronicle@gmail.com

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Improving the local health centers



The new LHC features a Mobile Play Cabinet, vibrant interiors, visible labels and markings for all the rooms to easily guide the patients

Breathing new life into health centers, SMFI aligned the facilities' needs with DOH guidelines, ensuring patients receive the care they deserve.

The once cramped, dimly lit facilities with limited privacy now boast organized and dedicated spaces for procedures and programs. Proper lighting and ventilation bathe the centers, replacing the previous dimness.

SMFI also enhanced the layout for ease of access, comfort, and contamination prevention. Inclusivity is at the forefront, with PWD-friendly features, comfortable and secure breastfeeding rooms nestled within, and a Mobile Play Cabinet that aims to educate young patients while keeping them entertained before their check-up.

The vibrant and welcoming atmosphere extends to the healthcare staff, providing well-equipped rooms for them to perform their administrative and medical duties in a conducive environment.

After SMFI's renovation at AFCH, Farnacio noticed that patients and their companions are in a better mood before their checkups and procedures.

"We used to see some patients leaving before their medical procedures were completed, but now I'm proud to say that they now have a more comfortable space to wait in. Patients due for diagnostic procedures now have a more comfortable waiting area that is air conditioned with a television set and soft couches, making them at ease and have a "feel at home" environment while waiting. Patients under observation at the ER can now rest well as compared to before, when there was no divider between the beds of the ER," he said.



The new LHC encourages new and existing patients to frequently visit the center to promote preventive healthcare.

"The renovation certainly enhanced our ability to deliver healthcare services more effectively by providing a pleasant and more comfortable venue for our patients while they are being treated and waiting to be treated. The renovated areas with its new furnishings and fixtures make it more spacious. Our equipments are now more accessible, allowing us to act more promptly and deliver services faster," he said.

Lucban Health Center is also optimistic as they steadily observe an increase in new patients

drawn to the modern facilities in the recently renovated center. This optimism is matched by their renewed eagerness to deliver services in their efficient workstations.

"The renovated health center has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from patients, such as "Wow, ang ganda na. Hindi na nakakainip mag-antay. Hindi na kami naaarawan o nauulanan sa labas". They have also commended the cleanliness and organization of the new facility. The modified layout with the addition of visible labels and markings has made it easier for patients to navigate the center and the increased privacy in the examination rooms brought about by the installation of new accordion doors, has been well-received," Licawen noted.

"Since the opening of the newly renovated center, we have observed a slow but constant increase in patient visits. Worth noting is the utilization of new and first-time patients of our facility. In time, the improved center will attract new patients and encourage existing patients to utilize the services more frequently," she hoped. /PR



SMFI equips Lucban Health Center with a rainwater catchment system to help contribute to the water conservation efforts of the city.

INKredible win: SM Foundation honored at the Philippine Quill Awards



8 Quill Awards, countless good stories. SM Foundation Communications Team, (from right) SMFI Trustee Engr. Ramon Gil Macapagal, SAVP Victor Chan, Assistant Communications Managers Michaela Tangan and Rhea Candalaria, and Santiago Vibandor, proudly receives eight Philippine Quill Awards from the International Association for Business Communicators (IABC) Philippines.

SM Foundation, Inc., the social good arm of the SM Group, has been honored with eight accolades at the 20th Philippine Quill Awards, showcasing the organization's excellence in communication and commitment to social development.

In Division 1: Communication Management, SM Foun-

dation received three accolades:

Revitalizing the SM Foundation Brand: Embracing the Joy of Social Good, Inclusivity, and Engagement (Excellence Award, Category 7: Marketing, Advertising, and Brand Communication)

SM Foundation: Spreading Social Good to Inspire and Strengthen a Nation (Excellence Award, Category 10: Community Relations and Category 15: Corporate Social Responsibility)

In Division 4: Communication Skills, SM Foundation was recognized for its outstanding achievements in various categories:

SM Foundation: #SpreadingSocialGood Stories Online (Excellence Award, Category 23: Social Media)

SM Foundation Primer: Sharing Stories and Rallying Partners for Social Good (Merit Award, Category 24: Publications)

SM Foundation Social Good Feature Videos: Sharing Stories of Transformation, Resilience, and Hope (Merit Award, Category 22: Audio/Visual)

We Care: The SM Foundation Newsletter Made Even Better (Merit Award, Category 24: Publications)

The Foundation has also emerged as the Company of the Year-2nd Runner Up, having championed exemplary communication practices in promoting social good.



The awards underscore SM Foundation's commitment to excellence in communication and its dedication to spreading social good. Each project recognized represents a significant contribution to the fields of Cause Marketing, Community Relations, Corporate Social Responsibility, Audio/Visual Communication, Social Media, and Publications.



SM Foundation's recent feat at the prestigious Philippine Quill Awards stand as a testament to the unwavering dedication and passion to making a positive impact on communities through effective development communication strategies.

"We are deeply honored to receive these awards, which is a testament to the unwavering dedication and passion of the entire SM Foundation team. This recognition reinforces our commitment to making a positive impact on communities and driving change through effective development communication," SM Foundation's Executive Director Debbie Sy said.

"We firmly believe that integrating corporate social responsibility with development communication ensures that our message of spreading social good is not only heard but amplified. This approach empowers us to inspire other stakeholders to champion positive change in their own communities," she added. /PR

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: SM FOUNDATION COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION OPENS FEB. 1



You can be an SM Scholar! SM Foundation opens the SM College Scholarship Application academic year 2024-2025 from Feb. 1-March 31, 2024 to empower deserving youth across the Philippines.

The SM College Scholarship Program, pioneered by the visionary Henry 'Tatang' Sy Sr., has transformed the lives of over 4,000 graduates, empowering them to hone their skills and uplift their family from the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Continuing the mission of the SM group founder, SM Foundation will once again open the scholarship application for academic year 2024-2025 from February 1 to March 31, 2024.

Foothold for deserving youth

The SM scholarship extends a helping hand to senior high school graduates from both public and private schools. Private school applicants should be DepEd voucher beneficiaries who completed Grade 10 in a public school. Beyond alleviating financial burdens through full tuition coverage, the program provides a monthly allowance and part-time job opportunities within the SM group during semestral breaks. A wide-ranging scholarship program, the SM College Scholarship is open to students aiming to pursue degrees in Computer Science, Engineering, Business, Accounting, and Education at partner colleges and universities nationwide. The SM scholarship goes beyond academics. Scholars are immersed in activities that foster personal development and teamwork, ensuring they emerge as well-rounded individuals prepared for the real world.

Taking the first step



Proud SM scholar Cyril shares that with her scholarship, she is able to focus on getting quality college education without financial worries.

Cyril Anne Tatoy is one of the many students who braved last year's application and is currently dedicated to improving her family's quality of life by pursuing her studies.

"The application process was easy, considering that the submission of requirements and the qualifying exam took place online, from the comfort of our homes. Little did I realize that a simple click on my phone would wield such an extraordinary opportunity to partake in a life-changing scholarship grant," she recalled.

Now enrolled at the University of San Jose-Recoletos, Cyril is pursuing her dream of becoming a science educator. For her, the scholarship provided her the freedom from financial worries and allowed her to fully focus on her studies.

She tells aspiring scholars: "I encourage you to view the scholarship application as a reflection of your dedication, capability, and discipline in your studies. It is crucial to approach this opportunity with integrity and honesty throughout the application process. Your genuine intentions will undoubtedly pave the way for heartfelt success, aligning with the vision you have for your future. Remember, qualifying for this scholarship is not just a privilege but a true blessing that can turn your aspirations into reality."

Since its inception in 1993, SM Foundation has remained steadfast in its goal of providing quality education to determined students like Cyril, aiming to uplift Filipino families, one scholar at a time. **/PR**

SM FOUNDATION ENHANCES PATIENT EXPERIENCE AT AIRFORCE HOSPITAL, BAGUIO HEALTH CENTER



Air Force City Hospital (AFCH) now provides upgraded healthcare services after SM Foundation's renovation.

The Philippine public hospitals and local health centers ceaselessly fulfill their duty to bridge the gaps in health and wellness despite countless hurdles—from health scares to persistent resource constraints and infrastructure challenges.

As these quests become more daunting, the Filipino spirit of "bayanihan" thrives within these walls. SM Foundation's (SMFI) health and medical programs joined forces with healthcare workers in fulfilling their advocacy

for improved healthcare of communities.

A staunch believer in the positive impact of health and wellness, the social good arm of the SM group upgrades health facilities in the country. Two of its recent endeavors were at the Air Force City Hospital (AFCH) in Clark and the Lucban Health Center (LHC) in Baguio.

Heeding a call



AFCH now boasts organized and dedicated spaces for procedures and programs.

AFCH's scope goes beyond the Philippine Air Force (PAF). While catering primarily to PAF personnel, their dependents, authorized civilians, and nearby minorities rely on its services. It's also the designated venue for PAF applicants and personnel's medical examinations.

With the easing of COVID-19 cases, the hospital has seen an increase in patients seeking treatment, diagnostic procedures, and preventive care. However, they struggled to cope with the growing demand due to several infrastructural challenges, such as limited space, outdated equipment, poor ventilation, and areas that lack permanent partitions, compromising the patients' privacy and comfort.

"With no Trauma Room, the healthcare workers used curtains to provide privacy when treating trauma patients. Storage for medicines, medical equipment and supplies, and the trauma beds were placed at the passageway from the emergency room (ER) main entrance to the nurse's station. This made the main entrance of the ER crowded or inaccessible," AFCH Commanding Officer LTC Darwin Farnacio MC (GSC) recalled the old state of the facility.

"The old setup was also unfavorable, and at times, even traumatic for other ER patients and their loved ones, because they used to witness drastic lifesaving procedures performed whenever a trauma patient arrived," he said.

Much like AFCH, Lucban Health Center wholeheartedly served the community amidst the infrastructure limitations.

"As the health center's poor condition somewhat directly impacted the quality of healthcare services provided to the patients, by addressing the structural and equipment issues, the renovation would significantly improve the overall patient experience and healthcare outcomes," Lucban Health Center's Medical Officer III Deansy Licawen said.



UN SPECIAL...

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MANILA, Philippines — With the Commission on Elections indefinitely suspending all proceedings related to the people's initiative, the Senate will convene on Wednesday the committee of the whole to tackle the proposal to amend certain economic provisions of the 1987 Constitution. Senate Deputy Majority Leader JV Ejercito said senators opted to discuss RBH6 as agreed upon by Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri and Speaker Martin Romualdez in the presence of President Marcos.

"I think the committee of the whole will tackle the economic provisions. We will do what was agreed upon (so they can't say) we didn't fulfill (the agreement). This is already scheduled," Ejercito told reporters. On Jan. 24, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel III said the resolution, which aims to amend restrictive economic provisions of the 1987 Constitution, is in "suspended animation" amid the continuing signature campaign for a people's initiative for Charter change. RBH6 was filed by Zubiri, along with Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda and Sen. Sonny Angara, to amend certain economic provisions of the Constitution and stop the people's initiative initiated by the House of Representatives. Congress is currently at an impasse over the issue. Ejercito said Marcos should issue a statement stopping the signature campaign to ease the tension between the Senate and the House. "That was what we were hoping for last week, we want a categorical statement from the President to stop all the political bickering. I think to end early political bickering, the President can just make categorical statements to stop PI to defuse the heat and tension," he added. Senators are again scheduled to hold a caucus to discuss Charter change developments, Ejercito noted. "Cracks now open war" For the Makabayan bloc, what started as "cracks" in the UniTeam alliance of the Marcos and Duterte camps have already widened into an "open war." In a statement, party-list representatives France Castro of ACT Teachers, Raoul Manuel of Kabataan and Arlene Brosas of Gabriela said the growing feud results in the "people's de-

mands left out in the gutter."

The feud started with the scrapped confidential funds of the Office of the Vice President and the Department of Education, both headed by Vice President Sara Duterte, they recalled. This was followed by the "supposed openness" of President Marcos for the Philippines to return as a member of the International Criminal Court, which investigated former president Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs and later, the suspension of Sonshine Media News International which is identified with the elder Duterte. "The Duterte camp retaliated with its known generals doing the rounds and sowing unrest among retired and active uniformed personnel," they said. "The social media accounts of the Duterte camp as well as their troll armies started spreading 'polvoron' memes alluding to the supposed cocaine addiction of Pres. Marcos Jr.," they added. Proof of the feud is the Bagong Pilipinas rally of the Marcos administration at Rizal Park on Sunday. The Duterte camp also organized its rally in Davao City, they noted. The Duterte camp wants to return to Malacañang, they asserted. "That is why many quarters are saying they are behind destabilization moves and the call for Marcos Jr. to resign so that Sara Duterte can become president," they said.

"In all this political maneuverings and bickering it is the Filipino people who are again suffering. These costly political intramurals at the expense of taxpayers would not lower the price of rice or gasoline," they maintained.

Conflicting ambitions Brosas said the rallies in Manila and Davao are a "disgusting display of conflicting political ambitions." "These politicians stay silent when the people are calling for aid, but when their power is at risk, they have the guts to use public funds for these kinds of expensive gimmicks," she said.

She also noted that during the rallies, officials did not discuss the rising cost of living, the crisis in transportation and workers' low salaries. — Sheila Crisostomo, Mayen Jaymalin, Neil Jayson Servallas

AFP...

MANILA — The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on Tuesday said this year's iteration of the "Balikatan" military exercises with the United States will be longer and more diverse. "The difference now and last year's 'Balikatan' is we are going to have more exercises in key positions all over the country. Aside from quantity we will heavily lean on towards quality training," AFP spokesperson Col. Francel Margareth Padilla said in a press conference at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City. She said the number of Filipino and American soldiers have yet to be determined along with the equipment that will be used in the annual mili-

tary exercises along with possible locations. Last year's "Balikatan" consisted of 17,767 soldiers -- 12,187 Americans; 5, 469 Filipinos; and 111 Australians. During last year's iteration, Filipino and American troops conducted the first ever sinking exercise (SINKEX) off San Antonio, Zambales where a decommissioned World War II corvette was sunk jointly. "Aside from kinetic activities and littoral airspace and landscape, we will also be doing exercises in the non-physical domain such as cyberspace and information warfare," Padilla said. (PNA)

PANGULONG...

MANILA, Philippines — The head of the People's Initiative for Modernization and Reform Action (PIRMA) admitted to coordinating with House Speaker Martin Romualdez and other House lawmakers in gathering 3% of voters' signatures per legislative district for the People's Initiative (PI) campaign.

During the Senate's probe on the PI campaign on Tuesday, Noel Oñate, lead convenor of the group behind the "EDSA-pwera" ad, confirmed that his group met with House lawmakers for "help" in the signature drive to amend the 1987 Constitution. Oñate made the admission in response to Sen. Imee Marcos, who flashed a screenshot of a text message containing a picture of him with Romualdez and other House lawmakers. The text message also contained the words "People's Initiative for Charter Change Staff Meeting" dated January 8, 2024.

Marcos asked if Romualdez is "supporting ... and all out behind the PI." "Yes, we coordinate with the Speaker and the congressmen in getting 3% signatures per congressional district. That's correct," Oñate said. Screenshot from the livestream of the Senate hear-

ing on the People's Initiative campaign, January 30, 2024. Oñate initially said that he only met with House constitutional amendments chair Rep. Rufus Rodriguez and Alfredo Garbin, a former House lawmaker. Marcos chided Oñate for skipping mentioning Romualdez, to which he said: "It slipped my mind." The pro-Cha-cha advocate then said that he requested the meeting and that it was held in Romualdez's residence. In a statement later that day, Romualdez said that PI representatives asked to meet with him. "This encounter, held at my townhouse, was in the spirit of open dialogue and understanding of civic actions spearheaded by our citizens," the House speaker added.

Romualdez said: "My role, as misinterpreted by some, is not as an orchestrator but as a facilitator for healthy democratic processes." Marcos previously accused the House leader of orchestrating the PI campaign and offering a P20 million reward for districts that will clinch signatures in support of the petition to amend the Charter. The petition being circulated specifically wants to change

COMELEC...

MANILA, Philippines — The Commission on Elections (Comelec) announced Monday the suspension of all proceedings related to people's initiative to amend the 1987 Constitution. The poll body had received signature forms from municipalities and cities across the country for the people's initiative, a mechanism that empowers Filipinos to directly propose amendments to the Constitution, without requiring congressional action.

The signature drive, however, has faced allegations of "signature buying," ADVERTISING In a briefing, Comelec Chairperson George Garcia said the body's en banc

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the Charter to allow Congress to vote on changes to the 1987 Constitution jointly — an arrangement that will give the House an upper hand as they outnumber the 24-member Senate. Romualdez said that his role in the PI campaign is "purely advisory and in no way extends to mobilizing or leading their signature campaign." "Furthermore, I firmly deny any allegations of involvement in unlawful activities such as vote buying related to this or any other initiative," Romualdez added. House Senior Deputy Speaker Dong Gonzales said in a press conference on Tuesday that it is "normal" for people to take pictures with the House speaker.

"Lahat naman nakikipag meet kay Spaker. Lahat nakikipagpicture, ang damping humihingi ng tulong kay Speaker," Gonzales said. House Deputy Speaker Jayjay Suarez added that people should "not take things out of context." Several minority House lawmakers first flagged the People's Initiative campaign in early January after they received reports that local executives were being mobilized to distribute the petition forms and pay people to sign them. **/ PHILSTAR.COM**

has decided to suspend indefinitely the acceptance of any signature sheets for the people's initiative. "We are suspending all of the proceedings indefinitely until we are able to review, enhance, and add something to our existing rules," Garcia said, referring to Comelec Resolution 10650, or the revised rules and regulations governing the conduct of initiative related to the Constitution. The poll body chief added that Comelec's guidelines on people's initiative lack some provisions such as rules on withdrawal and opposition.

"This [suspension] is necessary to avoid problems, conflicts, and misunderstandings in the interpretation of the provision of the rules," Garcia said.

The petition being circulated for people's initiative seeks to allow members of Congress to jointly vote on the proposed amendments in a constitutional assembly, giving the House of Representatives an advantage as they outnumber the 24-member Senate.

This week, the Senate committee on electoral reforms, led by Sen. Imee Marcos, will investigate allegations of "signature buying" for a people's initiative to change the charter.

Marcos earlier accused her cousin, House Speaker Martin Romualdez, of funding the ongoing signature campaign for the people's initiative for Charter change with as much as P20 million per district.

In a statement, Sen. Risa Hontiveros said the public should watch the Comelec every step of the way. "In the end, I stand firm that the proposal on the table is a revision and not an amendment, so no matter how it's twisted, this sham House of Representatives-led initiative should be buried," she said in a mix of English and Filipino.

/ PHILSTAR.COM



freedailycrosswords.com

ACROSS

- English dude 5)
- Instrument with some heft 9) Not a heavy-weight 14) Frau's partner 15) Got dirty going home? parked cars, 16) Blotto often 17) Jason's ship 18) Title character with the 19) Battery terminal 20) Dilly-dalliers' activities rescheduling 23) "Come in!" 24) " ... and you know the rest" 25) Spigot 28) Perform incorrectly 32) Force out of office 34) Word with "photo" or 37) Extremely long films "home" 39) Voice in the choir 40) The art of putting things off 44) Member of the Jackson 5 45) Glitterati member, briefly 46) Bawl 47) Acted badly 50) Like illegally 52) Don'ts partners 53) "Much _ About Nothing" King of Siam 55) Come to mind 59) Delays leading to 64) Bloodhound's guide 66) Material in a gym 67) Mine entrance 68) At a good clip, in poetry 69) Pre-owned 70) 5,280 feet "black" 71) Word with "film" or 72) Cushiony forest growth 73) Fortune-teller, supposedly for tomorrow

WAITING

DOWN

- Make sore by rubbing 2) "Great white" bird 3) Slangue 4) For the time being 5) The last one was Nicholas II 6) Arm bone 7) Type of cherry 8) "Love is blind," e.g. 9) Batting position 10) Type of valuable vase 11) Relating to the Pope 12) Hallucinogenic drug 13) Caustic drain opener 21) Less humid 22) " _ be an honor" 26) Mary of "The Maltese Falcon" 27) Indiana's state flower 29) Where to get a muddy face 30) LP or CD, e.g. 31) Santa's reindeer, collectively 33) Butter unit 34) Made a choice 35) First-rate, slangily 36) In a way 38) Fodder holder on a farm 41) Bunk 42) Not yet unwrapped 43) Crosswise, on deck 48) Resurrection Day 49) Banned bug killer 51) Enters REM sleep 54) Codeine source 56) Low-budget film, often 57) Attendance counter 58) Banana oil, for one 60) Fairy-tale opener 61) About 62) Words of denial 63) Concludes 64) First name on "Cheers" 65) Bean counter, for short

CITY OF BACOR NEWS

Kalinga sa PWD: Araw ng Pagmamalasakit at Kasiyahan



Bacoor Coliseum – Matagumpay na isinagawa ang “Kalinga sa PWD” ng City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWD) noong January 22024. Dumalo sa event sina Mayor Strike B. Revilla, Vice Mayor Rowena Bautista-Mediola, Congresswoman Lani Mercado-Revilla by Video Message, Kapitana Caridad Sanchez ng Sinbanali , Kapitana Vivian Ramirez ng Zapote 1, Kagawad PJ Ocampo ng Salinas 1, PWD Federation President Jorwin Bautista, mga PWD Presidents ng District 1, at ni Ms. Khei Javier Sanchez. Isa sa mga highlight ng event ay ang talakayang pinangunahan ni Dra. Aurora Sison ng Healthy Wiz Inc. tungkol sa kalusugan at edukasyon para sa mga PWD. Nagkaroon din ng raffle draw na nagbigay ng mga premyo para sa mga PWD. Sa pamamagitan ng event na ito, ipinakita ni Mayor Strike B. Revilla at ng Lungsod ng Bacoor ang kanilang malasakit at suporta sa mga PWD. Layunin ng event na ito na magdulot ng kasiyahan, kalinga, at pagkilala sa mga PWD sa kanilang mga kontribusyon sa lipunan.

Mahigit 2,300 Senior Citizens mula sa Barangay Molino 3 at 4, Nakatanggap ng regalo mula kay Mayor Strike B. Revilla



Nasa mahigit 2,300 Senior Citizens mula sa Barangay Molino 3 at 4 ang nakatanggap muli ng kanilang regalo mula sa Pamahalaang Lungsod ng Bacoor noong ika-26 ng Enero taong 2024, sa Bacoor Coliseum. Ang pamamahagi na ito ay pinangunahan ni Mayor Strike B. Revilla kasama sina City Councilor Simplicio Dominguez, OSCA Head Atty. Venus De Castro, CSWD Head Liliane De Roxas Ugalde, Brgy. Captain Jun Advincula and Council, at Brgy. Captain Jeffrey Campaña and Councils.



Last week's solution:



Higit 2,000 Trabaho, Alok sa Batangas City Job Fair

LUNGSOD NG BATANGAS(PIA) — Aabot sa 400 job seekers ang nakibahagi sa isinagawang job fair ng pamahalaang lungsod ng Batangas na ginanap sa Batangas City Sports Coliseum kamakailan.

Ang naturang job fair ay taunang aktibidad na tinaguriang “Handog ni Mayor: Trabaho para sa mga taga-Lungsod ng Batangas” ay bahagi ng pagdiriwang ng selebrasyon ng kapistahan ng Lungsod noong ika-16 ng Enero at pinamamahalaan ito ng Public Employment Service Office (PESO).

May tema ang pagdiriwang ngayong taon na “Sulong Masiglang Lungsod ng Batangas.”

Ayon kay PESO Manager Noel Silang, layon ng aktibidad na mabigyan ng magandang oportunidad ang mga residente ng lungsod upang magkaroon ng trabaho at maiwasan ang pagluwas o pagpunta sa malalayong lugar para maghanap ng kanilang hanapbuhay.

Nasa 30 lokal na kumpanya na may 2,505 job vacancies ang nakibahagi sa aktibidad kung saan nasa 29 katao ang hired-on-the-spot.

Lumahok din sa job fair ang mga kinatawan ng Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Social Security System (SSS), Philhealth, at PAG-IBIG upang mas mabilis na makakuha ang mga aplikante ng kanilang mga kinakailangang dokumento sa mga nabanggit na tanggapan.

Samantala, sinabi pa ni Silang na palagian silang naglalagay ng mga mahahalagang anunsyo sa Facebook page ng kanilang tanggapan para sa mga bakanteng trabaho mula sa iba’t ibang mga kumpanya. (BPDC, PIA Batangas)

Ugnayan sa Barangay in the City of Dasmariñas



The Provincial Government of Cavite, led by Governor Jonvic Remulla, recently launched the “Ugnayan sa Barangay” program to strengthen community ties and communicate the vision for a prosperous future. The initiative engaged residents of Barangay Paliparan III, Barangay Salawag, and Barangay Burol Main, in the City of Dasmariñas, on January 8, 10, and 11, 2024.

Governor Remulla showcased the government's comprehensive programs for 2024 during an interactive session, discussing key areas like healthcare, education, infrastructure, and social services. The event featured a raffle draw, adding excitement and fostering community spirit.

Additionally, the government distributed rice to support local families, addressing basic needs. The program reflects the commitment of the Provincial Government to inclusive, transparent, and participatory governance, aiming to positively impact the growth and well-being of Cavite residents in the coming year. The Ugnayan sa Barangay initiative stands as an exemplary model for actively involving and empowering local communities.

Empowering health, a Successful Medical and Dental Mission in Tagaytay City



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MM in Calumpang Cerca, Indang



The Office of the Provincial Governor-Extension, in partnership with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer (OPHO), spearheaded health outreach event in Brgy. Calumpang Cerca, Indang, Cavite on January 10, 2024, with the primary objective of providing essential medical services to enhance the overall health and well-being of the community.

Approximately 300 individuals underwent medical consultation, administered by the medical team from OPHO.

The success of the mission can be attributed to the combined efforts of the provincial government and local officials, led by Brgy. Captain Vergel Fidel, and other community leaders. This reflects their unwavering commitment to uplifting communities, fostering healing, and prioritizing the general welfare of residents. Ultimately, this collaborative endeavor contributes to the creation of a healthier and more resilient community.

PGC extends health outreach program to the locals of Amadeo



The Provincial Government of Cavite through the collaboration of the Office of the Provincial Governor and Office of the Provincial Health Officer, organized a medical and dental mission in Brgy. Buho, Amadeo, Cavite, on January 19, 2024, benefiting 233 attendees. GEAMH medical and dental professionals rendered their services with the aim of fulfilling the health needs of the constituents of Amadeo.

The event provided medical check-ups for 182 individuals, covering a range of health issues, and dental extraction treatments were availed by 51 beneficiaries. Participants received prescription medicines, multivitamins, and mosquito-repellent lotion.

The mission's success was attributed to the combined efforts of Brgy. Chairman Pedro M. Cesicar, SK Chairman Andrew B. Gastardo, and dedicated barangay health workers, demonstrating the benefits of community involvement in local government initiatives in advancing public well-being.



For more inquiries: 0999 229 5310 keyaccounts@enchantedkingdom.ph Enchanted Kingdom Enk_philippines www.enchantedkingdom.ph or visit our Group Sales Office located at the Park's Front Gate.