

SEA VLeague kicks off in Laguna

SECOND LEG. Philippine National Volleyball Federation (PNVF) president Ramon "Tats" Suzara (seated, center) with Seda Nuvali general manager Armand Angeles (seated, left) and secretary-general Donaldo Caringal (seated, right) pose with the team coaches and captains of Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia during the SEA VLeague press conference at the Seda Nuvali on July 27, 2023. The tournament will start on Friday at the City of Santa Rosa Multi-Purpose Complex in Laguna. (PNA photo by Jean Malanum)

MANILA – The Philippines will try to get back at Thailand when they meet on Friday (July 28) during the second leg of the inaugural Southeast Asia (SEA) Volleyball League at the City of Santa Rosa Multi-Purpose Complex in Laguna.

The Filipinos, led by veterans Bryan Bagunas and Marck Espejo, will face the Thais at 7 p.m. after the Vietnam-Indonesia match at 4 p.m.

Also expected to deliver is rising star Steven Rotter, named Best Opposite Spiker during the first leg of the tournament hosted by Jakarta where the Nationals fell to the Thais, 25-22, 25-20, 25-20.

"They're experienced players. They are smart. They can share their experiences with others. We can make a stronger job. I feel we can

DTI RIZAL CONDUCTS YEP BIDABES: WEBINAR ON BASIC ACCOUNTING



On May 03, 2023 the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Rizal through Negosyo Center (NC) Cainta conducted the fourth session of Youth Entrepreneurship Program "Building Initiatives with DTI in Assisting Budding Entrepreneurs to Succeed thru 7Ms" with the topic on Basic Accounting via Zoom Application and on Facebook Live private group.

The webinar was attended by students from various schools and universities and existing MS-MEs nationwide.

Atty. Jocelle E. Batapa-Sigue, Under Secretary of ICT Industry Development, DICT, graced the event. Usec. Jocelle

emphasized digitalization on her inspirational message and how the youth can contribute in policy making. She mentioned also the upcoming program of DICT which is the "Generation Connect Philippines" wherein it will focus on the ideas of the youth all over the country.

Moving on, the discussion was led by Dr. Ernie Tano, an Accredited Mentor from the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship, who shared his expertise in Basic Accounting. Mr. Tano discussed the different financial statements which are very useful to the entrepreneurs. Dr. Ernie highlighted the data needed on each financial report. He



gave also samples on how to input the daily transactions of a business to get an equal balance sheet.

Afterwards, Dr. Tano accommodated and answered questions gracefully raised by the participants who listened

attentively and actively from the discussion.

For the closing remarks, Ms. Marlene De Luna, Senior Trade and Industry Specialist of DTI Rizal gave her gratitude to the resource speaker and assured the participants for more webinars like this.

Mga magkakape, magka-cacao ng Quezon nakatanggap ng Php 14.3-M halaga ng proyektong pangkabuhayan mula sa DA-PRDP

Galak at pasasalamat ang naramdaman ng dalawang samahan ng magkakape at magka-cacao ng Quezon sa Department of Agriculture – Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP) at sa lokal na pamahalaan ng Quezon matapos pormal na tumanggap ng Php 14.3 milyong proyektong pangkabuhayan.

Ang mga nasa-

bing proyekto ay ang Lopez Tablea Production na iginawad sa Cacao Growers Association of Lopez (CGAL) at ang Guinayangan Coffee Processing na tinanggap naman ng Guinayangan Coffee Growers Association and Farm Entrepreneurs (G-CAFE). Parehong nakatanggap ang mga samahan ng processing facility at van. Nakatanggap rin ang CGAL

ng processing equipment ng cacao tulad ng desheller at chiller.

"Nagpapasalamat kami sa DA-PRDP at sa pamahalaan ng Quezon dahil ang pangarap naming magkaroon ng sariling lugar para iproseso ang kapeng Guinayangan ay nagkatotoo na. Mas mapapaganda pa namin ang kalidad ng aming produkto di tulad noon na sa iba't ibang lugar pa ipinoproseso ang aming kape," ani Raquel de Luna, pangulo ng G-CAFE.

"Kapalit ng mga suportang aming natanggap ay ang aming pagsisikap na pagandahin pa at pagyamanin ang aming pagproproseso ng cacao dito sa Lopez. Mas paghuhusayin pa namin upang ganap na makilala at tangkilikin itong aming produktong tsokolate," bahagi naman ni Bernardo Cantuba, pangulo ng CGAL.

Layunin ng mga proyektong ito na palakas ang industriya ng kape at cacao sa mga lokalidad sa pamamagitan ng pagproproseso na mag-

papataas ng halaga ng mga produkto, pagbibigay ng siguradong merkado sa mga magsasaka at ng karagdagang kabuhayan sa mga mamamayan.

Samantala, ipinahayag ni Engr. Redeliza Gruezo, Deputy Project Director ng DA-PRDP Regional Project Coordination Office CALABARZON, na patuloy na suporta ang DA-PRDP at Department of Agriculture partikular na ang High-Value Crops Development Program sa pagsisiguro na magiging sustainable ang mga interbensiyong ito at pagpapa-unlad pa ng mga taniman ng kape at cacao sa rehiyon.

Dumalo din sa seremonyas si Dra. Helen Tan, punong lalawigan ng Quezon, Atty. Mike Tan, kongresista ng ika-apat na distrito ng Quezon, Mayor Rachel Ubana ng Lopez, at dating Guinayangan Mayor Cesar J. Isaac III. Katulad ng DA, inihayag din nila ang patuloy nilang suporta sa mga samahan tungo sa ikauunlad ng kanilang kabuhayan at ng industriya ng kape at cacao sa Quezon. PR



LRT-1, LRT-2 fare hike begins Aug. 2

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Pag-IBIG Fund posts record high P20.61B income in H1 2023, up 11%

Diokno details policy tools for sustained growth at Post-SONA briefing



Duterte could be special PH envoy to China: Sen. Alan

DTI-Laguna Participates in the Kadiwa ng Pangulo Nationwide Rollout



PBGEN GREGORY B BOGÑALBAL, Deputy Regional Director for Administration, warmly welcomes Dr. Rainer Nery Mozo, Chief Medical Director/Country Manager-CBMG, Asian Philippines with foyer honors as he graced PRO4A's Monday Flag Raising Ceremony, coinciding with the Culmination of the 28th Police Community Relations Month and the Launching of PRO4A Publication featuring the 95-Day Accomplishment Report of the Regional Director held at PRO4A Covered Court, Camp BGen Vicente P Lim, Calamba City, Laguna. PRO4A



Enchanted Kingdom celebrates Eldar the Wizard's Birthday



Enchanted Kingdom, the First and Only world class theme park in the Philippines, announces two limited time offer in celebration of its beloved character's birthday this month. Eldar the Wizard is a home-grown, jolly character in EK known to teach children to uphold virtues of kindness, humility, patience, honesty, diligence, generosity, and love of God and family. Eldar's Birthday Treat Promo – July 16 to August 13 The grand celebration will kick off with the EK online store exclusive Eldar's Birthday Treat promo of one (1) Regular Day Pass bundled with one (1) Eldar's hat for a discounted price

of 1,200 pesos. Guests can avail this promo exclusively at the EK Online Store until July 30 and experience the enchanting world of Eldar while donning this iconic hat until August 13. Eldar's Birthday Bash Promo – July 30, 2023 Meanwhile, EK's Eldar's Birthday Bash promo entitles guests with access to Eldar's Birthday Bash and one (1) EK Regular Day Pass on July 30 at the Enchanting Events Place. Guests will be captivated with the performances by Enchanted Kingdom characters and talented musicians, magicians, and dancers. Kids and adults alike will also enjoy facepainting and other

Edukasyon ang puhunan natin sa mundong ito' — Bong Go assists indigent students of Biñan City, Laguna



Estrada wants more foreign language elective courses



Empower taxpayers with a Senate-approved Bill of Rights and Obligations



EDITORIAL: The MIF as fiscal relief

The Maharlika Investment Fund (MIF) as a sovereign wealth fund will serve as a kitty that will be invested in a variety of earning assets such as equities, bonds, stocks and other fixed-income securities.

It should register returns from these investments to make it viable and sustainable over a long period.

Oil-rich Norway put up such a fund in 1990—Government Pension Fund Global—and became the largest in the world with assets of over \$1 trillion as of August 2020.

It invests in equities, fixed-income instruments and real estate.

It is a successful fund with a return of 19.9 percent a year, led by equity investments with earnings of 26 percent.

The MIF will be structured in such a way to earn returns and dividends for investors who contributed to the kitty.

The government through competent managers will run the sovereign fund and make sure it is always liquid to finance its investment objectives, including big-ticket infrastructure projects.

Infrastructure projects will earn profits for the MIF, just like the toll roads that are now registering revenues for private sector companies.

The MIF can roll over the re-

FARE HIKE...

Pag-IBIG Fund netted a record high income of P20.61 billion in the first half of 2023, the agency's top executives announced on Thursday (July 20).

From January to June, Pag-IBIG Fund's gross income reached P35.03 billion, while net income amounted to P20.61 billion. Compared to the same period last year, gross income grew by 12% or P3.80 billion while net income increased 11% or P2.05 billion, driven mainly by earnings from

its housing and short-term (cash) loans, and investment portfolios.

"I am happy to report that Pag-IBIG Fund's performance this year remains strong. Our P20.61 billion net income during the first half of the year is the highest for any January to June period in our history. Our performance shows how excellently we are managing the funds that our members have saved with us. With our strong fiscalstanding, we remain in a strong position to finance more homes un-

turn on investments to fund its next projects or investments.

But beyond the return on investments, the sovereign wealth fund will ease the fiscal burden of the national government by way of reduced budget deficit and lower borrowings.

With funds used as equity—instead of loans—in building infrastructure projects, the national government reduces its heavy reliance on local borrowings and foreign loans.

This alternative source of funding gives the national government a larger budgetary allowance to fund other priority expenditures, such as social housing, health care, education and poverty-alleviation programs.

The thrust on infrastructure, meanwhile, will lead to a lot of high quality jobs and lure more foreign investors as the economy expands.

We all know that infrastructure projects, such as roads, bridges, airports and seaports, create economic opportunities, especially in the country-side.

The MIF, if run well, will contribute to greater economic expansion and provide a solution to the country's rising debt burden.

Sovereign wealth funds, thus, should be viewed as a catalyst for growth and economic prosperity.

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LRT...

MANILA – Fares for both the Light Rail Transit Line 1 (LRT-1) and the Light Rail Transit Line 2 (LRT-2) are set to increase beginning Aug. 2.

The Light Rail Corporation (LRMC) -- operator and maintenance of the LRT-1 -- said there will be a new minimum fare of PHP14 and a maximum fare of PHP35 for stored value cards (SVCs) while single journey tickets (SJTs) will range from PHP15 to PHP35.

This is an increase from the current minimum fare of PHP12 and maximum fare of PHP30 for SVCs and for SJTs ranging from PHP15 to PHP30.

"Based on the decision of DOTr's Rail Regulatory Unit (RRU), the LRT-1 boarding fare will become PHP13.29 with a distance fare of PHP1.21 per kilometer, coming from the current boarding fare of PHP11 and distance fare of PHP1 per kilometer," the LRMC said in a statement Monday.

It noted that due process has been followed in the fare increase, including the requirement to publish the approved fare adjustments for three consecutive weeks.

"Thirty days after the last publication date will be the collection date of the new fares; hence the effectivity date of August 2 for the new fares. A public consultation was also held on 17 February 2023 which was attended by various stakeholders," it said.

On the other hand, the Department of

Transportation (DOTr) announced the LRT-2's fare increase on Facebook.

SVCs will soon have a minimum fare of PHP14 and a maximum of PHP33 from the previous PHP12 and PHP28 respectively.

Meanwhile, the minimum fare for SJTs will remain at PHP15 while the maximum fare will increase to PHP35 from the current PHP30.

The fare increase for the LRT-2 is also based on the fare adjustment approved by the RRU for the LRT-1.

"Ang karagdagang pamasaha ay gagamitin para sa pagsaayos at pagpapabuti ng mga pasilidad at serbisyo ng LRT-2. Taong 2015 pa noong huling inaprubahan ang fare adjustment para sa linya (The fare in-

crease will be used to fix and improve the facilities and services of the LRT-2. It was 2015 when the last fare adjustment for the line was approved)," the DOTr said.

Students, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities will still have a 20 percent fare discount.

In June, the DOTr approved the fare increase for both the LRT-1 and LRT-2 and said the increase will lessen the amount spent by the government on subsidizing their fares by around three percent.

DOTr Assistant Secretary for Railways Sector Jorjette Aquino said the actual cost per passenger of a single end-to-end trip at the LRT-2 is about PHP178 while only charging PHP30 to passengers. (PNA)



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THREE CPP-NPA-NDF SUPPORTERS WITHDRAW SUPPORT IN QUEZON

CAMP CAP-INPIN, Rizal - Three supporters of the CPP-NPA-NDF from the municipality of San Francisco in Quezon made the commendable decision to withdraw their support from the communist party on Monday, July 24, 2023. The initiative was successfully carried out through the collaborative efforts of the Municipal Task Forces to End Local Communist

Armed Conflict in San Francisco, along with the invaluable assistance of the 85th Infantry "Sand-iwa" Battalion and San Francisco PNP. These joint forces facilitated the withdrawal of support from three residents hailing from Sitio Cabiao Ilaya in Barangay Sto. Nino. According to the 2nd Infantry "Jungle Fighter" Division Commander Maj. Gen. Roberto S. Ca-

pulung, as more individuals choose to break ties with extremist groups, the province moves closer to a brighter and more secure future for all its residents. He then reiterated that 2ID remains resolute in its pursuit of sustainable peace and progress, and stands ready to assist other communities seeking to separate themselves from the influence of the Communist Terrorist Groups. 2ID

EDUKASYON...

Senator Christopher "Bong" Go visited Biñan City, Laguna on Thursday, July 27, to extend much-needed assistance to indigent students. In his speech, Go emphasized the importance of education as a key driver for individual and societal progress.

The senator said he has been working tirelessly to address the challenges faced by young Filipinos in accessing quality education. He firmly believes that investing in the education of the youth is investing in the future of the nation.

"Maraming salamat po sa mga kababayan ko dito sa Biñan (City), sa inyong mainit na pagtanggap at sa mga estudyante naman, isa lang po ang aking paalala parati sa kanila, mag-aral po silang mabuti. Edukasyon po ang puhunan natin sa mundong ito at iyan po'y dala-dala mo hanggang sa pagtanda natin," Go emphasized.

"Masaya po ang ating mga magulang kapag nakapagtapos ng pag-aaral ang kanilang mga anak, kaya mahalin po natin ang ating mga magulang at mag-aral po kayo ng mabuti. Alam n'yowala po tayodito sa mundong ito kung wala po ang ating mga magulang," he added.

Go encouraged the youth to persevere and pursue their dreams despite the obstacles they may encounter. He emphasized that education is key to unlocking their potential and achieving a better future.

As a lawmaker, Go has been making significant strides to improve the country's educational landscape. Go has introduced Senate Bill No. 1708, which aims to mandate private higher educational institutions to waive college entrance exam-

FARE HIKE...

which are credited to their savings.

"Pag-IBIG Fund is owned wholly by its members - the Filipino workers. That is why as administrators of the Fund, it is our responsibility to manage their contributions wisely and excellently. With our second half projections on our

ination fees for underprivileged graduating high school students and high school graduates who belong to the top ten of their class if enacted into law.

Senator Go also filed SBN 1190, which proposes to expand the application of the Special Education Fund (SEF) to cover the other needs of the public education system if enacted. By amending Republic Act No. 7160 or the "Local Government Code," the bill seeks to utilize the additional one percent SEF tax for purposes such as constructing and repairing libraries, paying salaries and benefits of teaching and non-teaching personnel, and implementing new education policies and learning techniques.

The distribution activity was held at Biñan Elementary School where 1,400 students were given grocery packs, vitamins, masks, and meals. There were also select recipients of bicycles, mobile phones, computer tablets, shoes, shirts, watches, and balls for basketball and volleyball.

"Ako naman, nandirito ako para makatulong man lang sa inyo at makapag-iwan ng kaunting ngiti sa panahon ng inyong pagdadalamhati," he said.

Meanwhile, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) also extended educational assistance to qualified beneficiaries.

The event was in partnership with Congresswoman Marilyn "Len-Len" Alonte and was also attended by Vice Governor Karen Agapay, Mayor Arman Dimaguila Jr, and Vice Mayor Gel Alonte, among others.

"Sana ay huwag natin kalimutan na siya ay kasama natin, kadamay natin kapag tayo ay bag-

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loan releases, collections and performing loans ratio high, we are optimistic that we can maintain our financial performance and provide Filipino workers the best returns on their savings as well as the means to acquire their own homes through our affordable home financing," Acosta said (END).

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lo City General Hospital in San Pablo City.

Apart from the Malasakit Centers, Go is advocating for the construction of SHCs across the country, particularly in rural areas. These centers offer a wide range of services, including database management, out-patient, birthing, isolation, diagnostic (laboratory: x-ray and ultrasound), pharmacy and ambulatory surgical unit. Other available services are eye, ear, nose, and throat (EENT) service, oncology centers, physical therapy and rehabilitation center and telemedicine, where remote diagnosis and treatment of patients will be done.

With the support of DOH and fellow lawmakers, Go helped secure sufficient funds in the 2022 and 2023 national budgets for the construction of more than 600 SHCs across the country, including eleven in Laguna.

Necessary funds have been allocated last year for the DOH to construct SHCs in the cities of Biñan, Cabuyao, Calamba, San Pedro, and Sta. Rosa; and in the towns of Alaminos and Mabitac. This year, more centers were funded in San Pablo City, and in the towns of Sta. Maria, Los Baños, and Calauan.

As vice chairperson of the Senate Committee on Finance and adopted son of CALABARZON, Go supported the improvement of a drainage system in Barangay Canlalay, the construction of several river protection structures, and the installation of streetlights in several barangays.

On the same day, Go also visited Cavite City where he personally provided additional support to recovering fire victims who were given emergency housing assistance by the National Housing Authority. (KEVIN PAMATMAT)

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and Makati Sales Office. Non-members of the EKSPerience the Magic Card (EKMC) pay for only 1,500 while EKMC members can get this for only 500 pesos. For more information, guests can visit www.enchantedkingdom.ph or visit EK's official Facebook page.

DOST-CALABARZON CONDUCTS DARIUS II DATA BUILDUP AND WORKSHOP TO REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL PROJECT FOCALS, ENHANCES ONLINE PORTAL FOR CUSTOMERS IN ALL REGIONS

DOST-CALABARZON, through its Management Information Systems (MIS) Unit, conducted the Data Analytics-Ready Info Unified System (DARIUS) II Data Buildup and Workshop to project focal and coordinators from its Provincial

S&T Offices (PSTOs) and its Regional Office, last July 21, 2023.

Based on DOST-CALABARZON's DARIUS Project which initially focused on harmonizing the project monitoring platform of the various DOST Regional Offices



(ROs), the DARIUS II is the second phase of the said project, now equipped with the DARIUS Customer Portal that shall enable clients to request project funding assistance, track the status of requests, gain access to relevant transaction documents, and be notified with project requirements and announcements.

Engr. Francisco

R. Barquilla III, the Assistant Regional Director for Technical Operations of DOST-CALABARZON and the Project Leader of DARIUS, shared that the tedious manual processing of project proposals for potential funding prompted the team to develop a more customer-focused approach. These proposals are often under DOST's Small Enterprise



Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP), Community Empowerment thru Science and Technology (CEST), and local Grants-in-Aid (GIA).

"Dahil mayroon nang DARIUS Customer Portal (DCP), ang mga proponents ay magkakaroon ng paraan para malaman ang status ng submitted proposals nila at magkakaroon ng access sa mga softcopies ng approved project documents," said ARD Barquilla. Through the DCP, the processing of project proposals is made to be more efficient and convenient. Moreover, Ms. Bianca Pantoja, the Head of the

MIS Unit of DOST-CALABARZON, emphasized the crucial role of DOST ROs upon its nationwide implementation.

Ms. Pantoja mentioned, "The DOST ROs will serve as a mediator in the usage of the system. They will be the ones to train and help their respective clients and proponents in the usage of the system," she added, "Aside from that, ensuring the accuracy of the data being inputted in the system serves as a big part of their role. With the accurate data input, future data analysis and statistics can be provided from it."

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Published Weekly by: STRAIGHT NEWS

Senator Alan Peter Cayetano on Monday raised the possibility of making former President Rodrigo Duterte the country's special envoy to China to help reach out on a back-channel basis given his good standing with the Chinese government.

"There's no doubt that President Duterte is one of the best representatives of the country when talking to the Chinese government because of his relationship with President Xi Jinping and may experience na both good and bad during his term," Cayetano told reporters in an ambush interview on July 31, 2023.

Cayetano, who served as Duterte's Foreign Affairs Secretary from 2017 to 2018, said the former President has also gained the trust and respect of the Chinese government in the highest levels.

"If ever we know someone who can go to the highest levels of the Chinese government that the Chinese government trusts, si President Duterte iyon. But then we have to come out with a strategy that is both comprehensive and that will work in the short and long term," he said.

When asked about Duterte's seemingly

comfortable relationship with China, Cayetano said he never saw the former President compromise on anything regarding the Philippines.

"Never kong nakita na nagcompromise at binenta ni President Duterte ang Pilipinas. Iba lang y'ung pagiging bulaklakin ng bibig niya at iba lang siya magsalita, but he never sold out and he will never sell out the Philippines," he said.

Cayetano said there is urgency on the need for back-channel talks with China to ensure the stability not only of China and Philippine relations but also of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

"The earlier the better kasi tingnan mo, bakit naman lumakas ang China? Kasi maganda ang ekonomiya nila. Ngayon sa taas ng presyo, we need to get all the help we can get sa bigas, gulay, baboy, sa isda at sa lahat," he said.

"We're not only talking about China and the Philippines, I'm talking about fellow ASEAN and China. May danger talaga na pagtaas ng pagkain dahil sa nangyari sa Ukraine ngayon na hindi na naman pinapayagan sa Black Sea to transport the grain from Ukraine and the exports

from India," he added. Cayetano, however, clarified that Duterte should be tapped only for urgent messages and not the daily grind of talking with China.

"If may urgent at may emergency, pwede siya. But y'ung day-to-day negotiations, iyon na y'ung kung ano y'ung comfort ng Pangulo. Hindi naman sa hindi kaya. It's a full-time job eh. Stamina ang needed diyan kasi magpapabalik-balik ng Beijing," he said.

Strongly worded resolution vs China

With the Senate going on a closed-door meeting on Monday night with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea, Cayetano hopes the senators will take the time to be informed and to decide on what to express as a body on the issue.

The meeting was called after Cayetano last week cautioned the passage of Resolution No. 659 filed by Senator Risa Hontiveros which urges the government through the DFA to sponsor a resolution before the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) calling on China to stop its harassment of Philippine vessels within the WPS.

He said he was

amenable to coming up with a strongly-worded resolution that expresses the Senate's outrage against Chinese incursions.

"Good development na active ang Senate ngayon sa issue na iyan. Ang sa akin lang, pabor sa atin lahat ito dahil maraming facts na hindi alam tungkol dito. We have to explore many options, hindi puwedeng init lang ng ulo. We have to explore all the means and we will come to the conclusion that the best way is to improve the economy and strengthen our Coast Guard and Navy," he said. Cayetano also expressed hope that the Senate will not rush to a decision on Resolution 659 given the importance of the issue.

"Between Maharlika Investment Fund (MIF) and WPS, mas importante naman ito. Mahaba-haba naman ang interpellation sa MIF, 'wag naman nila madaliin ito. Wala naman deadline sa UN... September pa y'ung session ng United Nations," he said.

"Whatever we decide for later on, I think it is good for the public na pare-pareho tayong na-educate. These discussions help everyone," he added.

The Senate has given its final approval to the proposed Taxpayers' Bill of Rights and Obligations (TBORO), a significant step towards empowering and protecting taxpayers' interests. Senator Win Gatchalian, who championed this legislation, believes it will not only benefit taxpayers but also bolster the government's revenue collection efforts.

According to Gatchalian, the measure encompasses various fundamental rights for taxpayers, including the right to receive clear and simplified guidance on complying with laws, rules, and regulations implemented by revenue authorities. The bill ensures that taxpayers will be adequately informed in cases of any deficiencies or violations.

As the Senate passed Senate Bill No. 1806 or The Taxpayers' Bill of Rights and Obligations Act on third and final reading, the Chairperson of the Committee on Ways and Means emphasized that in the process of empowering taxpayers, the measure will hope to en-

DTI-Laguna Participates in the Kadiwangan Pangulo Nationwide Rollout



Victoria, Laguna — The Department of Agriculture Regional Field Office No. 4 CALABARZON and the Department of Trade and Industry - Laguna Provincial Office (DTI Laguna), in collaboration with the Provincial Government of Laguna through the Field Agriculture Extension Services - Office of the Provincial Agriculturist Laguna (FAES-OPAg Laguna), participated in the Kadiwangan Pangulo (KNP) Nationwide Rollout on July 17, 2023 at Time Plaza, Provincial Capitol Compound, Santa Cruz, Laguna.

In line with the simultaneous KNP rollout throughout the country, the KNP in Laguna was officially opened with the presence of the following officials: Laguna Vice Governor Hon. Karen Agapay, FAES-OPAg Laguna Provincial Agriculturist Marlon Tobias, Department of Labor and Employment

hance tax compliance on expectations that taxpayers will be more inclined in fulfilling their obligations if their rights and privileges are clear to them.

The measure also provides for the creation of the Office of the National Taxpayer Advocate (ONTA) which will represent low-income taxpayers, assist the public in their tax concerns, and issue opinions. The ONTA will be an independent and autonomous office attached to the Department of Justice (DOJ).

"Gusto natin na mas maging malinaw para sa ating mga taxpayers ang proseso ng pagbabuwis. Layon nating mabigyan sila ng pagkakataon na maintindihan nang maayos hindi lang ang kanilang mga obligasyon kundi ang kanilang mga karapatan bilang mga taxpayers," he added.

Gatchalian also extended his gratitude to Senator Lito Lapid, Senator Ramon "Bong" Revilla, Jr., Senator Cynthia Villar, Majority Leader Joel Villanueva, and Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri as co-authors of the bill.



Health tips on how to live well

5. Know the three Cs

More of us are suffering from hay fever than ever before, with reactions lasting longer and affecting those who haven't suffered previously. "The interaction of pollen with rising pollution, as well as climate change, are added factors," says Dr Beverley Adams-Groom, chief palynologist at the University of Worcester. Reducing your exposure to pollen is key so know the three Cs: Count (check the Met Office's pollen forecast); Cover (try big sunglasses, Vaseline around your nose, and closing the windows when the pollen count is high); and Clean (when you come home, shower, change clothing; and wipe down pets with a wet cloth).

6. Watch dry fruit

Delicious dried fruits like apricot, fig and mango are very high in sugar, so it's worth keeping your intake in check. Aim for 30g – or about 1tbsp – which counts as one of your five-a-day.

7. Listen to your gut

Have you noticed how your stomach reflects what you're feeling emotionally? If you're stressed or anxious this can slow digestion, triggering bloating, pain and constipation, but in other people it may speed up digestion causing diarrhoea and frequent trips to the loo. So, when feeling angry, don't rush your food. Take time to eat slowly, put your fork down between bites, and chew each mouthful well.

8. Get your vitamin green

It's official: surrounding yourself with green views has a powerful effect on health and wellbeing, reducing psychological stress and boosting energy, self-esteem, and mood. As well as regularly getting out in nature, position the chairs in your house so you naturally gaze out of the windows, fill your home with indoor plants, and set your computer screensaver to your favourite landscape.

9. Be snack savvy

Know the four Ps for smart snacking on the go: Plan, Pack, Protein and Produce. So, Plan ahead; Pack your snacks in spill-proof containers; include Protein to keep you satisfied for longer; and add fibre-rich fresh Produce like fruit or vegetables. An apple with Greek yogurt, a cheese stick, or a few nuts, can satisfy your cravings in a healthier way.

to be cont. fo next issue

Estrada...

MANILA – Senator Jinggoy Estrada has filed a bill mandating higher education institutions in the country to offer other foreign languages other than English as an elective course to prepare students in linguistically diverse workplaces.

In filing Senate Bill No 2341, or the Foreign Language Educa-

tion Act of 2023, Estrada said introducing more foreign languages to Filipino students will adequately equip them to be "21st-century learners".

"They would be able to connect with the world and be more globally competitive in their future workplaces," the lawmaker said.

The proposed bill

Diokno...

Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno engaged in in-depth discussions on policy reforms in the pipeline which are necessary to sustain the Philippines' growth momentum during the Post-State of the Nation Address Philippine Economic Briefing (Post-SONA PEB) on July 25, 2023 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay.

"Higher economic activity and increased investments will bring us to even greater heights. The policy environment for foreign direct investments is the most open and liberal it has ever been," Secretary Diokno said during the opening fireside chat with Euben Paracuelles, Chief ASEAN Economist of Nomura.

Economic liberalization bills such as the Retail Trade Liberalization Act, Foreign Investments Act, and Public Service Act, as well as the opening up of the renewable energy (RE) sector to full foreign ownership have made the Philippines' conducive to investments.

Apart from these structural reforms, Secretary Diokno said that the government is also improving the public-private partnership (PPP) mechanism to enhance the quality and pace of infrastructure development in critical sectors.

The proposed PPP Act or Senate Bill (SB) No. 2233 is currently pending second reading. The bill provides for a unified legal framework for all PPPs covering all types of PPP arrangements at the national and local levels, increases approval thresh-

olds for national PPP projects, and improves the framework for unsolicited proposals, among others.

Just recently, the President signed into law the Maharlika Investment Fund (MIF) Act, creating the country's first sovereign wealth fund designed to serve as a 'vehicle for growth.'

According to Secretary Diokno, the MIF is expected to widen the fiscal space and reduce reliance on official development assistance (ODA) in funding big-ticket infrastructure projects in areas such as green and blue projects, rural development, digitalization, sustainable development, and healthcare.

The Department of Finance (DOF) is also pursuing the passage of the proposed tax revenue measures under the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF) such as the Passive Income and Financial Intermediary Taxation Act, value-added tax (VAT) on non-resident digital service providers, and excise taxes on single-use plastics and pre-mixed alcoholic beverages, which are expected to be implemented in 2024.

"As early as the first month of the Marcos, Jr. administration, we designed what is called the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework. That's our North Star. We want to be where we want to be by 2028. Down the road we will continue to reform the tax system to make it even better," Secretary Diokno said.

Reforms to the military and uniformed personnel (MUP) pension system will be pursued to

widen fiscal space and ensure the sustainable provision of pensions in the long-term. Secretary Diokno said that the results of the consultations conducted by representatives of the economic team have been encouraging.

Secretary Diokno also discussed the economic team's pursuit of upgrades to the country's sovereign credit ratings, saying that the 'Road to A' is well underway.

"[Credit rating agencies] do not doubt our ability to service our debt. So they are looking for more structural reforms that will make our fiscal position stronger—and I think with this MUP pension reform, the rightsizing of the bureaucracy plus more tax reform, I think we'll qualify for 'A' rating," Secretary Diokno explained.

National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Deputy Governor Francisco G. Dakila, Jr., and Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Principal Economist Joselito R. Basilio also participated in the panel discussion on a fast-growing and forward-looking economy.

Following the first panel, private sector panelists Teresita Sy-Coson (Vice Chairperson, SM Investments Corporation), Atty. Benedicta Du-Baladad (President, Management Association of the Philippines), Ragnar Gudmundsson, PhD (Resident Representative to the Philippines, International Monetary Fund), and Pavit Ramachandran (Country

Director Philippine Country Office, Southeast Asia Department, Asian Development Bank) shared their views on President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.'s second SONA and the Philippines' socioeconomic agenda.

On PPPs, Sy-Coson emphasized the importance of clarity and simplicity in government regulations, saying, "If we can make it simple, the ordinance or the regulations of the government simple and easier for anyone interested to invest in the Philippines that would be a big plus."

Atty. Du-Baladad supported her view, stressing that the ease of doing business at the local level is very significant.

According to her, the Management Association of the Philippines has drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Trade and Industry to address concerns on the ease of doing business.

For IMF's Gudmundsson, investments that would close the infrastructure and education gaps will be key to enhancing productivity and attracting new investments that will in turn generate higher value added exports and narrow the current deficit over the medium-term.

ADB's Ramachandran noted that the Philippines already has ongoing projects to improve connectivity, transportation, and modernization. These include the Malolos-Clark Railway Project, North-South Commuter Railway, and the Davao Public Transport Modernization Project, which will be funded by the ADB. DOF.GOV

da said foreign language courses will also broaden their knowledge, experience, and understanding of different cultures. (PNA)



Feel the Cyber Thrill this August!



SM Supermalls hosts the biggest gaming activation in 60 malls nationwide.

Looking for the best deals on everything tech? Ready to play at the largest nationwide sports area? Now is the best time to visit SM Supermalls and unleash the gamer within as it celebrates the latest tech innovations and gadget trends, with exclusive deals and promos this Cyber Month!

From August 1 to 31, a celebration of e-sports and all things tech that make our lives easier and more convenient will take place at SM Supermalls. Essential gadgets, thrilling activities, and new discoveries are waiting to be made will welcome every individual with various needs.

Get ready as SM transforms its malls into a larger-than-life e-sports arena. Gamers and e-sports fans are in for a treat at the Cyber-Month celebration, at over 60 malls nationwide, as community tournaments and an immersive gaming environment take center stage. Tag along with your friends and watch some intense and epic battles as players try to outplay each other at the community matches.

Gaming that never goes out of style. If you are a gamer who loves your classic video games, the Retroverse is for you. Select malls every Saturday will be setting up Retro Gaming Stations featuring classic consoles and games from the past. Relive the magic of iconic titles like Super Mario Bros., Pac-Man, Tetris, and Sonic the Hedgehog.

Venture into different worlds with AweSM Kids. Kids and kids at heart can have some fun at the Kids Zone—an interactive area featuring popular games like SM Kids Roblox and Minecraft every weekend for the whole month of August.

The GeekCon is on! SM celebrates all things geek this Cyber Month including a Cosplay Competition. Every Sunday, bring your favorite anime, manga, games, TV, series, and comic book characters to life through elaborate costumes and performances that will wow the crowd. The GeekCon will also feature activities that geeks will love such as collectible toy displays, visual arts masterclasses, meet-and-greets with popular streamers, and Collectible Card Game Tournament.

Techtopia for all your tech needs. SM malls nationwide will have multiple activity areas bringing together a wide range of gadgets, interactive installations, and displays at Techtopia. Get your hands on the newest and trendiest gadgets, devices, and even smart home appliances at SM. Plus, at the Techtopia zone, you can check, test, and ensure the product's quality before making that big purchase.

Discover the hottest tech deals. Gear up and get your baskets ready for SM Supermalls' month-long nationwide tech and gadget sale. Whether you shop at your

favorite SM mall or scroll through your go-to SM Online and SM Deals apps, there are a lot of great gadget deals all for you. Avail of these special promos, special offerings, and bundles on select items with up to 50% off in participating stores this August.

Mark your calendars! August is geek-out month with these fun-filled

activities and deals in store for you this Cyber Month at an SM mall near you. Game on and shop #TechAssured gadgets and get exciting deals when you #CheckCyberzone.

For more information, visit www.smsupermalls.com/cyberzone or follow @SMSupermalls and @smcyberzone on social media.

SMPrimejoinsIloiloCityGovernmentand theDepartmentofEnvironmentandNaturalResources(DENR)incallingforinnovativesolutionsinwaterconservationinthemulti-stakeholderforum,“TowardsaGreenerFuture”



From left to right: Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Trenas, journalist Ces Drilon, Secretary Loyzaga, urban planning and landscape architect Paulo Alcazar, United Architects of the Philippines (UAP) co-chair Michaela Rossette Santo-Tayag and SM Supermalls Vice President for Corporate Compliance Liza Silerio. Photo credits to Arnold Almacen/Iloilo City Office of the Mayor.

Sec Loyzaga: Invest in rainwater collection

At the multi-stakeholder forum, “Towards a Greener Footprint”, in Iloilo City recently, Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga shared solutions-focused guidelines to help the local government reduce carbon footprint, with emphasis on water conservation to address

the looming water crisis and increase access to safe water and sanitation.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and SM Prime Holdings, Inc. (SM Prime), one of the leading real estate developers in Southeast Asia, recently called on local public officials to avoid the extraction of groundwater and, instead, invest

SM TURNOVERS NEWLY RENOVATED HEALTH CENTER AND CLASSROOMS IN CAVITE



SM Supermalls Assistant Vice President, Lorenz Calingasan (fourth from left) and Rosario Vice Mayor, Honorable Bam Gonzales (fourth from right) take the lead in the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the newly renovated health center in barangay Tejeros Convention, together with (from L to R) SM City Rosario Mall Managers Ryan James Palma and Roxanne Pangilinan, Tejeros Convention Barangay Captain Joemel Pulido, Municipal Administrator Tani Sabas, Municipal Health officer Dr. Noriel Emelo and Medical Officer Dr. Lorenzito Atangan.



Students and teachers of General Luciano L. San Miguel Elementary school witnessed the turnover ceremony of its newly repaired classrooms by SM foundation inc. (SMFI), Uniqlo Philippines and SM City Rosario. The ceremony was graced by Noveleta Mayor, Honorable Dino Chua (on stage, middle), Executive Director of SMFI, Linda Atayde (3rd from left), Gen. L. San Miguel Elementary School Principal, Daisy Baguio (2nd from left), SM City Rosario Assistant Mall Manager, Ryan James Palma (2nd from right), SMFI Project Consultant, Juris Soliman (right) and SMFI project supervisor Vaughn Lapid (left)

SM believes in the power of good health care and education, which are great investments for the future. These projects intend to help grassroots communities to have a better quality of life through this health facility which is accessible to many and classrooms that are conducive to children's learning.

in rainwater collection for recycling and impoundment, as well as explore new technologies such as modular desalination and modular sewage treatment plants, to manage the effects of climate change on the country's water resources.

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SM Prime was recently honored at this year's the 2023 Apolinario Mabini Awards for its efforts in empowering and uplifting Persons With Disabilities (PWDs). The organization took home multiple awards, conferred to it by the Philippine Foundation for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (PFRD), at a special ceremony held at the Heroes Hall in Malacanang Palace, last 18 July 2023.

The awards bestowed include the Empowerment of Persons With Disabilities Award given to SM Cares, SM

SM honored for efforts in empowering PWDs at this year's Apolinario Mabini Awards

Supermalls' corporate social responsibility arm, along with the Disability-Friendly Establishment Award given to several SM Malls and SM Offices. Special distinction was conferred to SM City Grand Central being the sole Gold winner, while SM City Urdaneta Central and SM City Telabastagan both received Bronze.

Special citations were also given to SM City Tanza, SM City Dasmariñas, SM City Iloilo, SM City Bacolod, and SM City Cagayan de Oro Up-

town for partial compliance with Batas Pambansa Blg. 344, or An Act to Enhance the Mobility of Disabled Persons by Requiring Certain Buildings, Institutions, Establishments and Public Utilities to Install Facilities and Other Devices.

SM Offices was also recognized under the Disability-Friendly Establishment category, with SM Cyber Two Makati receiving a Bronze award, and special honors awarded to One E-Com and Three E-Com Centers.



(L-R) Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri, Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin, SM Supermalls President Steven Tan, SM Supermalls SVP Engr. Bien Mateo and SM Offices VP Alexis Ortiga receiving SM Group's Apolinario Mabini awards

SM Prime...

“Rainwater catchments will not only provide additional supply for household use but will also help ensure the availability of surface water through the maintenance of watershed cover when impounded,” Secretary Loyzaga said.

Based on the latest report of the Philippine Statistics Authority, water abstracted for own use increased from 215.2 billion cubic meters (bcm) in 2020 to 217.8 bcm in 2021 countrywide. From 2010 to 2021, the largest amount of self-abstracted water is for the power sector (58.7%). This was followed by agriculture (33.5%); mining and quarrying, manufacturing, and construction (5.3%); and services sector and households (2.6%).

Earlier this month, the DENR said the country still has enough

water supply, but proper management is needed to prevent a possible water crisis by the end of the year.

The call was met with a resounding response from the private sector, particularly, SM Prime. In the same forum, SM Supermalls Vice President for Corporate Compliance Engr. Liza B. Silerio shared how SM Prime has stepped up the sustainability programs that it has been doing since SM Supermalls started recycling water in the 1990s.

From rainwater catchment to help deter flooding in communities where its malls are located, SM Prime also pioneered the mall-based rainwater filtration system that converts the collected rainwater to be potable enough for washing, cleaning and even drinking. Launched at SM City

From Page 4

Baguio, the facility will supply mall tenants with enough potable water to help reduce sourcing from the communities' water table.

“As an integrated property developer, we have seen the first-hand effects of natural hazards that are caused by the change in weather patterns in the Philippines,” Engr. Silerio explained. “El Nino and La Nina are two phenomena resulting from climate change. Our country ranks number one in the World Risk Index 2022 report as the most vulnerable among 193 nations.”

Faced with this challenge, Engr. Silerio shared that SM Prime will continue to find innovative ways to address the climate challenges. “We continue to evolve and adapt technology to improve our resource consumption as part of our climate action,” she concluded.



Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin and Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri graced the conferment with their presence. SM Supermalls President Steven T. Tan was also in attendance, alongside SM Supermalls SVP for Operations and Director for SM Cares Program on Persons with Disabilities Engr. Bien C. Mateo and SM Prime VP for SM Offices Alexis L. Ortiga.

“It is indeed an honor for SM's efforts to be recognized by the PFRD,” said Tan. “We work hard to ensure that our SM Malls cater to the needs of our fellow Filipinos who live with disabilities because we want to facilitate a safe

and inclusive space for them. We are humbled to be consistent awardees at the Apolinario Mabini Awards because it only reassures us that we are fulfilling that goal.”

“SM believes in advocating for a more inclusive environment for the disabled community, which is clear through the initiatives we push forward,” said Mateo. “More than creating projects for the benefit of disabled persons, we also want to spread awareness and encourage compassion among those of us who are able-bodied. We believe that is what is needed to create a society that is truly inclusive of Persons With Disabilities.”

Established by the PFRD on its Silver Anniversary in 1974, the Apolinario Mabini Awards is a biennial program named after one of the country's most well-known heroes. Also known as the Sublime Paralytic, Mabini's disability did not hinder him from playing a major role in the Philippine revolution. Thus, the awards are given to professionals and organizations that have empowered and rendered outstanding services to persons with disabilities, and are considered to be the most prestigious prize for Persons with Disabilities-related organizations and programs in the country.



SM Supermalls representatives with Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri and Apolinario Mabini Awards 2023 officials, Mrs. Audrey Tan-Zubiri and Arch. Jaime Silva

SM Prime is a strong advocate for persons with disabilities, with many notable programs under SM Cares designed to uplift and empower this sector of society. Several initiatives for disabled persons include the award-winning Emergency Disaster Preparedness Forum, which aims to equip persons with disabilities with the knowledge and skills to become

more resilient and better prepared during natural disasters, as well as The Blackout Zone, the first experiential exhibit that simulates blindness and encourages sighted individuals to develop a deeper understanding of the struggles and challenges faced by the those who are visually impaired community.

SM Cares' initiatives also reflect the orga-

nization's support for the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly “SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities”. Other advocacies of SM Cares include Programs for the Environment, Women & Breastfeeding Mothers, Children & Youth, Senior Citizens, and the SM Bike-friendly initiative.

To learn more about these programs, visit www.smsupermalls.com/smcare.