

# PhilHealth reminds members of P20-K GAMOT benefit, no carryover

MANILA – The Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) has restored the annual PHP20,000 Guaranteed Medicines Access Program (GAMOT) benefit for every member and dependent effective Jan. 1.

The state insurer, in a public advisory on Wednesday, said the benefit cap applies per calendar year and covers eligible outpatient medicines provided under the GAMOT program.

It reminded members that "any unused GAMOT benefit from the previous year will not be carried over to the current year."

Members and dependents are encouraged to maximize the benefit within the year to help reduce out-of-pocket expenses for essential medicines.

PhilHealth also reminded its partner health care providers for calendar year 2026 that the deadline for the submission of applications for the accreditation renewal has been extended until Jan. 14.

Applications

Bound to the sea for most of his life, Joel Lumangcas from Panglao Island, Bohol, moves with the waves.

From a young age, he had already helped his father with fishing, a livelihood that sustained their family. In 2008, Joel found himself working at a dive shop, where he served as a speedboat operator for divers. One day, his boss offered him the chance to become a dive master, just like his colleagues, which he readily accepted.

As a dive master, he ensured that tourists were fully briefed on all the underwater rules and knew what to expect during their tours. He guided them underwater, carefully overseeing their safety at all times.

Unfortunately, around 2010, he suffered

must be complete, with no gap in the providers' Department of Health (DOH) license to operate or certification, and submitted on or before the extended deadline to ensure continuous accreditation.

The state insurer warned that applications filed beyond Jan. 14 will be treated as re-accreditation and may result in delays or gaps in PhilHealth accreditation, which could affect the delivery of services to members.

Providers are advised to submit their applications to their respective Local Health Insurance Offices or PhilHealth Regional Offices (PROs).

For inquiries, PhilHealth said providers may coordinate with their PROs or contact the official PhilHealth hotlines.

The extension aims to give partner providers additional time to comply with accreditation requirements and help ensure uninterrupted access to health services for PhilHealth members nationwide. (PNA)

GCash represents PH at Mastercard Global Financial Health

a serious accident when an old tank he was using exploded, leaving his hands and feet severely injured. He spent two and a half months in the hospital, unable to walk. During this challenging period of his life, his wife, Cherry, stepped up as the family's breadwinner. Cherry went to their neighborhood selling banana cue to make ends meet, while Joel focused on his healing.

After three years of recovery, Joel began helping his mother sell fish in the market. Five years later, when his injury had fully healed, someone offered him a job at sea again. At first, he was hesitant, still haunted by the trauma of his past accident, but his desire to provide for his family gave him the courage to confront his fears.

When he returned to work, Joel be-

Coalition, showcases fintech expertise in international arena

Leading finance super app GCash is bringing its financial technology expertise as the sole Philippine founding partner in the Mastercard Global Financial Health Coalition, an international network of industry innovators focused on advancing financial health and resilience.

Represented by GCash lending arm Fuse Financing Inc., its president and CEO, Tony Isidro, is sharing his knowledge on how to further financial inclusion on a larger scale through technology.

This perspective sets the stage for the participation of GCash in the Coalition, which aims to strengthen financial resilience in emerging markets by connecting people to the right tools — harnessing technology for protection and empowering long-term financial habits.

Other members of the Coalition include DANA, TrueMoney, MTN Group Fintech, Airtel Africa, MOCO, Axian, Daviplata, and The Center for Financial Inclusion.

"GCash has transformed how millions of Filipinos manage their money—bringing secure, digital financial services into everyday life. Through its lending arm, Fuse Financing Inc., it has democratized lending in the Philippines, making credit fair and more accessible to millions, especially the unbanked and underserved segments," Isidro said.

"By joining this coalition, we aim to extend that impact beyond our borders, sharing our mobile-first innovation and insights to help strengthen financial resilience across emerging markets," he added.

For Isidro, the industry must confront a hard truth: opening an account is not enough to improve financial well-being. Real progress depends on whether people trust financial tools, understand them and use them regularly. Technology is central to building these behaviors. It strengthens security, simplifies transactions and enables users to take

control of their financial decisions.

According to Isidro, however, many Filipinos remain outside the formal financial system despite the rapid expansion of digital adoption in the country. This gap is evident in a study by Mastercard showing that 49.8% of adults still do not have a formal financial account. This limits access to savings, credit, and insurance that are key to long-term financial stability.

Fuse Financing addressed this gap by offering credit products that are simple, secure and accessible through the GCash app. This accessibility led to a growth in lending activities, reflecting a shift in behavior as more users integrate borrowing into their daily financial routines. This pattern aligns with Mastercard's findings that deeper usage of financial tools is closely associated with financial progression.

The Philippines illustrates how fintech platforms can reach communities that traditional banking has not fully served. Mastercard's analysis also

shows that when digital and physical tools complement each other, people are more likely to build consistent financial habits. This reinforces the role of technology as a driver of trust and adoption.

Isidro, as such said, the coalition strengthens the opportunity to bring this approach to more markets.

"We look forward to learning from fellow coalition members whose diverse experiences and best practices can help us further elevate our solutions. Together, we can accelerate progress toward a truly inclusive digital economy," he said.

As the Coalition moves forward, the experience and expertise of GCash in driving adoption and responsible borrowing will contribute to a broader, regional effort to improve financial health. The goal is to build a digital economy where more people have the tools and confidence to advance financially.

For more information, please visit [www.gcash.com](http://www.gcash.com).

NGO) from a friend. With the institution's loan, Joel was able to purchase a boat. Currently, both of them have a loan of PHP 40,000.00 each, which they use to maintain their boat, renovate their house, and support their children's education.

"Malaki ang naitulong sa akin ng CARD, Inc., kagaya ngayon yung tourist boat na ginagamit ko sa paghahanapbuhay ay mula sa loan na kinuha ko sa kanila (CARD, Inc. has helped me a lot. For instance, the tourist boat I now use to earn a living was made possible through the loan I received from them)," Joel stated.

Looking ahead, Joel hopes to acquire his second boat, a venture that will not only increase their family's income but also provide for their children's education and evolving needs. PR

## SAILING FORWARD



Joel Lumangcas, a skilled boat operator, expertly navigates his boat across the crystal-clear waters of Bohol.

came a snorkeling guide for a tour agency owned by his Korean employer. Meanwhile, his wife worked as a dishwasher in a restaurant owned by the same employer. During the low season, when there were no tourists, Joel would go fishing in the sea, selling the fish at his mother's stall in the market.

In 2018, Joel and his wife, Cherry, learned about CARD, Inc. (A Microfinance

# PGC's Medical Mission in Paliparan III, Dasma

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Free healthcare services for Barangay San Juan residents

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PGC continues health initiatives with medical and dental mission in Trece Marites City

## ATIng Parangal 2025: Leadership in Service, Partnerships in Action

Every three years, the DA-Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) CALABARZON gathers not to highlight programs, but to honor the people and institutions that give life to agricultural and fisheries extension in the region. ATIng Parangal 2025, held on December 12 at the SEARCA Auditorium, University of the Philippines Los Baños, stood as a powerful reminder that meaningful development is sustained by partnership, trust, and shared responsibility.

The event reflected the leadership philosophy of Dr. Rolan-

do V. Maningas, Center Director of the DA-ATI CALABARZON, one rooted in inclusion, innovation, and long-term vision. Under his direction, the Center has grown into more than a training institution; it has become a convergence hub where government agencies, academic institutions, local governments, private organizations, and communities work together to deliver relevant, timely, and responsive extension services to farmers and fishers across CALABARZON.

ATIng Parangal serves as the DA-ATI CALABARZON's highest expression of gratitude. It recognizes partners who,



from 2023 to the present, have consistently translated policies into action, research into practical technologies, and learning into livelihood opportunities. These partners, spanning provincial agriculture and veterinary offices, state

universities and colleges, national government agencies, learning sites, private extension service providers, media partners, women leaders, youth interns, scholars, and innovators, have become integral to the region's ex-

tension ecosystem. In his message, Dr. Maningas emphasized that the DA-ATI CALABARZON's accomplishments are collective achievements. He acknowledged that the success of agricultural ex-

tension does not rest on a single office or individual, but on a network of committed partners who share the same goal: empowering farmers and fishers to become more resilient, competitive, and sustain-

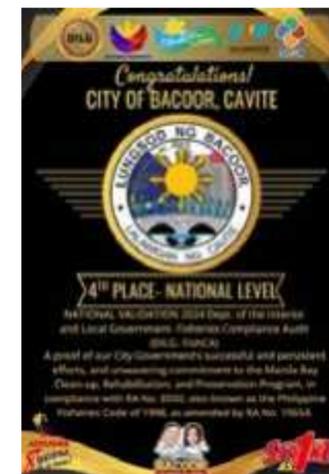
## Pamahalaang Lungsod ng Bacoor nakamit ang Ika-Apat na Parangal sa National Validation 2024 DILG-FishCA

Bagong taon, bagong parangal! Pagbati sa Lungsod ng Bacoor sa pagkakamit ng pang-apat na puwesto sa katapos lamang na National Validation ng Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) – Fisheries Compliance Audit.

Ang pambansang pagkilalang ito ay patunay ng matagumpay at sustenableng mga gawain, gayundin ng hindi matatawarang paninindigan ng lungsod ng Bacoor sa pagpapalakas ng Manila Bay Clean-up, Rehabilitation, and Preservation Program, bilang pagtugon na din sa Philippine Fisheries Code ng bansa.

Ang tagumpay na ito ay bunga ng sama-samang pagtutulungan ng iba't ibang departamento ng City Government of Bacoor, sa pangunguna ng Punong Lungsod ng Bacoor, Hon. Strike B. Revilla, katuwang ang buong Sangguniang Panlungsod ng Bacoor sa pamumuno ni Hon.

Rowena Bautista-Mendiola, at ang ating kinatawan, Hon. Lani M. Revilla. #AsWeStrikeAsOne #DahilSaBacoorATHomeKaDito #StrikeSaSerbisyo



## Cayetano to gov't, Senate: Assure Bato of due process

## OCPO Imus, ginawaran ng dalawang prestihiyosong parangal mula sa Commission on Population and Development CALABARZON

Nakamit ng City of Imus – Office of the City Population Officer (OCPO) ang dalawang malaking pagkilala mula sa Commission on Population and Development CALABARZON, kung saan tinanggap nito ang Population and Development Integration Champion Award na iginawad noong Nobyembre 6, 2025, sa Tagaytay City, Cavite at ang WOW (Way of Winning) Achiever Award for Responsible Parenthood and Family Planning na ipinagkaloob naman noong Nobyembre 20, 2025, sa Biñan City, La-



DOTr acquires 90% right-of-way for subway, 56% for NSCR North



## Tech giant to showcase refrigerator powered by Google AI next month

SEOUL – Samsung Electronics said Sunday it plans to showcase a premium refrigerator featuring Google's artificial intelligence (AI) model, Gemini, which can recognize food items stored inside through a built-in camera. The South Korean tech giant said it will unveil the new Bespoke AI refrigerator in the United States during the First Look event ahead of CES, which will kick off next month in Las Vegas.

**It is the first home appliance equipped with Gemini.**

Samsung said the new refrigerator can identify a far wider range of food products than previous models, which were limited to recognizing dozens of items.

The data will help consumers better manage their ingredients, with Gemini recommending recipes or assisting with grocery shopping. Gemini will be applied to Samsung's wine refrigerators, enabling the appliances to recognize labels and provide stored bottle lists to users.

"Advanced AI vision enabled through collaboration with Google will help Samsung offer a distinctive food experience," said Moon Jong-seung, head of Samsung's digital appliances division.

## Calabarzon police reaps major operational accomplishments in 2025, commits to people-centered policing in 2026

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) – As a result of the intensified efforts in maintaining peace and order in the Calabarzon region, the Philippine National Police Regional Office IV-A records significant operational accomplishments in 2025.

Under the leadership of PRO IV-A Regional Director Police Brigadier General Paul Kenneth Lucas, the Calabarzon police conducted 8,770 operations in its anti-illegal drug campaign, leading to the arrest of 11,391 individuals.

During the said operations, the authorities confiscated 84,235.02 grams of shabu and 91,349.27 grams of marijuana, with a combined estimated value of ₱646,319,834.60, which led to a major blow of illegal drug networks operating in the region.

According to PBGen Lucas, these

achievements reflect the hard work, discipline, and unity of Calabarzon police officers and personnel in carrying out the agency's mandate to maintain peace and security across the region.

"These achievements are a testament to the hard work, discipline, and unity of our personnel and our partners. Guided by the principle of Bagong PNP para sa Bagong Pilipinas: Serbisyon Mabibilis, Tapat at Nararamdaman, PRO 4A will continue to deliver responsive, honest, and people-centered policing for the people of CALABARZON." PBGen Lucas said in an official press release.

He also highlighted the crucial support of partner government agencies and local communities, emphasizing that these successes are crucial in the police's commitment to uphold the law, protect the public, and

## PGC...

On January 8, the Provincial Government of Cavite successfully conducted a Medical and Dental Mission in Barangay Cabezas, Trece Martires City, marking the continuation of the PGC's health initiatives for the new year.

The activity served a total of 582 patients, with 379 receiving medical consultations and 49 availing of dental services. Diagnostic services were also provided, including 100 fasting blood sugar (FBS) tests, 32 electrocardiogram (ECG) procedures, and 22 X-ray examinations. Free prescribed medicines were likewise distributed to patients.

Medical and dental services were delivered by health professionals

## Social.

steady growth in individual membership, which reached 2.46 million as of the end of September.

The company has expanded its lineup from standard items such as restaurant and convenience-store vouchers to higher-priced offerings including hotel accommodation vouchers.

User demographics are broadening as well. While about 60 percent of users of LY Corp.'s "Line Gift" service, which links to the Line communication app, are in their 20s and 30s,

sustain peace and order throughout the region.

Additionally, the Calabarzon police has successfully arrested 4,073 wanted individuals under its campaign against most wanted persons. This includes the arrest of 6 National Level; 1,006 Regional Level; and 1,433 Provincial Level Most Wanted Persons.

As part of its intensified campaign against illegal gambling, PRO IV-A conducted 9,686 operations across the region, resulting in 22,619 arrests and the confiscation of over ₱4 million in betting money.

from the General Emilio Aguinaldo Memorial Hospital (GEAMH), with the assistance of the Office of the Provincial Governor (OPG) medical mission team.

The mission was attended by local officials, including 7th District Board Member Aldrin Anacan, Councilor Joyce Anne Mojica, Councilor Anne Jomille Humarang, and barangay officials.

The activity underscored the provincial government's sustained commitment to bringing accessible and responsive healthcare services closer to communities, as it continues to roll out health programs aimed at addressing the medical needs of Caviteños throughout the year. — R. Tanael

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the company said "use by people aged 40 and older, as well as by men, has been increasing."

According to Yano Research Institute Ltd., the size of the social-gifting market stood at about JPY158 billion in 2019 and has grown steadily since then. Even in 2020, when the overall gift market shrank amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the social-gifting segment expanded by over 25 percent from the previous year, and it has continued to post strong growth ever since. (Jiji Press)

Meanwhile, campaign against loose firearms in the region has yielded notable results, with 1,478 operations leading to the confiscation, surrender, and recovery of 2,708 firearms, helping reduce election-related and other gun-related incidents.

As the new year begun, PRO IV-A sets its sight in delivering responsive, honest, and people-centered policing, making law enforcement fair and effective to build trust and maintain community engagement to deter crimes. (CO/PIA-CALABARZON with reports from RPIO)

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"Hindi siya makatapak dito (sa Senado) kasi walang guarantee na hindi siya aarestuhin at ide-deport sa The Hague

## Cayetano...

Senate Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano on Tuesday urged the government to assure Senator Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa of his rights and due process amid reports of his impending arrest by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"Napaka-importante kasi na may sistema tayo ng hustisya sa bansa at ang korte ang nakakasakop... Ang gobyerno dapat ina-assure si Senator Bato na merong proseso," he told reporters on the sidelines of the December 2 plenary session.

Cayetano was responding to a question on what the Minority Bloc intends to do regarding the continuing absence of dela Rosa from the Senate since session resumed on November 10, 2025.

Ombudsman Jesus Crispin Remulla had earlier announced that the ICC had issued an arrest warrant against dela Rosa in relation to his role as Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief in implementing the Duterte administration's war on drugs.

To date, the ICC has yet to confirm reports it had issued an arrest warrant for the senator. "Wala akong problema kung sasabihin ng gobyerno na, 'Kapag hinuli iyan, pwede siyang pumunta ng korte.' Kami mismo sa Minority, at least ako, hahamunin ko siya. 'Pumasok ka, responsibility mo iyan,'" the Minority Leader said.

He also called on the Senate leadership to stand up for dela Rosa in ensuring legal protection. "I'll make it simple: Kung may lumabas na warrant of arrest against a senator, dapat niyang harapin iyon... But this is a different case. This is a case where the Senate itself – the leadership at kaming lahat sa minority at majority – should stand up for a senator and ask, 'Is he getting the legal protection that every Filipino should get?'" he said.

Cayetano said this uncertainty is likely the reason dela Rosa has yet to attend the Senate session.

"That's my personal opinion that the leadership of the Senate should protect the rights of every single Filipino," he added.

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na walang say ang Philippine courts. Ang hinihingi lang ni Senator Bato ay katiyakan na kung may warrant of arrest, makakapunta muna siya sa ating courts," he said.

The senator also dismissed the possibility of an ethics case being filed against dela Rosa in relation to his absences.

"Napaka-illogical na mag-prosper y'ung ethics case. Kung mag-file pwede. Lahat naman ng klase na mag-file, pwede. Ang question, may ground ba? May threat siya against his liberty," he said.

Earlier this year, former President Rodrigo Duterte was arrested by Interpol on an ICC warrant for crimes against humanity after returning from Hong Kong. Without intervention from local courts, Duterte was immediately flown to The Hague, Netherlands.

Cayetano cited this precedent in urging the government to assure dela Rosa of a fair legal process.

"Personal kong pananaw ito, hindi pa namin pinag-uusapan sa Minority... Kasi kung sasabihin na any time pwede kang damputin at dalhin sa ibang bansa... When your life and liberty are threatened, you really think of options," he said.

Cayetano said the question is not why dela Rosa is absent but "why there is no assurance from the government that his rights will be protected."

As a lawyer, he stressed the need to elevate the stature of local courts more than international ones in resolving such cases.

"Baka sa kanila, ang view nila ay pwedeng dalhin sa The Hague. Abogado ako. Never ko pwedeng maging view na inutil ang Philippine courts. Wala pa akong nakikitang treaty o batas natin na pwedeng damputin ka na lang. Kahit doon sa mga treaties natin na pagka may crime dito or doon, pwede ka munang dumalog sa korte natin," the senator said.

Guided by the theme "Pagkilala sa Kahusayan, Pagsaludo sa Serbisyo," ATIng Parangal 2025 recognized excellence across various programs and sectors from organic agriculture, rice, livestock, coconut,

## DOTr ...

MANILA – Right-of-way (ROW) acquisition for the Metro Manila Subway Project (MMSP) has reached 90.76 percent, with at least 56 percent for the North-South Commuter Railway (NSCR) North Segment done by the end of 2025.

The acquisition is in line with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s directive to expedite land acquisition for the thousands of commuters who will benefit from both transport projects.

In a statement on Friday, Department of Transportation (DOTr) acting Secretary Giovanni Lopez said the ROW acquisition for the MMSP was only 51 percent complete as of February last year.

On the other hand, the number of acquired properties for the NSCR North Segment increased from 38 parcels in February to 1,143 in December 2025.

"Noong 2025, tagalang banner year para sa right-of-way natin dahil mas binilisan pa natin ang land acquisition para agad na mapakinabangan ng mga komyuter itong subway at NSCR (In 2025, it was a banner year for ROW because we accelerated land acquisition for the benefit of commuters of the subway and NSCR)," Lopez said.

The accelerated acquisitions were accomplished under the leadership of former DOTr Secretary Vince Dizon and incumbent acting Secretary Lopez through

## ATIng...

able.

"Sa bawat programang naipatupad at bawat kaalamang nai-parating sa ating mga magsasaka at mangingisda, naroon ang ambag at ating mga katuwang," he conveyed, underscoring the value of dedication and service rendered quietly but consistently through the years.

Guided by the theme "Pagkilala sa Kahusayan, Pagsaludo sa Serbisyo," ATIng Parangal 2025 recognized excellence across various programs and sectors from organic agriculture, rice, livestock, coconut,

addressing major bottlenecks in the MMSP, including Varilla Properties, properties in White Plains, Corinthian Gardens, and Metrowalk.

In addition, the ROW and site acquisition (ROWSA) project is being implemented through key initiatives such as the appointment of DOTr Assistant Secretary for ROWSA IC Calaguas, who oversees land acquisition for these projects.

ROWSA personnel were also increased from 200 to 900, while capacity building and training projects were also held to enhance their knowledge and skills.

ROWSA for the NSCR North Segment is expected to be completed by mid-2026.

For the NSCR South Segment, four of the 19 stations' ROW have been cleared —namely EDSA, Cabuyao, Santa Rosa, and the Banlic Depot. (PNA)

TOKYO – The market for so-called "social gifts," which allow people to send presents through social media or email, is expanding rapidly in Japan, with its size estimated at 600 billion yen this year, 3.8 times larger than six years ago, a private research firm said.

Social gifts are sent by sharing a dedicated URL generated at the time of purchase. Recipients can download a digital voucher to pick up the

high-value crops, corn and cassava, to urban and peri-urban agriculture. Special recognition was also given to learning sites, extension workers, private service providers, and innovators whose initiatives have bridged gaps, introduced new approaches, and strengthened local capacities.

More than an awards ceremony, the gathering became a celebration of shared milestones, proof that when institutions collaborate and leaders listen, extension services become more inclusive and impactful. It reaffirmed the agency's

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gift at a store or enter their address online to get the item delivered.

Most of the roughly 1.1 million products offered by online gift retailer Giftmall, operated by Giftmall Inc., can be sent also through the social-gifting system.

The operator said sales generated through social gifts surged 3.5 times in the April-September period of 2025 from a year earlier.

Use of social gifts is also spreading beyond family members and close friends, who are the main customer base. "They are increasingly being used for colleagues and bosses at work," a Giftmall official said.

A woman in her 30s who has used the service said she sent a digital cafe voucher to a co-worker as a small token of appreciation. "Not having to visit a store is a major advantage," she said.

Gifted Inc., a company listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange's Prime section whose electronic gift certificate business mainly involves corporate and municipal clients, has also seen steady growth in individual membership, which reached 2.46 million as of the end of September.

The company has expanded its lineup from standard items such as restaurant and convenience-store vouchers to higher-priced offerings including hotel accommodation vouchers.

PGH Women's Desk Program Coordinator Dr. Ma. Lourdes Rosanna de Guzman said the desk delivers holistic survivor care—injury treatment, medico-legal exams, psychiatric evaluations, crisis counseling, linkages to shelters, legal assistance, and support programs. Despite its small team, it handles thousands of cases with its network of partners.

She emphasized

## FROM PAGE 1

role as a catalyst and capacity builder, while honoring the individuals and organizations who continue to shape the future of agriculture in the region.

As ATIng Parangal 2025 concluded, it left more than citations and plaques. It reinforced a culture of appreciation and partnerships, one that Center Director Maningas continues to nurture, ensuring that every three years, the region pauses not only to recognize excellence, but to renew its commitment to "Masaganang Agrikultura, Maunlad na Ekonomiya."



## THE MAGICAL JOURNEY OF RIBBONS AND RHYTHM CONTINUES AT SM CITY TRECE MARTIRES

The magic continues at SM City Trece Martires as Ribbons and Rhythm comes alive in a vibrant musical spectacle filled with color, music, and heart. Featuring 35 characters—humans and mascots—bringing the story to life in a joyful celebration of harmony and imagination.

Now, the journey reaches its grand finale—join us for the final run at SM City Tanza on December 21, your last chance to witness this enchanting musical adventure. Let the magic move you one last



time!

#SMRibbonsAndRhythm  
#SMGrandMagicalChristmasParade  
#ChristmasFestivitiesAtSM  
#EverythingsHereAtSM  
#SMSupermalls  
#SMSouthLuzon

## Tessa Reyes...

manage referrals which involve sexual abuse, accounting for 80 percent of the cases.

It provides multidisciplinary support through doctors, social workers, psychologists, nurses, and legal professionals. Services include child-friendly forensic interviews, medical and psychological assessments, sexually transmitted infections or STI screening, therapy, safety planning, tele-consultations, and court preparation.

More than 150 Women and Child Protection Units nationwide are now supported through training and capacity building.

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## Free...

The Provincial Government of Cavite brought essential healthcare services to the community through a medical mission held on December 26, 2025, at Brgy. San Juan, Dasmariñas City, benefiting a total of 364 residents.

sized that collaboration across sectors, particularly through initiatives held for the national 18-Day Campaign to End Violence Against Women is significant.

These efforts underscore the institution's commitment to compassion, evidence-based practice, multisectoral partnership, and long-term improvements in digital case management, telehealth, and global cooperation, she added. A woman reclaiming her story

Today, Reyes stands as a public advocate for VAWC survivors—an unexpected role she took on by speaking out—as she hopes to encourage other women to confront the cycle of fear and silence.

This year, she began brainstorming with other women about creating a support group for women. She said some women would message her with long accounts of their experiences, and she would end up in tears.

At times, she would lock herself in her room for a week when

depression crept back, especially when she read a story from another wife whose pain mirrored her own memories.

She said some of the wives of uniformed personnel who reached out to her are professionals who, despite their successful careers, have low self-confidence because of the abuse they get from their husbands. She believes it is important for women who are victims of violence to confide in their mothers, sisters, trusted friends, or other women who are willing to listen to their painful stories.

She also submitted a concept program to the AFP, hoping that the assistance provided would not only support widows processing their pensions but also wives seeking to secure financial support.

Her journey is far from over. The legal process may drag on, and the full healing may take longer still. But for Reyes, standing up for herself, her children and the women she represents is the beginning of reclaiming her life and her life's purpose. (PNA)

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the Office of the Provincial Governor, the initiative highlighted the province's continued commitment to accessible, people-centered healthcare, made possible through the support of health personnel, barangay officials, and volunteers. — R. Dones



# Tessa Reyes: Journey of a violence against women survivor

MANILA — For years, Tessa Reyes lived behind the image of a quiet military family life: supportive spouse, devoted mother and constant presence in the background of her husband's rising career in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

But in 2024, she stepped out of that silence and into the public eye, determined to speak about the abuse she endured for more than a decade.

Reyes is the wife—or estranged wife—of Col. Ranulfo Sevilla, whose promotion became the center of national attention after she approached the Commission on Appointments (CA) with a plea: do not confirm his promotion.

Her testimony, which detailed years of alleged physical, emotional and financial abuse, prompted the CA to defer Sevilla's promotion, citing concerns over her disclosures.

## A story she carried for years

Reyes and Sevilla started seeing each other in 2004 and tied the knot in 2006.

He has kids from previous relationships. He brought them to me and I was a single mother at that time, raising my son while working with the government at that time," Reyes told Philippine News Agency in an interview.

"I was put in a situation na hindi ako makaatras dahil may mga batang involved. According to him, pinababayaang ng mothers nila at naniwala naman ako (I was put in a situation where I couldn't back out because children were involved. According to him, their mothers

Reyes took care of the children together with Sevilla's ailing mother for years. This, she said, caused her low self-confidence and self-doubt because Sevilla would accuse her of not "accepting and loving his children enough" when parenting concerns arose.

He would also accuse her of not taking care of his mother citing gossips from his relatives and house helpers, she recalled.

Constant accusations, arguments and belittling took a toll on her mental health, eventually leading to depression. She sought therapy to remain functional both at work and at home.

Reyes publicly shared that the first incidents of physical abuse happened in 2012, shortly before their first child turned one. What she described remains vivid to her — an argument over a misplaced pay slip that escalated into slapping, hitting and fear.

"Nasampal ko siya dahil hindi ko kinaya ang masasakit na salita, pero, pinagsasampal niya ako, bumagsak ako sa floor (I slapped him because I couldn't take the hurtful words anymore, but he slapped me repeatedly, and I fell to the floor)," she said.

"Pinipigilan ko siya na huwag umalis ng bahay para sa mga anak niya at sa Mama niya. Hinampas niya ako ng maleta because I was in his way (I was trying to stop him from leaving the house for the sake of his children and his mother. He hit me with a suitcase because I was in his way)," she recounted.

She said she remembered her husband was worrying more about how to hide her bruises the next day, as she needed to attend a family wedding. She recalled having no one who could intervene.

"Sundalo kasi at may laging nakasukbit na baril (He was a soldier and always had a gun slung on him)," she said, noting that the household maids were afraid to step in.

Another alleged incident happened in 2014, she said, while she was pregnant with their second child and preparing for the birthday celebration of Sevilla and Sevilla's daughter.

"Uminit ang ulo niya dahil hindi raw ako gaano interested sa

preparation dahil hindi ko raw mahal ang anak niya. Delicate ang pagbubuntis ko, nagtalo kami, tinulak niya ako, tapos para hindi tumama sa floor ang tiyan ko, itinukod ko ang siko at tuhod ko (He lost his temper because he said I didn't seem interested in the preparations and claimed it was because I didn't love his child. My pregnancy was delicate, and we argued. He pushed me and when I fell, I had to brace myself with my elbows and knees so my belly wouldn't hit the floor)" she said, recalling the fear and physical vulnerability she felt at the time.

Their second child was born premature and with special needs.

## A case dismissed, a voice rekindled

Reyes said she attempted to file a Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) case, but it was dismissed.

The experience has deeply affected Reyes and her children emotionally, mentally and physically, with the kids even undergoing psychotherapy because of the trauma.

As a mother, she said, it was painful for her to see her young children exposed to dysfunctional environment, recounting a custody interview of her daughter had to go through when she was just 5 years old.

The pain she felt got worse when her parents, her source of her strength and genuine love, died in 2021 during the pandemic.

Despite the Filipino belief that children should be kept out of marital issues and that mothers should protect the father's image, she chose to be open and honest with her kids so they would understand their reality.

Her children knew the struggles they faced, not to damage their father's reputation, but to understand that limited financial support meant they could not join school activities like field trips or

enjoy simple treats to their favorite fast-food chains.

She allowed them to express their emotions and observations about their father, and the entire family went psychotherapy and medication, with her daughter still receiving treatment.

She shared what keeps her strong are her children, because she refuses to fail them and wants them to know that no one else will care for them the way she does.

Even when people on social media assumed she is only after money, she said she seeks financial support for her children, which is both their right and their father's legal and moral obligation. The dismissal of the VAWC case, she said, later became one of the arguments cited in support of her husband's bid for promotion.

Still, she emphasized that the dismissal did not invalidate her experiences. She has since declared her willingness to re-file the case, saying the patterns of emotional, psychological and financial abuse remained evident throughout the years.

When Reyes appeared before the CA, it was not just a personal plea but a call to look deeper into the professional accountability of uniformed personnel accused of domestic abuse.

Her testimony contributed to the deferment of Sevilla's promotion — an uncommon development that placed the spotlight on how allegations of domestic abuse intersect with military service and public trust.

On Dec. 9, 2025, she filed a case with the Ombudsman so her concern could be investigated internally, saying that while her VAWC case is technically deemed "resolved," to her, it still isn't.

**Violence against women** Republic Act (RA) 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004 defines VAW as "any act or a series of

acts committed by any person against a woman who is his wife, former wife, or against a woman with whom the person has or had a sexual or dating relationship, or with whom he has a common child, or against her child whether legitimate or illegitimate, while only 269 cases, or about 4 percent, remain under investigation.

Earlier, the PNP said that it has recorded 3,926 cases of child abuse from January to June 2025 nationwide. It added about 262 gender-based violence cases were recorded in Kalinga during the last quarter of 2024 and the first quarter of 2025, while 62 VAWC cases were documented in Baguio City during the first quarter of 2025.

The economic impact of violence is also emphasized as an estimated PHP6 billion spent annually on crisis, medical and psychological services for survivors.

In response to this, the public is urged to recognize the various manifestations of VAW— from psychological and economic abuse to digital harassment — stressing that all forms pose serious threats to women's safety and well-being.

The Philippine Commission on Women has called on government agencies to intensify the implementation of existing laws such as the Anti-VAWC Act, Magna Carta of Women, and the Safe Spaces Act, ensuring that justice and protection are accessible and immediate for survivors.

**Supporting women in crisis** The University of the Philippines Manila, through the Center for Gender and Women Studies (CGWS), the PGH Women's Desk, and the PGH Child Protection Unit (CPU) are among those committed to the protection of women and children against violence, abuse, and exploitation. Many of the cases they handle begin with reports from the PNP and they

According to the PNP's Women and Children Protection Center (WCPC), the highest number of incidents involved RA 9262, with 2,144 cases, followed by 1,658 cas-

es under the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (RA 7610)

Citing the WCPC report, the PNP said that of the total cases, 6,614 or 96 percent were cleared, while only 269 cases, or about 4 percent, remain under investigation.

He is also charged under Section 3(h) of the same law for allegedly receiving "unwarranted financial or pecuniary benefits."

But the former legislator and now wanted fugitive from the law appears unrepentant and wants to evade culpability for the charges against him by dragging no less than President Marcos Jr. and former House Speaker Martin Romualdez into the mess of his own making by claiming the two top officials allegedly received kickbacks from budget insertions for anomalous public works projects.

President Marcos Jr. and Rep. Romualdez have both stoutly denied Co's baseless allegations.

While the President can defend himself should an impeachment complaint be filed against him, Leyte Rep. Romualdez, a lawyer and Constitutionalist, can defend himself in any judicial forum should formal charges be lodged against him.

As things now stand, Romualdez has already appeared before the Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI) The ad hoc body has no adverse finding against the former Speaker nor recommended the filing of charges against him.

In fact, there is no sworn testimony, document, or credible evidence that has directly linked Romualdez to any irregular flood control project transactions or kickbacks He has repeatedly emphasized this and highlighted his clear conscience, which remains the foundation of his defense.

Romualdez has also declared his full cooperation with investigative bodies, appearing voluntarily before the ICI, remaining in the country, and submitting relevant documents and statements.

The former Speaker has also underscored his trust in the independence of the Ombudsman and fairness of the legal system.

Reaffirming faith in an impartial, thorough evaluation by constitutional bodies supports his stance that justice will prevail through evidence-based scrutiny, not political pressure.

In defending himself, Romualdez can challenge statements not made under oath or lacking evidence, as he has done regarding unsubstantiated allegations from contractor testimonies and accusations. His defense remains fact-driven, respectful of due process, and focused on legal arguments rather than emotions or political rhetoric.

*cont. on page 7*

# EDITORIAL: Unfounded allegations

WITH his Philippine passport now canceled by the Department of Foreign Affairs after the filing of various graft charges against him, the former chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations and resigned Ako Bicol Party-List Rep. Elizaldy Co must be worried sick about the prospect of deportation from his hiding place abroad to face justice in this country and spend the rest of his life in jail if found guilty.

The Office of the Ombudsman has filed graft and malversation of public funds cases against him and others over an allegedly irregular P289.5-million flood-control/road-dike project in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro.

He is also charged under Section 3(h) of the same law for allegedly receiving "unwarranted financial or pecuniary benefits."

But the former legislator and now wanted fugitive from the law appears unrepentant and wants to evade culpability for the charges against him by dragging no less than President Marcos Jr. and former House Speaker Martin Romualdez into the mess of his own making by claiming the two top officials allegedly received kickbacks from budget insertions for anomalous public works projects.

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# ATI CALABARZON Trains Over 7,000 Farmers, Agri Stakeholders in 2025

In 2025, the Department of Agriculture (DA) capacity builder, the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) in CALABARZON, equipped a total of 7,084 individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to help steer a competitive and prosperous agriculture and fisheries sectors towards a vibrant economy.

As the catalyst and knowledge bank of the Philippine agriculture and fishery extension (AFE) system, the DA-ATI CALABARZON trained 4,783 farmers; 1,209 agricultural extension workers (AEWs) from various local government units; 555 DA staff; and 537 students, agri-enthusiasts, and individuals from the general public.

Training and other extension initiatives by the DA-ATI CALABARZON primarily focused on good agricultural practices, farm mechanization, climate-resilient agriculture, smart farming, and integrated nutrient and pest management.

These programs were not limited to the production aspect, as the agency also equipped the aforementioned individuals with technologies along the agricultural value chain, including post-harvest technologies, processing, and marketing—across different banner programs like rice, corn, livestock, Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Plan (CFIDP), High Value Crops Development Program (HVC-DP), organic agriculture, and National Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture Program (NUPAP), and additional extension services.

"Sobra po ang pasasalamat ko sa ATI CALABARZON dahil ine-ensure po nila na may bago silang kaalamang naihahatid at nakakarating po ito sa aming mga farmers. Sa training na ito, privilege po para sa akin na matuto at ma-experience 'yung mga hands-on kung paano ba bumuo ng cacao-coconut fusion products, na totoo pong helpful para mas ma-maximize pa 'yung gamit ng raw materials and ma-improve 'yung pwedeng pagkakitaan ng mga farmers," said Carla Pante, one of the farmer participants who shared her impression of the Training on Coconut and Cacao Fusion: Value

Chain-based Product Development and Market Integration last July.

John Mark Sto. Domingo, an agricultural and biosystems engineer from Teresa, Rizal, also shared how the DA-ATI CALABARZON helps extension workers like him in performing their duties at the grassroots level.

In his impression of the Training on Testing and Evaluation of Agricultural and Fisheries Machinery held last June, he said: "This training is a great help for me to understand how procurement and acceptance testing work in acquiring farm machinery. That's why every one of us ay sobrang eager ding pumasa – 'cause it will give us a chance to evaluate the machinery that we're acquiring more thoroughly. Because in the end, we want our farmers to receive those interventions na up-to-standards and fit talaga sa kung ano ang needs nila."

Moreover, social technologies, including training facilitation and management, and extension communication, were also imparted to participants, especially AEWs, farmer-leaders, and farm

dividuals with technologies along the agricultural value chain, including post-harvest technologies, processing, and marketing—across different banner programs like rice, corn, livestock, Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Plan (CFIDP), High Value Crops Development Program (HVC-DP), organic agriculture, and National Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture Program (NUPAP), and additional extension services.

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# Cavite sees drop in New Year–related incidents

CITY OF IMUS, Cavite (PIA) — The province of Cavite recorded a decline in holiday-related incidents during the New Year celebrations, according to data from the Cavite Police Provincial Office (PPO).

Acting Provincial Director Col. Ariel Red reported a sharp drop in firecracker- and pyrotechnics-related injuries. Data from the Ligtas Paskuhan campaign showed a

75-percent decrease in incidents, from 36 cases in 2024 to just eight in 2025.

All recorded cases involved firecracker- and pyrotechnics-related injuries. The Cavite PPO reported no incidents of indiscriminate firing, stray bullets, road crashes, or fires linked to fireworks and pyrotechnic devices.

Col. Red attributed the peaceful celebration to the combined efforts of law enforcers, local

government units, and the public.

"The remarkable decrease in incidents during the New Year's celebration is proof of the effective implementation of the laws and the cooperation of the people," he said, adding that public discipline played a crucial role in ensuring safety across the province.

The Cavite PPO also cited intensified operations against illegal

firecrackers and loose firearms, heightened police visibility, and close coordination with local government units and the Caviteño community as key factors behind the positive outcome.

The provincial police force extended its gratitude to partner agencies, LGUs, and residents for their continued support in maintaining peace and order.

## OCPO Imus..

Migrants (RBIM) na naglalayong mapaigting ang data at serbisyo para sa mga residente. Samantala, ang WOW Achiever Award ay patunay sa masigasig na pagpapatupad ng mga programang nakatuon sa

pagiging responsableng magulang at tamang pagpapalano ng pamilya, na bahagi ng 2025 CALABARZON Rafael M. Salas Kaunlarang Pantao Awards.

Ang mga pangrangal na ito ay sumala

## FROM PAGE 1

salamin sa kahusayan, dedikasyon, at patuloy na pangunguna ng Lungsod ng Imus sa larangan ng population and development program na nagsisilbing inspirasyon sa iba pang lokal na pamahalaan sa CALABARZON.

# PH readies feast of tasty, nutritious offerings for Gulfood 2026

FOOD Philippines promotes the Philippines as a strong sourcing destination for food and ingredients.

The Philippines has prepared a diverse showcase of premium and export-ready food products for Dubai-based food trade show Gulfood 2026, aiming to capitalize on the growing global demand for Philippine food and ingredients.

The country will be represented by 25 dynamic enterprises pursuing growth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), a market that has shown significant interest in nutritious food options. Products to be presented include fresh and processed fruits and vegetables; ethnic and gourmet products; non-alcoholic beverages; plant-based alternatives; cereals and cereal products; bakery products and confectionery; food ingredients and condiments; and ready-to-eat savories and prepared foods.

With support from the Department of Trade and Industry-Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (DTI-CITEM), the enterprises aim to strengthen ties with Dubai-based and MENA-region grocers, importers, distributors, and other trade players who seek high-quality, Halal-certified food products. They will be presented under the FOODPHILIPPINES banner, a CITEM-led branding initiative that promotes the Philippines as a dependable exporter of food and ingredients. The Philippine Pavilion at Gulfood 2026 will be open at the Dubai Exhibition Centre in Expo City Dubai from January 26 to 30.

The Philippine exhibitors in Gulfood 2026 are BV&R Commodities Corp.; Fly Ace Corporation; Global Food Solutions, Inc.; Galinco; Krytle Exports Philippines, Inc.; Lionheart Farms; Marbello's Processed Foods; Marigold Manufacturing Corporation (Mama Sita's); Marketreach International Resources; Mega Prime Foods Inc.; NgosioK Marketing (Super Q); Oleo-Fats, Inc.; Pacific Synergy Food and Beverage Corp. (Philippines); Philippine Cinmic Industri-



al Corporation; Philippine Grocers Food Exports, Inc.; Pixcel Transglobal Foods Inc.; P. Togo Corp.; Q-Phil International Trading; Sagrex Foods Inc. (Golden Saba); Sandpiper Spices and Condiments Corporation; See's International Food Mfg. Corp.; SL Agritech Corporation; Sonya Garcia's Secret Cottage Restaurant Inc.; 3 Sisters Homemade Banana Chips; and Yan Yan International Philippines, Inc.

The upcoming showcase will mark the Philippines' 21st participation in Gulfood. The country is determined to build on the momentum from last year's edition, during which the Philippines generated USD 135 million in export sales.

In addition to supporting enterprises in overseas trade fairs, DTI-CITEM is organizing the 19th edition of the International Food Exhibition (IFEX) Philippines, the country's largest business-to-business and export-oriented trade show for food, beverage, and ingredients.

IFEX Philippines spotlights premium products from across the regions and strengthens the country's reputation as a dependable supplier in the global market. Co-located within IFEX Philippines is the Sustainability Solutions Exchange (SSX) Ex-

## DA-4A ...

city of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) na kumuha ng kursong BS Agribusiness Management and Entrepreneurship, ang SQOODLES na silang nagtagumpay sa YFC Intercollegiate sa halagang P250,000.

Para sa mga datihan nang nanalo sa YFC na nagnais pang palaguin ang kasalukuyang negosyo ay tatlong YFC Upscale naman ang

## FROM PAGE 5

nagkamit ng karangalan at tig-P300,000, ang Franco Mushroom Farm, Ayo's Primee Food Processing, at Banahaw Creations.

Sa pangangasiwa ng AMAD, kasabay din ng paggagawad ang pag-sasagawa ng YFC Summit kung saan nagkaroon ng mga tagapagsalita upang mapaunlad pa ang kaalaman ng mga awardees ukol sa pagpapaunlad ng negosyo.

# Learners, teachers laud AI integration in PH basic education

MANILA – Some learners and teachers expressed optimism on the assistive benefits of the artificial intelligence (AI) within the education system as the Department of Education (DepEd) officially launched Project AGAP.AI on Friday.

Project AGAP.AI or Accelerating Governance and Adaptive Pedagogy through Artificial Intelligence aims to benefit 1.5 million learners and teachers nationwide for its initial launch.

Hannah Ysabelle Lualhati, a Grade 12 STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) student from the Quezon City Science High School, expressed hopes that they can maximize the AI tool to their advantage in terms of gathering and verifying sources for their basic education research.

"Since our school is very integrated in research, I believe siguro po sa pag-fact check ng mga Review of Related Literature (RRL) and sa paggamit po ng RRLs in general, matutulungan po talaga kami ng AI (in fact-checking RRL and the utilization of RRL in general, the AI can really help us)," she said.

Milanie Cayanan, Master Teacher I, also said Project AGAP.AI can help them improve teaching strategies into a more

interactive approach for students

"It can give us more opportunities when it comes to our strategies, like gamification, when it comes to our lessons. Because this also entertains the students, so that it is more interactive," she said.

Both of them, however, stressed that AI integration in the DepEd must have limitations and ethical boundaries to prevent mere dependence.

"We really hope that it can be implemented wisely. It will serve as a big change that would be helpful for us students. I wouldn't be too dependent on it since AI nga po. It's only there to help us, not replace us," Lualhati said.

Cayanan, likewise, added that teachers are constantly monitoring and checking to ensure that learners are not fully dependent on the use of AI.

"When it comes to the output ng mga estudyante, we make sure na it's not more of the AI, mayroon silang input — aided lang ng AI (When it comes to the output of the students, we make sure that it's not more of the AI, that they should have an input on it — only aided by the AI)," she said.

For his part, Education Secretary Sonny Angara agreed that AI

should neither replace actual efforts nor advance cheating or any disadvantageous use within the sector.

"Sabi nga ni Pangulo sa kanyang (Like what President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said in his) speech, it's not a replacement for hard work, for actual study, and for actual training," he said.

Among the key features of AGAP.AI are assistive technology for teachers' learning pedagogy, research support, and gamified activities for learners, among others.

The ethical use of AI will also be an integral part of the implementation of Project AGAP.AI, Angara said.

"Kailangan may rules tayo, hindi porket nandiyan na, gagamitin natin (We need to have rules, it's not because it's there, we will use it) to replace traditional thinking," he said.

The free AI tool, meanwhile, may be expanded to more schools in the country once the curriculum ends during the second quarter in coordination with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Angara also assured close collaboration with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) to ensure AI integration through stable connectivity in all public schools. (PNA)

# Social gifting booms in Japan; market nearly quadruples

TOKYO – The market for so-called "social gifts," which allow people to send presents through social media or email, is expanding rapidly in Japan, with its size estimated at 600 billion yen this year, 3.8 times larger than six years ago, a private research firm said.

Social gifts are sent by sharing a dedicated URL generated at the time of purchase. Recipients can download a digital voucher to pick up the gift at a store or enter their address online to get the

item delivered.

Most of the roughly 1.1 million products offered by online gift retailer Giftmall, operated by Giftmall Inc., can be sent also through the social-gifting system. The operator said sales generated through social gifts surged 3.5 times in the April-September period of 2025 from a year earlier.

Use of social gifts is also spreading beyond family members and close friends, who are the main customer base. "They are

cont. on page 2

# Making nutritious snack bar from black rice

Innovation and local agriculture come together in BlackGold Nutri-bar, a pioneering snack bar made primarily from black rice and other locally sourced, nutritious ingredients.

"BlackGold Nutri-bar is made from black rice as its primary ingredient, combined with other nutritious and locally sourced components that are not commonly used. These are carefully mixed and formed into a snack bar. This is our pioneer product under BlackGold Food Corporation, and based on our research, it is the first snack bar made from black rice," said Kieth Charles Bequibel, chief executive officer of BlackGold Food Corporation, a student-led enterprise based in Butuan City.

The product is inspired by 'ampaw,' a Filipino delicacy made from puffed rice, reimagined into a modern, convenient, and health-oriented snack.

The idea of the BlackGold Nutri-bar emerged when the firm's officers formed a team to participate in the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Caraga's competition on InnovEats during the Regional Science and Technology Week (RSTW) 2024. The competition encouraged students to develop innovative and nutritious food products, supporting the team.

According to studies by the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), unpolished pigmented rice, such as red and black rice, contains high levels of phytochemicals and health-promoting properties, making it



a healthier alternative to white rice. Black rice is particularly rich in antioxidants, including phenolic compounds, vitamin E derivatives, and γ-oryzanol, which are effective free-radical scavengers.

Juveriel D. Tenio, production manager, shared that these nutritional benefits made it an ideal ingredient for a snack bar. Beyond health, the group also aims to break the stigma that black rice is only for individuals with medical conditions.

"Through our product, we aim to promote and create a demand for black rice, especially since the Caraga region is known for being the capital of black rice. This is also our way of supporting the local farming community in the region," Tenio said.

Aside from success, BlackGold Nutri-bar is also recognized as a National Awardee in the 2024 Young Farmers Challenge Intercollegiate Category of the Department of Agriculture (DA) held in Baguio City on July 17, 2025. They received P500,000.00 funding to help the product's ongoing research and development. They also received multiple offers for potential

partnerships and collaborations.

Tenio further shared that the demand for nutribars has increased, with over 10,000 nutribars needed to be produced monthly. They are also working to scale up operations to meet the additional demand, including an order of 1,000 boxes from Taiwan and more orders from private companies.

Throughout its development, the team encountered various challenges, particularly in packaging. What started with manually applied stickers has now evolved into improved cellophane and carton packaging, using DOST Caraga's packaging and labelling services, making the product more presentable and market-ready.

BlackGold Nutri-bar continues to move forward with the help of its mentors and the support of the different government offices and farmers.

The BlackGold Nutri-bar stands as a testament to how innovative ideas, when paired with strong government support, can transform local agricultural products into sustainable and marketable enterprises.

# Mahigit 5.2 milyong pisong dagdag puhunanhandog ng DA-4A sa 42 agribusiness ng kabataan



Aabot sa P5,240,000 halaga ng parangal ang iginawad sa 42 agribusiness ng mga kabataang negosyanteng magsasaka sa ginanap na Young Farmers Challenge (YFC) Program 2025 Regional Awarding

Ceremony at Summit ng Department of Agriculture IV-CALABARZON (DA-4A) Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division (AMAD) noong ika-15 hanggang ika-17 ng Disyembre sa Nasugbu, Batangas.

Ang YFC ay isang kompetisyon na inilunsad ng DA na may layong hikayatin ang mga kabataang pumasok sa

# Over 13.7 million in Calabarzon registered under nat'l identification system

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — More than 13.7 million Filipinos in Calabarzon have registered under the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys), according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) Region IV-A.

Based on the PSA's preliminary count as of December 15, 2025, Cavite recorded the highest number of registrants with 3,503,633, followed by Rizal with 2,938,672. Batangas and Laguna posted comparable figures at 2,729,112 and 2,722,663, respectively, while Quezon registered 1,931,698 individuals.

PSA Regional Director Charito Armonia said the number of registrants reflects strong public participation in the government's national identification program.

"We attribute the steady increase in registrations to the expanded availability of national ID services through fixed and mobile registration centers across Calabarzon," Armonia said.

Armonia also reaffirmed PSA's commitment to ensuring inclusive identification and improving service delivery by bringing National ID registration and related services closer to the public.

The National ID is widely recognized as a valid proof of identity and facilitates access to government services, social protection programs, and financial transactions.

On Dec. 22, the PSA conducted National ID services to bring essential government programs closer to communities. The initiative aimed to improve accessibility for

elderly residents and katutubong 4Ps beneficiaries who often face mobility challenges and difficulty traveling to distant registration centers.

"By deploying the National ID Registration Team directly to communities, PSA Quezon ensured a convenient, efficient, and responsive registration process tailored to the needs of katutubong 4Ps beneficiaries," Armonia added.

The PSA continues to encourage unregistered residents in the region to register at the nearest PSA offices, malls, and partner local government units.

Registered individuals are also reminded that updating or correcting demographic information in the National ID System is free of charge at select registration centers.

Calabarzon police reaps major operational accomplishments in 2025, commits to people-centered policing in 2026

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) – As a result of the intensified efforts in maintaining peace and order in the Calabarzon region, the Philippine National Police Regional Office IV-A records significant operational accomplishments in 2025.

Under the leadership of PRO IV-A Regional Director Police Brigadier General Paul Kenneth Lucas, the Calabarzon police conducted 8,770 operations in its anti-illegal drug campaign, leading to the arrest of 11,391 individuals.

During the said operations, the authorities confiscated 84,235.02 grams of shabu and 91,349.27 grams of marijuana, with a combined estimated value of Php646,319,834.60, which led to a major blow

Arteza Chocolate, Manlangit Vermi Production, Joe Special Farm Lipa, Sanfiber Integrated, Alaga't Kita Farm, R&V hydroponics Leafy Vegetable Products, at KABI DELICACIES.

Sinundan naman ito ng isang negosyo ng dalawang estudyanteng kabataan mula sa Univer-

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of illegal drug networks operating in the region.

According to PBGen Lucas, these achievements reflect the hard work, discipline, and unity of Calabarzon police officers and personnel in carrying out the agency's mandate to maintain peace and security across the region.

"These achievements are a testament to the hard work, discipline, and unity of our personnel and our partners. Guided by the principle of Bagong PNP para sa Bagong Pilipinas: Serbisyon Mabilis, Tapat at Nararamdaman, PRO 4A will continue to deliver responsive, honest, and people-centered policing for the people of CALABARZON." PBGen Lucas said in an official press release.

He also highlighted the crucial support of partner government agencies and local communities, emphasizing that these successes are crucial in the police's commitment to uphold the law, protect the public, and sustain peace and order throughout the region.

Additionally, the Calabarzon police has successfully arrested 4,073 wanted individuals under its campaign against most wanted persons. This includes the arrest of 6 National Level; 1,006 Regional Level; and 1,433 Provincial Level Most Wanted Persons.

As part of its intensified campaign against illegal gambling, PRO IV-A conducted 9,686 operations across the region, resulting in 22,619 arrests and the confiscation of over ₱4 million in betting money.

Meanwhile, campaign against loose firearms in the region has yielded notable results, with 1,478 operations leading to the confiscation, surrender, and recovery of 2,708 firearms, helping reduce election-related and other gun-related incidents.

As the new year begun, PRO IV-A sets its sight in delivering responsive, honest, and people-centered policing, making law enforcement fair and effective to build trust and maintain community engagement to deter crimes. (CO/PIA-CALABARZON with reports from RPIO)