

Unremitted SSS contributions from delinquent employers down by 40 percent in 2023

Encouraged by the Supreme Court decision upholding the right of the Social Security System (SSS) to take legal action against employers who have been remiss in settling their contribution delinquencies, SSS President and Chief Executive Officer Rolando Ledesma Macasaet ordered an increase in the frequency of its Run After Contribution Evaders (RACE) Campaign nationwide.

“Our RACE Campaign must be working,” Macasaet said as he reported that the amount of unremitted members’ contributions from delinquent employers have plummeted by almost 40 percent in 2023.

Macasaet said that uncollected contributions in 2022 stood at P92 billion, but SSS successfully brought it down by 39 percent to P56 billion in 2023 on the back of aggressively pursuing delinquent employers and continuously updating employer records.

In 2022, the Commission on Audit (COA) called out the SSS for failing to collect over P92 billion from half a million delinquent employers.

Marilyn Cañeja’s journey from North Cotabato to Davao City is a tale of resilience and determination. As a young woman, she lived a sweet but meager life in the province. It was during her sophomore year in college that circumstances led her to drop out and work as a sales clerk in a pharmacy. Little did she know, this job would introduce her to her future husband.

Together, they shared dreams of independence; so they decided to quit their job and open a sari-sari store. The store prospered; however, to bear a child, she needed to give up the store as her doctor advised her to leave the stresses of store management behind. Meanwhile, her husband got a job as a bus conductor in Davao City. Prioritizing the family, Marilyn made the move to be closer to him after the birth of

According to state auditors, 466,881 employers did not remit P92.49 billion in premium contributions, penalties, and damages.

In a statement, Macasaet said the SSS has filed cases in court against 2,422 errant employers, majority of which have opted to settle their delinquencies either through full payment or via installment schemes, resulting in a record-high collection P1.37 billion in 2023 from P1.15 billion in 2022.

Collection from delinquent employers

Macasaet explained that the decrease in unremitted contributions could be attributed to the high collection of delinquencies from employers not remitting their employees’ contributions.

Macasaet also explained that the RACE Campaign is one of the programs that played a vital role in pursuing delinquent employers nationwide.

The SSS chief explained that RACE was an operation conducted by the state fund to ensure that employers com-

ply with their obligation as stipulated in Republic Act No. 11199 or the Social Security Act of 2018.

He said that only selected SSS branch offices conducted RACE campaigns in previous years. Recently, Macasaet said, he ordered the SSS to beef up the initiative by requiring all SSS branch offices nationwide to carry out RACE campaigns in their respective areas.

“We issued Show Cause Orders or Notices of Violation to delinquent employers and instructed them to report to SSS within 15 days to settle their unpaid contributions and corresponding penalties or face legal consequences for violating RA 11199,” Macasaet said. He added that in 2023, SSS conducted 587 RACE operations nationwide and issued written notices to 4,923 delinquent employers.

SC upholds RACE Campaign

Last month, the Supreme Court (SC) rejected an appeal filed by a real estate company, which was found by a lower court to have failed to remit employee contribu-

tions to the SSS on time.

In a seven-page resolution, the SC Second Division upheld a decision of the Court of Appeals (CA) against RGV Real Estate Center, Inc. for violating the Social Security Law for failure to remit contributions.

RGV also violated SSS Circular No. 52 for failing to remit salary loan/calamity loan amortizations of its employees. “The SSS is a government agency that is imbued with the salutary purpose of carrying out the State’s policy of establishing, developing, promoting, and perfecting a sound and viable tax-exempt social security system,” the SC resolution said.

The SSS had repeatedly issued Demand Letters seeking the payment of more than P3 million representing employee contributions. RGV availed the condonation program, which allows members with outstanding balances to settle their arrears by installment. In this instance, RGV still failed to comply with the condonation program’s rules.

The Social Security Commission first heard the case and found RGV liable to pay almost P7.5 million in unpaid contributions, interest, and penalties for late remittance.

The CA then ruled the case to be not reviewable. “Needless to say, the entitlement and amount of benefit and privilege of its (SSS) members are adversely affected by the non-remittance of the much-needed contributions. Any divergence from the rule subjects the employer not only to monetary sanctions but also to criminal prosecution,” the SC said.



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Macasaet said the SSS RACE operations have been institutionalized into the mainstream branch operational procedures in addition to systems enhancements made on regular collection, improved interoperability among concerned internal offices/units involved in collection, introduction of the administrative collection remedy of issuance of a Warrant of Detainment,

Levy, and Garnishment (WDLG), partnership with various Regulatory & Law Enforcement Agencies through Memorandum of Agreements, and judicial recourse to our Criminal Courts nationwide.

Updating the employers’ list

Aside from improved collection from delinquent employers, Macasaet said that SSS also updated its records since it discovered that many of the reported contribution collectibles were from establishments that no longer operated, resulting in overstated statements of accounts (SOAs) being issued by SSS.

Macasaet added that SSS Account Officers and branch personnel visually inspected the establishments and discovered that many of these businesses had ceased operations. **END**

Kalidad ng proyektong pang-imprastruktura ng DA Calabarzon siniguro, ebalwasyon ng mga konstruktur isinagawa



DepEd remains most trusted, top performing gov’t agency

Inagurasyon at Blessing Ceremony ng Springville South Phase 2 Covered Court



Muling pinangunahan ni Congrewoman Lani M. Revilla kasama si Mayor Strike B. revilla ang inagurasyon at pagbabasbas ng bagong covered court sa Spring ville phase 2, Barangay Molino 4, Bacoor City, Cavite.

Ang proyektong ito ay request ng Home Owners Association ng Spring Ville na tinugunan ni Cong. Lani M. Revilla sa tulong narin ng Pamahalaang Lungsod sa pangunguna ni Mayor Strike B. Revilla, Senator Ramon “Bong” Revilla Jr., Agimat PartyList Cong. Bryan Revilla, at ng Sangguniang Panlungsod Members sa pangunguna ni Vice Mayor Rowena B. Mendiola.

BOC records P8-B revenue surplus in Q1 2024



MANILA – The Bureau of Customs (BOC) has exceeded its revenue collection target for the first three months of the year.

“We collected PHP219.385 billion in total revenue – that’s a surplus of PHP8.489 billion from our target for that particular period. So, there’s a surplus of about... more than PHP8 billion by the Bureau of Customs for the first quarter of 2024,” BOC Assistant Commissioner Vincent Philip Maronilla said at the Saturday News Forum in Quezon City.

“Part of these were voluntary payments by companies through

our prior disclosure program amounting to about PHP1.88 billion – highest in the history of the Bureau of Customs per quarter; and also, there were audit findings amounting to about PHP89 million. We also collected about PHP3.8 million in revenue for public auctions conducted by the bureau,” Maronilla added.

Smuggled goods He also reported that about PHP48 billion

Cont. on Page 2



METRO PACIFIC TOLLWAYS ADDRESSES PEATC CASE FILING

Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation acknowledges recent media coverage over the case filing of PEA Tollway Corporation against our subsidiary, Cavite Infrastructure Corporation (CIC), the current joint-venture partner of Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) for the Manila-Cavite Toll Expressway Project, otherwise known as CAVITEX. Understanding that this is a matter of public interest, we would like to address the concerns with clarity and transparency.

With the project being a joint venture with the PRA, any legal dispute involving CIC should have rightfully included Philippine Reclamation Authority as an indispensable party. The petition against CIC was filed by Mr. Dioscoro Esteban Jr., Officer-in-Charge of CIC, who lacks authority of the PRA or of the PEATC Board to file such petition. This misrepresentation is further evidenced by the absence of the imprimatur of the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC) which is the

rightful counsel of a GOCC such as the PEATC.

However, MPTC has consistently demonstrated professionalism and courtesy by extending invitations for constructive dialogue. We firmly believe that open communication and collaborative problem-solving are the most effective means of resolving disputes. Regrettably, these invitations were disregarded, hindering the progress towards an amicable resolution.

MPTC reiterates its commitment to uphold the highest standards of corporate governance and ethical conduct. We remain steadfast in our dedication to resolve disputes through peaceful and lawful means, prioritizing the interests of all stakeholders involved. We hope that the parties involved will address the issue with sobriety, professionalism, and a genuine willingness to engage in meaningful dialogue towards a mutually beneficial resolution. PR



POINT OF VIEW

7 Health Tips Every Woman Should Take to Heart

Many women fall into the habit of taking care of others' health and wellness needs before they take care of their own.

But the fact is that you're actually in a better position to provide care for the people most important to you when you make your own healthcare a top priority.

No matter what your age or overall health status is, these 7 health tips can help you increase your chances of better health throughout your life:

1.) Stop smoking. Doing so will greatly reduce your chances of developing lung and heart disease.

2.) Stay on top of your annual wellness checks*. This habit can increase the chances of early detection of disease or chronic conditions, which in turn increases your chances of doing something about any health problems you develop.

3.) Don't skimp on sleep. Besides fighting the signs of aging, regular sleep promotes mental alertness and helps keep your stress levels in check.

4.) Avoid the sun during 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. When you do have to be outside, wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a SPF of 30 or higher.

5.) See your doctor every year. Even if you are feeling fine, regular wellness checks and health screenings can increase your chances of early detection of problems.

6.) Make physical activity* an important part of your life. Even if you only have time for 20 minutes of exercise a day, a lifelong habit of regular activity benefits your healthy heart and helps you stay on top of your weight and your stress levels.

7.) Make good nutrition a priority. Avoid crash diets or overindulgence in favor of a realistic diet that features plenty of fruits and vegetables.

MORE ABOUT NUTRITION:

Regardless of a woman's age, nutrition experts generally recommend a diet that is focused on fruits, vegetables, fiber and protein. Your physician can direct you to appropriate resources- such as choosemyplate.gov – to help you tailor a diet that best supports lifelong health.

Women of childbearing age also need foods with folic acid (like leafy green vegetables, beans, and citrus fruits) to help prevent birth defects.

For women who have gone through menopause, it's recommended that you increase your intake of foods with calcium and Vitamin D (such as seafood, fruit, low-fat dairy, and egg yolks) in order to prevent bone disease.

Inagurasyon...

SALES “SINKHOLE” - REVILLA

SENATE Committee of Public Works Chairman Senator Ramon Bong Revilla, Jr. demanded that Maynilad and its contractors be penalized over the huge hole that appeared in the middle of Sales Road in Pasay City on Sunday (April 14).

According to the report of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the “sinkhole” was caused by a leak from the water pipeline of Maynilad Water Services, Inc. The opening of the hole measures 2 meters by 3 meters but the hollow space inside is much wider. It also goes down as deep as 8-10 feet.

“Dapat mapanagot ang Maynilad at ang mga contractors nila dito! This poses great danger lalo na sa mga motorista, at kung di agad nakita at napabayaan, baka pati sa mga residential properties at buildings sa area. Kung makikita niyo nga yung butas, malapit na siya sa pundasyon ng NAIAX

Gatchalian...

Senator Win Gatchalian urged the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) to rigorously enforce provisions of the SIM registration law following the retrieval of a substantial number of Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) cards during a series of search warrant implementations against the Tarlac-based Philippine Offshore Gaming Operator (POGO), now termed as Internet Gaming Licensee (IGL).

During the execution of a warrant to seize and examine computer data from the raided Zun Yuan Technology Inc. on March 22 and 23, authorities were able to recover assorted sim cards, along with hundreds of cellular phones and digital devices.

Authorities also

FROM PAGE 1

elevated highway. Nakakatakot ang posibleng epekto nito kung sakali,” the solon said in exasperation.

Revilla said that the water concessionaire should be held accountable so that they will become more responsible with the impacts of their service.

“Hindi pwedeng hayaan lang na ire-repair tapos wala na. Hindi ‘yon accountability. Dapat may managot para magsilbing daan ito para mas maging proactive ang mga service providers sa mga projects nila, hindi lang basta reactive kapag may problema na. Ilang beses na tayo nakatanggap ng report na may pumutok na pipe sa ganito, minsan nagdudulot pa ng baha at nakakabalala. Dapat bago pa lang magkaroon ng leak, na-check na. Tuloy-tuloy dapat ang inspection at maintenance,” the Senate Public Works Chairperson explained.

As of the morning of April 15 (Monday), DPWH said that they are already prepared filling the void and repair the said damage.

BOC...

worth of smuggled items were seized in 2023. Among the most common goods that are being smuggled into the country are cigarettes, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) goods, as well as local brands, agricultural products, and medicines.

“And of course, agri-products. Cigarette has jumped from the years before to really now become one of the most smuggled items. Every time I think that whenever an item increases in terms of tax rate or tax treatment, iyon ho ang nagiging (that product becomes) the most smuggled item,” he added.

From January to March this year, Maronilla said, the BOC confiscated PHP11.8 billion worth of goods.

“So, we’re still on track on having one of the largest hauls in recent years of smuggled products,” he said.

Digitalization Meanwhile, Maronilla noted that the digitalization process in the bureau is 96.99 percent complete.

“For the first quarter of 2024, we’re at 96.99 percent digitalized. That means that 161 out of the 166 processes of the Bureau of Customs are now digitalized,” he said.

FROM PAGE 1

him, groups behind many scamming activities in the country could be related to POGOs/IGLs.

“It is alarming to note that unscrupulous individuals or groups continue to commit fraud and various scamming activities even after the measure was passed into law. This goes to show that we have yet to achieve the purpose of this legislation, and it is the job of the NTC to ensure that provisions of this law are implemented thoroughly,” Gatchalian said.

He emphasized that the measure is intended to establish accountability in the use of SIM cards and deter the use of SIM-related technology in various scamming activities.

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“Now, the few that are yet to be digitalized are those processes that need inter-linkages with other government agencies. So, majority of them, we’re still waiting for the other agencies to upgrade their respective digital systems so that the BOC can integrate.”

Maronilla noted that the digitalization project was mainly created to minimize face-to-face transactions to eliminate corruption.

“In digitalization, first and foremost, ang ina-address namin doon (what we are addressing) is the face-to-face transaction. Ang na-establish kasi namin dati (We have established that) a big portion of the...well, at least the opportunity to have transactions that tend to corrupt both parties come from the fact that our stakeholders are able to do transactions face-to-face with our employees – so, ni-remove namin iyon (we removed that),” he said.

Security breach

An investigation is also being conducted by the Department of Information and Communications and Technology (DICT) and the National Privacy Commission regarding the BOC system that was compromised two weeks ago.

“So, there was a breach in our Customs system – not all but I think a significant portion of some of our applications. The DICT, the unit under the DICT in charge of identifying the breach that was conducted, is now looking into it. An investigation has already been launched by the Privacy Commission also and the Bureau of Customs, to determine the lapses that were encountered, why this came about,” he said.

“Security measures were also already implemented to avoid further breaches and further abuse of any information that is contained in the Customs system.”

The BOC is gradually resetting all access of employees to the system, he said.

Among the systems that have been comprised were the auction and disposal system, pre-payment, internal system, and customer care portal system. (PNA)

April 24-30, 2024

ACROSS

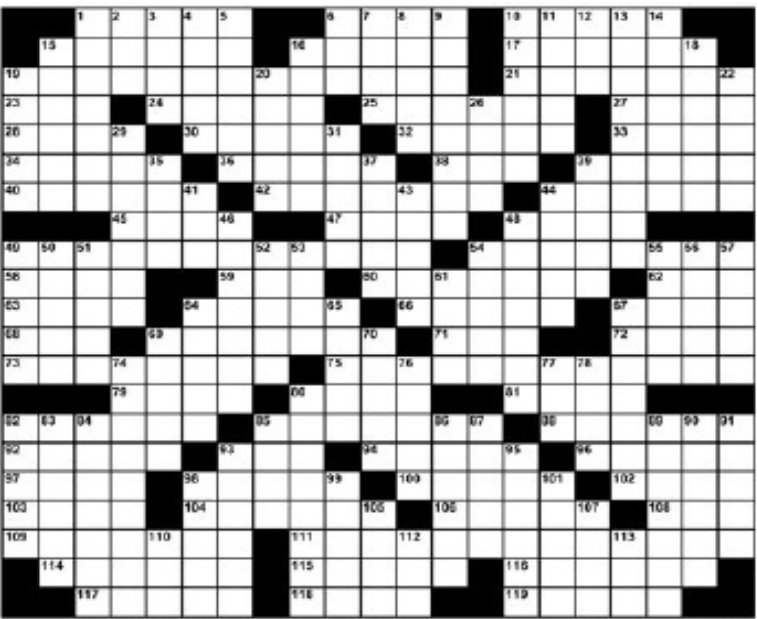
- Intrinsically
- Shave off
- South America prairie
- Illustrious warriors
- Attack
- Grass trimmers
- Shrewd
- Cheap
- E. Can. time zone
- Noah's great grandfather
- Correspondence friend
- Wading bird
- Use a dagger
- Sinned
- Pious one
- Screen
- Labors
- Stopwatch
- Particular thing: L.
- Fish covering
- Group of nine
- Rescue
- Quick breads
- Stake
- Imputed
- Harvest
- Welcome one
- Ponders
- Curare kin
- Incidental
- Silt
- Little island
- Great quantities
- Marsh rails
- Elegant room
- Moon over Montevideo
- Corrida cry
- Failed to keep appointment
- Speed: ABBR.
- Russian sea or lake
- Gun muzzle covers
- Doubt
- Greek Letters
- Lima is its capital
- Give off
- Avoids
- FDR secretary of Labor
- Puzzle
- The Buccaneers' home
- Homily:abbr.

- Contemptible person
- Atlantic or Pacific
- Wine vessel
- Arab chief
- 100 2 years
- Some are loose
- Castle trench
- Tomorrow, in Toledo
- Head covers
- Italian three
- Studied
- Steep cliff face
- Chief
- commodity
- Parisian heads
- Makes happy
- Louvers
- did in
- Inhibit

DOWN

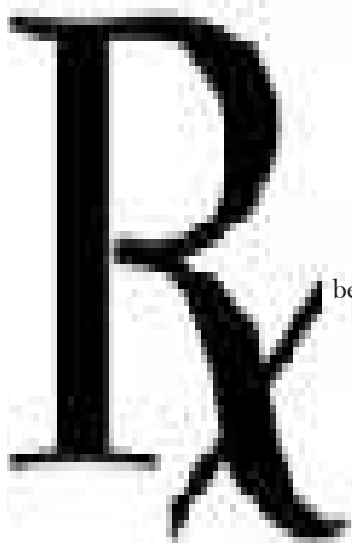
- Be appropriate
- Hesitation sounds
- Lasso
- Net
- Accompany
- Canadian prov.
- Above or upon
- Rakes
- Trapped
- Thin shelled nuts
- Grown-up
- Exec. skill
- Submarine viewer
- Graceful horse
- Played Moses
- Plan
- Discourage
- Adhesive
- Bitter
- Former senator — Kefauver
- Marina feature
- Praises
- A Reese
- Japanese Premier, 1964-72
- Lasso
- ___Flow; German Ocean
- Put on
- Liquid vessels
- Canary kin
- African primates
- Rotate
- Steer

Crossword Puzzles



- A-Bomb plane ___ Gay
- Juniper Shrub
- International Service club members
- Peruse
- Whined
- Formerly Pleasant Island
- Muslim gold coin
- Unpalatable
- Kilauea output
- Greek porticons
- Top-notch
- Crossed wood framework
- Alaska town
- Gratuities
- Continuous
- Destroyed remains
- Scot's uncle
- Child: Sp.
- Amulets
- Jazz dance
- Nimbi
- Discloses
- Hammer part
- Wall recesses
- Spark, a la grandpa
- More docile
- India dress fabric
- Goose: L

- Sunglasses
- Worn
- Fuse
- Genueflect
- Roman magistrate
- Comedian dell' ___
- Shoo
- Baden_Baden, e.g.
- Church seat
- Western Indian



LONELINESS

The eternal quest of the individual human being is to shatter his (or her) loneliness.

WHEN YOU KNOW YOURSELF, you will never be lonely because you will always have yourself to be with. When you achieve this state of self-awareness you ill also realize that there is a greater awareness, the universal consciousness that is aware of you and with you at all times.

One of the ways to connect with this consciousness is through prayer. It can connect you with all things.

You have to be willing to see beyond yourself for this to happen. If you blame others for your loneliness or the lack of attention you receive, things will not change. Then loneliness will prevail. But if you focus on getting to know yourself and your Creator, you will always have company.

Soulution of the Week

Take some time to get to know yourself better. Keep a journal, meditate, pray and listen.

WORDHUNT

C H J Y S F P N E X J K U Y G
D N F P V J J P R I N T E R O
K I U B K I P R V J B N B P T
W Y G S C R A P B O O K A E E
N Q K I E V J Z S V M P V G N
C J D V T K Z V E B E I X W F
A S I N U A N N V R T W V A T
J E R O U S L E A A X F T O G
W F B X Y S E L E M E N T S O
B G Y P D D B R L I Z Q Z G B
D S H A C C C P G F R S T Q Z
K S R E W O L F G T P T H Y W
S B G M E M O R I E S H A Z A
T T Z W Z V P Q I P M R H U I
T P Y S W R I B B O N S T S H

SCRAPBOOK
DIGITAL
PAPER
PREVIEW
ELEMENTS
FLOWERS
LEAVES
CREATIVE
SUZYQ
HYBRID
PRINTER
RIBBONS
BRADS
MEMORIES



SM CITY BACORR, CAVITE - Age is just a number for this 70-year old job seeker at the Job Fair Held at SM City Bacoor. Organized by Bacoor City PESO and the office of Congresswoman Lani Mercado-Revilla, the job fair gathered 44 companies and almost 400 job seekers with 239 of them hired on the spot.



BETTER SUMMER DAYS WITH STARBUCKS – SM CITY MOLINO



SM CITY MOLINO, CAVITE - You can't buy happiness, but you can buy coffee, and that's pretty close. Visit Starbucks at SM City Molino located on the Ground Level.

Dive into endless fun with The SM Store Bacoor's top-quality inflatable pools! Perfect for this summer relaxation right in your backyard. Enjoy upto 20% discount and grab this Inflatables of Toy kingdom at The SM Store Bacoor!



It is true, as somebody said many decades ago, that history repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.

We're seeing a repeat of Oplan Tokhang the Rodrigo Duterte administration implemented with bloody results from 2016 until the end of its term in mid-2022.

The violent crackdown on suspected drug traffickers and users led to an officially acknowledged death toll by the Philippine National Police of more than 6,000, but human rights groups claim the actual figure could well be between 20,000 and 30,000.

Last month, Davao City Mayor Sebastian Duterte, son of the former president, issued a stern warning against those using illegal drugs in the city during the turnover ceremony of the new Davao City police chief. "Kung hindi kayo aalis, kung hindi kayo titigil, papatayin ko kayo." (If you will not leave, if you will not stop, I will kill you.)

That was the same warning issued by the elder Duterte when he took office in 2016, and repeated many times during his term.

Recall that as Davao City mayor, he organized the so-called Davao Death Squad that targeted drug traffickers and other criminals for many years.

Now, he faces before the International Criminal Court a charge of crimes against humanity precisely for ordering the killing of thousands of alleged drug suspects.

Barely a week after Mayor Duterte declared his own war on drugs, seven drug personalities, two of them high-value targets at city level, have been killed in police operations.

The recent deaths are on top of 15 drug-related killings that have taken place since January, based on the monitoring group Dahas Project of the University of the Philippines' Third World Studies Center.

As of March 26, Davao City is a "top hotspot" for drug-related killings, according to Dahas.

Seven cops have since been relieved from their positions in connection with the city's war on drugs. The PNP Internal Affairs Service has also started its investigation into the killings.

According to the Davao Region police office, the seven policemen have been disarmed and would be subjected to paraffin testing, adding that they must also explain why it was necessary for them to use their guns in neutralizing the drug suspects.

The Commission on Human Rights is on the right track in denouncing the Davao City killings and in issuing an order to its regional office in Davao to conduct a thorough probe of the alleged extrajudicial killings.

According to the agency, the killings constitute grave violations of human rights: "Using extrajudicial means undermines the rule of law and destroys faith in legal systems, ultimately hindering genuine efforts to address the root causes of drug-related problems in the country."

We agree completely, and urge the Davao City government and its police force to review operational procedures to uphold due process and the rule of law in its drive to rid the city of the drug menace.

STRAIGHT NEWS

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According to a recent Tugon ng Masa survey from March 11 to 14, the DepEd ranked first among government institutions in terms of trust and performance with ratings of 82 and 84 percent, respectively.

Following DepEd in terms of trust were the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Department of Health (DOH) both at 79 percent, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) at 73 percent, and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) at 71 percent.

The five government agencies were also the same top-performing agencies for the first quarter survey.

Following DepEd in terms of satisfaction were the DOH with an 80 percent performance rating, DSWD with 77 percent, CHED with 73 percent, and DPWH with 72 percent.

Across major areas, DepEd's trust scores were highest in Mindanao at 94 percent and lowest in Metro Manila at 74 percent.

DepEd's performance ratings, meanwhile, were highest in Mindanao at 95 percent and lowest in Balance Luzon and Metro Manila at 78 percent.

OCTA noted that the government agencies that received trust ratings below 50 percent were the Department of Energy (DOE) at 49 percent, Department of Transportation (DOTr) at 45 percent, Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) at 42 percent, Department of Budget and Management (DBM) at 41 percent, Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) at 40 percent, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) at 39 percent, Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) at 36 percent.

Four government agencies received less than 40 percent performance ratings: the DTI and DICT tied at 38 percent, DBM at 37 percent, and DHSUD at 33 percent.

The survey was conducted among 1,200 respondents aged 18 years and above with ±3 percent margin of error at a 95 percent confidence level.

CHED Chairper-

LGUs, gov't agencies ordered to implement anti-hunger programs

MANILA - Malacañang on Sunday issued Memorandum Circular No. 47, directing all government agencies and local government units to support the implementation of the Enhanced Partnership Against Hunger and Poverty (EPAHP) program that will ensure food security and proper nutrition.

The memorandum was signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on April 19.

The EPAHP is one of the banner programs of the Task Force on Zero Hunger, aimed at institutionalizing efforts to mitigate hunger and promote food and nutrition security by linking community-based organizations (CBOs) to prospective markets and providing credit assistance to support food production, processing and distribution.

"It is imperative for all government agencies and instrumentalities to support the continued and effective implementation of the EPAHP Program to bolster government efforts towards attaining zero hunger, food and nutrition security, and sustainable agriculture," the memorandum read.

The Task Force Hunger is tasked to ensure the continued and effective implementation of the EPAHP Program in coordination with relevant government agencies.

The task force

son J. Prospero de Vera III vowed to continue the improvement of programs and services for higher education institutions in the country.

"CHED is grateful to the Filipino public for continuously trusting the Commission as we perform our mandate of providing quality higher education and cultivating an equitable and sustainable higher education landscape," he said in a statement.

He said the continuous trust of the public serves as a motivation for CHED as it approaches its 30th year.

"Our direction under Bagong Pilipinas has always been to innovate and enhance the quality of our higher education system," de Vera said.

The CHED maintained its slot in the top 5 most trusted and top-performing agencies in four consecutive quarters last year.

Meanwhile, DSWD co-spokesperson Irene Dumlaog welcomed the 77 percent performance rating of the department.

"This recognition underscores the tireless efforts of the DSWD in fulfilling its mandate to provide social protection and promote the welfare and dignity of the Filipino people, especially the marginalized and vulnerable sectors of society," she said in a statement.

Dumlaog said the agency's high ratings exemplify its commitment to delivering efficient and compassionate services to its clients.

She said the survey results are also a validation of the significant efforts of each "Angel in Red Vest" in providing services with "extra love" and "extra care" as envisioned by DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian.

The survey results serve as a valuable indicator of public perception and confidence in the DSWD's ability to address the needs and concerns of the Filipino people along social protection," she said.

DPWH Secretary Manuel Bonoan, meanwhile, described the survey results as "encouraging" that measures the public sentiment of the department.

"It is a reflection of the steadfast efforts, commitment, determination, and dedication of every DPWH official and personnel," Bonoan said in a statement.

"To the DPWH family, I extend my sincerest gratitude for your hard work. To the public, we promise to maintain this level of excellence and trust, as we carry with us the vision of President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos' Bagong Pilipinas," he added.

The DPWH takes pride in the continuity of public confidence, receiving a high trust rating in the past two years. It underscores the public's growing trust and satisfaction in the DPWH's capacity to enhance the country's infrastructure and improve the people's quality of life.

Despite facing operational and budgetary challenges at the beginning of the year, the Department has surpassed expectations, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to its mandate, Bonoan said. (with a report from Zaldy De Layola/PNA)

A total of 4,800 Pangasinenses received assistance from the offices of Senators Alan Peter and Pia Cayetano during a four-day visit to the Province of Pangasinan on April 15 to 18, 2024.

The aid proved essential as the province, currently experiencing El Niño, has grappled with severe drought conditions, leading to crop failures and water shortages.

Various sectors in the towns of Dagupan, Alaminos, San Nicolas, Malasiqui, Bayambang, and San Carlos City received much-needed relief through the collaborative efforts of the sibling senators and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)'s Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) program.

Addressing the beneficiaries from the sectors of ambulant vendors, sari-sari store owners, solo parents, and women, Mayor Belen Fernandez of Dagupan encouraged them to fully utilize the aid ex-

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tended by the senators to their community.

“Kahit sobra silang busy, hindi nila tayo pinapabayaan dito sa Dagupan. Sa pagtanggap niyo ng AICS, huwag ninyo itong sasayangin. Maganda itong ipang-dagdag sa inyong kapital. Tayo ay masuerte dahil tayo ay tinutulongan,” she said.

In Alaminos, an additional group of 1,000 residents from sectors including senior citizens, solo parents, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and the indigent also benefited from the collaborative efforts of the Cayetano-DSWD partnership, facilitated by Mayor Bryan Celeste.

Among them is Jesica Caasi, a solo parent and cancer survivor, who said her condition has never hindered her ability to help her family. Expressing gratitude to the senators for the assistance, she plans to use it to enhance her sari-sari store business.

“Napakalaking tulong po talaga nitong iniabot nina Senator Alan at Senator Pia dahil napamahal na po ng

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sa multa at (Like the grace period given by the President, it is only appropriate that the first ones to be apprehended should also be given grace period from fines and) impounding,” she said.

The senator agreed with President Marcos' directive, citing confusions among e-vehicle drivers on what are prohibited roads or where are they allowed to pass.

“Huwag na sana nating pahirapan ang mga may-ari ng e-bikes at e-trikes na naghahanap lang ng maayos na alternatibong masakyan (We should not make it harder for e-bike and e-trike owners who are just looking for an alternative transportation),” Poe said.

MMDA Regula-

tion 24-022 took effect on Monday, prohibiting e-bikes, e-trikes, tricycles, pedicabs, pushcarts, and “kuliglig” (improvised motor vehicle) from plying national roads, circumferential roads, and radial roads in Metro Manila. However, President Marcos directed the MMDA and local government units (LGUs) on Thursday to grant e-vehicle owners a one-month adjustment for a wider information dissemination about the new regulation.

With the President's order, Poe said she expects the MMDA and other agencies concerned to consult the stakeholders and create balanced policies that take into consideration the plight of commuters without compromising safety. (PNA)



Philippines's Ambassador to Malaysia Ma. Angela Ponce will also be joining the event.

The Malaysian delegation will be led by ABAC Malaysia Chairman Tan Sri Nazir Razak and B2B Connect Initiative (BCI) chairman and former Malaysia trade minister Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed. They will lead a group of Malaysian companies engaged in rice, durian, pineapple, poultry, coconut, banana, agarwood, rubber, and palm oil production.

The trade visit follows the signing last year of a Memorandum

of Understanding initiated by the ASEAN BAC Philippines with ASEAN BAC Malaysia, where both countries agreed to engage in promoting trade, investment, and other development partnerships in agriculture. The signing was witnessed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. last year in Kuala Lumpur.

The visit is expected to kick off similar cooperation activities between ABAC Philippines and all the other signatories of the MOU – namely Indonesia, Singapore, Cambodia, Myanmar, Brunei, Laos, and Thailand. In the Philippine

delegation are Kennemer Country Head Jojo Joson, Lionheart Farms CEO Christian Moeller, Bounty Fresh SVP Carl Benedict Chung, Phil. Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement's Rowena Sadicon, Yovel East CEO James Amparo, LT Group CEO Michael Tan, l'impact Foods Business Devt Manager Nelben Moreno, Iba Botanicals CEO Ben Mead, BioPrime SVP Paul Tolentino, Universal Leaf President Winston Uy, Highly Succeed CEO Maricar Malaki, RFM CFO Oliver Rey Matias, and YTMI Realty President Felcaster Torres.

METRO PACIFIC TOLLWAYS ADDRESSES PEATC CASE FILING

Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation acknowledges recent media coverage over the case filing of PEA Tollway Corporation against our subsidiary, Cavite Infrastructure Corporation (CIC), the current joint-venture partner of Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) for the Manila-Cavite Toll Expressway Project, otherwise known as CAVITEX. Understanding that this is a matter of public interest, we would like to address the concerns with clarity and transparency.

With the project being a joint venture with the PRA, any legal dispute involving CIC should have rightfully included Philippine Reclamation Authority as an indispensable party. The petition against CIC was filed by Mr. Dioscoro Esteban Jr., Officer-in-Charge of CIC, who lacks authority of the PRA or of the PEATC Board to file such petition. This misrepresentation is further evidenced by the absence of the imprimatur of the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC) which is the rightful counsel of a GOCC such as the PEATC.

However, MPTC has consistently demonstrated professionalism and courtesy by extending invitations for constructive dialogue. We firmly believe that open communication and collaborative problem-solving are the most effective means of resolving

disputes. Regrettably, these invitations were disregarded, hindering the progress towards an amicable resolution.

MPTC reiterates its commitment to uphold the highest standards of corporate governance and ethical conduct. We remain steadfast in our dedication to resolve disputes

through peaceful and lawful means, prioritizing the interests of all stakeholders involved. We hope that the parties involved will address the issue with sobriety, professionalism, and a genuine willingness to engage in meaningful dialogue towards a mutually beneficial resolution. PR



Muling papalo sa 43-44°C ang damang-init o heat index sa ilang bahagi ng Calabarzon ngayong araw batay sa tala ng DOST-PAGASA.

Sa forecast ng ahensya, mainit at maalinsangang panahon ang nararamdaman sa Tanauan City, Batangas na aabot sa 44°C habang 43°C naman ang temperatura sa Sangley Point, Cavite

Ang heat index ay ang init ng panahon na nararamdaman ng tao na maaaring magdulot ng heat cramps, heat exhaustion, at heat stroke.

Kung maaari, iwasan ang mga outdoor activities o ang labis na paglalagi sa labas ng bahay o opisina mula alas-10 ng umaga hanggang alas-4 ng hapon.



Go Negosyo Celebrates Outstanding Filipina Entrepreneurs

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT. First Lady Liza Araneta Marcos joins Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion, together with Department of Trade and Industry Secretary Alfredo Pascual and US Ambassador MaryKay Carlson, join the country's leading women entrepreneurs and executives, winners of the Inspiring Filipina Entrepreneur Awards 2024, and nearly two thousand aspiring and active women entrepreneurs at the Women Summit event of Go Negosyo, held at the Ayala Malls Manila Bay last March 9, 2024.

The non-profit Go Negosyo celebrated Filipina entrepreneurs last March 9, 2024 during its annual Women Summit event, this year held at the Ayala Malls Manila Bay in Parañaque City. First Lady Liza Araneta Marcos joined Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion, US Ambassador Mary Kay Carlson, DTI Secretary Alfredo Pascual, and thousands of women en-



trepreneurs in celebrating women-led MSMEs in the country.

It was also the venue for the annual Inspiring Filipina Entrepreneurs Awards, where 19 outstanding Filipina entrepreneurs were chosen from hundreds of nominations received. This year's awardees spanned several sectors of industry, from food and beverage to manufacturing, and services and social enter-

prise. They included Ally Joy Cabarles of Kaulayaw Coffee, Annette Patdu of the Original Paeng's, Jonnah Escudero of Lily of the Valley, Cristina Balao-as Cayat of Inabel Tailoring, Czarina Sevilla of Avocadoria PH, Emilyn Kabor of Jireh Food Products, Katrina Blanca De Leon of Genteel Home, Maria Rafaela Louise Sol of Nuevo Ystilo, Marica Peñalosa of Ate Rica's Bacsilog, Marie Joyce Co Yu of True

Blends & Coffee, Frances Uma Espinosa of The Original Paeng's, Jonnah Garcia of Punique Handicrafts, Marjorie Barcelona of Healthy Lemon, Leah Marie Ayeng of Prestige Paper Products, Anna Melissa Nava of 1Export Trade and Services, Anna Magalona of But First Coffee, and Denise Caranto of Konu. Robina Gokongwei-Pe, meanwhile, was given the Woman of Leg-

acy Award.

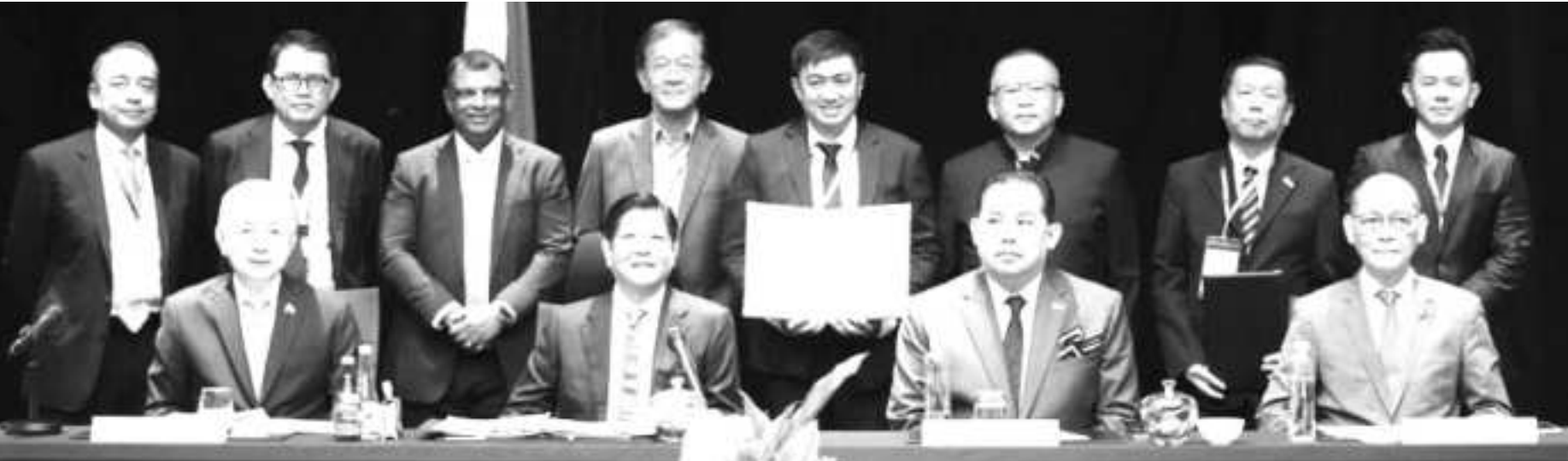
In attendance to talk to the hundreds of women entrepreneurs gathered that day were accomplished Filipina executives and entrepreneurs including GMA's Annette Gozon-Valdez, renowned chef Gaita Fores, mining executive Caroline Tanchay, designer Vania Romoff, and Canva's Yani Donato.

Go Negosyo organizes Women Summit every year to celebrate women's achievements and contributions to society and the economy in various fields and industries. In doing so, it hopes to inspire the next generation of Filipinas and advocate for the integration of digitalization that supports women-led enterprises. By putting forward this agenda, the program aims to empower women through forum discussions, inspirational talks, and interactive sessions by successful businesswomen and visionaries, highlighting their resilience to promote

productivity and global competitiveness.

The day-long program featured panel discussions centering around the theme "Harnessing the Digital Age to Empower Women". Among the topics of discussion were translating creative vision into business, envisioning sustainable businesses centered around agriculture, breaking gender barriers in male-dominated professions, succeeding in an industry transformed by AI, effective financial management for MSMEs, effective branding using digital tools, impactful content creation, opportunities in eco-friendly businesses, women in e-sports, and the business of beauty. Celebrity women entrepreneurs Cristalle Belo Henares, Ms. Universe Philippines Angelique Manto and singer/TV host Atasha Muhlach also were featured in inspirational sessions. Drag performer and impersonator Taylor Sweep provided the entertainment for the event.

Concepcion Leads Agri Trade Visit to Malaysia



ASEAN BAC members, together with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., Department of Trade and Industry Sec. Alfredo Pascual, House Speaker Martin Romualdez, and then-Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno at the signing of the MOU with Malaysia private sector last July 27, 2023 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The MOU paved the way for the series of collaborations set to take place between Philippine and Malaysian agriculture companies. Standing, from left, are ABAC Malaysia Chairman Tan Sri Nazir Razak, ABAC Philippines Chair Joey Concepcion, Group CEO of Capital A Tony Fernandes, and members of the Malaysian business community.

Leading Philippine agriculture companies are set to meet with Malaysian agriculture powerhouses this April 22 to 24, 2024 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in time for the 100th meeting of the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (BAC). The meeting is a direct outcome of ASEAN BAC Philippines's efforts to forge partnerships between the agri-

culture companies of the ASEAN member states.

The three-day visit will involve a series of meetings to initiate strategic partnerships; technology and knowledge exchange of best practices and experiences; and expand market access and diversify agricultural enterprises in both countries. The delegation will visit plantations and man-

ufacturing sites around Malaysia to further explore other possible partnerships. A Memorandum of Agreement on agarwood production technology will also be signed during the visit.

ASEAN BAC Philippines chair and Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion, who will lead the delegation, said the meetings will be important

as the Philippines moves forward to ensure food security for itself and its neighbors in the region.

"This will benefit not just the agriculture industries of both our countries but also put us on a path toward developing cooperative relationships within the public and private sectors to ensure food security for the region," he said. "We will

learn from each other and facilitate market linkages so that we can be a more productive, food-producing, self-reliant region. Starting with Malaysia, we will forge partnerships with the agri companies of the other ASEAN member states," he said.

Joining Concepcion during the trade visit will be former Agriculture Secretary and now Go

Negosyo Senior Adviser Dr. William Dar, the presidents, CEOs, and top executives of leading Philippine agriculture companies in commodities like rice, corn, coconut, cacao, poultry, flour, dairy, banana, durian, tobacco, agarwood, fertilizer and essential oils, as well as agriculture technology and manufacturing. The

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