

She's got it in the bag

Vigan City is a popular destination among tourists because of its notable preservation of the Hispanic-Filipino culture throughout time. Its vibrant tourism opens doors of business opportunities to many Ilocanos, including Lucila Datuin from Bantay, Ilocos Sur.

Lucila resided and completed her high school education in Ilocos Sur before deciding to pursue her college studies in Manila. She majored in business administration and later worked as a marketing staff in a restaurant. She met her husband in Manila. They had two kids and spent 15 years together before he passed away. Realizing that she was all alone raising her kids in Manila, she decided to quit her job and come home to Ilocos Sur. Although she was born and raised in Ilocos, it was still difficult for her to start over because she had been away for a long time, and many things had already changed.

Sewing threads of hope

When she went back to Bantay, the first thing she did was look for a livelihood. She sold fish and street foods in their front yard. She was aware that her current income was insufficient to support the needs of her children, especially when she became a widow and a single mother to two children.

While selling fish, she noticed an abel cloth from a weaver passing by. She got the idea of turning it into bags. Without a second thought, she purchased two yards of abel cloth and produced six small bags.

After producing bags, her next step was to look for potential buyers. Lucila, who used to live in Manila, had yet to establish connections or a network in Vigan City. Rather than relying on her



Lucila Datuin, a microentrepreneur from Bantay, Ilocos Sur, ensures that her business keeps up with the changes of time and the tourists.

acquaintances and relatives, Lucila decided to go to souvenir shops and introduce her products to store owners.

Having no prior experience, she stumbled when she started her business in 2007. Her products often received criticism and negative feedback from store owners. Lucila lost count of the rejections she received but refused to lose heart. She remained firm as an emerging microentrepreneur. She tried other shops until she found one store willing to display her bags for consignment.

She eventually went back to the store to check on her bags. Fortunately, the travelers had shown interest in her crafts. It motivated her to work harder. In the following years, she learned that wallets made from abel and mats were the items in demand. Unable to handle the volume, Lucila hired staff to assist her in her business production. She started with one staff until she hired more to meet the increasing orders. Lucila became the supplier of some of the top must-visits in Vigan, such as Heritage and Baluarte.

She learned to adapt to produce good quality products while matching the customers' and travelers' changing needs. Now, she also creates printed shirts, tote bags, and wallets.

Meeting the challenges of growth

Challenges continue to test Lucila. Her former employees created their own businesses and competed with her. She thinks it is always good to help and uplift others but not to the extent of imitating and owning her product designs.

started her dream using a simple portable machine. And in 2007, she bought her high-speed machine using her loan from CARD, Inc. (A Microfinance NGO).

Meet with success

Because of her passion and dedication, Lucila was recognized in the Galing ni Nanay Awards, a recognition given by CARD MRI for outstanding client entrepreneurs. In 2018, CARD MRI recognized her again as the Gawad Maunlad Awardee of Pagkilala sa Mga Likha ni Inay.

In 2013, Lucila won Galing ni Nanay, a recognition given by CARD MRI for outstanding microentrepreneur clients of the organization. She was also a finalist in the 2018 Pagkilala sa Mga Likha ni Inay.

With her perseverance, she built two houses and two apartments. She also made land investments and acquired three vehicles used in delivering orders.

Right now, her son assists her in business. He is the one who delivers their products to souvenir shops, while Lucila's other child is working in Vigan City.

"Stay committed to your goals even if you feel like crumbling down with the harsh words thrown at you," Lucila advises how to stay long in the business. In five years, she envisions her business having its distinct identity and trademark in Vigan City. PR

Spain, Japan advance to FIFA Women's World Cup q'finals

OFF TO QUARTERFINALS. Players of Japan celebrate after beating Norway at the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 Round of 16 at Wellington Regional Stadium in Wellington, New Zealand on Aug. 5, 2023. Japan will take on the winner of Sunday's game between the US and Sweden. (Anadolu)

ANKARA — Spain and Japan have reached the quarterfinals of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup.

Spain beat Switzerland 5-1 while Japan eliminated Norway 3-1 in the round of 16 matches on Saturday.

Spain reached its maiden quarterfinals, despite playing without the reigning Ballon d'Or winner Alexis Putellas, who is still recovering from a knee injury.

Japan, which conceded its first goal of the tournament, will take on the winner of Sunday's duel between holder the US and Sweden.

The winner of the other round of 16 clash on Sunday between the Netherlands and South Africa will face Spain in the upcoming quarterfinal round.

The 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup will conclude with the final on Aug. 20. (Anadolu)



DILG brings low-cost agri, SME products to Central Office employees through Kadiwa ng Pangulo

As part of the celebration of National Nutrition Month, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) hosted the Kadiwa ng Pangulo (KNP) in the DILG Central Office on Friday, bringing low-cost agricultural products and other products of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to employees of the DILG and the National Police Commission in Quezon City.

DILG Secretary Benhur Abalos said the Department is one of the first national government agencies that hosted the KNP on its premises. He said conducting KNP in DILG premises will allow Department employees to buy low-cost and fresh goods straight from the producers since they, like the others, should also benefit from this good program of the President and are not exempt from rising food costs.

"We are planning to hold this activity monthly and as the Christmas season approaches, we will do it twice a month," Abalos said.

The DILG Secretary said the project is already being implemented in the local government units, where KNP market days are set on the 15th and 30th days of each month.

He said local governments provide for free the site for the activity, for example, a basketball court or the provincial capitol or municipal hall. The Department of Agriculture (DA) brings the farmers and their produce, and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) takes care of the products of SMEs.

"Only Philippine products are sold so each LGU can promote the fruits and vegetables that

are grown in their locality as well as their local dry goods," he said.

In addition to fruits and vegetables, ready-to-eat food and processed meat were sold at the eighth floor of the DILG Central Office as well as organic fruit juices and concentrates. SMEs sold bags and apparel and leather goods like wallets, belts, and shoes.

On the other hand, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) showcased its livelihood assistance projects, while the National Nutrition Council and the Cooperative Development Authority promoted proper diet and cooperative participation.

Meanwhile, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) will pay the wages of those who transported the products and the builders of the stalls under its Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) Program.

Launched and spearheaded by the DA in 2019, in collaboration with the DILG and the Food Terminal Inc. (FTI), KNP is a program of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. which seeks to empower the farming community by providing a direct and effective farm-to-consumer food supply chain. It also gives farmers, fisherfolks as well as micro-SMEs rent-free venues to sell their produce and increase their income.

In his second State of the Nation Address, the President said "The Kadiwa system enabled the public to buy goods at cheaper rates and the farmers to sell their crops with-out having to worry about transportation costs." DILG.GOV



PH positivity rate slightly dips to 3.5%

Inflation slides to 4.7% in July, slows for sixth consecutive month

SSS beefs up campaigns against delinquent employers

PAGCOR should implement actionable strategies to address POGO-related crimes



Magnitude 5.5 quake jolts eastern China

PH, MALAYSIA PRIVATE SECTOR EXPLORE AGRI COOPERATION AND MSME DEVELOPMENT



Comelec deletes 462K double registrants as BSKE nears



PBGEN CARLITO M GACES, Regional Director of PRO CALABARZON, responding to the call to action by the Secretary of Justice at the Department of Justice Symposium on Capacity Development for Officers and Personnel of the Philippine National Police, held today August 4, 2023 at National Prosecution Service Region 4A, 4B and 5, Tagaytay Country Hotel, Tagaytay City. PRO4A

Wisdom In Fighting For What Is Right! Might Should Never Dictate What Is Right!



Villanueva, Ejercito support hike in PBBM's 2024 travel budget



EDITORIAL: Stronger drive vs corruption

If most Filipinos believe the national government should exert greater efforts to fight corruption, will our leaders and policy makers heed their sentiment?

The latest Pulse Asia survey found 84 percent of 1,200 respondents agreed with this statement: "Pursuant to the Philippines' concurrence with international agreements, the power of national agencies, laws, and mechanisms to fight corruption should be strengthened."

A total 36 percent said they "strongly agree" while 48 percent said they "somewhat agree" with the statement.

What's interesting is that most of those who agreed the government should do more to curb corruption come from Mindanao (92 percent) and Visayas (89 percent), where poverty levels are higher as compared to NCR (82 percent) and Balance Luzon (80 percent).

The result of the survey, from June 19 to 23 and commissioned by Stratbase ADR Institute, indicates nearly all Filipinos consider corruption as an enormous challenge that should compel government to take firm steps to solve.

According to Pulse Asia President Dr. Ronald Holmes, "virtually no one" disagrees with the strengthening of the agencies, laws, and mechanisms to fight corruption.

He observed the usual proposal in the past was for the government to establish a single, well-resourced anti-corruption agency which has fiscal autonomy and is insulated from partisanship and political interference.

What's starkly clear is past administrations simply ignored the recommendation, leading to what the World Bank claimed has been the loss of about one-fourth of the total annual national budget to inveterate crooks in government.

The survey also yielded various answers to what the respondents felt were the negative effects of corruption in Phil-ippine society.

Respondents said corruption erodes trust in government services and public officials; creates a normalized attitude towards corrupt practices; results in inefficient delivery of basic social services as health and education; leads to less public funds devoted to fighting poverty; and produces substandard infrastructure.

Given this range of the negative consequences of corruption in our public life, the question that needs to be answered now is whether this government is willing to take the road less traveled and embark on an honest-to-goodness anti-corruption drive that will spare no one, from the big fish to the small fry.

It has five more years to prove that it really listens to what Filipinos are saying.

PH positivity...

MANILA — The country's positivity rate, or the number of people testing positive for the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), has slightly decreased to 3.5 percent as of August 4.

Over Twitter on Saturday, OCTA Research Group fellow Dr. Guido David noted a 0.4-percent decline from last week's (July 29) 3.9 percent.

"The Department of Health (DOH) reported 154 new cases, four deaths, 281 recoveries. About 29 of the new cases

are from the National Capital Region, projecting 100 to 150 new cases the next day (August 5)," he said.

To date, the country's overall tally of Covid-19 infections has reached 4,173,631 with 3,832 active cases.

The total number of Covid-19 deaths stands at 66,626.

The DOH's latest bio-surveillance report showed 767 samples were sequenced on July 26 to August 1 by the Philip-pine Genome Center. It logged that 84 percent of cases

Wisdom...

Let's get things done in the West Philippine Sea based on what is right, not on might! Wisdom is essential; let's look to the past and learn from history in coming up with an effective and comprehensive West Philippine Sea strategy.

In resolving the issues of the West Philippine Sea and our relationship with China, we need to have an aggressive and sincere effort to have direct negotiations as well as confidence-building measures with China. This is in order to jumpstart a joint approach to the West Philippines Sea dilemma that will see peace and stability in the short term as we work towards an acceptable solution in the long term.

Both countries have a large stake in maintaining stability in the region. In the wake of the COVID pandemic, with every country in the whole ASEAN scrambling to get back on its economic feet as soon as possible, peace, order, and stability are essential for steady

progress and development.

We cannot be ignorant of geopolitics. We must be conscious of, and sensitive to the dynamics of rival superpowers, yet be assertive that superpowers should not force upon us their way of doing things in the region. A Rule Based Approach That Is Fair To All Is What We Should Insist On.

As elected leaders of the nation, it is our duty to get things done the right way. For this we need wisdom and circumspection. In formulating a national strategy, we have to look honestly into the past and make every effort to learn from history.

The Senate must continue the discussion on the West Philippine Sea. Maturity is needed not only in how we approach the problem but also in how we contextualize our approach and strategy. In this regard, I believe not bringing this matter to the UN General Assembly is NOT a sign of weakness but a mark of maturity.

It is also not

PAGCOR...

regulator is yet to be convinced of the necessity to completely ban POGOs despite their downsides.

The chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, Gatchalian has time and again called for the immediate expulsion of POGOs from the country amid rising cases of criminalities attributed to POGOs.

He has maintained that social costs and reputational risks

brought about by these crimes far outweigh any benefits derived from revenues paid by POGOs.

Diokno welcomes swift creation of House ad hoc committee on military and uniformed personnel pension reform

Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno welcomed the swift creation of an ad hoc Committee on the Military and Uniformed Personnel (MUP) Pension Reform which

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were XBB types.

"XBB 2.3 Acru was most prevalent at 30 percent followed by XBB 1.16 Arcturus at 24 percent," David said.

The two were followed by XBB 1.9.1, or Hyperion, at 18 percent or 140 cases; XBB 1.5 at 5 percent or 41 cases; and BA 2.3.20 at 5 percent or 35 cases.

Meantime, the remaining 7 percent or 90 cases were other XBB types. (PNA)

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true that there is no other choice, nor that the Government is not doing anything. In fact the UNGA option has been discussed many times in the past, and many experts have said that it will not help the Philippines' cause and might even weaken our position.

We are already on very firm ground based on International Law from the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and The Hague arbitration award. If we bring this matter before the United Nations General Assembly, anything less than a unanimous vote will only weaken our position and clutter the issues. The UNGA is not a venue of enforcement.

The Philippine government's problem has never been who is "right," rather it is who has the "might" to enforce "the right".

Let us continue to pray and support our frontliners who bear the burden and risk their lives in protecting our lives and sovereignty. PR

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was formalized during the House of Representatives session on August 2, 2023.

Albay 2nd District Representative Joey Salceda, who also chairs the House Committee on Ways and Means, was appointed Chairperson of the newly-created Committee.

"I thank the House, led by Speaker Martin Romualdez, for swiftly acting on this,

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PAGCOR...

Senator Win Gatchalian urged the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (PAGCOR) to devise appropriate and actionable strategies to effectively address the growing criminal activities associated with the Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGOs) industry.

This call comes in the wake of a recent raid on SA Rivendell Global Support, Inc., another POGO accredited service provider. During Wednesday's operation in Pasay City, some Filipinos were rescued, and it was discovered that several rooms were being used for cyber scams while a few rooms were utilized for online gambling. Other cases of criminalities attributed to POGOs in the past include kidnap-for-ransom, cryptocurrency, love scams, and human trafficking.

"With the increasing number of these crimes, we are now becoming the human trafficking hub of the world. It's evident that POGO is not bringing any benefit but instead, the industry is bringing shame to the country," emphasized

Gatchalian.

"What we want is formal and actionable strategies by PAGCOR duly approved by the board, and not just plans to appease legislators. 'Yung sinasabi niyong inspection and coordination, narinig na namin 'yan ng ilang beses," Gatchalian told PAGCOR officials at a Senate hearing on the recent human trafficking and cyber fraud operation inside Clark Freeport Zone, which was the subject of a proposed resolution filed by the senator.

PAGCOR Vice President Atty. Jessa Mariz Fernandez told the committee that among the reforms undertaken by the regulator include the adoption of a new framework, which places all POGOs under probationary status until September this year, after which they will need to reapply for a new license. She said they will issue a recommendation based on the companies' compliance or non-compliance.

This was Fernandez' reply to Gatchalian's queries on whether the

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DTI Laguna, CLDD Calamba City Hold Seminar on Basic Accounting for Non-Accountants



Cavinti, Laguna — In line with its thrust to equip the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with additional financial recording skills, the Department of Trade and Industry — Laguna Provincial Office (DTI Laguna) conducted a seminar on basic accounting for non-accountants in partnership with the Cooperative and Livelihood Development Department (CLDD) of the City Government of Calamba at the CLDD Training Center, Calamba City, Laguna last April 28, 2023.

The seminar was conducted for the existing and potential MSMEs of Calamba City to learn the principles, basic tools and techniques of the accounting process which will guide them in making business decisions. The activity aims to impart basic knowledge on bookkeeping and efficient financial recordings to MSMEs for them to apply on their everyday business transactions. It will also allow them to better manage their business by controlling and utilizing their finances.

Senior Business Counselor Joemarie Valizado of Negosyo Center Paete discussed the basic accounting and simple bookkeeping and emphasized the relevance of recording relevant transactions to the business

enterprise. Valizado also emphasized the keyword relevance of the transaction in order to avoid confusion in recording events that transpire on the enterprise and provided tips and steps for bookkeeping activities for the business firms.

Participants were able to discuss among themselves during the group activity on basic bookkeeping and income and expense calculation. They were given a 15-minute activity to solve a case study relative to bookkeeping that allows them to understand and practice recording their business financial transactions.

A total of forty-four (44) participants from the City of Calamba actively attended the aforementioned seminar. Also present in the event was Dr. Leonardo Opuencia, De-partment Head of CLDD Calamba, who gave his encouragement and support to the cooperatives. In addition to this, the business counselor discussed upcoming activities of DTI Laguna, as well as the other programs and services of the DTI and Negosyo Center.

Overall, the seminar was commended by the participants and expressed their interest to join future seminars, mentoring and coaching sessions of DTI Laguna. (RSPalentin, DTI-Laguna).

SSS...

The Social Security System (SSS) asserted that it is aggressively pursuing delinquent employers nationwide and vows to intensify further its efforts to collect their unremitted contributions.

SSS President and Chief Executive Officer Rolando Ledesma Macasaet made the statement to assure all SSS members of its commitment to pursue delinquent employers and to urge all employers to comply with their obligations of religiously remitting the social security contributions of their employees.

"Each employer is assigned to a specific SSS Account Officer (AO) whose responsibility is to ensure employers' compliance to Republic Act 11199 or the Social Security Act of 2018, such as registration and reporting of their employees and remittance of corresponding contributions to SSS," Macasaet explained.

He added that Statements of Account (SOAs) are prepared regularly, which leads to the conduct of payroll audits whenever discrepancies are discovered. Billing letters are then sent to the employers who are obliged to settle as soon as possible or within the payment deadline.

Errant employers will receive a demand letter from SSS which could lead to the filing of a case assuming the persistent non-compliance by the employer.

SSS intensified its Run After Contribution Evaders (RACE) campaigns, which aim to compel delinquent employers to comply with the law by

issuing a Notice of Violation and instructing them to report to SSS within 15 days or face legal consequences.

"Even though we are aggressively pursuing delinquent employers, we still offer them some relief through our contribution penalty condonation programs for their consideration so that penalties may be waived if they are deemed eligible," he said.

"SSS is also continuously reconciling and updating its records since we discover that several employers sometimes neglect to update the list of their employees in the SSS records resulting in overstated SOAs being issued by SSS," Macasaet said.

SSS issues hundreds of thousands of SOAs and billing letters, which have to be later classified depending on actions taken by SSS and/or the concerned employer.

SSS regularly coordinates with state auditors toward fairness in the presentation of financial statements as well as in assessing compliance with pertinent laws, rules, regulations, and policies or procedures. State auditors' observations, recommendations, and reports help drive continuous efforts to improve SSS operations.

Meanwhile, Macasaet ensures stakeholders that SSS is financially capable of continuously paying benefits and granting loans to its members and pensioners as its cash flows remain healthy, with revenues outpacing expenditures. END

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homes.

The central government has dispatched a team to assist with rescue efforts, and the railway authority has suspended trains that pass through or depart from the affected region.

Local authorities have launched an emergency response to organize rescue and assess possible risks. (Anadolu)

Villanueva...

"And malaking tulong din yung pagre-reestablish (it is also a big help of re-establishing) or strengthening the relationship with our ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) neighbors, with EU (European Union) especially, yung ating mga (our) known allies. We

want to announce to the world that we are now again ready and open for business," Ejercito said.

However, the lawmaker noted that while President Marcos travels, the government should also address various local issues like infrastructure, airports, energy, and

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peace and order, which he said are things that investors consider before putting up business in a country.

Nevertheless, Villanueva and Ejercito vowed to scrutinize the OP's proposed budget in general when it reaches the Senate.

The OP is requesting an allocation of PHP1.408 billion for "local/foreign missions and state visits," higher than the PHP893.97 million under the 2023 General Appropriations Act.

President Marcos has so far visited 11 countries since he assumed office in June 2022.

These include Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, United States, Cambodia, Belgium, China, Switzerland, Japan, the United Kingdom and Malaysia. (PNA)

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Zest-O Corporation Kicks Off Cam- paign to Promote Plastic Responsibility

Zest-O, the Philippines no.1 juice brand, is at the forefront of innovation once more. Zest-O Corporation has launched its initial Community Incentive Program in partnership with GreenCycle Innovative Solutions at Barangay Tungkong Mangga, in San Juan Del Monte, Bulacan on August 1, 2023. This collect and redeem initiative is part of Zest-O Corporation's commitment to supporting the needs of a circular economy while ensuring that it remains environmentally responsible throughout the life cycle of its products.

43 years ago, Zest-O Corporation's founder and chairman, Mr. Alfredo M. Yao, introduced the first doypackaging to the Philippines and pioneered its use in the ready-to-drink (RTD) juice market. Since then, Zest-O Corporation has continued to expand into other product categories like RTD chocolate drink, carbonated soft drink, noodles, and condiments. This passion for innovation, excellence, and providing value-for-money products has made Zest-O Corporation one of the country's leading FMCG companies, and the Zest-O juice brand a ubiquitous part of the Pinoy experience.

We now have a generation of parents who grew up with Zest-O raising a generation of children who are also #Batang-Zesto. Zest-O Corporation has been leveraging this in past campaigns to promote Filipino values like family-centeredness, gratitude, respect for elders, diligence, creativity, and responsible citizenship. "Mula noon hanggang ngayon, ang Batang Zest-O, Eco Alisto."

Zest-O Corporation kicked off this new campaign with a Town-hall Meeting at Barangay Tungkong Mangga. The LGU of San Juan Del Monte Bulacan showed up in full force as well as City Environment & Natural Resources Office (CENRO) officials, and representatives from the different districts (purok), schools, homeowners' associations, markets, and commercial establishments in the area.



Zest-O Corporation Kicks Off Campaign to Promote Plastic Responsibility

The Community Incentive Program empowers ordinary citizens to take action against plastic pollution by turning their plastic trash into cash. Ms. Raychelle Fran Reyes, Zest-O Group Brand Manager, shared that part of the program's aim is to give extra livelihood to members of the community by giving cash incentives for every kilo of collected plastic waste. She emphasized the need to care for the environment and how the Batang Zest-O Eco-Alisto campaign addresses this need. She hopes that Zest-O's Information Drive will help instill this value in generations of Batang Zest-Os.

Mr. Roland Vera Cruz, President and General Manager of GreenCycle Innovative Solutions shared how they have been helping LGUs be in compliance with RA 9003, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000. He also gave a walk-through of what will be done to the different plastics that will be collected—depending on the type some will be recycled, upcycled, or co processed. Co-processing refers to the use of waste materials as a substitute to fossil fuels and/or raw materials.

Zest-O Corporation turned over 12 collection bins to be placed throughout Barangay

Tungkong Mangga. Barangay Chairman Alexander "Bong" Medina expressed support for the Batang Zest-O, Eco-Alisto campaign and their gratitude for being the first community partner to kick off the program.

Zest-O Corporation is partnering with different communities and schools, and will be rolling out an Information Drive in the succeeding months. They are committed to transform hundreds of tonnes of plastic waste into new products of great value to create a better future for the planet. Mula noon hanggang ngayon, ang Batang Zest-O, Eco-Alisto. END

Villanueva...

MANILA – Senate Majority Leader Joel Villanueva and Senator Joseph Victor Ejercito on Friday expressed confidence President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. shall put into good use the Office of the President's (OP) proposed budget for local or foreign missions and state visits in 2024.

In a Zoom interview, Villanueva said President Marcos' recent travels abroad, which generated a lot of investment pledges, can justify the

[KUALA LUMPUR, July 27, 2023] — Two private sector groups representing Malaysia and the Philippines signed a Memorandum of Understanding here last July 27, 2023 to explore joint efforts in agriculture development, focusing on palm oil, rubber and other agricultural commodities that may thrive in the Philippines and Malaysia. The MOU was signed on behalf of ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN BAC) Malaysia and ASEAN BAC Philippines by their respective Chairs, Tan Sri Nazir Razak and Joey Concepcion. The signing was witnessed by Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. during his meeting with Malaysian business leaders as part of his three-day State Visit to Malaysia.

The initiative will aim to replicate an agri model similar to Kapatid Angat Lahat sa Agri Program (KALAP) to achieve inclusive and sustainable agriculture through the integration of small farmers into the value chain of large companies, and allowing them to benefit from the transfer of technologies and economies of scale. KALAP is an initiative of Go Negosyo, the non-profit founded by Concepcion to promote entrepreneurship and advocate for the development of Filipino MSMEs.

"Public-private partnerships are essential as we move toward regional economic integration and make our agriculture industries pro-

ductive and competitive," said Concepcion. "We already have several of these big-brother models in the Philippines covering prime commodities like tobacco, coconut and rice, with large Philippine companies like Universal Leaf, Lionheart Farms and Yovel East successfully implementing their inclusive models in the communities where they operate," he said. Concepcion said they are aiming to encourage more big-brother companies to participate.

The MOU between the Philippines and Malaysia concerned specifically the possibility of jointly conducting studies and mentorship channels for potential agriculture, agriculture technology, food security, agripreneurship business models, and value chain development.

It will also aim to identify the business requirements to develop trade and investment opportunities in palm oil, rubber, fruits, poultry, agricultural technology, and other agricultural products and services of Malaysia and the Philippines. "We are confident that with this partnership with ASEAN BAC Malaysia and the leadership of Chairman Nazir Razak, that both our countries will benefit from sharing our experiences in these areas," said Concepcion.

Razak said that ASEAN-BAC Malaysia is happy to facilitate potential partnerships between prominent players in relevant fields from the two countries. "Food security is

get something in return," he added.

In a separate Zoom interview, Ejercito, who traveled with the President in Malaysia, said he witnessed the benefits that a state visit could bring to the country.

He said that in the three days the Philippine delegation was there, their schedule was full of meetings with royalties, the prime minister, businessmen, as well as bilateral meetings.

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POINT OF VIEW Health tips on how to live well

11. Morning, sunshine!

"Throwing back your curtains in the morning can help you to sleep better at night," says Dr Alanna Hare, a consultant in sleep medicine. "This is because light is key in regulating our sleep patterns and so getting natural sunlight helps sync your body's sleep/wake cycle."

12. Reap what you sew

Mindfulness – noticing your thoughts, feelings, emotions and bodily sensations – is proven to deal with stress and anxiety, and is even recommended by NICE (National Institute of Clinical Excellence) as a way of helping to prevent depression. Looking for a new way to give it a try? Try embroidery, which ticks all the mindfulness boxes because you must slow down and focus on the task in hand. For a new project, try DMC The Mindful Mandala Embroidery Duo Kit (£20, John Lewis).

13. Love your lentils

Add red lentils to your next spaghetti bolognese or shepherd's pie. They have a 'meaty' taste, which means they can be easily added to mince meals for a higher-fibre supper. Cutting down on meat? Replace your beef altogether.

14. Win with one

Always think 'can I add one more set/movement?' when you exercise. So, if you cycle around the park five times, make it six; if you're playing tennis, play another set. That one little push of movement in the end will get you fitter faster, plus you'll realise you can do more than you give yourself credit for, which is powerful fitness fuel.

15. Habit stack

Pair a 'must do' with a 'should do' and see those good habits stack up. For instance, while you're shaving your legs, check your moles for changes; while you're waiting for the kettle to boil, do some gentle stretches; when you're making your dental appointment, book your smear or mammogram, too.

16. Good mood food

No, you're not imagining it: feeling 'hangry' – or hungry-angry – is a real thing. This is because, unlike other organs, your brain relies on a drip-drip-drip supply of glucose throughout the day to stay properly fuelled so, if you don't eat regularly or you skip meals, you won't feel your best. As well as eating regularly, drop your fear of fat. The brain is made up around 50 per cent fat, and our cells need good quality fats to maintain their structure so consider good fats those found in olive oil, nuts, seeds, and avocados.

17. Upgrade your terrain

Move your usual walk or run to the beach or rugged countryside. The reason? Soft surfaces, such as sand and grass provide no rebound, which means your muscles must work harder.

to be cont. fo next issue

Inflation...

The country's headline inflation rate slid to 4.7 percent in July 2023, marking the sixth consecutive month of deceleration. This is within the month-ahead forecast range of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) of 4.1 to 4.9 per-cent.

"Headline inflation cooled further to 4.7 percent in July 2023 from 5.4 percent in June. This is the sixth consecutive month that inflation has eased, strongly supporting the likelihood that inflation might be within the 2.0 to 4.0 per-cent target range by the fourth quarter of 2023," Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno said.

The July 2023 inflation rate is at its lowest level since the 4.9 percent in April 2022. It was below the median estimate of 4.9 percent by private analysts.

The downtrend in inflation was primarily due to the slower increase in Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels (4.5 percent in July from 5.6 percent in June); Food and non-alcoholic beverages (6.3 percent from 6.7 percent); and Transport (-4.7 percent from -3.1 percent). However, inflation in Education increased to 3.7 percent in July from 3.6 percent in June.

Seasonally adjusted month-on-month (MoM) inflation was at zero percent monthly growth rate in July 2023 from a 0.1 percent uptick in the previous month.

The main contributors to headline inflation for the month of July are Food and non-alcoholic beverages, contributing 2.4 percentage points (ppt); Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels

(1.0 ppt); and Restaurants and accommodation services (0.8 ppt).

While food inflation continued its downward trend for the sixth consecutive month at 6.3 percent, it continues to be the main source of headline inflation led by vegetables (0.6 ppt); rice (0.4 ppt); flour and bread (0.3 ppt); as well as milk and eggs (0.3 ppt).

Meanwhile, the deceleration in food inflation was led by the decline in prices of meat (-1.7 percent from 0.3 per-cent), and the slowing down of price increase for fish (4.5 percent from 6.2 percent) and sugar (21.4 percent from 28.9 percent).

Top contributors to the non-food inflation are Food and beverage services (0.76 ppt), Actual rentals for housing (0.65 ppt), and Passenger transport services (0.33 ppt).

Core inflation, which excludes selected volatile food and energy items, slowed down to 6.7 percent from the 7.4 percent recorded in June, bringing the average core inflation for the first seven months of the year to 7.6 percent.

Inflation in the National Capital Region (NCR) remained at 5.6 percent, while inflation for areas outside of NCR decelerated to 4.4 percent.

Region VIII (Eastern Visayas) recorded the lowest inflation rate at 2.4 percent, while Region VI (Western Visayas) had the highest inflation rate at 5.8 percent.

Inflation for the bottom 30 percent households, which has been rebased to the year 2018, declined to 5.2 percent, from 7.2 percent a year

ago, and 6.1 percent in June 2023, resulting in a YTD inflation of 7.6 percent.

The main sources of deceleration in inflation for the bottom 30 percent households were lower inflation rates of Food and non-alcoholic beverages (6.1 percent); Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels (3.0 percent); and Transport (-3.0 percent), respectively contributing 49.3 percent, 31.3 percent, and 12.4 percent to the downward trend in inflation.

The Economic Development Group (EDG) held its second session in a Joint EDG and Inter-Agency Committee on Inflation and Market Outlook (IAC-IMO) Meeting on July 20, 2023.

It discussed the continuous implementation and the intensification of measures to monitor prices and the demand- and supply-side risks in both food and non-food commodities in view of safeguarding the Filipino people's purchasing power against potential inflationary impacts of weather and external-related uncertainties, the impending El Nino, and transportation and wage hike petitions.

To ensure food security, particularly in rice, the government will intensify the proper utilization of the calamity fund and Quick Response Fund to help farmers.

"The private sector will be encouraged further to fill in any supply deficit through timely importation and the government will facilitate the arrival of needed imports, particularly during the lean season," Secretary Diokno said.

The government will also expedite the implementation of measures to mitigate the impact of El Niño as discussed by the National El Niño Team (NENT) to ensure food security.

These include the provision of production inputs such as early maturing/short gestation/drought tolerant seed and planting materials), adjustment of the cropping calendars, construction or installation of rainwater harvesting structures and small scale irrigation systems, and distribution of pump and engine sets,

among others.

Measures will also be implemented by the government to facilitate the issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) and the enactment of a policy on the automatic approval of SPSIC application, and the issuance of importation guidelines by the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) with a more predictable regime that allows industrial users to directly import their sugar requirements and facilitates greater competition.

Information technology, such as satellite imaging and crop growth models, is also increasingly being utilized by the government to help enhance the monitoring of the production of rice and other key agricultural commodities. The latest technologies will help provide more timely information for policy decisions of the government.

To support the vulnerable sectors, the government will continue its Targeted Cash Transfer (TCT) program and fuel subsidy program.

Landbank's Anti Bill Shock Program will also cushion the impact of high electricity prices for end-users. The pro-program provides financing to electric distribution companies at concessional rates with no additional cost on their working capital. This will protect consumers from paying higher electricity bills due to the increase in power consumption.

On the fiscal side, the government maintains its commitment to fiscal responsibility through the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF) – the government's blueprint to lower the fiscal deficit and avoid adding up to inflationary pressures.

In the first semester of 2023, the National Government (NG) deficit settled at PHP 551.7 billion, lower by 18.2 per-cent compared to the same period in 2022.

"The economic team remains steadfast in maintaining inflation at manageable levels to preserve the purchasing power of the Filipino people and to sustain macroeconomic stability while promoting a robust economic growth," Secretary Diokno said. DOF. GOV

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PAGCOR...

and Representative Joey Salceda for leading the charge in crafting a pension system that our MUP retirees can look forward to in their retirement. I trust that the Committee will be able to come up with a reasonable solution that is mutually acceptable to all parties involved," Secretary Diokno said.

According to Rep. Salceda, the Committee will endeavor to

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.

SATISFY YOUR SIZZLING PLATE CRAVINGS AT SM CITY BACOR FOOD COURT



SM CITY BACOR, CAVITE - Craving some sizzling midweek delight? Who's ready to dig in and experience the sizzling bliss of Sizzling Spareribs—seasoned, trimmed pork ribs served with special sauce, mixed vegetables, and java rice? Visit Sizzling Plate, located at the 4th Level, SM Foodcourt

WHAT'S NEW AT KENNY ROGERS ROASTERS' – SM CITY MOLINO?



SM CITY MOLINO, CAVITE - Embark on a flavorful journey of spices with Kenny Rogers Roasters' new Shawarma Selections! Be captivated by the mouthwatering richness and bold umami flavors in every delectable bite of Shawarma Roasted Chicken, Shawarma Rice Bowl, and Shawarma Burger. Visit them at SM Molino Ground floor level for dine-in and takeout. For delivery, call 0917-555-9000 or visit kennyrogersdelivery.com.ph

ALL THINGS CUTE AT MINISO – SM CENTER IMUS



SM CENTER IMUS, CAVITE - What a cloudy day today! Let this Rainbow Series Cloud Pillow chase your sadness and worries away. Available for Php 349. Available at MINISO, SM Center Imus, Ground Floor. Visit today and get the cutest things at Miniso!



Enchanted Kingdom celebrates Eldar the Wizard's Birthday



In line with the marking of Enchanted Kingdom's 28th soft opening year, the first and only world class theme park in the Philippines celebrated its beloved character's birthday month, July 31. Eldar the Wizard is a home-grown, jolly character of Enchanted Kingdom (EK) known to teach children to uphold virtues of kindness, humility, patience, honesty, diligence, generosity, and love of God and family.

Eldar's Birthday Bash captivated more than 400 guests with performances by EK characters and talented musicians, magicians, and dancers. Both kids and adults enjoyed the fun activities prepared by EK and its sponsors.

EK's Chief Operating Officer (COO) Cynthia R. Mamon expressed her gratitude to the guests and sponsors for making Eldar's birthday extra special. "This is indeed a very special day for us as we also commemorate Enchanted Kingdom's soft opening 28 years ago. Eldar has been an icon of bringing magic to everyone, and we hope to continue bringing magical ex-

periences and memories that last a lifetime," she added.

The magical celebration was made possible by EK's sponsors: Australian Own Milk, Dayzinc, Reyes BBQ, Mondelez International, Avea, The Big Chill, Vitamilk, Tiny Buds, Evian Facial Spray, Ovomaltine, Clever Mama, Farlin, Zim, Nurture, Oishi, Royal Crown, Rite N Lite, Jele Beautie Philippines, Ceres, Nissin, Dutchmill, Lucky Me, Spectrum, Jollibee Foods Corporation, SD13 Advertising Corporation, Lock N Lock Philippines, Poten – Cee, URC - Universal Robina, Goya, Tender Juicy, Cherifer, Expressions, and View True Express Digital Imaging.

Additionally, the event was supported by the following tenant partners: Dairy Queen, Alcatraz, Potato Corner, Shakes Station/Zenzu Milk Tea, Karate Kid, TEHO Apparel, Fortune Bakeshop, DVK Enterprise, Taters, Turks, Famous Belgian Waffle, Subarashi Manju, Po Jang, Lil Orbits, Sweetie Yors, Sique Trading, Chino Latino, Auntie Anne's, La Churrera, Angels Corn, Dash Ice Scramble, and Shakey's.

Philippine Red Cross Awarded Hero SG of Laguna



Photo Caption Left to Right (PRC Volunteers Camille Cabaral, Nicole Aquilar with Philippine Red Cross San Pablo Chapter Administrator Dorie Cabela, SG Hassan Pasco , PRC Board of Governor Asst. Treasurer Andrew Nocon and PRC SPC Chapter Board Chairman Engr. Aaron Carlo D. Cabrera

The Philippine Red Cross San Pablo Chapter (PRC) recognized SG Hassan Pasco for his outstanding display of courage during an emergency situation last July 30th 2023 held in Vil-

la Evanzueda, San Pablo City.

PRC SPC Chairman Engr. Aaron Carlo Cabrera attests that, "SG Pasco was not only a remarkable mall guard but was also a true hero. Us-



ing what he learned from the First Aid training given by Philippine Red Cross, he was able to save a life. He exemplified how it is to

be a PRC Advocate. The event also commemorates Philippine Red Cross 73rd years of Humanitarian Service.

Comelec...

MANILA – The Commission on Elections (Comelec) has removed some 462,000 double registrants from the National List of Registration of Voters (NLRV) as it prepares for the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections (BSKE) in October this year.

"May 39,000 pa po (There are additional 39,000 double registrants for) countercheck and subject of reconsideration," Comelec Chairperson George Erwin Garcia said in a Viber message on Friday.

The Comelec has earlier vowed to file charges against those who "deliberately" registered twice or multiple times.

Besides multiple registrants, the Comelec also assured to remove unreported deceased voters based on the civil registry's updated data.

Stronger electoral system

Meanwhile, Garcia reaffirmed his commitment to ensure a stronger and more efficient electoral system in the country as he celebrated his first year in service.

In a separate statement, he cited reforms and efforts made by the poll body to improve electoral accessibility and

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transparency. "We have implemented data-driven improvements to enhance the efficiency of the Commission and to increase voter registration turnout," Garcia said.

Besides increasing voter registration turnout, the Comelec is also pushing ways to ease voting experiences for Filipinos through mall voting. "Safeguarding the Filipino vote is a profound responsibility that we bear with utmost seriousness... With our collective efforts, we will continue to address challenges and work towards a stronger, more efficient electoral system that serves the needs of our nation," he added.

Comelec is set to sign an agreement for mall voting with SM Supermalls and Robinsons Malls on Aug. 7.

It is also eyeing to implement an automated election system (AES) for the 2025 National and Local Elections (NLE).

Comelec targets to replace the 97,000 vote counting machines with automated counting machines through its proposed Fully Automated System with Transparency, Audit, and Count (FAS-TrAC). (PNA)

Limang sakahan sa Batangas, ginawaran ng Participatory organic Certificate (POC)



Sa tulong ng Department of Agriculture IV-CALABARZON (DA-4A) Organic Agriculture Program (OAP) at Regulatory Division, limang farm sa lalawigan ng Batangas ang nagawaran ng Participatory Organic Certificate (POC) mula sa Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) noong Hulyo 7, 2023.

Ang Participatory Organic Certificate (POC) ay isang kasulatan na nagpapatunay na ang mga pangunahing miyembro ng isang Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) group ay sumunod sa lahat ng mga requirements at pa-mantayan ng Philippine National Standards (PNS) on Organic Agriculture (OA).

Nilikha ang PGS upang magkaroon ng isang pamamaraan ng sertipikasyon para sa mga organikong produksyon na makukuha sa mas abot-kayang paraan ng mga maliit na magsasaka at mangangisda. Ang PGS group ay binubuo ng di bababa sa limang miyembro na

ang sakahan ay may kombinasyon ng crops at livestock. Sila ay isang legal na asosasyon o kooperatiba ng mga magsasaka o stakeholders na rehistrado, sertipikado at kinikilala ng DA. Ang mga miyembro ng akreditadong PGS group ang may kapangyarihan na mags-ertipika na ang isang produkto ay galing sa organikong sistema ng pagsasaka.

Samantala, ang limang pangunahing miyembro o core PGS Group ng Batangas Organic and Natural Farming Agriculture Cooperative (BON-FAC) na nagawaran ng naturang sertipikasyon ay ang Chad's Nature Farm ng Mataas na Kahoy, Ole Farm Well ng Padre Garcia, RLI Fruit Farm ng Bauan, Iglesias Farms ng Malvar, at San Jose Farm ng San Jose. Maaari na silang mag-aplay ng akreditasyon bilang maging isang ganap na Organic Certifying Body (OCB) kung saan maaari silang mag-inspeksyon, mag-isyu ng sertipikasyon sa organikong pagsasaka at kum-pirmahin kung ang isang produktong binebenta ay organikong.

Para sa mga interesadong indibidwal o grupo na nais maging sertipikado ang kanilang produkto bilang organic, maaaring makipag-ugnayan sa DA-4A o sa City/Municipal Agriculturist Office. PR