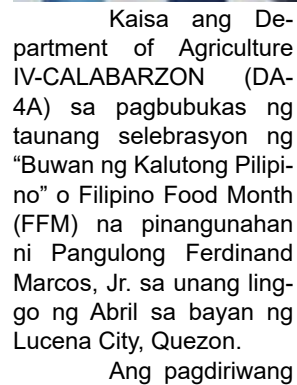


SAN MIGUEL
FOOD AND BEVERAGE, INC.

DA-4A, KAISA SA SELEBRASYON NG FILIPINO FOOD MONTH NA PINANGUNAHAN NI PANGULONG MARCOS SA QUEZON





10 practical health tips to help you start off towards healthy living in 2025.

1. Eat a healthy diet

Eat a combination of different foods, including fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts and whole grains. Adults should eat at least five portions (400g) of fruit and vegetables per day. You can improve your intake of fruits and vegetables by always including veggies in your meal; eating fresh fruit and vegetables as snacks; eating a variety of fruits and vegetables; and eating them in season. By eating healthy, you will reduce your risk of malnutrition and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.

2. Consume less salt and sugar

Reduce your salt intake to 5g per day, equivalent to about one teaspoon. It's easier to do this by limiting the amount of salt, soy sauce, fish sauce and other high-sodium condiments when preparing meals; removing salt, seasonings and condiments from your meal table; avoiding salty snacks; and choosing low-sodium products.

On the other hand, consuming excessive amounts of sugars increases the risk of tooth decay and unhealthy weight gain. In both adults and children, the intake of free sugars should be reduced. WHO recommends consuming less than 5% of total energy intake for additional health benefits. You can reduce your sugar intake by limiting the consumption of sugary snacks, candies and sugar-sweetened beverages.

3. Reduce intake of harmful fats



Fats consumed should be less than 30% of your total energy intake. This will help prevent unhealthy weight gain and NCDs. There are different types of fats, but unsaturated fats are preferable over saturated fats and trans-fats. WHO recommends reducing saturated fats to less than 10% of total energy intake; reducing trans-fats to less than 1% of total energy intake; and replacing both saturated fats and trans-fats with unsaturated fats.

The preferable unsaturated fats are found in fish, avocado and nuts, and in sunflower, soybean, canola and olive oils; saturated fats are found in fatty meat, butter, palm and coconut oil, cream, cheese, ghee and lard; and trans-fats are found in baked and fried foods, and pre-packaged snacks and foods, such as frozen pizza, cookies, biscuits, and cooking oils and spreads.

cont. on next issue

CAVETANO...

Senator Alan Peter Cayetano on Friday stepped in as a mediator during a Senate Blue Ribbon Committee hearing seeking to resolve a dispute between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Blue Star Construction Development Corporation over a scrapped government housing development contract in the Masungi Georeserve in Rizal. In his opening statement, Cayetano set the tone to ease tensions by reading the preamble of the Constitution and a passage from the Bible. "In a time where there is so much waste and abuse of human rights, abuse of power, we are finally realizing that we cannot abuse nature. It is not sustainable. We are a country and people who are looking for good (environmental) models and examples," Cayetano also told the DENR and the Blue Star panel on April 11, 2025.

The senator also emphasized that the dispute presented an opportunity to address long-standing issues in the conservation area. "I felt this is an opportune time, but also a caution to all of us, including the Senate and the government, that people are watching. I [hope] we can

PBBM EXPANDS ACCESSIBLE HEALTHCARE CENTERS

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. reaffirmed his commitment to providing efficient and accessible healthcare for all Filipinos through free urgent, ambulatory, and outpatient medical services for non-life-threatening conditions.

During last Wednesday's Alyansa Para sa Bagong Pilipinas rally in Malolos City, Bulacan, the President announced plans to significantly expand the number of Bagong Urgent Care and Ambulatory Service (BUCAS) centers.

"Ang karamihan naman po ay hindi kailangan mag-confine sa ospital.

conclude this in a very sober way and find real models. If this is really a good model and mali ang pagka-cancel, then it should be resolved. Kung mali ang model na ito at may pagkakamali na nakita lang in hindsight, it should be cancelled," he said.

The dispute arose from the DENR's termination of its 2022 Supplemental Joint Venture Agreement with Blue Star, citing the company's alleged failure to build 5,000 housing units in Masungi. The Masungi Georeserve Foundation, affiliated with Blue Star since 2017, claimed that the government failed to clear illegal settlers as promised and accused the DENR of evading meaningful dialogue.

Given that the problems surrounding Masungi Georeserve span nearly three decades and multiple administrations, Cayetano expressed hope for clarity. "We are all made in the image and nature of God so we should all be good stewards [of his creation]... Whatever we do here will be a lesson to the next generation so I hope that we can really come up with not only finding the solutions and identifying issues, coming up with the facts, but really coming up with a sustainable solution," he said. PR

Kaya naman nasa clinic lang, magtatahi lang ng sugat o 'yung bali ng paa o mangananak," President Marcos said.

"Lahat po 'yan ay kaya naman nitong ating mga BUCAS center.

Kaya't pararamihin po natin nang pararamihin," the President added.

Health Secretary Teodoro J. Herbosa said BUCAS centers play a critical role in improving healthcare accessibility, especially in areas where hospital services are limited.

The centers support hospitals in giving urgent medical attention to non-life-threatening condi-

NGCP...

NGCP is suspending all maintenance activities beginning 05 May 2025, in line with contingency plans set by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) for the upcoming national and local elections on 12 May.

Construction and non-critical maintenance activities near substations and transmission lines are temporarily suspended from 05-16 May.

Maintenance works and construction activities inside substations and within 300 meters of energized power lines are suspended from 05-16 May. All transmission lines were cleared of vegetation and obstructions as of April 30, except for one line in South Luzon. Scheduled vegetation trimming along the said line is still being negotiated with the uncooperative landowner.

These contingency measures are set by NGCP to be consistent with the timeline of activities set by the COMELEC in its Resolution No. 10999 dated 24 May 2024 prescribing the calendar of activities and prohibited acts in line with the national elections, and Resolution No. 11055 dated 13 September 2024 setting the roles of different agencies in ensuring the peaceful and credible conduct of the mid-term elections.

Local absentee voting started on 28 April 2025, while canvassing and proclamation of winners are set from 13-19 May 2025. Uninterrupted

tions.

These healthcare centers offer essential medical services, such as consultation, laboratory and diagnostic testing, dental care, and reproductive health services.

As of March



May 14-20, 2025 FROM PAGE 1

and reliable transmission of power must be ensured during this critical period, thus warranting maintenance works and shutdowns to be put on hold.

"NGCP is strictly following its contingency measures and coordinating with concerned groups to ensure a power interruption-free election, especially during the crucial periods prescribed by the COMELEC," said NGCP.

Based on the updated power outlook, there is sufficient supply on the critical election weeks. Maintenance activities of power plants were also adjusted to ensure their availability during this period.

NGCP will activate the 24/7 operations of its Overall Command Center from 11 May until 8:00PM of 14 May 2025, and its critical units, particularly System Operations (SO) and Operations and Maintenance (O&M), will remain fully staffed and operational.

Line crews, engineers, pilots, maintenance and testing, and other technical personnel are also strategically positioned in substations to respond to line trippings, if any. Administrative and other support teams will also remain on duty.

As early as February, NGCP's Power Task Force Elections (PTFE), a special team formed to ensure the security and reliability of the transmission network across the country during the elections, already set out with preparatory activities.

2025, President Marcos said there are 51 BUCAS centers nationwide.

A BUCAS center also brings medical services closer to communities, especially those in far-flung areas, decongesting hospitals. | PND

May 14-20, 2025



PGC proudly joins the nation in celebrating Ease of Doing Business Month 2025!

PGC affirms its commitment to efficient, transparent, and responsive public service. Together, let's champion a business-friendly environment that drives innovation and inclusive growth.

All systems go for Chavit's e-jeepneys



The Philippines' first e-jeepney assembly plant has opened its doors in Lima, Batangas, bringing the country one big step closer to eco-friendly, cleaner and greener commutes. Leading the ribbon-cutting ceremony are Ako Ilokano Ako partylist Rep. Richelle Singson, businessman and former Ilocos Sur governor Chavit Singson with LTRFB, DOTr and LCS E-mobility ON officials.

MALVAR, Batangas—It's full steam ahead for the mass production of electric jeepneys of former Ilocos Sur governor Luis "Chavit" Singson, Chairman of LCS Group of Companies, the country's leading makers of electric vehicles.

Chavit Singson said the LCS manufacturing plant in Malvar, Batangas is now capable of producing 500 units of e-jeepney per month.

Recently, Singson led the inauguration of the assembly plant by the LCS Group of Companies, in partnership with Electric Mobili-ty ON (EMON), an outfit run by Korean automotive experts at Lima Technology Center Special Economic Zone in Malvar, Batangas.

Production of Chavit Singson e-jeepneys is in line with the commit-

ment of LCS company to support the country's Public Transport Modernization Program (PTMP). The LCS Group will sell the basic e-J01 model to members of transport groups at a significantly reduced price of P1.2 million per unit from its market value of P2.5 million, and will come with zero down payment, zero collateral and zero interest.

"Umpisa na ng pagkalugi (I'll start losing money)," Singson said.

"Ito naman talaga ang pangako ko, na tutulong ako sa mga tsuper at sa modernization program ng gobyerno (This is what I promised, to help public transport drivers and the modernization program of the government."

Singson said Paraguay has placed an order for 60 e-jeepney

units from his company at P2.5 million each.

"At least, kahit papaano, kikit rin tayo pag may order mula sa ibang bansa (In a way, we will have profit if we have orders from other countries)," he said.

Singson said the factory can make 500 units per month, but can increase its output if there are more orders from transport groups across the country.

The modern jeepneys are seen as an upgrade to the traditional jeepneys in terms of passenger comfort, cost of maintenance and environmental impact.

LCS-EMON, the country's only electric automobile manufacturer, will also produce electric scooters, tricycles and pick-up vehicles to generate income and broaden its market, Singson added.

KWF, NAGSAGAWA NG MONITORING SA GRANT MANOBO DULUNGAN NG USM



Nagsagawa ng monitoring sa proyektong Dokumentasyon ng Wikang Manobo Dulangan ang mga mananaliksik mula sa Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) na sina Kirt John Segui at Dannielle Laggui noong 23-26 Abril 2025 sa Dulangan Village, Senator Ninoy Aquino at Sityo Blanga, Brgy. Nalilidan, Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat. Ang proyektong ito ay grant na ipinagkaloob ng KWF sa University of South-

ern Mindanao (USM). Si Dr. Radji Macatabon ang project leader ng pangkat kasama sina Dr. Rosemarie Sison, Prop. Jovelyn Gesulga, at Prop. Normie Pabinal.

Nakipag-ugnayan din ang mga mananaliksik mulang KWF sa Opisina ng Pangulo ng USM, tanggapan ng NCIP

Sultan Kudarat Provincial Office, at pamahalaang bayan ng Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat.

Isa ang USM,

kasama ang Mariano Marcos State University (Isneg) at Confederation of Indigenous Peoples Organizations in Southern Negros Occidental (Binukignon/Binukidnon), sa tatlong institusyon na pinagkalooban ng KWF grant.

Layunin ng proyekto na makatuwang ang iba-ibang institusyon sa pagbuo ng mga pananaliksik hinggil sa mga katutubong wika ng bansa. PR

SSS OPENS NEWLY RELOCATED SERVICE OFFICE IN TAYTAY, RIZAL



Social Security System (SSS) President and Chief Executive Officer Robert Joseph Montes De Claro (4th from left), Social Security Commissioner Eva B. Arcos (3rd from left), and Mayor Allan Martine S. De Leon of Taytay, Rizal (5th from left) officially open the new SSS Taytay Service Office on 28 April 2025, bringing better SSS services to the people of Taytay. Also in the photo are (from left) SSS Antipolo Branch Acting Head Richiel R. Madlangbayan, SSS Vice President for National Capital Region (NCR) East Division Benjamin M. Dolindo, Jr., SSS Executive Vice President for Branch Operations Sector Voltaire P. Agas, SSS Senior Vice President for NCR Operations Group Maria Rita S. Aguja, and Barangay Captain Razel Z. Valera of Barangay San Juan, Taytay, Rizal, and (at the back, left) SSS Pasig Mabini Branch Acting Head Marivic M. Goremalem and SSS Vice President for Public Affairs and Special Events Division Carlo C. Villacorta.

SSS President and Chief Executive Officer Robert Joseph Montes De Claro, Social Security Commissioner Eva B. Arcos, and Taytay, Rizal Mayor Allan Martine S. De Leon inaugurated the new SSS Taytay Service Office in Taytay, Rizal, on 28 April

2025, bringing better services to the municipality dubbed as the Garments Capital of the Philippines.

The SSS Taytay Service Office is located within the municipal government complex on the 3rd floor of Manila East Arcade II Building, Don

Hilario Cruz, Barangay San Juan, Taytay, Rizal. It is ready to serve SSS members and employers in Taytay and nearby areas from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

SSS President
cont. on Page 6

MANILA — Home Development Mutual Fund or Pag-IBIG Fund members can borrow up to 90 percent of their savings starting May 16.

"Mas pinadali at pinalaki na ang Pag-IBIG Multipurpose Loan sa pamamagitan ng 90 percent loanable amount mula sa iyang savings, pinaikling 12-month eligibility, at mas maraming repayment options (The Pag-IBIG Multipurpose Loan has become bigger and more accessible with a 90 percent loanable amount from your savings, shorter 12-month eligibility, and more repayment options)," the agency said in a public advisory on Wednesday.

This enhancement is part of its goal to provide more members with accessible funds for future needs.

Members with upgraded Regular Savings can avail of a larger loan since loan entitlement

DILG FETES 16 GENDER-RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE CHAMPIONS

In support of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s call to eliminate gender-based discrimination and uphold women's rights, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) recognized 16 of its regional offices through the Gender and Development (GAD) Seal Certification Program.

The GAD Seal Certification is a flagship initiative that promotes institutional gender mainstreaming within the DILG, grounded on three major components: Assessment Criteria and Documentary Requirements, Scoring System, and Certification Procedure.

"Each seal conferred today tells the story of a regional office that has translated gender-responsive governance into action.

These offices have implemented innovative programs, advanced inclusivity, and upheld the principles of equality and social justice," said DILG Undersecretary Atty. Jon Paulo Salvahan.

In a memorandum, DILG Secretary Jon-

FROM PAGE 1

is based on their total savings.

Previously, the cap or maximum amount members could borrow was 80 percent of their savings after 24 months of contribution.

The cap increase is also available for the Health and Education Loan Programs and the calamity loan.

Earlier, Pag-IBIG Fund Chief Executive Officer Marlene Acosta said the multi-purpose loan remains affordable at 1.4583 percent monthly interest rate despite the enhancements.

The state mutual fund released PHP70.3 billion in cash loans to more than 3.2 million members in 2024.

The figure is the highest amount of cash loans disbursed in a year.

It aims to assist about 3.6 million members with projected cash loan releases of up to PHP95.3 billion this year. (PNA)

vic Remulla emphasized that recognizing and incentivizing gender mainstreaming efforts contributes to a more coherent and nationwide approach to gender equality, ultimately empowering women and marginalized sectors across the country.

The program features a three-tier recognition system — Gold, Silver, and Bronze- based on performance scores. A minimum of 70 points is required to qualify for certification, while regional offices scoring below 70 are not conferred with the GAD Seal.

For this year, the DILG GAD Seal Gold awardees are the regional offices of the Cordillera Administrative Region and Regions II, VII, X, and XII. Silver awardees include the National Capital Region, CALABARZON, and Regions I, IX, and XIII. Bronze awardees are the regional offices in MIMAROPA and Regions III, V, VI, VIII, and XI.

The GAD Seal is awarded annually, with each certification valid for one year from the date of issuance.

SSS...

and Chief Executive Officer Robert Joseph Montes De Claro announced that the opening of the SSS Taytay Service Office is a key part of the organization's shift towards becoming more service-oriented. He emphasized that the SSS exists primarily to provide valuable services to its members and employers.

The Taytay office is the latest addition to a series of new local SSS offices being established across the country. These offices aim to facilitate transactions for members and employers while enhancing access to SSS services.

"We are very excited to open our new SSS service office in Taytay, Rizal," De Claro stated. "This new office will bring SSS services closer to our members and employers in the municipality and surrounding areas, especially considering the presence of many micro and small businesses in the town. We are confident that this new SSS office will make a significant difference in their lives."

He reaffirmed that the new service office in Taytay reflects SSS's commitment to reaching and serving its members and employers, regardless

NCIP INTENS... FROM BACK PAGE

Campaigns (IEC) on the new election system. This collaboration includes webinars designed for IP representatives and community leaders. "This way, they can help us disseminate the information on the process of the upcoming elections," Sumangil explained.

NCIP Region IV-A estimates that 10,000 Indigenous Peoples voters in the region are expected to participate in the upcoming elections. However, this figure represents only a fraction of the eligible IP voters in CALABARZON, as many individuals aged 18 and above have yet to register.

Sumangil also highlighted the challenges faced by COMELEC in delivering Automated Counting Machines (ACM) to IP communities residing in Geographically Isolated

FROM PAGE 7

of their location across the country.

Meanwhile, SSS thanked the local government of Taytay for providing lease-free office space to SSS and even shouldering the renovation works and internet connection for the new SSS service office.

The SSS Taytay Service Office covers an area of 75 square meters and can handle more than 300 transactions each day. Members and employers can perform a variety of transactions at this office, including member registration, issuance of employer certificates of compliance, submission of requests for membership amendments, updates to member records (for example, simple corrections and the addition of beneficiaries), and compliance with the Annual Confirmation of Pensioners (ACOP) Program.

Members and employers can also use the services offered by the service office's e-center, such as My.SSS registration, accessing My.SSS services, requesting the resetting of password and recovery of user ID My.SSS member and employer account, and updating of employer profile. PR

As part of these efforts, the agency marked the World Day for Safety and Health at Work on April 28, bringing together over 200 representatives from labor and manage-

and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA), such as General Nakar, Quezon.

According to NCIP, only two regions — CALABARZON and Cagayan Valley — have been provided with Accessible Voting Centers (AVCs) to facilitate easier voting for Indigenous Peoples. "We are also working with the NCIP Central Office to provide Special Voting Centers for IPs. We are talking with the central office so we can address this issue, because we have many GIDA areas that have not been provided with AVCs," Sumangil said.

Additionally, NCIP noted that some Indigenous Peoples encounter difficulties in obtaining essential documents, such as birth certificates, which are required for voter registration

May 14-20, 2025

DOLE PARTNERS WITH PRIVATE SECTOR TO UPHOLD WORKERS' RIGHTS

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in Calabarzon has strengthened its partnership with key private sector players in an effort to promote and uphold workers' rights.

"DOLE Calabarzon is actively coordinating with private companies in various ways to ensure that our workers are given the correct and lawful benefits. This includes regular labor inspections and Technical and Advisory Visits where we assist micro-enterprise proprietors in understanding and properly implementing labor laws—covering correct wage computation, statutory benefits like SSS, PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG, and compliance with Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) standards," said DOLE Calabarzon Regional Director Erwin N. Aquino.

He emphasized that the Labor department remains hands-on in ensuring that employees across the region receive fair wages, lawful benefits, and a safe working environment.

As part of these efforts, the agency marked the World Day for Safety and Health at Work on April 28, bringing together over 200 representatives from labor and manage-

ment sectors. The event highlights the importance of a strong enforcement of occupational safety and health rules, not just as a legal obligation but as a vital element in building productive, safe, and sustainable work environments.

COMELEC TO IMPLEMENT SPECIAL VOTING HOURS FOR SELECT SECTORS

SANTA ROSA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) announced that it will open a more inclusive, safe and convenient voting option for senior citizens, persons with disabilities (PWDs) and pregnant women to ensure their participation in the 2025 national and local elections.

In an interview during the Ugnayan at Talakayan sa Laguna program of the Philippine Information Agency, lawyer Marx Nicholas Delmo, election officer of COMELEC in Calamba City, Laguna, stated that

cont. on Page 4

May 14-20, 2025

EDITORIAL:

WHETHER you're a candidate for national or local positions in the May 12 polls or one of their supporters, you should be concerned about how you can contribute to improving the quality of life of our people and ensuring a better future for our country.

And when we talk about achieving a better future for the nation, then we must be concerned as well with improving the quality of the education of our youth.

A recent survey by the Philippine Statistics Authority called Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Study (FLEMMS) showed some 18.9 million Filipinos who completed secondary education between 2019 and 2024 may be considered "functional illiterate" as they still have problems with reading comprehension despite years of schooling.

According to Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian, chair of the Senate basic education committee, the results of the study should prod the national government to devise a strategy to address "the gravity of our situation now."

AGRI RENEWS CALL TO PROBE P11-B EXPIRED MEDICINES, VACCINES IN DOH WAREHOUSES, HEALTH FACILITIES

AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee reiterated his call for an investigation into the P11 billion worth of expired medicines and vaccines in Department of Health (DOH) warehouses, following a recent Senate resolution by Senator Joel Villanueva. Lee emphasized that the expiration of essential drugs, including over 7 million vials of COVID-19 vaccines, is a clear case of negligence and misuse of public funds.

Lee, who filed House Resolution No. 2117, highlighted the importance of accountability and efficient use of health resources. He also called on the DOH to submit a comprehensive report on the expired supplies and the steps taken to address the issue. AGRI Party-list continues to push for free medicines and healthcare services for all Filipinos, stressing the need for proper government action to ensure public health resources are used effectively.

AGRI Party-list Representative Manoy Wilbert Lee reiterated his call to investigate the P11

billion worth of expired medicines and vaccines in Department of Health (DOH) warehouses and health facilities flagged by the Commission on Audit (COA).

The Bicolano lawmaker renewed his call after Senator Joel Villanueva recently filed Senate Resolution No. 1326 to probe the said issue.

"Buo ang suporta natin sa panawagang ito ni Senator Joel Villanueva para imbestigahan din sa Senado ang malaking kapabayaan at malaking kasalanan na ito sa taumbayan," Lee said.

It also called on the DOH anew to submit a comprehensive report to Congress detailing the status of all expired supplies, including COVID-19 vaccines, and the steps taken to address the situation.

It can be recalled that during the last House Plenary Deliberations on the DOH Budget last September, Lee inquired about the lack of medicines in public hospitals.

"Mayroong bilyon-bilyong pondo para sa mga gamot pero bakit kinakailangan pang bumili ng mga kababayan natin sa labas ng ospital? Bakit kailangan pa nilang gumastos para sa gamot kahit na sa charity wards sila naka-admit? Isa pa ito sa dumaragdag sa out-of-pocket expenses nila; dagdag isipin ng may sakit; dagdag pasanin ng

We agree. In fact, the lawmaker believes the failure to achieve higher levels of basic literacy in the country is among the factors behind the high poverty incidence in some provinces.

The country's poorest provinces, such as Tawi-Tawi and Davao Occidental, recorded the highest functional literacy rate, while the provinces that topped the PSA literacy list, like Cavite and Bataan, have lower poverty incidence rates.

The senator estimated that based on the PSA data and available information, about 24.82 million Filipinos age 10 to 64 could be considered functional illiterate, or individuals who could read, write and compute but could not understand what they have read.

That's not all. Another 5.86 million Filipinos belonging to the same age group are "basic illiterate," or unable to read, write and compute.

14.QUI According to education experts, those who are considered functional illiterate have very basic reading and writing skills but are unable to apply them in everyday situations.

For instance, they may know how to write their full names but cannot properly fill out job applications or understand complicated written instructions.

Moreover, the functional illiterate would be unable to perform complex tasks or acquire higher literacy skills and consequently, have limited employment opportunities.

They are also likely to remain poor and remain vulnerable to social exclusion.

The end-result of functional illiteracy is intergenerational disadvantage, or a situation where children who grow up in a low literacy household usually experience educational difficulties as well.

Do your candidates for national or local positions have clear positions on how they can help improve our educational system and prepare the youth to take an active part in nation-building?

If not, ditch them and vote for somebody else.



What's wrong with our education system?

For instance, they may know how to write their full names but cannot properly fill out job applications or understand complicated written instructions.

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Do your candidates for national or local positions have clear positions on how they can help improve our educational system and prepare the youth to take an active part in nation-building?

If not, ditch them and vote for somebody else.

BotiCARD...

BotiCARD opened its newest branch in Biñan City, Laguna, on January 8, 2025, to bring high-quality, affordable medicines closer to more Filipinos.

By establishing a presence in Biñan, the pharmacy reaffirmed its commitment to making essential healthcare accessible, providing more affordable alternatives, and delivering health education to the community.

BotiCARD President Rosenda Aquino expressed the pharmacy's dedication to reaching more communities, particularly those living on the margins.

"We believe that expanding our services across the country and improving people's health is another way to support CARD MRI's mission of eradicating poverty," she stated. As part of the celebration, BotiCARD offered free consultations, blood

ed and no longer responsive to the hospitalization cost of the beneficiaries.

"Hindi magiging posible ang ipinaglalan-ban nating libreng gamot at libreng pagpapagamot kung magpapatuloy ang kapalpakang ito sa gobyerno. Dapat may managot sa mga kapabayaan na nagkakait ng mga serbisyong pangkalusugan para sa mga Pilipino. Buhay at kabuhayan ang nakataya dito," AGRI Party-list stated. PR

FROM PAGE 5

pressure monitoring, and dental extractions to clients and the general public who attended the event.

In addition, the pharmacy provided a 28% discount on selected medicines and vitamins.

During the opening, 109 individuals benefited from the free medical services. Aside from medicines, BotiCARD offers basic medical supplies, hygiene products, and other essential health products.

BotiCARD, the health wing of CARD Mutually Reinforcing Institutions (CARD MRI), was established in 2011 to ensure the availability of affordable and quality medicines to CARD members, their families, and communities.

To learn more about BotiCARD, Inc., visit its website at <https://www.cardmri.com/botocard> and the official Facebook page, [@boticardOfficial](#).

A LIFE BUILT ON HARD WORK



From the gateway of Bicolandia, Dominga Perez continues to strive in life with the help of her grass broom business that started in 2011.

“Age is just a number,” a phrase that rings true for 76-year-old Dominga Perez of Camarines Norte, who pushes forward in her business journey with relentless grit and determination. Not everyone is blessed with decades of physical strength, and Dominga remains grateful for the body that endured the test of time. She had a

fair share of struggles, beginning with her days as a miner, then as a housekeeper, and now as a microentrepreneur. After getting married, she learned to times when she was lucky enough to find a few grams of gold, but there were also times when all she gained from mining was exhaustion. Nevertheless, she continued doing this

become a miner with her husband. However, after 13 years together, her first husband passed away. Despite the loss, she remained strong and continued her duties as a mother.

Love found its way back to her life when she met her second husband, with whom she was blessed with six children. Mining remained their primary livelihood, as it was common in their community. Dominga has firsthand experience of the job. Unfazed by the dangers and hazardous environment, she would dig the ground and enter holes in search of gold.

There were times when she was lucky enough to find a few grams of gold, but there were also times when all she gained from mining was exhaustion. Nevertheless, she continued doing this

AND PERSEVERANCE



work for many years.

In 1996, her husband had to stop working due to an injury. Dominga, too, had to leave mining behind. To support her family, she worked as a house helper while peddling grass brooms made by her neighbors. She travelled to Sta. Rosa Sur and as far as Paracale, seizing every opportunity to sell grass brooms and earn a living.

Knowing that being a house helper was not a long-term solution, she sought to build something of her own.

In 2011, she learned the craft of broom-making and turned it into a business. That same year, she became a client of CARD Bank, a microfinance-oriented rural bank that provided small loans to aspiring entrepreneurs like her.

Her initial loan was used to purchase raw materials needed to make the product, while her income as a house helper covered their daily expenses.

When her husband was still alive, he

worked with her to make grass brooms, ensuring the products were of good quality and durability. Now, one of her children has stepped in to help keep the business alive.

Crafting grass brooms is a good business decision for her, as it is an everyday, practical, and affordable cleaning tool for the home.

With patience and persistence, Dominga not only sustained her business but also gradually paid for and acquired the land where her home now stands.

“I may be economically challenged, but with my skills and the support of CARD Bank, I started a business and learned how to handle my finances wisely.

That is how my life has constantly improved,” she concluded, highlighting how a skill that is supported financially can create a positive change in life.

At 76, Dominga proves that resilience, skill, and financial support can lead to success at any age.

COMELEC ...

persons with disabilities, senior citizens, and pregnant women along with their assistants. Only they will be served from 5:00 AM to 7:00 AM,” Delmo said.

Those with special needs, senior citizens, and pregnant women who belong to the priority group but are unable to vote during the said voting hours will still be accommodated through the priority lanes set up for them in every polling precinct from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm.

These lanes will remain open throughout the day to allow them skip regular queues and vote with great comfort and convenience, the Commission reiterates.

The election offi-

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cer then emphasized that this system upholds the right to suffrage of every Filipinos and to maintain an organized electoral process while safeguarding the welfare of the vulnerable sectors.

Meanwhile, COMELEC has warned the public to remain cautious and vigilant against false information circulating online claiming that the upcoming election has been postponed and moved to another date, clarifying that such claims are fake and not true.

Individuals spreading such false information may be held liable for an election offense under Section 261(z)(11) of the Omnibus Election Code.



SM SUPERMALLS AND ASP INK PARTNERSHIP FOR AUTISM-INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT



Strengthening our commitment to a more inclusive community, SM Supermalls and ASP sign the Memorandum of Understanding for Inclusive Hiring of talents on the spectrum.



Ms. Shereen Sy shares a thoughtful message that encourages proper understanding of each member of the community to be able to serve them better.



DA-ATI CALABARZON has officially partnered with RHUDARDA Integrated Agri-Coconut Farm, located in Polillo, Quezon, as a new Coconut-based Learning Site for Agriculture (CocoLSA). The partnership was formalized through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), led by Center Director Dr. Rolando V. Maningas. The event also featured the unveiling of the LSA billboard and the awarding of the LSA certificate. In his message, Dr. Maningas emphasized the significant contribution of cooperatives to development. The farm is the second Learning Site for Agriculture (LSA) in Polillo and the first CocoLSA in the entire Polillo Group of Islands (POGI). It was established to support the community by sharing skills and knowledge while strengthening the agricultural network in Polillo, Quezon.

ASP INK PARTNERSHIP FOR AUTISM-INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT



SM Supermalls and ASP Leaders are dedicated to sharing valuable insights, inspiring us to continually enhance and transform our customer experiences.

MANILA, Philippines—SM Supermalls has partnered with the Autism Society Philippines (ASP) to create work opportunities for individuals on the autism spectrum and help them succeed in the retail industry.

This collaboration reflects SM's enduring commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion across its operations.

This newly inked partnership builds on that legacy, ensuring more meaningful, sustainable roles for talents on the spectrum within the SM ecosystem. SM Markets pioneered autism-inclusive hiring back in 2016.

A ceremonial signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was held at Book Nook in SM Podium, marking the beginning of an inspiring new chapter in inclusive employment.

Book Nook, a flagship community learn-

ing hub under SM Cares, will soon welcome individuals on the spectrum as Book Nook concierges, bringing SM's inclusive vision to life in a space that champions learning, connection, and belonging.

“Book Nook was always meant to be a space where everyone feels they belong,” Ms. Shereen T. Sy shared. “Through this initiative, we bring that vision into sharper focus—creating not just a library, but a living story of inclusion, empowerment, and opportunity.”

“The Autism Society Philippines is excited about this collaboration,” said Ms. Mona Magno Veluz, Country Manager of ASP Autism Works. “We need more companies carving a space for Filipinos with disabilities in their businesses, allowing them to contribute and grow.”

The partnership is part of SM Cares' broad-

er advocacy for inclusive employment, which aims to create work environments where people with disabilities are welcomed and celebrated for their unique strengths.

“At SM, inclusion is more than a policy—it's our purpose,” said Mr. Steven T. Tan, President of SM Supermalls.

“This partnership with ASP reaffirms our commitment to being a ‘Mall for All’—a place where everyone can succeed and feel they belong.”

SM Supermalls continues to redefine inclusive, compassionate public spaces—not just in its malls but in communities throughout the Philippines.

Its strategic partnership with the ASP ensures our commitment to being in best practices for recruiting, developing, and retaining talents on the autism spectrum. **PR**

BotiCARD opens its 24th Branch in Biñan City



(From left to right) Father Efren Montoya, BotiCARD President Rosenda Aquino, Micoinsurance Coordinator Elvira De Guzman, CARD MRI Managing Director Aristeo Dequito, and BotiCARD Operations Director Florife Reynido led the opening of the BotiCARD Branch in Biñan, Laguna. cont. on Page 3