

ADVANCED NEW YEAR’S GIFT: RICE FARMERS GET MORE AID FROM DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Three days after Christmas, rice farmer Marison Piloy went down the hills where his farm is located in the remote village of Tio-Angan in Bagulin, La Union to receive forage choppers, trowels, sprinklers, and mineral blocks (for livestock) from field officials of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Piloy was among 1,791 rice farmers who journeyed to the town center to accept the farm inputs under the livelihood projects of the DA's Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program Phase 2.

To their pleasant surprise, Piloy and his neighbors from Sitio Sinabugan also received cash cards that would allow them to withdraw the P5,000 unconditional cash transfer from excess tariffs collected in the implementation of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL).

"We didn't expect to receive our cash card today. It was nice to have something to buy for farm equipment like fertilizer and so on. Thank you for the continued support of the DA to us. Since SAAD, our farm life has become easier as there are more cows in Sinabugan. We even use farm machinery in the fields," Piloy, a member of the Sinabugan Farmers' Association, remarked in Ilocano.

Officially called the Interventions Monitoring Cards (IMC) for the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund-Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RCEF-RFFA), the cash cards are being distributed to an estimated 2.4 million rice farmers tilling two hectares of land and below.

The RFFA is an unconditional financial assistance to farmers funded by excess tariff collection from rice importations in 2022 that total P12 billion. The 2023 RFFA beneficiaries include farmers that registered in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture as of June 30, 2023.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has approved the release of P12 billion RFFA ahead of the New Year celebrations to help rice farmers "cope with the increasing cost of production and sustain their productivity even in the face of challenges like the coming El Niño."

To implement the President's instructions, the DA has tapped the Development Bank of the Philippines to distribute the funds. The state-owned bank, in turn, engaged homegrown fintech firm USCC, formerly RCPI, to use its over 850 stores nationwide as well as ATMs owned by other banks and other non-bank entities under BancNet for the cash grants distribution.

During the distribution of the farm inputs, Bagulin municipal agriculturist, Engr. Juvy Sagapan, told the Bagulin rice farmers that the cash cards are already funded.

"I am glad that our farmers happened travelled down from their barrio just as those [IMC] cards already have funds. This serves as an advance gift for the new year. I am also very grateful that the Director personally came to hand over these assistance, especially to the Sinabugan farmers because they seldom receive the intervention as [the sitio] is far away," Sagapan said in the dialect.

Analiza Ramos, head of the Field Operations Division of the Department of Agriculture-Regional Field Office in Ilocos Region (DA-RFO1), said Bagulin is the first municipality in La Union to receive the RTL benefit for 2023. She said La Union has 15,088 RFFA recipients.

Aside from the cash cards and farm inputs, DA-RFO I Regional Executive Director Dr. Annie Bares also delivered food packs to the members of Piloy's association. She gave them her assurance that the agency will strive to achieve higher productivity and

income for farmers. During her consultation and dialogue with the farmers, Dr. Bares learned that the farmers of Sitio Sinabugan urgently need water supply for the vegetables and other crops they planted on top of the hills. "One of these days, we will be sending our engineers to inspect the area for the possible establishment of an irrigation system or provision of pump and engine sets. Also, we will refer you to the Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division (AMAD) for the linkage of your produce to prospective buyers or sell through our Kadiwa market," Dr. Bares said. Since October this year, the Sinabugan farmers have already harvested cucumbers and tomatoes as part of the SAAD intervention, but they could only sell their produce at low prices due to lack of access to other markets. Bagulin is located on the eastern part of La Union bordering Kapangan, Benguet. Tio-Angan is estimated at 194.4 meters above sea level. For comparison, Tagaytay is about 600 meters above sea level. ### (DA I- RAFIS)

OVER 500,000 MT OF IMPORTED RICE DUE TO ARRIVE DECEMBER THROUGH FEBRUARY



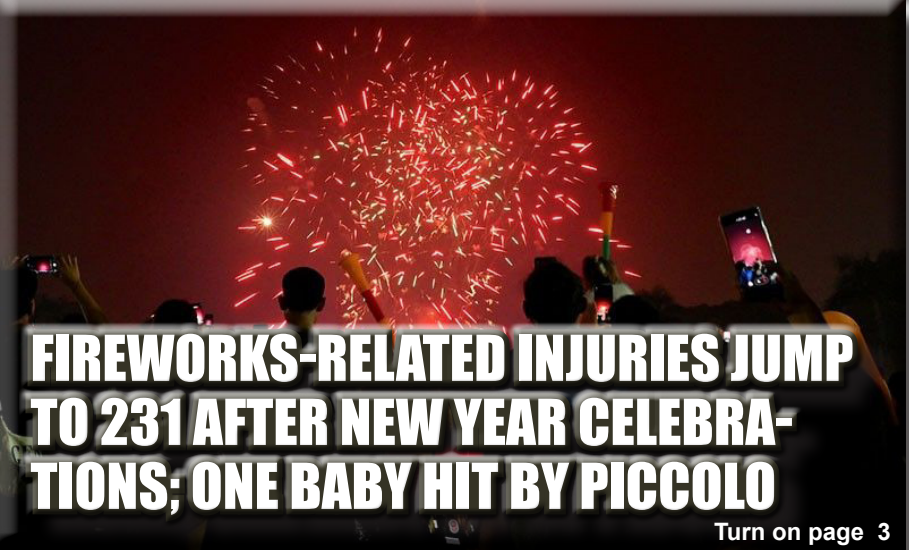
Around 76,000 metric tons of rice from Taiwan and India are scheduled to arrive in the Philippines this month and early January while grains imported by the private sector have started to arrive as part of the broader effort to boost inventory of the national food staple in preparation for the adverse effects of the El Nino weather phenomenon, a ranking official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Wednesday, December 27.

DA Undersecretary Roger Navarro, officer-in-charge for operations, said nearly half-a-million metric tons of rice imported by the private sector are due to arrive between December and early February in compliance with the agreement between Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. and holders of rice import permits. "We received reports that around 100,000 tons of imported rice has already arrived in the country. This is part of the 495,000 metric tons committed by import permit holders to Secretary Tiu Laurel," Navarro said. Separately, a total 20,000 bags, equivalent to 1,000 metric tons of rice delivered before Christmas Day was the first batch of the 40,000 bags of rice donated by Taiwan, Navarro added. Within the last week of December and early January, Navarro said 75,000 metric tons of rice will arrive from India. India has banned the export of non-basmati white rice last July to stabilize domestic supply and prices. In October, however, India approved the export of over 1 million metric tons to seven countries, with the Philippines getting over 28 percent of the export allocation. "The 75,000 metric tons due in the coming weeks is part of the 295,000 metric tons of rice India has allocated to the Philippines," Navarro said. With the arrival of imported rice and the volume harvested by farmers in recent months, Navarro said the country will have sufficient supply of the national food staple until the next harvest which starts in March. National rice consumption is around 36,000 metric tons per day, or around 1.08 million tons per month. Economic managers, especially the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, are closely-watching the rice supply situation due to its impact on inflation.

The BSP has aggressively raised interest rates since last year to tame inflation, which affects the purchasing power of consumers and undermines economic growth. ###

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FIREWORKS-RELATED INJURIES JUMP TO 231 AFTER NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS; ONE BABY HIT BY PICCOLO

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EMULATE RIZAL'S GENUINE LOVE FOR COUNTRY - MARCOS



President Marcos makes a floral offering at the monument of Jose Rizal to commemorate the 127th anniversary of the martyrdom and patriotism of the national hero yesterday. Inset shows the President and First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos leading the flag-raising rites at Rizal Park.

MANILA, Philippines — As the nation marked the 127th anniversary of the martyrdom of Jose Rizal yesterday, President Marcos called on Filipinos to emulate the national hero's genuine love for the country and to have a deep sense of ownership of their motherland. "I enjoin all of you to keep emulating the timeless values we can learn from his life and works," Marcos said in his message yesterday. "I also call on everyone to let the genuine love for the country that he lived out, and later died for, propel us to have a deep and personal sense of ownership for our land and our future," he said. The President arrived at the Rizal Monument in

Rizal Park, Manila before 7 a.m. and was rendered arrival honors by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), followed by the raising of the Philippine flag. He was joined by First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos and their children, Ilocos Norte Rep. Sandro Marcos, Joseph Simon Marcos and William Vincent Marcos. Government officials, led by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr., Army Commanding General Lt. Gen. Roy Galido, National Historical Commission of the Philippines chairman Emmanuel Franco Cairo and Manila Mayor Honey Lacuna, as well as mem-

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CHED DIRECTS SUCS TO STOP OFFERING SHS PROGRAM

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PRESIDENT MARCOS YESTERDAY EXEMPLIFY SOLIDARITY THROUGH KINDNESS, VOLUNTEERISM



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PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD SETS MASSIVE RECRUITMENT IN 2024

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Embracing Hope and Resilience: Welcoming the New Year in the Philippines

As the clock strikes midnight, signaling the beginning of a new year, the Philippines stands at the threshold of possibilities, armed with the spirit of resilience and the promise of hope. In a nation that has weathered its fair share of challenges, the arrival of the new year is not merely a date on the calendar but a testament to the indomitable Filipino spirit.

2023 was a year marked by both triumphs and tribulations, a year that tested the mettle of the Filipino people. From the ongoing battle against the global pandemic to the aftermath of natural disasters, the resilience of our communities shone brightly. Families came together, neighbors supported one another, and a collective determination to rise above adversity echoed across the archipelago.

As we bid farewell to the challenges of the past year, it is crucial to reflect on the lessons learned and

the strength gained. The pandemic underscored the importance of unity, science, and the tireless efforts of our healthcare professionals. It taught us that, in the face of a common enemy, we are stronger together. The calamities reminded us of the fragility of our environment and the need for sustainable practices to protect our beautiful islands.

Looking ahead, 2024 brings with it a renewed sense of hope and the opportunity for transformation. The vaccination efforts continue to progress, offering a beacon of light at the end of the tunnel. It is a time for the nation to heal, rebuild, and emerge even stronger. The resilience ingrained in the Filipino spirit serves as the foundation for a brighter future.

As we celebrate the new year, let us not forget the sacrifices made, the lives lost, and the challenges that persist. Let the spirit of bayanihan guide us as we navigate the path ahead. Together, we can

build a Philippines that is not only resilient in the face of adversity but also compassionate, inclusive, and sustainable.

In the coming year, let us strive for progress in education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Let us embrace innovation and harness the potential of our youth to create a future that is both dynamic and promising. The new year is a blank canvas, and it is up to us to paint a picture of a nation that thrives and uplifts every Filipino.

In closing, let the turning of the calendar be a symbol of renewal, a chance to leave behind the difficulties of the past and embark on a journey of growth and prosperity. As we welcome 2024, may the Philippines stand tall as a beacon of hope, a testament to the strength of its people, and a source of inspiration for the world. Happy New Year, Philippines!

-ANG KABITENYA

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bers of the diplomatic corps and the Philippine Army's security and escort battalion, also attended the commemoration of Rizal Day.

More than a century after his heroism, Marcos said Rizal's influence continues to be felt in a world that is still afflicted by greed, oppression and injustice in various forms.

He reminded Filipinos to continue striving to follow in the national hero's footsteps with the same purpose, passion and nationalism in everything that they do, to overcome all the challenges that come their way.

"With our meaningful commemoration, may the ideals and spirit of Dr. Jose Rizal live on as we fully realize the Philippines that he and his contemporaries fought hard for," the chief executive said.

"Transcend differences" Vice President Sara Duterte has urged Filipinos to take inspiration from Rizal in overcoming personal and national adversities through courage, sacrifices and willingness to set aside differences.

"But let us not confine Rizal's legacy to history books. Today, we issue a call to action. Let us continue the vision that Rizal ignited and expand his legacy through the causes and dreams we champion in our time," Duterte said yesterday in her Rizal Day message posted on her Facebook account.

"We must be brave in working for reforms and innovations, even if it means making significant sacrifices. Rizal's life was a testament to the power of courage in the face of adversity," she added.

Duterte said the commemoration of Rizal's heroism must also inspire Filipinos to transcend differences and, instead, unite for a more progressive, resilient and inclusive country.

"Let this Rizal Day in-

spire every Filipino to rise above challenges, become catalysts for personal growth and development and remind one another that we possess the capacity to build and restore our nation. Let us transcend our differences and unite for a progressive, resilient and inclusive Philippines," Duterte said.

Duterte, who is also the concurrent Education secretary, urged the youth to emulate Rizal's passion for knowledge and use the obtained knowledge in carrying the nation forward.

"To the Filipino youth, Rizal's values are an everlasting wellspring of inspiration. His curiosity and passion for knowledge serve as a beacon, showing us the path towards a brighter future. Let us honor his memory by nurturing our own hunger for knowledge and becoming the leaders who will carry our nation forward," she said.

Heroism Senators yesterday called on the public to emulate Rizal's heroism.

"This Rizal Day, let us remember Rizal's love for the nation, and how he sacrificed his life for our freedom," Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri said in Filipino.

"Let us continue his fight, and let us not make his sacrifices become futile. Let us unite in loving and defending our country and our fellow Filipinos," he added.

Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda added that Rizal's virtues should be the basis in fighting for the environment and in promoting the country's heritage.

"Despite Dr. Rizal being martyred 127 years ago, his ideals remain timeless, and we should use that as a springboard to foster our love for our nation and become model citizens.

The real way to give homage to one of our foremost

heroes is to build upon the foundations that he laid when this archipelago was striving to find its identity – and build upon it for a better understanding of today," she said.

"Dr. Rizal was very much ahead of society, as he understood the importance of taking pride in our heritage, as we can use it to go back to our roots and then go from there. He recognized the beauty of the country and its people, including the exceptional artistry and craftsmanship of Philippine textiles," Legarda added.

Embrace Rizal's spirit House Speaker Martin Romualdez has urged Filipinos to "embrace" Rizal's spirit.

"I call upon each of us to embrace Rizal's spirit in our everyday actions. May his courage inspire us to confront our challenges with dignity and integrity. May his wisdom guide our decisions towards the betterment of our beloved country," he said in a statement yesterday.

Romualdez noted Rizal was not merely a hero, but a "visionary whose deep insights and steadfast dedication to freedom laid the cornerstone of our national identity."

"In commemorating his life and works, let us remember that Rizal was more than a historical figure; he was a symbol of hope and the epitome of what it means to love one's country," he added.

The Speaker underscored that Rizal's bravery in opposing colonial tyranny and his profound affection for the Philippines remain as vital inspirations for every Filipino.

"In an era where our sovereignty and national identity face new challenges, we must live by Rizal's ideals. Let's foster unity, cherish our cultural heritage and continue to build a nation that our children can inherit with pride – a nation

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SM SUPERMALLS' BIKE-FRIENDLY INITIATIVES SHINE AT MOBILITY AWARDS 2023

SM Supermalls recently clinched accolades at the Mobility Awards 2023, with 13 SM malls being recognized as establishments that champion sustainable and bicycle-friendly practices in the Philippines.

SM Mall of Asia earned distinction as the "Top 2 Most Bicycle-Friendly Large Establishment" and was awarded a Silver for its exemplary standing. Other Silver Awardees include SM Center Pasig, SM City Marikina, SM City Masinag, SM City Angono, SM Cherry Antipolo, SM City Baguio, SM Seaside City Cebu, and SM Lanang in Davao. The Bronze Awardees include SM City North Edsa, SM City Fairview, SM City Manila, and SM City San Lazaro.



of Asia protected bike lanes at the North Public Utility Vehicles (PUV) Terminal along Pacific Drive.

"At SM Supermalls, we believe in promoting a healthier and more environmentally conscious lifestyle. Receiving these recognitions motivates us to continue innovating and enhancing our facilities to better serve the needs of our cycling community," said SM Supermalls' President Steven Tan.



At SM Lanang in Davao, joggers, cyclists, and drivers navigate the pathways, fostering safer and more accessible roads for everyone.



SM Lanang in Davao's "Bike My Way" program nurtures a love for cycling among children and teens, transforming the mall into a safe haven for aspiring cyclists and enthusiasts.



SM Cares, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of SM Supermalls, advocates for the bike-riding community through the Bike-Friendly SM Program. Recognizing biking as a safe and economical alternative amid the pandemic, SM has established bike-friendly infrastructures strategically placed at key locations.



of Asia bike parking at the Entertainment Mall along Seaside Boulevard.



along Dona Julia Vargas Avenue.



SM City Masinag bike racks



Cherry Antipolo's Central Bike Stations with Bike & Dine facilities and dedicated seats.



SM City Fairview holds a Bike Fest event in celebration of World Bicycle Day.

At SM Mall of Asia, an extensive network of 18 kilometers features both shared and dedicated bike lanes, complemented by well-placed bike racks, vending machines, and service repair stations, collectively enriching the biking experience. This commitment to enhancing cycling is mirrored across SM Supermalls, evident in initiatives such as SM Seaside City Cebu's 1.6km of designated bike lanes, a sprawling 2.1-hectare bike trail at SM Center Pulilan in Bulacan, bike lanes at SM City Marikina, and a collaborative effort with SM City Iloilo to actively promote cycling culture.



SM Mall of Asia's "Share the Road" signages.

Boasting more than 500 bike racks and 80 repair stations nationwide, SM Supermalls ensures a safe and pleasant environment for bike commuters. Through collaborative efforts with the Department of Transportation (DOTr), Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), European Embassies, and cycling advocacy groups, SM has developed educational materials such as the Biker's Manual and Bike Safety Videos, dedicated to promoting road safety and proper biking etiquette.

The Mobility Awards, organized by the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC), The Climate Reality Project Philippines, MNL Moves, 350.org Pilipinas, and Pinay Bike Commuter Community, in collaboration with the League of Cities Philippines and 27 regional partners, aim to recognize and celebrate initiatives fostering sustainable and active transportation.

SM Cares champions various advocacies, including programs on environmental sustainability, persons with disabilities, children and youth, women and breastfeeding mothers, senior citizens, and social entrepreneurship. To learn more about SM Cares, follow @SMCares on social media. /PR

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FROM SAUCES TO CHIPS, TOMATO-BASED PRODUCTS EMERGING AS A SUNSHINE VENTURE IN CAGAYAN VALLEY



The freshly picked tomatoes from Nueva Vizcaya farmers. (Photo courtesy of DA 2)

Tomato is one of the most versatile fruits thriving in the Philippines as they can be consumed in diverse ways - raw or cooked. It can also be an ingredient in many dishes, processed into sauces and drinks, and mixed in salads.

Tomatoes are identified as fruits, botanically classified as berries, but commonly used in culinary as a vegetable ingredient or side dish. Research shows that tomatoes are the major dietary source of the antioxidant lycopene, which has been linked to many health benefits, including reduced risk of heart disease and cancer.

In Cagayan Valley, the tomato is a high-value crop planted by farmers, especially in the upland areas. Numerous varieties are also grown in the backyard.

However, its seasonality remains to be a challenge to farmers. The harvest season starts at the end of the year and up to the summer season, but the price normally decreases tremendously due to oversupply. Few farmers plant during the off-season because of the unpredictable weather conditions that affect the quality of their produce.

Recently, the region was in the limelight over social media following the viral post of truckloads of tomatoes dumped on a roadside in Nueva Vizcaya, the number one producer of tomatoes in the region.



A farmer prepares tomatoes from Nueva Vizcaya to be traded in Metro Manila. (Photo courtesy of DA 2)

With this, various government agencies provided interventions and technical assistance to tomato farmers to avoid wastage and to help them market their harvests.

The Department of Agriculture has linked them to various market outlets in the National Capital Region, institutional buyers, food processors, and other regions.

From September to November this year, 68,526 kilograms of tomatoes were sold totaling P2.56 million sales through the intervention of the management of the Nueva Vizcaya Agricultural Terminal (NVAT) - an agricultural trading facility established by DA.

Gilbert Cumila, general manager, said their intervention benefited 269 tomato growers and 318 assorted vegetable producers in Nueva Vizcaya.

“NVAT has also managed to engage with four institutional buyers based in Manila. We deliver twice a week using Kadiwa trucks provided by the DA regional office, through the Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division,” Cumila said.

He assured that the terminal will continue to perform its role in ensuring that the vegetables being delivered to them are traded in other provinces and regions. He also said the Cagayan Valley tomatoes and other vegetables reach as far as the Bicol Region.

“At present, NVAT buys good quality tomatoes at P10 to P15 per kilo on average from the farmers to cater to these institutional buyers,” Cumila added.



Members of an organized women-group in Quirino province train on tomato candy making conducted by the Department of Trade and Industry. (Photo courtesy of DTI)



Aside from the buy and sell initiative, NVAT also bought 3,243 kilograms of tomatoes from the farmers in the second week of December and donated them to the municipalities of Dupax del Sur, Bayombong, and Bagabag for free as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility.

Rose Mary G. Aquino, OIC regional executive director of DA Region 2, said they are now expediting the operation of the newly established multi-commodity processing center in Nueva Vizcaya. They would try to process tomato into a paste and other sauces.

The Department of Trade and Industry also trained some tomato growers on product development to avoid spoilage of excess produce and to give them another avenue to generate sales through innovation and technology transfer.

DTI Region 2 provided skills on how to make tomato jam, vinegar, wine, candy, and chips.



Atty. Michael Paggabao of DTI Region 2 and Carolyn Calucag of Tuguegarao City government introduce tomato chips to the buyers during the China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning, China last September 2023. (Photo courtesy of DTI 2)

Michael Paggabao, chief Trade and Industry Development Section, said there are already local entrepreneurs who are now venturing into tomato-based products that they have assisted up to the packaging and marketing.

He said one of the successful adaptors of their product innovations is the Lighthouse Cooperative, a tomato chip producer showcased at the ASEAN-China Expo recently in Nanning, China.

“The Chichamatis, a tomato chips product from Cagayan Valley was one of the best sellers during the expo. It was the first time to be exported and showcased at an international trade fair,” Paggabao said.

Other than these, some local government units and other national line agencies are also considering some interventions for the tomato growers, not only to eliminate wastage but also to improve the lives of the farmers and to help propel the local economy. (ALM/OTB/PIA Region 2) /PIA.GOV.PH

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that fulfills the dreams and aspirations of Dr. Jose Rizal,” Romualdez said.

Rizal’s aspirations The AFP will continue to champion Rizal’s aspiration for a truly independent nation, said Brawner. “As the men and women of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, we seek to become agents of peace who take great pride in the fundamental core of our mandate: Protecting the People, Securing the State – as through this we continue to champion Dr. Jose Rizal’s aspirations for a truly independent nation,” the Armed Forces chief of staff said in his message yesterday during the ceremony.

Brawner said that, as catalysts of peace, the AFP and its soldiers should continue echoing Rizal’s advocacy of genuine reform and development, through peaceful and justified means, for the Filipino people and the Philippines.

He said that for 127 years, Rizal was able to inculcate an irrevocable heritage of patriotism and wisdom that transcends all sectors of society to this day. “With the multitude of systems, methods and mechanisms available now at our disposal, we must utilize them to continue bringing peace to the communities and defend our territorial boundaries, more than ever,” Brawner said.

He also acknowledged the sacrifices of uniformed personnel in upholding the values that Rizal esteemed: “The leadership and commitment that exemplifies the spirit of service and selflessness of our institution.” “With this, the AFP encourages all Filipinos from all walks of life to embody the nobility of Gat Jose Rizal’s resolute and unconditional

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loyalty to our flag, country and the Filipino people as we exercise our rights and privileges borne out of our national hero’s sacrifice,” Brawner added. He said that the AFP must put people and country first, above all else, in everything that it does. History Rizal Day is a regular holiday in the Philippines that commemorates the works and life of the national hero.

The Philippine Revolutionary Government, led by Emilio Aguinaldo, declared on Dec. 21, 1898 that Dec. 30 of every year be a day of national mourning in honor of Rizal and other victims of the Philippine revolution. Rizal’s first monument was erected and unveiled on Dec. 30, 1898 in Daet, Camarines Norte. On Sept. 28, 1901, Act No. 243 was issued granting the right to use public land at Luneta – now Rizal Park – in Manila to erect a statue of the national hero. Under Republic Act 229, which was enacted in 1948, a committee was created to take charge of the proper celebration of Rizal Day in every municipality and chartered city. Rizal was a Filipino nationalist and writer who advocated political reforms in the Philippines under Spanish colonial rule.

He was born in Calamba, Laguna on June 19, 1861. Rizal became famous for his classic novels, “Noli Me Tangere” and “El Filibusterismo,” which awakened the minds of Filipinos in the struggle against foreign colonizers. He was executed by Spanish authorities on Dec. 30, 1896 at Bagumbayan for rebellion after the Philippine revolution broke out, which was mainly inspired by his writings /PHIL-STAR.COM

CHED...

MANILA, Philippines — Commission on Higher Education (CHED) chairman J. Prospero de Vera III has directed all state universities and colleges (SUCs) to stop offering the senior high school (SHS) program starting next school year (SY 2024-2025), saying that there is no longer any legal basis to fund it.

In a Memorandum from the Office of the Chairperson dated Dec. 18, 2023, De Vera said the authority of SUCs as well as local universities and colleges (LUCs) to engage in basic education through the SHS program has already lapsed after SYs 2016-2017 to 2020-2021, the supposed transition period for the Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) system. He cited two CHED memorandum orders (CMOs) issued by his predecessor, former chairperson Patricia Licuanan, when the K-12 basic education program was launched during the administration of the late former president Benigno Aquino III.

“This is to reiterate the decision of the commission, through CMO Nos. 32 and 33, Series of 2015 and 2016, respectively, that engagement of SUCs and LUCs in basic education through senior high school shall be limited to the K-12 transition period, which is from SY 2016-2017 to SY 2020-2021 only,” De Vera’s memorandum stated. He added that the Department of Education (DepEd) has already issued a notice that there will no longer be any government assistance to private school students and teachers who moved to SUCs and LUCs for the SHS program “except for those entering Grade 12 in SY 2023-2024 to finish their basic education.” “The DepEd has already issued a notice, through the Private Education Assistance Committee, that beginning SY 2023-2024, there should be no more Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education beneficiaries from SUCs and LUCs, except those who

will be entering Grade 12 in SY 2023-2024 to finish their basic education and that SUCs and LUCs with laboratory schools can accept enrollees but will no longer receive vouchers,” De Vera said in his memorandum.

The CHED, through CMO No. 32 Series of 2015, had allowed SUCs and LUCs to offer the SHS program beginning SY 2016-2017 until SY 2020-2021 in support of the country’s shift to the K-12 basic education system and in anticipation of the low enrollment in higher education institutions (HEIs) during those transition years.

The same CMO, however, stated that SUCs and LUCs’ participation in the SHS program “shall be limited to the K-12 transition period only, from SYs 2016-2017 to 2020-2021.” The same CMO also stated that SUCs previously authorized to offer basic education through their laboratory schools shall be allowed to accept up to 1,000 students during the K-12 transition period, but must cap their enrollment at 750 students once the transition period ends.

“Considering the foregoing, SUC presidents/OICs (officers-in-charge) are directed to bring to their respective SUC BOR (Board of Regents)/BOT (Board of Trustees) the discontinuance of senior high school in SUCs as there is no longer legal basis to fund the same,” De Vera said. “For SUCs with laboratory school, present to the Board the financial implication of notice from the Department of Education as to non-issuance of vouchers for senior high school enrollees in SUCs and compliance with CMO No. 32 Series of 2015 which provides that following the (K-12) transition period, the laboratory schools shall cap enrollment at 750 students,” he added. The CHED chief directed the agency’s regional directors to monitor SUCs and LUCs’ compliance with his memorandum. /PHILSTAR.COM

FIREWORKS...

MANILA, Philippines — The number of fireworks-related injuries doubled overnight after the New Year festivities, according to the Department of Health on Monday, with at least 116 new cases nationwide, including an 11-month-old baby injured by an illegal firecracker.

This brings the total number of firecracker-related injuries to 231 since the health department began its monitoring in December 2023 — higher than the total number of cases recorded by this time last year.

Sunday evening marked the country’s first celebration of New Year’s Eve without any COVID-19-related restrictions on movement and gatherings more than three years since the pandemic began. The government lifted the state of public emergency and removed all related protocols and restrictions in July 2023.

The DOH said that it has been beefing up its campaign against the use of firecrackers during the holidays to prevent injuries and saw positive results before the pandemic

in 2020. To date, 2019 has seen the lowest number of average daily cases at 159.

“Our data shows that we have a new hope this year for less injuries by going for community fireworks displays across the nation,” the DOH said in a press release.

On Monday morning, the DOH said that it recorded 116 new cases, including the youngest victim so far — an 11-month-old child from the National Capital Region whose face was burned by an illegal piccolo “lit by someone else on the street.”

The DOH added that the oldest individual to be injured by a firecracker is a 76-year-old man from the Ilocos Region who sustained an eye injury from a kwitis he lit at home.

Nearly half of all injuries (49%) were from Metro Manila, followed by Central Luzon (27%) and Ilocos Region (24%).

A mix of legal and illegal firecrackers caused the injuries, which included kwitis, 5-Star, boga, piccolo, among others.

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PRESIDENT...

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos yesterday called on Filipinos to display solidarity and volunteerism, and to contribute to efforts to secure a better future for the Philippines.

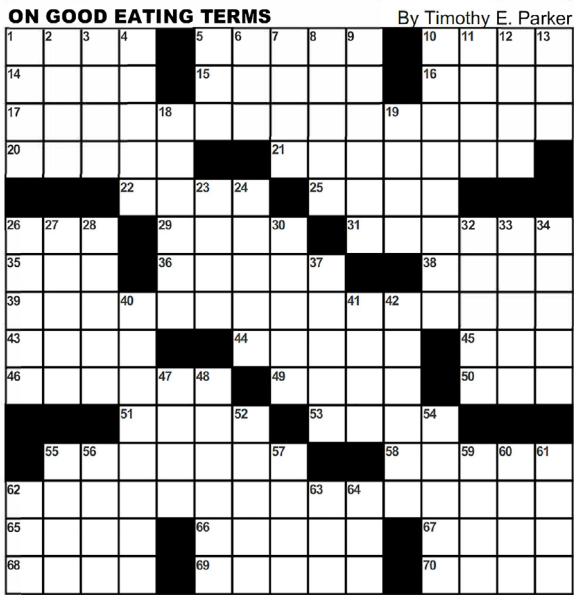
In his New Year message, Marcos, whose campaign during the 2022 elections centered on the call for unity, said each Filipino is a “catalyst” for the country’s “meaningful social transformation.” “As we welcome 2024 with great optimism, I call upon every Filipino from every corner of the world to contribute to the future of our beloved motherland. Let us embody the spirit of solidarity through acts of kindness, volunteerism and compassion, knowing that each of us is a catalyst for our country’s meaningful social transformation,” the President said.

Marcos said every new beginning allows Filipinos to reflect on what they have accomplished, to move forward with the lessons they have learned, and reinforce the unity they have forged as a people.

“As a nation, we bid farewell to the challenges and triumphs of the past year and embrace a new dawn of opportunity and hope that heralds another fresh start for all,” the Chief Executive said. “Truly, I am delighted to begin this new year with you as we strengthen our bonds and charter a new roadmap for tomorrow. Let the dream of a revitalized Philippines – a Bagong Pilipinas – guide our every endeavor as we bring forth peace, progress, and prosperity for all,” he added. Clear vision As Filipinos faced plenty of challenges and triumphs in 2023, Vice President Sara Duterte said her vision remains clear and rosy for the coming year, and vowed to continue rendering “sincere service” in 2024. “2023 was a colorful year for our country and the world – so many stories of triumphs, challenges and hope. But as Filipinos, we remain strong and unshaken,” Duterte said in her New Year’s message.

“That’s why our vision for tomorrow will remain clear: We will continue to deliver sincere

CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1) What you're filling in
- 5) Site of a Muslim pilgrimage
- 10) Had a sensation
- 14) One way to serve a steak
- 15) Hope for a nominee
- 16) "I had no _!"
- 17) Like a neat, perfect arrangement
- 20) It's spotted in Westerns
- 21) Fish-eating birds
- 22) Rosemary or thyme
- 25) Use a bayonet
- 26) Hardly a gentleman
- 29) Was a blabber-mouth
- 31) Quenches
- 35) Biochemistry abbr.
- 36) "Sacro" follower
- 38) "Damn Yankees" femmefatale
- 39) Extremely naive
- 43) Flexible mineral
- 44) Satan (with "the")
- 45) Astrological carnivore
- 46) Cheated at hide and seek
- 49) Scarf material
- 50) Auction merchandise, sometimes
- 51) Bird of old Rome
- 53) Soil type
- 55) Current measures
- 58) Baggy
- 62) Between a rock and a hardplace
- 65) Relax on a couch
- 66) It gives one a leg up
- 67) Proceeds from a heist
- 68) "Trick" joint
- 69) Heavy British weight
- 70) Certain voiced votes

DOWN

- 1) Get a handle on
- 2) Member of Indian royalty
- 3) Modern Persia
- 4) Swimming pool measurement
- 5) Content starter
- 6) Yearling's mother
- 7) Crime boss
- 8) Prefix with "cross"
- 9) Human aces
- 10) Bright meteor
- 11) Duane or Nelson
- 12) Directors Spike and Ang
- 13) Sailor, in slang
- 18) Kind of license
- 19) Face-to-face exam
- 23) Lady Macbeth or Hamlet
- 24) Hunter's hiding place
- 26) Finish a pie crust
- 27) "Tomorrow" musical
- 28) Do the running man
- 30) Oasis fruit
- 32) Bearlike marsupial
- 33) "Gantry"
- 34) Wooden shoe
- 37) Raise trivial objections
- 40) Spongy tree gall
- 41) Tall fodder holder
- 42) Acid-neutralizing compound
- 47) "... happily _ after"
- 48) Most desperate
- 52) Brief quarrel
- 54) Coffee order, sometimes
- 55) Soon, to a bard
- 56) Having X and Y chromosomes
- 57) He's "the Man" of baseball
- 59) "Works for me"
- 60) Pivot
- 61) Congers
- 62) Breed
- 63) Half of the tai chi symbol
- 64) "Adolescent" start

CITY OF BACOR NEWS

ATTENTION BACOR RESIDENTS!

NOTICE OF PAYMENT OF LOCAL TAXES, FEES AND CHARGES FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2024

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to the provisions of 2022 Revised Revenue Code of the City of Bacoor, the payment of Local Taxes, Fees and Charges are indicated as follows:

REAL PROPERTY TAX, SOCIALIZED HOUSING TAX AND IDLE LAND TAX

Advance Payment for the year 2025
With 20% discount
On or before December 31, 2024

Prompt Payment

With 10% discount	Without discount and penalty
1st quarter - on or before January 20, 2024	1st quarter - on or before March 31, 2024
2nd quarter - on or before April 20, 2024	2nd quarter - on or before June 30, 2024
3rd quarter - on or before July 20, 2024	3rd quarter - on or before September 30, 2024
4th quarter - on or before October 20, 2024	4th quarter - on or before December 31, 2024

Business Tax
Without penalty

1st quarter - on or before January 20, 2024
2nd quarter - on or before April 20, 2024
3rd quarter - on or before July 20, 2024
4th quarter - on or before October 20, 2024

Community Tax Certificate
Without penalty - up to February 28, 2024
With penalty - starting March 1, 2024

Professional Tax Receipts
Without penalty - up to January 31, 2024
With penalty - starting February 1, 2024

Failure to pay the above-mentioned taxes, fees and charges shall subject the taxpayer to a penalty, surcharge and interest as indicated under the Revenue Code of this City.

For inquiries/payments please call (046) 481-4100 loc. 228 and 238 or email at cto@bacoor.gov.ph

Online payments at boss.bacoor.gov.ph

CLEARING OPERATION PARA SA MAS LIG-TAS NA PAGSALUBONG NG BAGONG TAON

December 31, 2023 – Kasabay ng pagdagsa ng mga mamimili sa Zapote Market ngayong araw upang maghanda para sa pagpasok ng bagong taon, patuloy na nagsasagawa ang Pamahalaang Lungsod ng Bacoor, sa pangunguna ni Mayor Strike B. Revilla, ng isang mal-awakang Clearing Operation.

Layunin nitong mapanatili ang kaayusan at seguridad sa Lungsod sa pamamagitan ng pagbabawal at paghuhuli sa ilegal na mga gawain tulad ng ilegal parking at pagtitinda ng mga paputok.

Kasama sa hakbang na ito ang koordinasyon ng Bacoor Traffic and Management Development (BTMD), City Inspection Compliance Unit (CICU), Bacoor - Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), at Bacoor Public Safety Unit (BPSU).

Nagpahayag naman ng pasasalamat ang maraming negosyante at mamamayan sa matagumpay na imple-mentasyon nito at sa matibay na pagtutulungan ng Lokal na Pamahalaan at ng iba't-ibang ahensya na nabanggit.



Last week's solution:



PRESIDENT ...

From Page 3

service," she added.

Duterte said she and her of- fice would push through with their agenda of delivering peace and comfort to all Fili- pino families.

"We will never be shaken by any challenges – a Happy New Year to all Filipinos. My hope for everyone is to gain new hope, strength and for- tified determination to strive and be united for the welfare of each Filipino," she said.

Unity and service

"As we stand on the threshold of a new year, I find myself re- flecting with a heart filled with gratitude and hope on the transformative journey we, the Filipino people, have em- barked upon in 2023," Speak- er Martin Romualdez said to members of Congress in his New Year's message.

He reflected on the past year's milestones as a tes- tament to Congress' "shared dedication to progress, unity, and service."

"The achievements we have realized together are indeed remarkable. The commitment and hard work of each of you, as members of our commu- nity, have been pivotal in the passage of critical bills, mea- sures, and resolutions ad- dressing the varied needs of our nation," Romualdez said.

Saying that every economic reform and social initiative has always been about improving the life of every Filipino, Ro- mualdez goes on to thank House members for their ded- ication and commitment to the common good, which be- came a "driving force" behind 2023's legislative wins.

"Your unwavering efforts have not only shaped policy, but

also strengthened our democ- racy. Faced with challenges, you have stood resolute in your commitment to our coun- try and our people," he added.

With renewed optimism and purpose, Romualdez called on Filipinos to uphold the spir- it of unity and service: "I wish every Filipino a Happy New Year. May this year bring us closer to realizing our national aspirations. Let's continue to uphold the spirit of unity and service in the days to come. Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!"

Bayanihan spirit

With the bayanihan spirit alive, Filipinos will overcome whatever challenges in 2024, Sen. Nancy Binay said.

Binay continued that with faith, prayers and collective strength, Filipinos will con- tinue to persevere and work hard for better lives.

"As we enter the New Year, let's face each tomorrow with hope. Armed with our faith, prayers, and our collective strengths, we will continue to persevere and work hard to recover from last year's chal- lenges," she said in Filipino.

She urged Filipinos to have renewed vigor and strength to welcome the Year 2024 with a smile and a full heart.

"There will be various chal- lenges along the way, but I am confident that as long as we keep the bayanihan spirit alive, we will overcome what- ever is thrown our way," the senator said.

"Even if the challenge contin- ues, we will continue to rise. From our family, Happy New Year – at Mabuhay tayong la- hat!" she said. /PHILSTAR.COM

PHILIPPINE ...

From Page 1

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) intends to hire 4,000 additional per- sonnel this 2024 to meet the growing demands in maritime security and in performing its other func- tions.

A "massive recruitment" is being eyed in order to bring the PCG closer to its target of having 100,000 Coast Guard personnel, PCG spokesperson Rear Admiral Armand Balilo told The STAR recently.

"The rationalization is for us to have three Coast Guardians for every one kilometer of coastline. The Philippines has an esti-

mated 37,000 kilometers of coastline," Balilo said.

The PCG would need around 111,000 personnel for this. Balilo said they are hoping to reach their goal in 10 to 15 years.

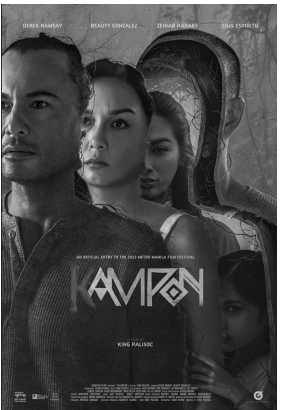
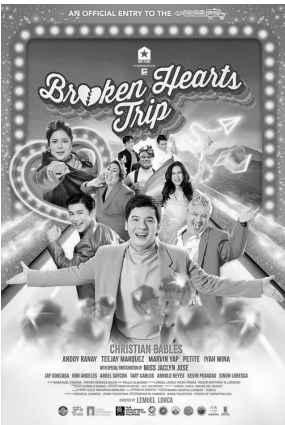
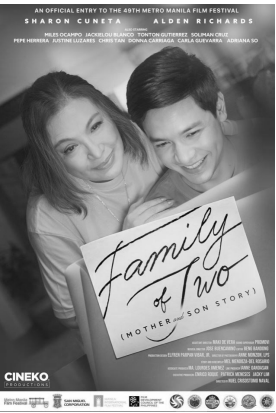
Currently, there are only around 30,000 PCG per- sonnel.

The PCG's main functions include maritime safety, security and law enforce- ment, conducting maritime search and rescue as well as marine environment protection.

In a statement, PCG com- mandant Admiral Ronnie Gil Gavan described 2023 as "challenging" for the PCG.

2023 METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

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