

SMC eves 20% discount for seniors, PWDs on use of expressways

MANILA – Senior citizens and persons with disabilities (PWDs) will soon receive a 20-percent discount on the use of expressways and skyways in Metro Manila, southern Luzon, and northern Luzon, an official of the San Miguel Corp. (SMC) said on Tuesday.

SMC’s infrastructure group head Rafael Yabut, who previously served as public works undersecretary, made the commitment during the House investigation into the implementation gaps regarding the laws on discounts and benefits for the elderly, PWDs, and solo parents.

Yabut said they would coordinate with the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) and other concerned agencies on how to grant discounts on its tollways.

SMC operates the Metro Manila and Ninoy Aquino International

Airport skyway system, South Luzon Expressway, Southern Tagalog Arterial Road, and Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union Expressway.

The other toll roads in Luzon are operated by Metro Pacific Corp. These are North Luzon Expressway, Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway, Cavite-Laguna Expressway, Cavite Expressway, and NLEX-SLEX Connector.

House Ways and Means Committee chair Joey Salceda, who is presiding over the inquiry, suggested that instead of deducting 20 percent from the cost of an expressway or skyway radio frequency identification (RFID) card or its top-up load, an equivalent amount would be added to the card price or additional load.

“In other words, it would be an add-on. If you buy PHP5,000, you get PHP6,000, or PHP1,000



Experiencing the Lunar New Year at SM City Santa Rosa



In honor of the Lunar New Year, SM City Santa Rosa has unveiled its latest festive decor. The centerpiece of the mall features a Mighty Red Dragon, symbolizing specific blessings and wishes for the coming year. Immerse yourself in the celebration and enjoy a variety of goods, crafts, and traditional snacks. The decor embodies the true essence of Chinese New Year, making it a must-see attraction. #. #LuckIbLoveAtSM#EverythingHereAtSM #AWorldOfExperienceAtSM

STRAIGHT NEWS PUBLISHING

TODAY'S NEWS AND BEYOND

VOL. I • NO. 32 --February 07-13, 2024 • P 10.00

NBA All-Star starters announced

ANKARA – The 2024 NBA All-Star Game starters have been announced as LeBron James, who makes history with 20th All-Star selection, will captain the West squad while Giannis Antetokounmpo will lead the East squad in February, NBA confirmed.

The NBA will return to the East vs. West format in next month’s All-Star Game.

Kevin Durant (Phoenix Suns), Nikola Jokic (Denver Nuggets), Luka Doncic (Dallas Mavericks), and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (Oklahoma City Thunder) are the Western Conference starters as the team will be captained by Los Angeles Lakers forward James.

James, who is an

All-Star starter for the 20th straight year, beat former NBA champion and Hall of Fame Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who was selected 19 times in history.

Joel Embiid (Philadelphia 76ers), Jayson Tatum (Boston Celtics), Tyrese Haliburton (Indiana Pacers), and Damian Lillard (Milwaukee Bucks) are the Eastern Conference starters.

The East will be captained by Bucks’ Greek superstar Antetokounmpo.

The All-Star Game reserves for both teams will be revealed on Feb. 1 as seven players will be named in each conference.

The 73rd NBA All-Star Game will be played at Indianapolis’ Gainbridge Fieldhouse on Feb. 18. (Anadolu)

PAGCOR revenues up 35% to P79.4-B in 2023

MANILA – The Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (PAGCOR) said Friday it booked PHP79.37 billion in revenues in 2023, up 34.63 percent from 2022’s PHP58.96 billion, driven mainly by robust earnings from licensed casinos and the rising Electronic Games sector.

Gaming operations remain the main source of PAGCOR revenues with PHP73.11 billion while other sources, such as services, business income, gains, and non-operating income, contributed PHP6.26 billion.

Net income was at PHP6.81 billion, a 53.27 percent increase from the agency’s PHP4.44 billion profit in 2022.

PAGCOR Chairman and CEO Alejandro H. Tengco said the higher earnings enabled the state gaming firm to increase its contribution to nation-building (CNB) to PHP49.56 billion, which is 43 percent higher than the PHP34.67 billion CNB in the previous year.

“Our robust revenue generation in 2023 allowed us to remit more funds to the government to finance various services, including funding for the Universal Health Care program, also known as PhilHealth,” Tengco said in a news release.

He said the lion’s share of PAGCOR’s CNB, amounting to PHP34.72



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VP Sara reassures support for PBBM



Recto gets credited by SSS for its successful savings and investment program for Filipinos

BIDA Run highlights ‘whole-of-society approach’ in curbing illegal drugs in Imus

PBBM directs agencies to fast-track completion of all water projects to address water scarcity



President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has directed both the private and public sectors to expedite the completion of all water projects in the Philippines as part of the collective effort to improve water security and address potential water scarcity in the country.

In his speech during the inauguration of the Davao City Bulk Water Supply Project in Davao City on Wednesday, President Marcos said that the construction of the project is a proven approach to combat water

Improvement of financial literacy among Filipinos pushed

PBBM orders intensified cybersecurity system for PNP, directs further training of personnel as criminals move to cyber



President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. ordered the strengthening and improvement of the cybersecurity systems of the Philippine National Police (PNP) through further training of its personnel and investing in technology.

POINT OF VIEW

HEALTH HINTS FOR ELDERLY FROM AGES 45 TO 100 YEARS

- However busy you are, observe all these to remain healthy:
- Drink less milk in your tea. Instead, add lemon or lime juice.
 - In the day time, drink more water; but night time, drink less.
 - Don't drink coffee, Advisable To Stop Completely.
 - Eat less oily and seasoned foods.
 - Best sleeping times are between 9pm to 6am.
 - In the evening, eat little or nothing after 5 or 6pm.
 - Don't take medicines with cold water but with warm, and take your medicines half an hour before going to bed. Never take medicines and lie down immediately.
 - As you aged further , stop drinking chilled water but drink only water at room temperature
 - Try to sleep for at least 8 hours per day.
 - Having a nap for an hour and a half between noon and 3pm, to relieve stress and keep younger and not age easily.
 - Once your mobile phone battery is left with only one bar, don't make calls anymore, because the dangerous radiation and waves are one many times higher than a fully charged battery.
 - Use your left ear to answer calls, right ear will directly hurt your brain. □ Better still to use ear-phones to answer calls.
 - Two things to check as often as you can:
 - (1) Your blood pressure
 - (2) Your blood sugar.
 - Six things to reduce to the minimum on your foods:
 - (1) Salt
 - (2) Sugar
 - (3) Preserved meat and foods
 - (4) Red meat especially roasted
 - (5) Dairy products
 - (6) Starchy products
 - Four things to increase in your foods:
 - (1) Greens/vegetables
 - (2) Beans
 - (3) Fruits
 - (4) Nuts
 - Three things you need to forget:
 - (1) Your age □
 - (2) Your past □
 - (3) Your worries/grievances □□
 - Four things you must have, no matter how weak or how strong you are:
 - (1) Friends who truly love you
 - (2) Caring family
 - (3) Positive thoughts
 - (4) A warm home.
 - Seven things you need to do to stay healthy:
- Cont. for next week issue

Army's 2ID holds Lakbay-Aral for Ateneo senior high

CAMP CAPINPIN, Rizal - Students of the Ateneo de Manila University - Senior High School experienced a glimpse of the military life during the 2nd Infantry "Jungle Fighter" Division's first Lakbay-Aral of the year at Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal on Friday, February 2, 2024.

Among the participants of the one-day event were 200 students, 10 teachers, 12 facilitators, and 3 emergency medical technicians from the said school. They embarked on a journey through the home of the Jungle Fighters, where they visited the General Staff offices, 2ID's Relic Point, and the Division Training School.

The students were treated to an Infantry Demo and Static Display, providing them with first-

VP Sara...

MANILA – Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Z. Duterte has reiterated her commitment to work with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. as she thanked him for his continued trust and confidence.

The Vice President even thanked President Marcos in her statement on Wednesday for his continued trust and confidence as Education Secretary.

"Mahalaga ang kanyang pagkilala sa papel ng lahat ng bumubuo ng Department of Education sa pagsulong ng 8-point Socioeconomic Agenda ng Marcos administration para sa isang 'Bagong Pilipinas' (New Philippines) (His recognition to the role of the Department of Education in pursuing the 8-point Socioeconomic Agenda is important for a Bagong Pilipinas)," Duterte said in her statement on Wednesday evening.

Duterte also lauded President Marcos for respecting her views, especially on people's initiative.

Likewise, Duterte said she respects the views of his father and siblings but does not necessarily agree with them.

PAGCOR... FROM PAGE 8

billion, has been remitted to the National Treasury. Half of the amount or PHP17.36 billion will go to PhilHealth to provide free health care coverage to millions of poor Filipinos.

PAGCOR also remitted PHP3.65 billion to the Bureau of Internal Revenue as a 5 percent franchise tax and PHP285.20 million for the agency's corporate income tax.

Recipients of PAGCOR's 2023 earnings include the Philippine Sports Commission (PHP1.73 billion) while a separate PHP92.58 million was given to athletes and coaches who won in international competitions as mandated by the Sports Incentives and Benefits Act.

PAGCOR will also remit PHP3.06 billion in cash dividends to the National Treasury, while local government units hosting Casino Filipino branches collectively will get PHP451.72 million.

The Board of Claims under the Department of Justice will also receive PHP63.12 million to compensate persons who have been wrongly imprisoned.

Zubiri... FROM PAGE 1

MANILA – Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri acknowledged on Wednesday that some provisions of the Republic Act No. 11534 or the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) Act, which was approved and passed by the Senate in the last Congress, caused the country problems in earning more investments.

Zubiri made the admission during a public hearing of the Economic Affairs panel regarding the proposed establishment of Bulacan Airport City Special Economic Zone and Freeport Authority (BAC-SEZFA).

"It takes being a man to admit that as a majority floor leader, we made some mistakes at some of our measures. That's why the beauty of legislation is we can amend the measures to answer and address the concerns by the CREATE measure," he said in his opening statement.

One of these

mistakes, Zubiri cited, is the powers vested in Fiscal Incentives Review Board (FIRB).

"It created so much confusion that a lot of our locators either left or those who have potential business proposals to the country were sitting in the sidelines kasi nga (because) we created this animal called the FIRB," he said.

Zubiri pointed at the FIRB as the reason why there are still hundreds of pending applications for ecozones.

The FIRB under CREATE, ensures that apart from tax subsidies, tax incentives are also granted and monitored properly by relevant agencies.

It also creates policies and acts as an oversight on the administration, approval or disapproval of granting tax incentives or tax subsidies.

Before CREATE Act, investors could go to

Cont. on Page 3

February 07-13, 2024 Crossword Puzzles

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

Across

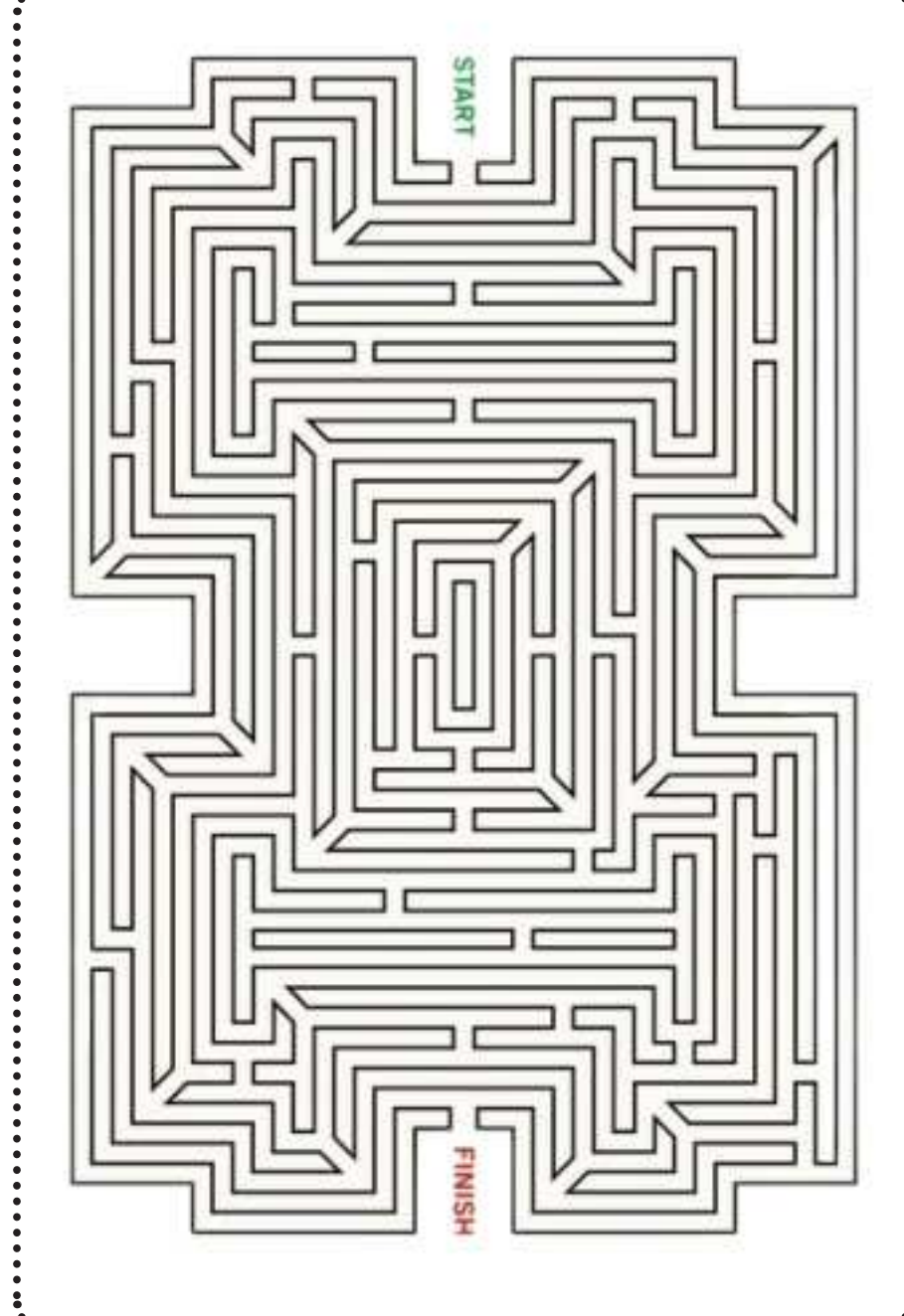
- 1 Type of ski race (8)
- 5 Landlocked country in West Africa (4)
- 9 Conceal (5)
- 10 Risky undertaking (7)
- 11 Becomes less wide (7)
- 12 Stomach exercise (3-2)
- 13 Anew (6)
- 14 Plunderer (6)
- 17 Deduce or conclude (5)
- 19 Surpass (7)
- 20 Seeks to hurt (7)
- 21 Simple (5)
- 22 Movement of water causing a small whirlpool (4)
- 23 Low-spirited (8)

Down

- 1 Remove dangerous substances from (13)
- 2 Ditherer (7)
- 3 Terrified or extremely shocked (6-6)
- 4 Princely (6)
- 6 Mature human (5)
- 7 Wet behind the ears (13)
- 8 Impregnable (12)
- 15 Sum of money put in the bank (7)
- 16 Person to whom a lease is granted (6)
- 18 Stinky (5)

2			3			8		
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					1	3	6	
1	7							
3	6		8					
	9		1	4	7		2	
6	3			2			4	1
						9		

Maze



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7								5
5		1	2		9	3		7
2								3
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3		2	4		8	1		9
6								4
	4	7	3		2	8	5	

Successful Entrepreneurs, Top Business Leaders Mentor MSMEs at Go Negosyo's First Entrepreneur Event for 2024



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

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

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

"The success of this first 3M on Wheels free entrepreneurship mentoring event gave us more reason to intensify our campaign to reach as

many MSMEs nationwide this year, especially considering the bright prospects for our country's economy," said Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion.

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

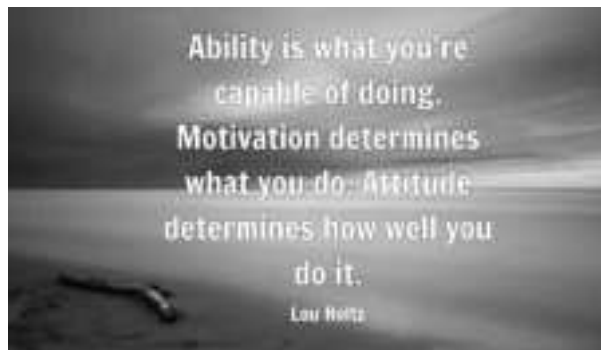
Concepcion personally mentored several MSMEs, including single mother Magdalena Ramos, who runs a distributorship business of Kettle Korn; Denise Caranto, who founded the snacks business Konu, and Marjorie Barcelona, who grew her lemonade business into franchising.

A special part of the program was a short

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

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

3M On Wheels promotes the three M's for successful entrepreneurship, namely Mentorship, Money, and Market. All three form the foundation of Go Negosyo's mission to promote entrepreneurship among Filipinos. The event was inspired by the growing number of Filipinos turning to entrepreneurship and fills the learning gap in the entrepreneurial journey of active and aspiring entrepreneurs.



Recto presides 2nd Maharlika Investment Corporation board meeting as new Chair

Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto has presided over the second board meeting of the Maharlika Investment Corporation (MIC) in his capacity as new Chairperson to discuss its strategic direction.

Established under Republic Act (RA) No. 11954, the MIC serves as the sole vehicle responsible for mobilizing and utilizing the Maharlika Investment Fund (MIF) for investments in transactions aimed at generating optimal returns on investments (ROIs).

The MIC's role is to establish a diversified portfolio of investments in the local and global financial markets and in other assets that promote the commercial as well as developmental and strategic objectives of the Fund.

The Board approved MIC President and CEO (PCEO) Rafael Jose D. Consing, Jr. to continue discussions with stakeholders regarding potential investments.

The commercial objective of the MIC is geared towards obtaining optimal absolute return and maximizing financial gains on its investments in the short- to medium-term. In the long-term, the developmental objective is to promote economic development by making strategic and profitable investments in key sectors.

During the meet-

ing, PCEO Consing reiterated the sectors that will be tapped by the MIF to achieve multigenerational commercial, economic, and social development value creation.

The industry focus includes infrastructure; oil, gas, and power; agroforestry industrial urbanization; mineral processing; tourism; transportation; and aerospace and aviation.

PCEO Consing also called for a reorganization of the Committee Chairpersons to be compliant with Section 26, R.A. 11954, which states that an Independent Director must be the Chairperson of the Risk Management Committee, consistent with international best practices.

Independent Director Atty. German Q. Lichauco II was nominated as Chairperson of the said Committee, as well as other committees on good corporate governance.

Meanwhile, the Board approved the remittance of funds from the account of the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr) to the MIC. The BTr shall transfer the contributions to the account of MIC within five (5) business days from receipt of the relevant Board Resolution.

The Board likewise approved the motion to appoint the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP)

and Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) as depository banks of the MIC which is consistent with Department of Finance (DOF) Department Circular No. 002.2022 stating that GOCCs may deposit and maintain government funds with the LBP and DBP without the need for prior approval from the Secretary of Finance.

To ensure that the MIC performs its mandated functions, the Board approved that PCEO Consing be authorized to hire personnel as specified under the duties and qualifications of the PCEO in Section 23 of R.A. 11954.

Present during the second board meeting were MIC Directors Vicky Castillo L. Tan, Atty. German Q. Lichauco II, Andrew Jerome T. Gan, and Roman Felipe S. Reyes; LBP PCEO Lynette V. Ortiz; and DBP PCEO Michael O. de Jesus.

The MIC's Advisory Body was also present, represented by Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman and Officer in Charge Treasurer Sharon P. Almanza.

The third MIC board meeting is scheduled sometime in February, following the Secretariat's consultation on the availability of the Board of Directors. Dof.gov

Soldiers capture war materiel in Camarines Norte encounter

CAMP CAPIN, Rizal - Troops of the 2nd Infantry "Jungle Fighter" Division seized items following an encounter between the government forces and the New People's Army in Labo, Camarines Norte. Troops of the 85th Infantry "Sandiwa" Battalion were conducting combat operations at Brgy. Bayabas when they encountered around 10 armed per-

sonalities, resulting in a 15-minute firefight. This led to the capture of an anti-personnel mine, four backpacks, a sack of personal belongings, and a solar panel. In a statement, the 2nd Infantry "Jungle Fighter" Division Commander Maj. Gen. Roberto S. Capulong emphasized the significance of the captured war materiel, which included one anti-personnel mine that

could have inflicted harm on innocent civilians and assured the public of the military's unwavering dedication to preserving peace and order in the pursuit of a safer and more secure environment in Southern Tagalog. 2ID



EDITORIAL:

What exactly does sustainable deployment of our workers overseas mean?

It means when we deploy workers in one particular line of work, such as nurses, to other countries, it should not result in the shortage of these workers here.

That's the problem we experienced when other countries opened their doors to our doctors and scientists starting as far back as the 1960s, leading to what had been described as "brain drain."

That's what happened when the Middle East countries began to recruit our engineers and skilled construction workers to build their infrastructure.

It's a problem the government, through the Department of Migrant Workers, wants to address as soon as possible.

According to the agency, they want to implement a policy of sustainable deployment of our OFWs so we both benefit.

The DMW wants the deployment of our OFWs to various countries to be a beneficial two-way exchange or a win-win situation for both sides.

Germany, for instance, has expressed interest in hiring not only nurses but also other skilled workers and those in the hospitality industry.

The Philippines and Germany have signed a joint declaration of interest based on what's called the 10-year-old Triple Win Program, which primarily involved recruitment of Filipino nurses to work in that European country.

Zubiri...

welcomed with "fantastic packages."

"Everything was handled there. You only talk to one person, they come in and everything was perfect," Zubiri recalled.

"Now, they all have to go to FIRB, it think if its an investment over PHP1 billion. Eh, ano ba naman ang PHP1 billion? Yung planta nga lang ilang bilyon na (What is PHP1 billion? Building a plant

costs billions) and I've met with several businessmen from different foreign organizations, from Japan, Korea, United States and that's their number one complaint," he added.

Zubiri noted, however, that the Senate Committee on Ways and Means is already on it to discuss the proposed amendments in making CREATE to Maximize Opportunities for Reinvigorating the Economy or the

Let's not waste time

This is government-to-government recruitment of nurses was agreed upon ten years ago.

The Philippines and Germany are now exploring opportunities for the recruitment of other skilled Filipino workers that could also be a win-win situation for both parties.

The German government wants to hire electrical engineers, electricians and workers in the hospitality sector, such as hotels and other facilities catering to travel and tourism.

President Marcos Jr. has declared the countries that have expressed interest in hiring Filipino workers, such as nurses, should also be part of the solution of the so-called "brain drain" problem by assisting us in the education and training of our nurses and other professionals.

Other countries, including Canada and Austria, have expressed interest in hiring Filipino nurses to fill the requirements of their own health and medical systems.

Negotiations with these countries are ongoing to address the shortage not only of nurses here but also of teaching staff for the nursing profession.

The agreements are also expected to result in recipient countries providing scholarships for nursing students and assisting in upgrading hospital facilities, training facilities, and faculty development in the Philippines.

If this is what's called sustainable deployment, we're all for it.

FROM PAGE 2

CREATE MORE bill.

The bill pushes reforms that cover the establishment of a streamlined tax refund system for registered business enterprises and institutionalization of risk-based classification of claims and audit framework to improve the timeliness, efficiency, and predictability of the VAT (value-added tax) refund process.

To improve the country's presence and market share in the foreign market, the CREATE MORE bill also expands the enhanced deduction regime which shall increase the deduction for power expenses from 150 percent to 200 percent, and 200 percent deduction on expenses relating to approved trade fairs, exhibitions, and missions.

Moreover, the bill proposes to clarify the transitory provision by expressly exempting transitory RBEs under the 5 percent gross income earned regime from all national and local taxes, including VAT and duty incentives. (PNA)



BIDA...

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

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

"We are partnering with the Dangerous Drugs Board, and we

would like to conduct seminars with the PTA so parents would know how to identify red flags and how to approach the problem," Abalos said.

In partnership with the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM), Abalos highlighted the DILG's active engagement with religious groups to connect with grassroots communities.

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

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

PBBM DIRECT AGENCIES...

scarcity through the joint efforts of the local government and private entities.

The Davao City Bulk Water Supply Project is one of the country's largest private bulk water supply facilities under the Apo Agua Infrastructura Inc. in partnership with the Davao City Water District (DCWD) that taps into the Tamugan River. It aims to shift from Davao City's dependence on groundwater.

President Marcos acknowledged the Apo Agua of Aboitiz InfraCapital, the DCWD and the local government of Davao for their unwavering dedication and tireless efforts in realizing the Davao City Bulk Water Supply Project.

He also emphasized that the joint efforts of the public and private sectors in ensuring the protection and conservation of the Panigan-Tamugan Watershed and the management and rehabilitation of the watershed only showed that development can be pursued without compromising the environment.

"Thank you for showing us the deep well of potential that public-private partnerships hold,

not just in securing water supply, but also in paving the way for enhanced economic growth, jobs creation, and an improved standards of living for all Filipinos," President Marcos said.

"What this demonstrates is a proven approach in battling water scarcity, which is no longer a seasonal challenge but a perpetual threat that comes with climate change. It is for this reason that I continually stress the urgency of improving water security, and directed agencies concerned to expedite the completion of all water projects across the country," he added.

The chief executive underscored the importance of water security as he emphasized that any disruption to the water supply degrades the quality of life, dampens economic activities and could fuel disorder.

He said that water scarcity remains to be the hardest form of emergency to contain, but can be prevented through foresight, right plans, united action and political will.

"Anticipating problems instead of letting them catch us by surprise

FROM PAGE 1

coming together."

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

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

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

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

FROM PAGE 1

is how we approach these challenges in the Bagong Pilipinas. We prepare for contingencies, solve problems, and defuse potential crisis before they occur. We dream of building a nation our children that proudly inherit—that our children can proudly inherit," President Marcos said.

"And as such, this project is worth bequeathing to the generations that will come after us," he added.

Before this, President Marcos has ordered the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), in coordination with various government agencies, to prioritize and expedite the completion of water supply projects in areas that will be severely affected by the El Niño phenomenon.

President Marcos also ordered the DPWH and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to explore public-private partnerships in rehabilitating and improving the country's water supply systems.

The DPWH was also ordered to build large scale water impounding projects to increase areas that may be served. PND

Enchanted Kingdom shares magic, love and prosperity this February

Enchanted Kingdom, the first and only world class theme park in the Philippines, announces its Chinese New Year and Valentine's offerings for the month of February.

EK welcomes back "Enchanting Dinner in the Sky" featuring a Japanese themed dinner for couples and groups while riding the Wheel of Fate. Enjoy magical views, bring home photo souvenirs and red string bracelets as you create your enchanted story with us. The Enchanting Dinner in the Sky also includes regular day pass tickets and will run on all weekends of February and on Valentine's Day.

In celebration of

the Year of the Dragon, EK brings their EnChinese New Year Promo. Family and friends will feel the magic of prosperity as they savor an EKsclusive Chinese lauriat set meal good for four persons, inclusive of four regular day pass tickets starting February 9 to 29. Book this promo now through the EK Online Store.

Meanwhile, Asia's Got Talent Grand Finalist Power Duo will headline EK's Chinese New Year Celebration on Saturday, February 10. They will be joined by IOX Dancers and EK's very own Victoria's Way and Kingsmen. Park guests will witness the traditional

DILG, DENR, LGUs team up needed to fix water, waste problems

Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Benhur Abalos on Friday afternoon pushed for active collaboration between local government units (LGUs) and national government agencies in tackling the growing problem of waste management and water security.

Abalos made the call during his speech at the Waste and Water Summit at the SMX Convention Center which was initiated by the DENR in partnership with the DILG.

The summit was aimed at strengthening linkages and cooperation between the DENR, DILG, LGUs and other stakeholders at the local level among others.

"Ang collaboration dito ay napakahalaga. Pag-usapan natin ang problema. This is why this summit is very important," Abalos said.

He continued: "Huwag kayong mahiya sa amin. Sabihin ninyo sa amin kung ano ang problem sa lugar ninyo, at gagawa tayo ng plano ng sabay-sabay kasama ang DENR".

Abalos specifically urged LGUs to seek

help from the DILG and DENR to better address issues on waste management and water problems in their locality saying he understands that "not all LGUs are created equal."

"Let us look at reality – what is really happening on the ground. Not all LGUs are equal. Hindi po lahat ay mayaman."

The DILG Secretary further explained that the DENR will establish the standard for cleanliness for each locality, while the DILG will diligently monitor and grant monetary incentives to LGUs who practice full compliance.

"I'll work with the DENR on this, we'll go to the grassroots."

According to reports, 61,000 metric tons of garbage are produced on a daily basis, 20% of which comes from the National Capital Region, and contributes to the 20 to 22 million metric tons of solid waste produced annually.

He also took note of the lack of access to sanitary landfills, to which only 1,107 out of 1,634 LGUs nationwide have access to the facilities.

"More or less, 500 LGUs do not have access to sanitary landfills.



Solon wants seniorcitizens' purchase booklets scrapped



MANILA – House of Representatives Deputy Majority Leader Erwin Tulfo on Tuesday called for the scrapping of the purchase booklets as a requirement for the elderly to avail of a 20 percent discount for medicines and groceries.

Tulfo, representative of the ACT-CIS Party-list, made this remark during the House Committee on Ways and Means hearing on the implementation and policies that provide discounts and incentives for senior citizens and persons with disabilities (PWDs).

"I think we have to go away with the booklet because this is useless and an additional burden to senior citizens," he said.

Tulfo said senior citizen identification should be enough for the elderly to avail of the discount.

"Pangalawa sir, this is an insult to all the senior citizens kasi parang tinitingnan ng mga merchants ng mga business establishment na mga manloloko ang mga senior citizen natin kaya they have to own a booklet. (Secondly sir, this is an insult to all the senior citizens because it's like the merchants of business establishments look down on them as cheaters and that they need to own a booklet)," he said.

Tulfo said the majority of the senior cit-

February 07-13, 2024

MANILA – Senator Sherwin Gatchalian on Thursday pushed for the passage of his bill, requiring the teaching of financial literacy courses from elementary all the way to the tertiary level.

Gatchalian made this call as financial and insurance activities emerged as among the top contributors to the country's 5.6-percent gross domestic product growth in 2023.

Under his Senate Bill 479 or the Economics and Financial Literacy Curriculum and Training Act, Gatchalian proposed the teaching of an Economics and Personal Finance (EPF) course in schools to improve financial literacy among Filipinos.

"Habang patuloy na lumalaki ang kontribusyon ng financial activities sa paglago ng ating ekonomiya, mahalagang tiyakin din nating may sapat na kaalaman ang ating mga kababayan pagdating sa mga usaping ito (As the contribution of financial activities to our economic continue to grow, it is important to make sure our countrymen have enough knowledge about financial literacy)," he said in a

statement.

"Sa pamamagitan ng panukala nating economics and personal finance course na ituturo sa ating mga paaralan, mapapalawak natin ang kaalaman ng ating mga kababayan pagdating sa usapin ng pananalapi (Through our proposal to teach economics and personal finance course in our schools, we will improve the knowledge of our countrymen in handling finances)," the chairperson of the Senate Committee on Basic Education added.

Based on the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' 2021 Financial Inclusion Survey, only 2 percent of Filipinos are able to answer all six basic financial literacy questions, while 69 percent correctly answered half of the six questions.

The survey also showed that only 42 percent of respondents correctly identified the effects of inflation on their purchasing power, lower than the 55 percent recorded in 2019.

Under Gatchalian's proposed measure, all public and private schools, local and

Recto...

Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto was credited by the Social Security System (SSS) for the success of the Worker's Investment and Savings Program (WISP), which was created under the Social Security Act of 2018 that he sponsored during his tenure as legislator.

Established in January 2021 as part of Republic Act 11199, WISP is a mandatory provident fund scheme that serves as another savings for private-sector workers and other individual paying members of the SSS.

This safe, convenient, and tax-free individual retirement savings plan allows members to invest and earn returns from their contributions, embodying the core principle of "Work, Save, Invest,

February 07-13, 2024 Improvement...

state universities and colleges, private universities and colleges, and technical-vocational schools and centers are required to develop a course solely focused on EPF, which will be part of their respective curriculum.

At the elementary level, the EPF course shall cover lessons such as making spending decisions, planning and managing personal finances, evaluating expenses and budget preparation, and financial goal setting, among others.

At the secondary, tertiary, and technical-vocational levels, topics shall include the concept of income and preparing a savings plan, understanding the financial landscape, participating in various savings and investment schemes, and investing for retirement, among others.

The proposed measure also seeks to provide EPF professional development to teachers, and an EPF training course to government and private sector employees who will guide the youth in making financial decisions. (Leonel Abasola/PNA)

Recto...

and Prosper."

As of December 31, 2023, WISP contributions amounted to PHP 79.51 billion from 6.02 million members.

The program covers private-sector employees, self-employed individuals, overseas workers, and voluntary members who have no final claim and have contributions to the regular SSS program, and have a monthly salary credit that exceeds PHP 20,000.

WISP contributions are paid together with regular SSS contributions. In addition to those provided by the regular SSS program, members are entitled to disability and death benefits, as well as a retirement fund.

Due to the success of the mandatory provident fund scheme,

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the SSS launched the WISP Plus in December 2022—a voluntary retirement savings program offered exclusively to SSS members. It serves as an additional layer of support apart from regular retirement benefits.

WISP Plus contributions amounted to PHP 391.63 million from around 30,536 members as of December 31, 2023.

WISP and WISP Plus actual investment portfolios as of November 2023 amounted to PHP 76.34 billion and PHP 1.41 billion, respectively.

The annualized return on investment of WISP was recorded at 5.33%, while WISP Plus was at 6.87%.

The Social Security Act of 2018 rationalized and broadened the powers and responsibilities of the Social Security Com-



Look: The Police Regional Office 4A Officers' Ladies Club, headed by Mrs. Mary June T. Lucas, Adviser, together with the personnel of the Quezon Police Provincial Office and Regional Community Affairs and Development Division - Family Juvenile Gender Advocacy Development, conducted an outreach activity called "OPLAN Bisita-Eskwela (BES) and Gift Giving" today at Maka Elementary School in Barangay Ailiw, Lucban, Quezon. A total of 80 students from kindergarten to grade six were provided with food and non-food items. During this activity, Mrs Mary June T Lucas led the tree planting activity in the vicinity of the school and personnel from Quezon PPO conducted lectures on R.A. 7610, known as "Anti- Child Abuse Law. Moreover, this activity aims to gain the community's trust and confidence, particularly among the youth sector, and encourages them to become S.T.R.O.N.G (Smart, Talented, Responsible, Obedient, Nice, and God-Fearing)

PBBM orders...

gies that will help address the increasing cybercrime and emerging issues on cybersecurity.

In a Palace briefing on Wednesday, PNP chief Gen. Benjamin Acorda Jr. said that while there is improvement in the country's crime statistics, there is still a need for PNP to focus on addressing cybercrimes.

"Although seemingly nakita natin na nag-improve 'yung crime statistics—it went down by 10 percent—but as we dissected further this crime statistics, there is a need for us to focus on cyber-crimes," he said.

Based on the National Peace and Order Situation report pre-mission (SSC) to ensure the long-term viability of the SSS and make it more responsive to the evolving needs of its stakeholders.

The law ensured that all employees including domestic workers, overseas Filipino workers, as well as those self-employed, are included in the SSS pension system for their protection in case of disability, sickness, maternity, old age, death, and other contingencies that may result in financial loss or burden.A

sent by Acorda to the President, the total number of crimes reported between July 1, 2022, and January 31, 2024, or the peace and order indicator, crimes committed dropped by 10.66 percent as compared to the period December 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022.

Acorda said as of 2023, the PNP has trained a total of 487 police officers on cybersecurity. Acorda said they will be complying with the directive of the President by further expanding the access of their training down to every police stations using their 2024 budget.

"Yung ang nakita natin na medyo tumaaas as reported during the last quarter. And in line with that, as instructed by President, we are intensifying, we are capacitating our police officers in the ground, especially previously ang ating cyber-crime groups is only up to the regional level lang," he said.

"This time, we are training our personnel and our objective is down to the police station level, municipal level, we will have police officers who are trained to handle to cybercrime or online crimes,"

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he explained.

According to Acorda, most cybercrimes that were reported to the PNP were committed locally, with swindling or estafa as the leading cyber-crime reported. This was followed by the illegal online access, identity theft, online libel, and credit card fraud, respectively.

The PNP chief also stressed the need to reinforce public awareness on cybercrimes.

"Dissecting it further 'yung mga cyber-crimes committed, it's more on online scams. To our appreciation, it's more of awareness for our mga kababayan or the public about this skimming na ginagawa ng mga kriminal over the internet," he said.

Acorda acknowledged the role of the SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) Registration Act in establishing the identities of perpetrators.

"Malaking bagay po talaga when it comes to the identity, or establishing the identities of these perpetrators sa online. Through the SIM card identification, medyo nati-trace natin, nakakatulong sa pagtrace natin sa mga identities ng mga scammers," Acorda stressed. PNDs