

NGCP renews partnership with DepEd for educational support program



As part of its educational support programs, NGCP renewed its partnership with the Department of Education (DepEd) to provide school supplies, computer laboratories, and school buildings to its various host communities.

Education Secretary Sonny Angara and NGCP President Anthony Almada led the renewal of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) at the DepEd Head Office in Pasig City recently.

"The latest MOU reflects our strong commitment to supporting the Department of Education and fostering a brighter future for students across the country, ensuring that no one is left behind," NGCP said.

"Through this partnership, we provide learners with a conducive



environment that fosters growth and academic success, enabling them to reach their full potential and build a brighter future," it added.

Since 2011, NGCP has provided a total of Php 473.43 million of CSR program support to DepEd, including the distribution of 870,500 schoolbags filled with school supplies worth Php212.13 million in 3,482 schools across the country.

This project aims to assist learners and their parents by providing school supplies for Grades 1 to 3 and raise awareness about transmission line safety, anti-pilferage, and NGCP's zero harm policy, to host communities. These important messages are incorporated into the NGCP notebooks distributed to students.

To help bridge the digital gap, NGCP established 39 computer laboratories worth Php101.34 million to select public schools in underprivileged and remote host communities, giving students access to basic computer proficiency necessary for future opportunities.

Additionally, NGCP constructed Php159.96 million worth of classroom buildings in support of the government's initiative to provide essential infrastructure facilities that foster an ideal learning environment.

"This is NGCP's way of recognizing the critical role of our host communities that have consistently supported us and helped protect power transmission facilities in their respective areas," NGCP stated.

Relentless Achiever

"I will keep working as long as I can," is the daily mantra of 61-year-old Anastacio Castillo. True to his word, he continues to work tirelessly to earn a living.

Born in Quezon Province, Anastacio's life took a new turn when he met his wife, a native of Pangasinan, at a mutual friend's wedding. After getting married, they moved frequently, living in Bulacan, Cavite, and Batangas before settling in Tiaong, Quezon, upon discovering his wife was pregnant.

In those early days, selling mami (noodle soup) was their main source of income. To grow their livelihood, Anastacio established a small carinderia (eatery). One of his most successful strategies was using social media to promote his business, where he went live to showcase the food he was offering.

Aside from cooking, Anastacio is also skilled in making aluminum glass — a craft he learned from his uncle when he was just 17 years old. This skill eventually became another source of income for his family. Five years ago, he decided to start his aluminum glass business, starting with small contracts. Over time, his work gained recognition in the community.

Recently, Anastacio tried his hand at hog raising, but it suffered a significant setback due to the African swine fever (AFS) outbreak. Many of his pigs died, leading to heavy financial losses.

Despite this, Anastacio remains optimistic. "We had previously



Aluminum glass making was one of Anastacio Castillo's businesses that helped him put his children through school and provide them with a comfortable life.

What I like about them is that they support small businesses like mine that lack sufficient capital," he said.

Anastacio Castillo's story proves how hard work can lead to a better state in life.

CARD **RBI**

Ito ang bangko natin.

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Cavite students learn disaster preparedness via video game

Rice for All sale in supermarkets eyed by mid-February

DTI-Laguna, Center for Competencies Enhancement and Development conduct Employment Job Coaching Seminar



Calamba City — The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) – Laguna Provincial Office, in collaboration with the Center for Competencies Enhancement

and Development (CCED), successfully conducted a seminar titled "Employment/Job Coaching Seminar" on January 17, 2025 at the 3rd Floor Kristine Business Center, Calamba City Hall, Brgy. II (Poblacion), Calamba City, Laguna.

The seminar was participated by a total of sixty-five (65) students from different qualifications, specifically in Food and Beverage Services, Events Management Services, Housekeeping, and Bookkeeping under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

Ms. Lored Amansec, President of CCED, delivered a warm welcome and introduced the following re-source speakers for the seminar:

cont. on Page 2

During the mission, 482 individuals received free medical consultations and essential medicines, addressing a wide array of health concerns. Additionally, 85 patients availed themselves of free dental services, including tooth extractions, bringing much-needed relief to the community. - A. Sarte

On January 14, 2025, the Office of the Provincial Governor's Medical Mission Team, in partnership with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, conducted a highly successful Medical and Dental Mission in Barangay Malagasang II-A, City of Imus.

The event saw the presence of notable leaders, including Vice Governor Sherman Jaro,



The Women's Welfare Program returned to the City of Dasmariñas, providing Php 2,000 in financial assistance to 2,000 women. Governor Athena Tolentino was joined by Mayor Jenny Barzaga, 4th District Board Member Fulgencio "Jun" Dela Cuesta Jr., BM Nickol Austria, and

the Sangguniang Panlungsod members of Dasmariñas in the impactful program which underscores a strong commitment to empowering women, strengthening their role in society, and fostering opportunities for growth and community development.

Senate gives final nod to PHIVOLCS Modernization Bill championed by Cayetano

Senate approves PHIVOLCS Modernization Bill on Final Reading

The Senate showed its full support for the PHIVOLCS Modernization Act (Senate Bill No. 2825), sponsored by Senator Alan Peter Cayetano.

With 23 affirmative votes, the bill was approved on its Third and Final Reading on Tuesday, January 14, 2025.

cont. on Page 3

Cavite career Education caravan inspires young minds in GMA

talents with career goals.

The event's interactive discussions and engaging activities sparked enthusiasm and curiosity among the students. The activities encouraged them to explore diverse career paths that resonate with their passions and strengths, empowering them to envision a future full of possibilities.

The initiative underscores Cavite's commitment to fostering youth development and ensuring that students are well-prepared to navigate the challenges of an ever-changing global landscape.

— R. Tanael

On January 17, 2025, the Cavite Career Education Caravan, spearheaded by Office of the Provincial Public Employment Service Manager (OPPEM), made a significant impact at Alta Tierra Integrated School in General Mariano Alvarez, Cavite. Twenty-nine students participated in an inspiring event designed to guide them in making informed decisions about their academic and career aspirations.

Organized to address the evolving demands of the modern workforce, OPPEM Head, Ms. Rizalie Pin-pin-Enero, shared their expertise on emerging career trends, the essential skills for today's job market, and the importance of aligning personal interests and



MINDFULNESS EXERCISES & ACTIVITIES FOR ADULTS

- Say goodbye to your anger. Gradually bring your attention back to your breath and rest here for a while until your emotions have subsided or settled down;
- Reflect on the experience. Notice the sensations that this exercise brought up in your body. Notice if they changed through the process. Take note of whether you applied compassion to your anger, and if so, how you did it. Think about what happened to the anger when you showed it compassion.

This exercise can be repeated as many times as necessary. It is recommended to work your way up from milder experiences of anger to the most intense and memorable epi-sodes.

Practicing this technique can help you to defuse chronic anger in a rather counterintuitive manner: by accepting and mindfully feeling your anger, you can take control of the experience and compassionately address it.

Mindfulness Techniques for Anxiety

Mindfulness techniques can also aid an undiagnosed individual who suffers from occasional (or not-so-occasional) anxiety.

A meta-analysis in 2010 advocated for the effectiveness of mindfulness exercises on anxiety and depression. The researchers found that mindfulness-based therapy was moderately effective for treating anxiety and improving mood and that the effects lasted beyond the initial improvements (Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010).

To begin applying mindfulness to your anxiety, or that of your clients, Mindful.org has provided a short description of 10 attitudes that will help build the foundation for successfully addressing anxiety:

• Volition or intention

This is the building block of all other attitudes. First, you must bring your focus to the intention of working with your anxiety.

• Beginner's mind

This refers to a mindset that is ready to see from a new perspective and consider new ideas with regards to dealing with anxiety.

• Patience

This is a very important attitude to cultivate since it can broaden your perspective and help you persevere when you run into obstacles on your journey.

• Acknowledgment

Having the mindset of acknowledgment means that you take each experience for what it is; you accept what is happening and are secure in the knowledge that it will pass.

• Non-judgment

This attitude involves experiencing your present moment without evaluating and judging it. It means you let go of value judgments about yourself and how you are feeling and allows you to begin your work from a more balanced starting point.

• Non-striving

This attitude refers to the willingness to accept a situation or experience as it is, without trying to change it. To combat your anxiety, you must first be present with it and accept your current state.

• Self-reliance

The mindset of self-reliance is characterized by trusting yourself and your ability to handle your feelings. Cultivating your self-reliance will allow you to more easily acknowledge, experience, and let go of your anxiety.

Continuation next week

Cavite...

KAWIT, Cavite (PIA) — Over 800 students from Emiliano Tirona Memorial National Integrated High School in Kawit, Cavite get immersed in an innovative disaster management lecture, learning about flood preparedness through the interactive online video game Minecraft.

This initiative is part of the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to strengthen disaster and flood preparedness among the youth under the Cavite Industrial Area-Flood Risk Management Project (CIA-FRIMP).

Mr. Keisuke Ono, a lecturer at the Tohoku Institute of Technology in Japan, led the session on flood education using a 3D city model within Minecraft.

Rice...

MANILA — Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said cheaper rice options under the Kadiwa ng Pangulo (KNP) Rice for All will be available in supermarkets on the second week of February.

These include RFA 5, or the 5 percent broken which sells at PHP45/kg.; RFA 25, or the 25 percent broken at PHP38/kg.; RFA 100, also known as Sulit rice or 100 percent broken at PHP36/kg.; and P29, or the aging but good quality rice stock of the National Food Authority sold to vulnerable sectors at PHP29/kg.

This came following his meeting with major supermarket chains and convenience stores on Jan. 21, which gained positive feedback.

"Well, I'm hoping Feb. 15 or latest March," he said in a dinner interview Thursday.

"There will be another meeting with FTI (Food Terminal Incorporated) with them. Then after that, another meeting na kapag na-sort out ng ang details, another meeting with me."

Tiu Laurel, how-

Ono emphasized the benefits of Minecraft's three-dimensional features in helping students and the younger generation better understand disaster management and identify flood-prone areas, compared to traditional two-dimensional maps.

"Minecraft is good for kids to study which areas are endangered during floods and which places are safe under flood conditions," Ono said.

"This is very important for providing collective information about natural disasters because the young generation of the Philippines is vital not just for this country but also for the world in building a better future," he added.

According to CIA-FRIMP, the interactive lecture aimed to instill disaster resilience among the youth by immersing

them in a hands on, visual learning experience. Through the 3D city model, students were able to simulate real life flood scenarios, identify flood-prone areas, and explore evacuation routes and risk reduction strategies.

Using the gamified approach, Ono guided students through discussions on the causes of flooding, structural and non-structural mitigation measures, and community-based strategies for disaster risk reduction.

For the teachers of Emiliano Tirona Memorial National Integrated High School, the Minecraft online video game enabled students to better appreciate disaster management lessons.

"The interactive application captured the students' attention, making the learning experience both enjoyable and informative. By incorporating engaging elements,

ing on their reach)," Tiu Laurel said.

He, however, clarified that not all stores are required to put up RFA options due to limitations of spaces. (PNA)

DTL...

1. Ms. Dessy Encinas, Supervising Labor and Employment Officer of the Information, Investment Promotions and Employment Services Office - City Government of Calamba, shared "Practical Advice on Improving Employability".

2. Ms. Alma Arenal, Business Counsellor of DTI Laguna Negosyo Center in Calamba City, facilitated an engaging session on "How to Start a Business", guiding the participants through the fundamentals of entrepreneurship, including business registration and accessing government support through DTI programs.

3. Atty. April Casabuena, Regional Director of the Department of Migrant Workers CALABARZON, discussed "Working Abroad and Illegal Recruitment", highlighting essential precautions for aspiring overseas workers and ways to

the app facilitated a deeper comprehension, allowing the students to connect with the material in an exciting way," the school stated.

The Provincial Government of Cavite supported the initiative, recognizing it as a step toward building a disaster-resilient community.

"This activity underscores the commitment of CIA-FRIMP, the Provincial Government of Cavite, and the local government of Kawit. By empowering the younger generation with knowledge and practical tools, this initiative will enable them to create safer communities ready to face the challenges of natural disasters," the provincial government said.

CIA-FRIMP is a collaborative initiative between the DPWH and JICA aimed at addressing flood risks and enhancing disaster preparedness in the Cavite Industrial Area.

From Page 1

From Page 1

From Page 1

BingoPlus player bags a jackpot prize of 312 million pesos



L-R: BP Studio Host Troy; ABL President, Mr. Jasper Vicencio; BP Jackpot Winner; and PAGCOR Representative



Mr. Jasper Vicencio, President of BingoPlus, delivers an inspiring speech during the awarding ceremony, celebrating the platform's remarkable achievement and the life-changing win of 312 million pesos.

BingoPlus, the country's most comprehensive digital entertainment platform, celebrated yet another milestone. A lucky player won a massive jackpot prize of 312 million pesos. To commemorate this big win, a special awarding ceremony took place on January 10, 2025 at a hotel in Manila.

Doubling the previous jackpot prize, the avid BingoPlus player broke the record for winning the biggest jackpot ever. During the awarding, the winner was presented with a mock cheque by Mr. Jasper Vicencio, the president of AB Leisure Exponent, Inc. (ABLE). He also conveyed a message that highlighted BingoPlus'

achievements.

Moreover, prominent media from the country attended the significant event. Following the event highlights, the media representatives had the opportunity to interview the winner along with Mr. Vicencio during a press conference. He thanked the supporters for their appreciation of BingoPlus' offerings. He stressed that because of them, Bingo Plus was able to give back to the community through their foundation.

Additionally, the lucky winner expressed her gratitude to BingoPlus. "Thank you so much sa biyaya. Actually, hiniling ko 'to. Siguro, kayo yung naging way ng nasa taas para maibigay niya sa akin

ang hiling ko," the jackpot winner said when the BingoPlus host asked her what her message is to the brand that gave her a life-changing experience.

When asked about her initial reaction to winning, she stated that she was shocked. And yet, on the day of the ceremony, she still could not believe she had won such a huge amount. She emphasized the importance of her children's education while sharing her plans for the prize money. Thus, to help the player be equipped and manage her winnings, a financial coaching session was conducted before the ceremony.

Furthermore, the brand's focus is to con-



BingGirls performing a dance number at the 312 Million Jackpot Awarding Ceremony.

tinue creating spectacular moments, such as the jackpot awarding ceremony. BingoPlus is committed to enhancing the gaming experience of their players as they remain at the forefront of the industry. Likewise, the support-

ers should look forward to what BingoPlus has in store for this new year.

DigiPlus Interactive Corp. pioneered digital entertainment in the Philippines. It introduced leading platforms BingoPlus and ArenaPlus, wide-

ly known for their engaging experiences in interactive gaming and sports entertainment. DigiPlus also operates PeryaGame, Tongits+, and GameZone, with more to come. For more information, visit: www.digiplus.com.ph.

PAPER to Hold Induction Ceremony for New Board of Trustees and National Officers at the Supreme Court

The Prime Alliance of Publishers, Editors, and Reporters (Ph) Inc. (PAPER) will hold its Oath-Taking Ceremony for the newly elected Board of Trustees and National Officers on February 3, 2025, at 1:00 p.m., in the Supreme Court of the Philippines, Manila.

Honorable Court Administrator Raul B. Villanueva, a key figure in the Philippine judiciary, will serve as the Inducting Officer for this prestigious event.

Hon. Villanueva has earned widespread respect for his dedication to promoting justice and maintaining the integrity of the judiciary. As Court Administrator, he oversees the efficient operation of courts nationwide, ensuring public trust in the judicial system. His presence as the Inducting Officer reflects the important intersection between the media and justice in fostering transparency, accountability, and informed communities.

PAPER was built on the dedication of its three founding pillars—Luisito T. Arriola, Abel C. Pablo, and Nena E. Malari—along with 12 other Board of Trustees representing Tarlac, Laguna, Cavite, Samar, Bulacan, Batangas, and Mindanao.

The organization faced its greatest challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which claimed the lives of two of its founders, Mr. Arriola and Mr. Pablo. Despite these heartbreaking losses, PAPER found

its commitment to responsible journalism and national service.

A Brief History of PAPER

The Prime Alliance of Publishers, Editors, and Reporters (Ph) Inc. (PAPER) was founded in December 2019 in Manila City by a group of media practitioners from various regions in the Philippines. United by a shared vision, they sought to address the unique needs of professionals in the journalism and broadcasting fields while promoting environmental stewardship and community service through truthful, responsible reporting.

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Luisito T. Arriola, Abel C. Pablo, and Nena E. Malari—along with 12 other Board of Trustees representing Tarlac, Laguna, Cavite, Samar, Bulacan, Batangas, and Mindanao.

The organization faced its greatest challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which claimed the lives of two of its founders, Mr. Arriola and Mr. Pablo. Despite these heartbreaking losses, PAPER found

renewed strength to carry forward the vision of its founders. Today, the organization stands as a beacon of resilience, with a growing membership, strengthened partnerships, and a steadfast commitment to advancing truth, integrity, and social responsibility in Philippine journalism.

Looking Ahead with New Leadership

The upcoming induction ceremony will formally introduce the new leaders of PAPER, led by Bayani N. Zoleta, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Bonifacio C. Dacayanan, President. Under their leadership, PAPER is set to expand its initiatives aimed at fostering collaboration among media practitioners, promoting ethical journalism, and contributing to nation-building.

Honoring the Media's Role in Nation-Building

This milestone event highlights the vital role of media in shaping public discourse and ensuring transparency. Hon. Villanueva is expected to deliver an inspiring message, emphasizing the synergy between the judiciary and the press in upholding democracy and serving the Filipino people.



CAVITE, PHILIPPINES — The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) successfully concluded the second leg

from December 10 to 11, the caravan took place in Silang and Dasmariñas, further advancing DTI's nationwide initiative aimed at boosting industry compliance and ensuring consumer protection.

DTI Secretary Cristina A. Roque emphasized the Department's commitment to equipping stakeholders with vital knowledge to navigate evolving product policies. "These initiatives enable stakeholders to navigate the fast-changing landscape of global standards and market demands," Roque stated. The caravan focused on fostering a culture of compliance and informed decision-making, crucial for the safety, quality, and competitiveness of Philippine industries.

The first day



of the event gathered stakeholders from the CALABARZON region at the Silang New Municipal Hall. Participants, including manufacturers and retailers, engaged in in-depth discussions on standardization and conformity assessment, led

by various divisions of the DTI-Bureau of Philippine Standards (BPS). On the second day, 132 architecture and engineering students from the National College of Science and Technology in Dasmariñas attended lectures and workshops covering topics

such as BPS programs, technical regulations, and conformity assessment procedures. Through these sessions, the DTI-BPS aimed to highlight the importance of compliance and industry standards to local stakeholders.

Lumagui Celebrates BIR's Record-Breaking Collection, Emphasizes Focus on Taxpayer-Oriented Service

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) successfully surpassed its 2024 revenue target set by the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), marking a historic achievement in the agency's history.

BIR Commissioner Romeo D. Lumagui, Jr. confirmed that the agency collected a total of at least P2.848 trillion. "While the final collection figures will be confirmed in mid-February, we are confident that we have exceeded the DBCC's target," Lumagui stated.

Excluding 2020 when the target was adjusted due to the global pandemic—this is the first time in twenty years that the BIR surpassed its revenue goal. Moreover, this success comes despite the Philippine economy's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growing at a slower-than-expected rate of 5.2% in the third quarter of 2024, down from 6.4% in the previous quarter and 6% in the same period the previous year.

"The BIR has collected at least Php 2.848 trillion for 2024, and all credit goes to the hard-

working men and women of the agency. Mabuhay po kayong lahat!" Lumagui expressed.

The Commissioner attributed this success to the agency's focus on good governance reforms and a shift toward a taxpayer-oriented approach, which has enhanced voluntary tax compliance. "When government agencies enhance their processes and services, citizens are more willing to do their part and pay their fair share of taxes," he added.

Since his appointment as BIR Commissioner by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. back in 2022, Lumagui has garnered praise for his hands-on leadership, which has been crucial in strengthening the BIR's commitment to good governance.

Under his leadership, the BIR achieved several notable milestones, including 100% nationwide ISO certification for various frontline processes, the Civil Service Commission's Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management

(CSC PRIME-HRM) Maturity Level II Accreditation, and the National Privacy Commission (NPC) Seal of Registration in the previous year.

Lumagui has cultivated a culture within the BIR grounded in four pillars, namely: strong and assertive enforcement activities, excellent taxpayer service, integrity

and professionalism within the institution and among its employees, and a robust push for digitalization.

It was under his term that the BIR made a significant dent in combating the long-standing issue of "ghost receipts," which involve the use of fictitious receipts and invoices to evade taxes. The establishment of the Run After Fake Transactions (RAFT) task force—a first

in BIR history—has been a critical step in tackling this pervasive issue.

Additionally, the BIR introduced a new withholding tax system for online stores, leveling the playing field between traditional and digital retail businesses.

"We are thankful for the guidance and support of President Marcos, Jr., and this inspired us to reciprocate his trust with

outstanding performance. We now have a successful and proven template that works," Lumagui explained. "My hope and prayer is that all the stakeholders — from both the public and private sector — will continue to support the reforms that we have put into place, so that we can continue to surpass our targets in the coming years," the commissioner concluded.

NAIAx, portions of Skyway Stage 3 speed limits adjusted to 80 kph

SMC Infrastructure announced an increase in the speed limit on the NAIA Expressway (NAIAx) to 80 kilometers per hour (kph) from the previous 60 kph, effective January 15, 2025.

Similar speed limit adjustments will be implemented on straight sections of Skyway Stage 3 starting January 20, 2025. These adjustments follow a comprehensive study conducted by the company's traffic safety managers.

"This change will make travel on NAIAx and Skyway Stage 3 faster and more efficient for every-

one," said SMC Chairman and CEO Ramon S. Ang. "We have carefully studied this to make sure that it benefits motorists while prioritizing safety."

Ang added, "This also complements the ongoing reconfiguration of exit plazas at NAIAx, which should allow for less congestion and help improve motorists' experience on the expressway."

However, Ang stressed that the 60-kph speed limit will continue to be enforced for all motorists on curved sections of both expressways.

"This is to maintain safety, as we do not

want to put any motorists at risk of accidents due to miscalculation or over-steering, especially where there are sharp curves, given the limitations to the design of both the NAIAx and Skyway 3," he explained.

Ang further elaborated that right-of-way issues during the construction of NAIAx and Skyway Stage 3 forced redesigns of some sections and even a number of access ramps, due to very limited space. As a result, portions of both expressways have sharp curves where

motorists need to slow down.

To ensure compliance, Ang said traffic patrolers equipped with radar speed guns will continue to monitor and issue citations to motorists caught violating the speed limits. All traffic patrolers are deputized by the Land Transportation Office (LTO) to apprehend erring motorists at exits, confiscate their drivers' licenses, and issue temporary operator's permits.

"We appeal to our motorists to observe speed limits at our expressway facilities for the safety of all," Ang concluded.

cont. on Page 3

EDITORIAL: Teenage pregnancy: Use facts, not fear

CONSERVATIVE and religious leaders and their allies in Congress are mobilizing against the pro-posed Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy Act in the Senate, more than a year after a similar bill was passed in the House of Representatives.

Both bills seek to address the growing problem of teenage pregnancies and all the attendant health risks and financial burdens they entail. To stand in the way of such legislation, using fear and deception, is a disservice to the nation.

In 2022, at least 411 children were born to teenage mothers every day, giving the Philippines one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in Southeast Asia, wrote Dalmacito A. Cordero Jr., from the Department of Theology and Religious Education at De La Salle University, in a letter published in the Journal of Preventive Medicine & Public Health in 2024.

Teenage pregnancy was determined to be a "national and social emergency" by the National Economic and Development Authority in 2019, he noted.

"In a nationwide survey commissioned by the Commission on Population and Development in November 2020 among adults 18 years old and [younger], the issue of pregnancies among adolescents figured prominently as the most mentioned in all geographic areas and across socioeconomic groups," Cordero wrote.

"In 2022, a total of 3,135 adolescent girls younger than 15 years old gave birth, a 35.13-percent increase from the 2,320 recorded in 2021," he added.

That year, live births by females ages 19 and younger reached 150,138, up 10.15 percent from

136,302 in 2021.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) show that one in 20 Filipino babies are born to girls ages 15 to 19 and that births registered to girls ages 10 to 14 have been increasing. In 2023, there were 3,343 children born to children ages 10 to 14.

The PSA also reported that most births delivered by teen mothers are fathered by significantly older men, highlighting a disturbing situation that often leads to abuse.

A significant number of maternal deaths among teens every year — 162 girls ages 10 to 19 — was due to pregnancy or childbirth in 2022 alone. This is hardly surprising, as the bodies of teenage mothers are not yet suitable or ready to carry a child in the womb, Cordero wrote.

"When the mother is not healthy, the child she carries will also be unhealthy," he warned. "Adolescent mothers (aged 10 to 19 years) face higher risks of eclampsia, puerperal endometritis and systemic infections than women aged 20 to 24 years, and babies of adolescent mothers face higher risks of low birth weight, preterm birth and severe neonatal conditions."

On the socioeconomic side, PSA data show that teen pregnancy accounts for almost 60 percent of school dropouts among girls, severely limiting their potential and costing the country billions in lost opportunities.

Clearly, legislation to address this situation is a crucial step in the right direction.

A group of conservative advocates, however, have launched a campaign called Project Dalisay to stop the Senate bill and even recall the House bill that was

Senate...

In his sponsorship speech in December 2024, Cayetano emphasized the urgent need to modernize the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) to enhance the country's disaster preparedness.

"Ang Pilipinas

kasi isa sa pinaka-vulnerable [when it comes to disasters caused by natural hazards]. That's what this modernization bill is about. How we can mitigate disasters, risks, how we can prepare, and how we can also take care of our nature better," he said.

The bill aims to

better equip PHIVOLCS to effectively perform its functions and contribute to closing the gaps in the country's disaster response and preparedness.

It includes upgrading PHIVOLCS' equipment, increasing the number of seismic stations, and ensuring better salaries and training for its

personnel.

Following the passage of the bill on its final reading, senators expressed strong support for the measure, recognizing its critical role in strengthening the country's disaster response and preparedness.

Senator Joel Villanueva took the Senate floor to thank Cayetano for

already passed.

As part of this effort to discredit these bills, the group, led by former chief justice Ma. Lourdes Sereno has released a deceptive video using hot-button terms like "childhood masturbation" or "sexual rights" of children to rally support against comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) from uninformed parents.

But none of these terms or concepts are in the Senate bill drafted by Sen. Risa Hontiveros.

In fact, the Project Dalisay video highlights portions of a CSE document released by the World Health Organization for Europe but omits this detail and, with some skillful editing, makes it appear to be portions of the bill in question.

"As the author of the bill, I'm surprised and outraged at the lies spreading on social media against the proposed measure," Hontiveros said in Filipino and English. "We all want what's best for our children, but outright lies, misinformation, disinformation and promoting fear can lead to more harmful decisions about our teen's lives. They are just confusing us."

Contrary to the claims of Project Dalisay, Hontiveros' bill has no provisions about teaching or encouraging masturbation for children between zero and 4 years old and teaching "bodily pleasure" or "sexual rights" to children ages 6 to 9.

"Absolutely none of those concepts exist in our bill. Those lines in their supposed rebuttal are complete and total fabrication," Hontiveros said.

Sereno, in her video, suggests the CSE could "hypersexualize" children at a very early age, ignoring the threats that already exist in traditional and social media.

How we choose to act on teenage pregnancy is open to debate, but that discussion ought to start with facts, not fear and deception.

From Page 1

his leadership in advancing the bill.

"We extend our thanks to Senator Alan Peter Cayetano for his leadership in pushing for this critical measure. We voted 'Yes' to this measure to make sure that PHIVOLCS is equipped with the equipment, technology, and personnel needed for timely and accurate

disaster data collection," Villanueva said.

Before the sine die adjournment last year, Cayetano repeatedly pointed out the broader implications of the modernization bill stating that it is just one part of a larger effort to keep the Philippines and its people safe

NAIAx...

NAIAx is the elevated toll road that connects the Skyway System to the three passenger terminals of NAIA, and other key areas such as Entertainment City, Macapagal Boulevard, Sucat Road in Paranaque City, and the road network to Cavite province.

The 18-km Sky-

way Stage 3 meanwhile connects Balintawak, Quezon City, and NLEX to the Skyway System at Buendia in Makati and the South Luzon Expressway at Alabang, Muntinlupa City. Stage 3 also features key exits in the cities of Manila, San Juan, and Caloocan, providing alternative routes to these areas. PR

From Page 6



The Provincial Government of Cavite, led by Governor Athena Tolentino, successfully conducted the third leg of the Women's Welfare Program in the City of Imus, distributing ₱2,000 in financial assistance to 2,000 women beneficiaries. Governor Tolentino spearheaded the initiative, joined by 3rd District

Congressman AJ Advincula, Mayor Alex Advincula, Board Member Ony Cantimbanan, and members of the Sangguniang Panlungsod of Imus. The program highlights the government's dedication to empowering women, enhancing their roles in society, and promoting community development throughout Cavite.





Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion (second from left) witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between Land Bank of the Philippines and Yovel East Development Inc., one of the big brothers of the Go Negosyo's Kapatid Angat Lahat sa Agri Program (KALAP), giving farmers access to capital through the Agrisenso Plus Lending Program. In the photo are (from left) Go Negosyo senior adviser and former Dept. of Agriculture Secretary Dr. William Dar, Concepcion, Yovel East President and CEO James Amparo, LANDBANK President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz, LANDBANK National Development Lending Sector EVP Ma. Celeste Burgos, and LANDBANK Lending Programs Management Group FVP Eden Japitana.

Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion thinks it is time financial institutions change their mindset about lending to farmers and see agriculture as a profitable business. "We have so much land, so much talent, we just have to make it work and eventually change the mindset of many of our bankers that it's time to lend to farmers," he said.

"We have to show them that farmers can be profitable," he said, as he witnessed the signing of a MOA between the Land Bank of the Philippines (LANDBANK) and Yovel East Development Inc. (Yovel East).

The signing was held last January 14, 2024 at the LANDBANK Plaza in Manila. It will combine Yovel East's expertise in farm clustering under its We Will Rice program and LANDBANK's financial support through its Agrisenso Plus Lending Program. The agreement "streamlines rice production, enhances profitability, and promotes sustainability. It aims to boost agricultural efficiency, economic growth, and food security." Signing for LANDBANK was its President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz, and for Yovel East was its President and CEO, James Amparo.

"With this agreement, we give the farmers under Yovel East's management access to money, markets and mentorship, the three essentials of successful entrepreneurship which we emphasize in our work at Go Negosyo," said Concepcion. Among Go Negosyo's programs is the Kapatid Angat Lahat sa Agri Program (KALAP), which aims to integrate small farmers into the value chain of big agriculture corporations. Advising the program is former Dept. of Agriculture Sec. Dr. William Dar; Yovel East is one of the pioneer big-brother companies of KALAP.

LANDBANK's President and CEO Ortiz said that financial assistance "is just one piece of the puzzle in addressing the challenges faced by the agricultural sector." She called Yovel East's We Will Rice Program as exemplifying the potential for creating far-reaching impact, offering farmers access to vital resources, modern technologies, and an end-to-end production process that enhances [farmers'] livelihoods and competitiveness.

From only giving fertilizers to farmers with an after-harvest payment scheme, under its We Will Rice program Yovel East was able to provide

and finance the farmers, supplying everything from seeds, chemical inputs, fertilizers, machineries, and even daily cash and labor costs to help the farmers survive. Eventually, Yovel was able to even buy back and market the produce. Yovel East now has thousands of farmers in its fold after only five years of operation.

"One of the difficult parts of being a farmer is the uncertainty," said Amparo. "Uncertainties in weather, uncertainties in water, uncertainties of where they can get financing for their fertilizers, machineries, and the sad part even the uncertainties of where to sell their produce when they harvest," he said. This uncertainty feeds the reluctance of financing institutions to lend to farmers. With corporate farming, banks can be given the confidence to lend to farmers because they are assured of sustainability, predictability, and a dependable business model.

Amparo said that the partnership will maximize the strength of each sector: with farmers being able to concentrate on farming, LANDBANK providing the capital, and the private sector, led by Go Negosyo, providing the management prowess to make the business sustainable.

"The idea of corporate farming needs the support of institutions like LANDBANK for them to scale up and continue what they do," said Concepcion.

LANDBANK's Agrisenso Plus Program is "designed to deliver a full suite of support—featuring expanded eligibility, lower interest rates, and simplified loan process to provide broader access to credit and other support interventions for small farmers, fishers, and agribusinesses, and other players in the agriculture value chain." LANDBANK is the largest development financial institution in the Philippines.

Women, LGBTQIA+ Community Members in Sto. Tomas undergo fish value addition training



Twenty-four members of the United Gay and Lesbian Association (UGLA) and Tanglaw Women's Association in the City of Sto. Tomas, Batangas, underwent a technology-based value addition training on fish, along with an awareness seminar on basic food hygiene, held at the CBAC Building, Poblacion 2, Sto. Tomas, Batangas, November 13-14.

The training, organized by the City Government of Sto. Tomas, through the City Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Division (CLEd) in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST)-Batangas, aimed to educate and equip members of the two associations with skills to enhance the value of the fish they sell to the residents of Sto. Tomas. It covered proper handling, processing, and packaging of fish products to ensure quality and safety for consumers.

Value-added fish products, such as pastil, Spanish-style sardines,

fish balls, and fish nuggets, were demonstrated to the participants. The processing of these products, from the selection of fresh fish to preparation, cooking methods, and packaging, was discussed in detail. Adding value to fish products not only increases their marketability but also provides consumers with healthier product options. Mr. Nico John Abratique, Ms. Ma. Jesukristina Lumanglas, and Mr. Gean Anriel Geniza of Batangas State University (BatStateU) served as the resource speakers of the training.

Meanwhile, an awareness seminar on basic food hygiene and current good manufacturing practices was also integrated into the training to ensure the implementation of food safety systems and to safeguard that every product produced conforms to standards.



Jan. 29-Feb. 04, 2025

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AboitizPower and UGEP ink deal with Republic Cement for long-term solar power purchase agreement



AboitizPower and UGEP's solar company sign contract with Republic Cement. Photo shows (L-R) AUSI Directors, Pieterjan Vanbuggenhout and James Yu; AUSI Chairperson Ruth Yu-Owen; and Republic Cement executives, President Reinier Dizon and CEO Roman Menz.

Aboitiz Upgrade Solar Inc. (AUSI), a joint venture between AboitizPower and Upgrade Energy Philippines (UGEP), signed a long-term solar power purchase agreement (PPA) with Republic Cement & Building Materials, Inc. (RCBM). Under the PPA, AUSI will develop, build and operate a ground-mounted solar project in RCBM's facility in San Mateo, Norzagaray, Bulacan, while RCBM will purchase the clean energy generated.

With AUSI shouldering the upfront capital investment and the operations of the project, it will exclusively sell the produced power to RCBM's cement plant, enabling the latter to achieve long-term operational savings and reduce its carbon footprint. The ground-mounted solar project is slated for completion by the second half of 2025.

"This project sets a new benchmark for solar adoption in the industrial sector," said James Yu, AboitizPower's First Vice President and Head of Retail. "By bridging AUSI's expertise in delivering innovative energy solutions and Republic Cement's sustainability goals, we are creating a blueprint for how renewable energy solutions can power the Philippines' industrial future."

Roman Menz, CEO of Republic Cement Services, emphasized the importance of renewable energy for the cement industry, often recognized for its carbon-intensive op-

erations.

"This partnership reflects Republic Cement's dedication to sustainability in terms of addressing the pressing need for cleaner energy solutions," said Menz. "By integrating solar energy into our operations, we take a decisive step toward reducing emissions and contributing to a more sustainable Philippines."

Ruth Yu-Owen, AUSI Chairperson, highlighted the broader impact of the collaboration.

"This partnership is a major milestone in our

shared vision of utilizing renewable energy to fuel industrial development," said Yu-Owen. "AUSI, backed by the collaboration between AboitizPower and UGEP, is dedicated to offering sustainable and efficient energy solutions that address the energy needs of businesses while supporting the Philippines' transition to renewable energy."

AUSI develops, builds and operates distributed solar solutions catered to large commercial and industrial consumers. PR

DISTRIBUTION OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND FOOD PACKS FROM SENATOR BONG GO TO FIRE VICTIMS

Bacoor City, January 20, 2025 - Senator Bong Go, in partnership with the City Government of Bacoor, brought much-needed relief to 211 families affected by a recent fire in Barangay Zapote 1. The distribution of financial assistance and grocery packs took place at the Arsenio E. Castillo Hall in Talaba Elementary School, with Mayor Strike B. Revilla and other local officials present.

Senator Bong Go, known for his compassion and commitment to helping Filipinos in need, personally handed out aid to each family, offering words of comfort and encouragement. He also organized a raffle draw, where lucky recipients won bicycles, cellphones, shoes, and watches.

Mayor Strike B. Revilla expressed his



gratitude to Senator Bong Go for his generosity and swift response to the fire victims. He emphasized the City Government's continued commitment to

supporting the affected families as they rebuild their lives.

The event served as a powerful reminder of the government's dedica-

tion to helping Filipinos during difficult times and highlighted the importance of community support and solidarity in times of crisis.

P1.21B-imprastruktura sa Quezon, Laguna aprubado sa DA-PRDP Scale-Up



Inaasahan ang patuloy na paglago ng sektor ng agrikultura at pangisdaan sa Calabarzon matapos aprubahan ang pondo ng tatlong farm-to-market roads sa Quezon at isang potable water system sa Laguna. Popondohan ang mga ito sa ilalim ng Philippine Rural Development Project Scale-Up ng Department of Agriculture at ng World Bank. Tutugon ito sa 33,771 indibidwal at 7,670 kabahayan.

Ang mga aprubadong FMRs ay ang Concreting of Sto. Niño-Huyon-Uyon Farm-to-Market Road sa San Francisco

na may habang 10.58 kilometro, Construction of San Roque-San Antonio Magcopa-San Pablo Suha-Doongan Ilaya Farm-to-Market Road with 2 Bridge Componentb sa Catanauan na 12.46 kilometro, at ang Concreting of Bagupaye to San Pedro FMR with Bridge sa Mulanay na 15.33 kilometro. Layon ng mga itong isaayos at pabilisin ang transportasyon para sa mga residente at produktong agrikultura at pangisdaan. Magbibigay-daan din ang mga ito sa pagpapalakas ng produksyon ng pagkain at pagpasok ng mga oportunidad para sa ka-

VOL. II • NO. 31 5

buhayan ng mga mamamayan, partikular na ang mga magsasaka.

Samantala, ang Rehabilitation and Improvement of Level II Potable Water System sa Majayjay, Laguna ay tutugon sa walong barangay. Tutulong ito upang maging tuloy-tuloy, ligtas, at kalidad ang suplay ng tubig sa mga komunidad at maiiwas ang mga mamamayan sa mga sakit tulad ng diarrhea at gastritis mula sa maruming tubig. Dahil padadaliin nito ang pagkuha ng tubig, makakatulong rin ang proyekto sa mga mamamayan na mas pagtuunan ng pansin ang kanilang mga kabuhayan tulad ng pagtatanim.

Nagpasalamat ang mga lokal na pamahalaan sa DA-PRDP Regional Project Advisory Board at sa DA-PRDP Regional Project Coordination Office Calabarzon para sa kanilang mga nangangap na suporta. Anila, sisiguraduhin nilang maging matagumpay ang implementasyon ng mga proyekto upang maraming mga mamamayan at magsasaka ang magbenepisyo dito at mapaulnad ang kanilang mga pamumuhay.

"We are very happy to support and approve these subprojects because the benefits go beyond agriculture and fisheries, layunin din nitong tulungan ang mga taong umunlad sa kanilang mga komunidad by giving them access to basic resources and services and opportunities. With the approval of these subprojects, we hope to see more developments in the agriculture and fisheries sector and a reduction in poverty incidence in these communities," ani DA Regional Field Office Calabarzon Executive Director and RPAB Chairperson Fidel Libao. PR