

# Mekeni Joins Hospital on Wheels Medical Mission for over 1,000 Porac Residents



legacy of service," Mr. Garcia said.

Hospital on Wheels founder Dr. Jim Sanchez expressed appreciation for Mekeni's continued partnership and the collective effort behind the mission.

"For 18 years, Hospital on Wheels has advocated accessible healthcare.

We are deeply grateful to Mekeni Food Corporation, the local government of Porac, and all our partners who shared their time, resources, and expertise to make this mission successful," Sanchez said.

Porac Municipal Vice Mayor Trisha "Jen" Capil welcomed the initiative, noting its alignment with the municipality's priorities.

"This medical mission is a big help to our community, especially our indigenous peoples.

We thank the Hospital on Wheels, Mekeni, and all the partners for bringing this service to Porac, as it supports our

administration's goal of inclusive and accessible healthcare," Capil said.

Aside from the medical, surgical, dental, and optical services, the mission also brought moments of care and comfort to beneficiaries through the distribution of gift packs for IPs and children who attended the activity.

Hospital on Wheels has been conducting medical missions nationwide for 18 years, while Mekeni Food Corporation has supported the initiative for three consecutive years, demonstrating the company's sustained commitment to health-focused community partnerships.

Other organizations that supported the mission include Rotary Club of Malolos (D3770), Rotary Club of Maharlika (D3780), Philippine Travel Operators Association (PHILTOA), Aguman Campangan, Office of Senator Imee Marcos, Eagles, BNI Pampanga, Philippine Air Force (PAF), PAF Reservists, and Scrubbed BPO.

PORAC, Pampanga (December 12-13, 2025) — Mekeni Food Corporation reinforced its commitment to community health and inclusive development as it actively supported the Hospital on Wheels (HOW) medical mission that served more than 1,000 patients at the Jose Songco Lapid Gymnasium in Barangay Can-

gatba, Porac, Pampanga. The two-day mission delivered free medical, surgical, dental, and vision screening services to residents, with a strong focus on reaching indigenous peoples (IPs) and underserved communities in Porac.

Mekeni joined Hospital on Wheels, the local government of Po-

rac, and various partner organizations in mobilizing resources and volunteer support to bring essential healthcare closer to those who need it most.

Mekeni President Mr. Prudencio "Pruds" Garcia underscored the value of collaboration in creating lasting impact.

"When organizations work together with a

shared purpose, we can do great things for our communities.

This mission is close to my heart because our parents, Mekeni founders Mr. Felix Garcia and the late Mrs. Meding Garcia, once taught indigenous peoples in the mountains.

Supporting this initiative continues that

# SMC TO WAIVE TOLLS ON EXPRESSWAYS ON CHRISTMAS, NEW YEAR'S EVES

San Miguel Corp. (SMC) said it will again waive toll fees across its expressway network on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, continuing an annual practice aimed at easing holiday travel.

The toll holiday will apply to all SMC-operated expressways, including the Skyway System, NAIAX Expressway (NAIAX), South Luzon Expressway (SLEX), STAR Tollway and the Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union Expressway (TPLEX).

Tolls will be waived from 10:00 p.m. on

Dec. 24 until 6:00 a.m. on Dec. 25, and from 10:00 p.m. on Dec. 31 until 6:00 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2026, the company said.

SMC said the toll waiver is intended to benefit motorists traveling late at night to reach their families during the holidays.

SMC Infrastructure, the company's infrastructure arm, said it has placed safety and security personnel on heightened alert and rolled out measures to manage the expected increase in traffic during the holiday period.

Beginning noon

on Dec. 20, additional patrol and security personnel have been deployed in critical areas, while emergency response teams are placed on standby to quickly clear any road obstructions, the company said.

Traffic monitoring centers across SMC-operated expressways are staffed around the clock to track traffic conditions and coordinate with emergency responders.

Roadworks that may affect traffic flow have been suspended from Dec. 20 until Jan. 4, 2026, to help ease congestion.



Tow trucks and other emergency vehicles have also been placed at strategic locations to ensure faster response to incidents.

SMC Infrastruc-

ture advised motorists to plan their trips ahead, allow extra travel time and ensure sufficient balance in their Autosweep accounts to avoid delays at toll plazas.

The company added it has coordinated with local government units and national agencies to help manage traffic on public roads connecting to the expressways.

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SSS marks 2025 with pension reform and program upgrades; Looks forward to 2026

TOXICS WATCHDOG REMINDS PUBLIC TO WATCH OUT FOR POTENTIAL CHEMICALS AND OTHER HAZARDS IN PLASTIC TOROTOT



With Christmas and New Year just around the corner, toxics watchdog BAN Toxics reminds the public to be extra cautious when buying plastic hornpipes or "torotot," as some may contain harmful chemicals such as lead and mercury, known neurotoxins that can severely affect a child's brain development.

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# Gen. Trias Farmers Graduate from Sustainable Pig Farming Program

CAYETANO URGES REDIRECTION OF DPWH'S P60-B TARGET SAVINGS TO KEY PUBLIC NEEDS



The Provincial Government of Cavite, under the leadership of Governor Francisco Gabriel "Abeng" D. Remulla, continues to prioritize education through the Iskolang ng Lalawigan ng Cavite program, an initiative aimed at easing the financial burden of students in higher education.

A total of 15,249 students from Cavite State University (CVSU) received ₱2,000 in cash assistance, benefiting enrollees from CVSU campuses in Silang, Imus, Rosario, and Cavite City.

The program seeks to provide direct educational support to deserving Caviteño students, helping them meet academic and daily school-related expenses.

The initiative reflects the provincial government's ongoing efforts to invest in human capital by ensuring that students have access to resources necessary to pursue and complete their studies.

Through programs like Iskolang ng Lalawigan ng Cavite, the province reaffirms its commitment to empowering the youth and building a more educated and resilient Cavite. — A. Sarte

BIR LEADS SIMULTANEOUS NATIONWIDE DESTRUCTION OF ILLICIT VAPE PRODUCTS WITH P1.34 BILLION IN TAX LIABILITIES

PGC RELEASE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR CVSU ROSARIO STUDENTS

The Provincial Government of Cavite, under the leadership of Governor Abeng Remulla, distributed financial assistance to 5,475 student-beneficiaries under the Provincial Scholarship Program during the Iskolang ng Lalawigan educational assistance distribution held on December 16 at Cavite State University-Rosario Campus.

The activity aimed to help ease students' educational expenses while promoting academic excellence. Governor Remulla was joined by First District Board Members Romel Enriquez and Jygs Gandia, who expressed their support and encouragement to the scholars.



The Iskolang ng Lalawigan ng Cavite program continues to underscore the provincial government's strong commitment to investing in education and empowering the future of Caviteño youth. - R. Tanael



### 27 Natural Health and Nutrition Tips That Are Evidence-Based

#### 25. Avoid restrictive diets

Diets are generally ineffective and rarely work well long term. In fact, past dieting is one of the strongest predictors for future weight gain (85Trusted Source).

This is because overly restrictive diets actually lower your metabolic rate, or the amount of calories you burn, making it more difficult to lose weight. At the same time, they also cause alterations to your hunger and satiety hormones, which make you hungrier and may cause strong food cravings for foods high in fat, calories, and sugar (86Trusted Source, 87Trusted Source).

All of this is a recipe for rebound weight gain, or “yo-yo” dieting.

Instead of dieting, try adopting a healthier lifestyle. Focus on nourishing your body instead of depriving it.

Weight loss should follow as you transition to whole, nutritious foods — which are naturally more filling while containing fewer calories than processed foods (14Trusted Source).

#### 26. Eat whole eggs

Despite the constant back and forth about eggs and health, it’s a myth that eggs are bad for you because of their cholesterol content. Studies show that they have minimal effect on blood cholesterol in the majority of people, and they’re a great source of protein and nutrients (87Trusted Source, 88Trusted Source).

Additionally, a review involving 263,938 people found that egg intake had no association with heart disease risk (88Trusted Source).

#### 27. Meditate

Stress has a negative effect on your health. It can affect your blood sugar levels, food choices, susceptibility to sickness, weight, fat distribution, and more. For this reason, it’s important to find healthy ways to manage your stress (88aTrusted Source).

Meditation is one such way, and it has some scientific evidence to support its use for stress management and improving health (89Trusted Source, 90Trusted Source).

In one study involving 48 people with high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, or both, researchers found that meditation helped lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and inflammation compared with the control group. Additionally, the participants in the meditation group reported improved mental and physical wellness (91Trusted Source).

#### The bottom line

A few simple steps can go a long way toward improving your eating patterns and wellness.

Still, if you’re trying to live a healthier life, do not just focus on the foods you eat. Exercise, sleep, and social relationships are also important.

With the evidence-based tips above, it’s easy to introduce small changes that can have a big impact on your overall health.

#### Just one thing

Try this today: There are lots of suggestions on this list that can help you improve your health, but it’s best to put just one or two into practice at a time so you do not get burned out. As more of these healthy actions become habits, you can add more into your routine.

## Toxics...

While torotot are often promoted as a safer alternative to firecrackers, the group, which advocates for safe toys for children, emphasized the need for the public to be aware that plastic hornpipes may contain harmful chemicals and urged parents and caregivers to closely supervise children while using and playing with them.

In its latest market monitoring, BAN Toxics purchased 12 samples of colorful plastic torotot from ambulant vendors and toy stores in Baclaran, Pasay City, and Divisoria in Manila. The torotot were priced at P15 for small ones and up to P40 for larger ones.

Using a Vanta XRF Chemical Analyzer, the samples tested positive for lead at levels of up to 980 parts per million (ppm) and mercury at up to 190 ppm, above the regulatory limits for safe toys. Other hazardous chemicals detected included barium, bromine, chlorine, and chromium. The group also noted that none of the samples were

properly labeled, as required under Republic Act No. 10620, or the Toy and Game Safety Labeling Act of 2013.

Potential hazards associated with torotot include choking hazards from small parts, laceration hazards from sharp plastic edges, chemical hazards from color pigments, and possible hearing damage from blowing the hornpipe directly into the ear.

“Let us be mindful and practice safety first when buying and using torotot or similar plastic noisemakers for our children,” said Thony Dizon, Advocacy and Campaign Officer of BAN Toxics. “Parental supervision and guidance are important to ensure their health and safety.”

BAN Toxics also advised the public to be vigilant when buying children’s products, recommending that they always check the labels, inspect the colors and materials used, and ensure proper labeling as mandated by law.

Republic Act  
**FROM PAGE 01**

## Gen. Trias....

The City Government of General Trias marked a milestone in local agriculture with the graduation ceremony of the Farmers Field School on Sustainable Pig Farming (FFS-SPF) held on December 19, 2025, at the Animal Pound Center in Bagong Kalsada, Brgy. Pasong Kawayan II.

The program celebrated the completion of learning-by-doing training by local farmers aimed at promoting environmentally sound, safe, and profitable pig farming practices.

Participants were equipped with practical knowledge on animal health, biosecurity, and sustainable livestock management to strengthen food security and livelihood opportunities in the city.

The ceremony featured messages from key officials and partner agencies, including Dr. May M. Magno, Provincial

Veterinarian, Ms. Marian Lovella, Learning Specialist, ATI CALABARZON, Hon. Mario C. Amante, Barangay Captain and the City Government, highlighting the importance of empowering farmers through education and innovation.

Graduates were formally recognized during the event, underscoring their commitment to adopting sustainable practices that benefit both the community and the environment. The activity reaffirmed General Trias’ dedication to developing resilient farmers and advancing responsible livestock production.

The program concluded with a closing message from Dr. Gloria C. Digma, the City Veterinarian, who expressed her sincere gratitude to all the dedicated graduates for their hard work and commitment throughout the program. — A. Sarte

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10620 mandates that all toys and games, whether locally or internationally manufactured, imported, donated, distributed, or sold in the Philippines, comply with the safety labeling and manufacturer’s marking requirements set forth in the Philippine National Standards (PNS) for toy safety. Similarly, the DENR Chemical Control Order for Lead and Lead Compounds prohibits the use of lead in the production and manufacturing of toys.

The WHO fact-sheet on lead poisoning states that “lead can affect children’s brain development, resulting in a reduced intelligence quotient (IQ), behavioral changes such as decreased attention span and increased antisocial behavior, and lower educational attainment.”

Last December 12, BAN Toxics launched its annual school-based toxics-free and waste-free “Iwas Papatok” campaign. About 2,000 students, parents, teachers, representatives from the Philippine National Police,

## PGC...

The Provincial Government of Cavite conducted a Top Management Review on December 11, 2025, bringing together department heads and key personnel to reinforce the province’s commitment to efficient, transparent, and quality public service.

The program opened with an invocation, followed by a presentation of the province’s Quality Policy and an audio-visual overview highlighting ongoing quality initiatives. Participants were formally acknowledged by Ms. Anne Minnette M. Dastas, Unit Head of the Office of the Provincial Governor—Office of the Provincial Internal Audit Services.

Messages of support and direction were delivered by Provincial Administrator Engr. Gilbert V.

Gandia, underscoring the importance of institutionalizing quality standards across provincial offices.

A Top Management Meeting, led by Ms. Michelle F. Alcidi, Provincial Board Secretary and Quality Management Representative, served as a key platform to assess performance and align strategies.



Bureau of Fire Protection, and community members joined the call for “Iwas Papatok, Iwas Disgrasya, Iwas Polusyon,” promoting a cleaner, safer, and toxics-free approach to celebrating the holidays.

A noise barrage and lively display of creative, eco-friendly noisemakers—such as homemade tambols, bamboo or wooden clappers, shakers made from recycled bottles and cans with pebbles inside, tambourines from bottle caps, and used cooking pot lids—marked the countdown to the campaign launch. The event reinforced the message that holiday celebrations can be joyful without relying on harmful firecrackers.

BAN Toxics emphasized the importance of moving away from traditional firecrackers and fireworks toward a safer, non-polluting way to celebrate the New Year. “Shifting to a toxics-free and waste-free yuletide celebration not only protects the environment but also safeguards public health, especially that of children.”

Participants reviewed crime data covering calendar years 2023 to 2025 and discussed ways to strengthen preventive measures in commercial establishments.

These measures included the enforcement of window transaction and clear-face policies, the use of advanced CCTV systems, door-clamping mechanisms, and intercom integration to improve security and monitoring.

A highlight of the meeting was the demonstration of the OR-MS-ART, a rapid-response device capable of instantly sending alerts to law

## DA-4A namahagi ng 24 na Hauling Truck para sa mga magbababoy ng CALABARZON

Pormal na tinanggap ang dalawampu’t apat (24) na Farmers’ Cooperatives and Associations (FCAs) sa rehiyon ng tig-iisang animal hauling truck mula sa Department of Agriculture IV-CALABARZON (DA- 4A) Livestock Program noong ika-15 ng Disyembre sa Lipa City, Batangas.

Ito ay bilang suporta sa kanilang operasyon sa transportasyon ng mga hayop na makakatu-long sa pagpapalakas ng kabuuang produksyon at kita sa sektor ng pagbababuyan.

Kasabay nito, nagsagawa rin ng aktwal na demonstrasyon sa paggamit at pagpapalaala sa wastong operasyon ng truck at katiyakan sa kaligtasan.

Kasama sa mga benepisyaryo ang Cavite Farmers Feedmilling and Marketing Cooperative at Silang Livestock Agriculture Cooperative mula sa Cavite; Malinao Farmers Association at Pangkalahatang Samahan ng Mag-sasaka (PASAMASI) mula sa Laguna; Libato Farmers Husbandry and Corn Farming Association Inc., LIMCOMA Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Magahis Multipurpose Cooperative, Lucban Multipurpose

Cooperative, Kamahari Agri-based Multipurpose Cooperative, Padre Garcia Development Cooperative, at Guinhawa Farmers Association mula sa Batangas; Sampaloc Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Multi-purpose Cooperative, Amoran-to Social and Economic Community Organization (AMORSECO), Organikong Tatak Yapak Farmers Association, Samahan ng mga Magbababoy ng San Francisco, Tulo-Tulo Hog Raisers Association, at Capuluan Tulon Farmers Association mula sa Rizal; at Agdangan Agri-business Farmers Agriculture Cooperative, Grupong Magsasaka ng Brgy. San Nicolas, General Luna Inc., Sampaloc Farmers Association, Dolores Development Cooperative, Pinagdanlayan Farmers Association, Concepcion Pinagbakuran Farmers Association, at Manggaling Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Cooperative mula sa Quezon.

Samantala, inihayag ni DA-4A Regional Executive Director Fidel Libao na patuloy na isusulong ng ahensya ang mga programang magbibigay ng konkretong suporta sa sektor ng paghahayupan sa rehiyon.

## Bacoor...

Hon. Manolo “Noly” Galvez, P/Lt. Chief Basman A. Macarangal Jr., P/Maj. Kris Albin B. Gonzales, Project SOS programmer, Yvan Mercado, and various business stakeholders.

Participants reviewed crime data covering calendar years 2023 to 2025 and discussed ways to strengthen preventive measures in commercial establishments.

These measures included the enforcement of window transaction and clear-face policies, the use of advanced CCTV systems, door-clamping mechanisms, and intercom integration to improve security and monitoring.

A highlight of the meeting was the demonstration of the OR-MS-ART, a rapid-response device capable of instantly sending alerts to law

enforcement during robbery incidents. PLT Chief Macarangal suggested incorporating an acknowledgment feature to confirm that responding police units receive alerts in real time.

Local officials expressed strong support for the project.

Board Member Pagulayan and Councilor Galvez both committed to backing the initiative and exploring the passage of a local ordinance to institutionalize its implementation throughout Bacoor.

P/Lt. Desamito thanked all stakeholders and the Bacoor local government unit for their cooperation, underscoring the city’s continued commitment to public safety and ensuring the protection of convenience store employees and customers.

Local officials expressed strong support for the project.

Board Member Pagulayan and Councilor Galvez both committed to backing the initiative and exploring the passage of a local ordinance to institutionalize its implementation throughout Bacoor.

## SSS...

Quezon City, Philippines – The Social Security System (SSS) closes 2025 with implementation of the Emergency Loan Program (ELP) capping off achievements that strengthened social protection for millions of Filipinos highlighted by successful implementation of the Pension Reform Program, loan program enhancements, expanded membership coverage, and significant strides in digital transformation.

SSS President and CEO Robert Joseph Montes De Claro said, “This year was a turning point for SSS. From the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and with guidance from former Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto and current Finance Secretary Frederick D. Go, we delivered on our promise to provide better benefits and programs, faster services, and wider coverage for our members. These milestones reflect our unwavering commitment to social security protection for all Filipino workers and their beneficiaries.”

### Key Achievements in 2025

2025 SSS Pension Reform Program featuring annual pension increases for all 3.8 million pensioners every September from 2025 to 2027 – 10% increase for retiree and disability pensioners and 5% increase for survivor pensioners; Salary Loan Program enhanced with reduced interest rate to 8% (from 10%) for more than 600,000 member-borrowers;

Calamity Loan Program enhanced with reduced interest rate to 7% (from 10%) and with faster activation for about 630,000 member-borrowers;

Pension Loan Program for SSS Retiree and Surviving Spouse Pensioners implemented featuring loanable amount up to P300,000 for retiree pensioners and P150,000 for survivor pensioners for more than 30,000 pensioner-borrowers;

Issued MySSS Card with 2-in-1 function-

ality, a valid SSS ID and automatic enrollment as a disbursement account with almost 10,000 cards received already by SSS members and almost 100,000 disbursement accounts enrolled;

Emergency Loan Program implemented with low interest rate of 7% and 6-month moratorium on loan repayment for more than 26,000 member-borrowers;

Contribution Subsidy Provider Program rolled out led by Double Dragon Corporation paying P18.2-M to fully subsidize SSS contributions for 2,000 informal sector self-employed workers in Iloilo City and Roxas City for 12 months – local government units, religious groups, and others also registering as subsidy providers;

Accredited 25 Cooperatives as Coverage and Collection Partner to facilitate SSS registration, contributions collection, benefit and loan applications for more than 200,000 members of cooperatives;

Partnered with various government entities for social security coverage of Job Order/ Contract of Service (JO/COS) workers who are not covered by GSIS – more than 500,000 JOs registered and more than 200,000 JOs regularly paying SSS contributions; and Implemented Run After Contribution Evaders (RACE) Programs nationwide to exact compliance from delinquent employers.

### Looking forward to 2026

“We also look forward to 2026 where we continue implementation of existing programs, develop new ones, strengthen member servicing, and expand footprint of SSS nationwide and abroad,” De Claro added.

The year 2026 brings with it Tranche 2 (of 3) of the Pension Reform Program for another round of pension increase for all pensioners in September.

Also available for 2026 is the Emergency Loan Program up to 9

December 2026 or until the calamity declaration is lifted.

**Micro loan program**  
From 17 December 2025 approval by the Social Security Commission of the guidelines for micro loan program, we expect implementation of this loan program early in 2026.

“With guidance from Finance Secretary Frederick D. Go, SSS is looking to implement this micro loan program through partner institutions very soon as a safer and affordable option to borrow cash for short-term needs with 15- to 90-day tenor and interest rate of 8% per annum or 0.67% per month,” De Claro said.

### Expanding footprint in the Philippines and overseas

Toward ensuring that no Filipino worker is left behind, we shall pursue opening of local and overseas branches in 2026. SSS is looking to establish Foreign Representative Offices in Madrid, San Francisco, and Macau while looking to establish 10 new branches locally.

### Massive recruitment of personnel

For 2026, SSS is looking to hire about 1,800 personnel toward completely providing manpower resources in the frontlines – be it physically or virtually through electronic means. This recruitment effort aims to address

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gaps in service delivery and handling of requests for assistance and various complaints.

### Other initiatives for 2026

Other programs being explored include potential partnership with the National Commission of Senior Citizens (NCSC) through Chairperson Ma. Mercedes N. Gutierrez for the Annual Confirmation of Pensioners (ACOP) Program, special programs for gig economy workers, and contribution subsidy program for 2,000 OFWs through P28.8-M commitment from Double Dragon Corporation.

“Looking back at 2025 and forward to 2026, we remain committed to our goal of making SSS relevant in the life of every Filipino at every point in their lives by providing quality social protection, continuous enhancement of member servicing platforms, and espousing the value of saving for the future,” De Claro emphasized.

For more information, inquiries, or feedback, members may contact the SSS through hotline 1455, email ussaptayo@sss.gov.ph, and our branches. See us also through our website (www.sss.gov.ph) or our social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Spotify, Viber, X, and YouTube) under the MYSSSPH handle for latest announcements and instructional material on SSS programs. PR





# SM Cares Turns Movie Tickets Into Classrooms Nationwide



SM Cares launches the "HOPE in a Movie" campaign with a special screening of Avatar: Fire and Ash at SM Cinema Mall of Asia, turning movie moments into classrooms for Filipino students.

Advocates and partners proudly come together after the "HOPE in a Movie" launch, united in their commitment to build classrooms and create better learning opportunities for the younger generation.



Partners, advocates, and guests gather at SM Cinema Mall of Asia for the "HOPE in a Movie" launch—joining forces to bring more classrooms and learning spaces to Filipino communities.



Guests enjoy their snacktime treats as they gear up for the "HOPE in a Movie" launch and the special screening of Avatar: Fire and Ash at SM Cinema Mall of Asia.

"From Reel to Real Stories: HOPE in a Movie", a nationwide campaign that transforms everyday movie experiences into meaningful support for public school classrooms.

The campaign kicked off on December 18 with a special screening at SM Cinema Mall of Asia, bringing together partners, advocates, and community leaders to champion a shared mission: addressing classroom shortages in public schools through collective action. The event also highlighted SM Cinema's commitment to innovation with the introduction of SCREENX, a cutting-edge 270-degree panoramic format developed in partnership with CJ 4DPLEX, offering audiences a more immersive way to enjoy films.

"At SM Cares, we believe that empowering communities creates lasting impact," said Steven T. Tan, President of SM Supermalls. "This campaign is built on a simple yet powerful idea: when people watch a movie at SM Cinema, they're not just enjoying entertainment—

they're helping create real opportunities for Filipino students by turning movie moments into classrooms."

Through a partnership among SM Supermalls, Generation HOPE, and the Department of Education (DepEd), a portion of every SM Cinema ticket purchased will go toward building 10 public school classrooms over the next three years. The initiative applies to all SM Cinema tickets—whether bought at ticket booths, kiosks, or online—and across all formats nationwide, making participation easy and accessible.

This effort builds on SM's long-standing commitment to education. To date, SM Foundation has constructed 403 classrooms and donated 116 school buildings nationwide, alongside digital learning hubs equipped with computers, smart TVs, and essential software to strengthen digital literacy. SM has also created community learning spaces in its malls, such as the Book Nook—a free reading and storytelling

hub designed to nurture a love for learning among families and children.

With HOPE in a Movie, Generation HOPE brings its experience in impact-driven classroom projects, while DepEd ensures that school sites and facilities meet educational standards and address priority needs.

"This partnership demonstrates the power of collaboration between the private sector, social enterprises, and government," Tan said. "Together, we can create sustainable solutions that help students learn better and communities grow stronger."

As the campaign moves into the new year, SM Cares invites moviegoers nationwide to join this meaningful movement by choosing SM Cinema—turning movie experiences into real stories of hope for Filipino students. Together, we can transform entertainment into empowerment, because every ticket purchased helps write a brighter, HOPE-filled future for the next generation.

# Dec 31, 2025 - Jan 06, 2026 DOE Secretary Garin opens MGI Visitor Center; Pushes geothermal growth and environmental stewardship in the country



DOE Secretary Garin cites MGPP's unique compact design enabling baseload supply with minimal environmental footprint.

Sto. Tomas, Batangas, December 22, 2025 – Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Sharon S. Garin led the formal opening of Maibarara Geothermal Inc. (MGI) Visitor Center located inside the Maibarara Geothermal Power Facility (MGPF) complex in Sto. Tomas, Batangas, attended by MGI partners PetroGreen Energy Corporation (PGE), ACEN, and PNOC-Renewables Corporation (PNOC-RC). PGE is a joint venture between Yuchengco-led PetroEnergy Resources Corporation and Kyuden International Corporation (KIC), the overseas investment arm of Japan's Kyushu Electric Power Company, Inc.

"It's a pleasure to be here in MGI, to formally open MGI's Visitor Center, and join partners who share one clear purpose of accelerating transition to cleaner energy under the Philippine Energy Plan," said Secretary Garin. "Just this week, we have signed a MOA with the Land Bank, operationalizing the Philippine Geothermal Resource De-Risking Facility (GRDF), to address investment risks in exploration and drive the development of geothermal energy in the Philippines. Maibarara's success demonstrates that achiev-

ing our purpose requires more than just technological advancements. It is ensuring that we deliver benefits for the people and for our country," adds Garin.

The newly inaugurated facility serves as a hub for geothermal energy education, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability advocacy.

Designed to offer learning experience, the Visitor Center features displays on geothermal energy, key information on the development and operations of MGPF, and overview of MGI and its community partnership and environment protection programs.

The event also marked the launching of the Maibarara segment of We Power C.A.R.E., PGE's flagship biodi-

## Bacoor police launch new alert system to strengthen crime prevention

CITY OF BACOR, Cavite (PIA) — To further enhance public safety and protect businesses, the Bacoor Component City Police Station has launched Project SOS: 'Strike One SMS,' a new crime-prevention and rapid alert system designed to improve police response during emergencies.

The initiative was formally introduced during a recent coordination meeting held at the Strike

versity-focused environmental initiative which champions conservation, awareness, restoration, and ecotourism in regions hosting PGE renewable energy projects. MGI commits to adopt Kapapa (Medinilla magnifica Lindl.), a critically endangered flowering plant found only in the Philippines.

The species is one of 30 endangered species adopted for conservation over the next 30 years under the We Power C.A.R.E program.

First introduced in 2024 through a partnership with UPLB, the program underscores PGE and MGI's call for collective action to protect natural ecosystems while advancing clean energy use.

Among those present were Provincial Board Member Hon. Alde Pagulayan, City Councilor

## EDITORIAL: Unfounded allegations

WITH his Philippine passport now canceled by the Department of Foreign Affairs after the filing of various graft charges against him, the former chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations and resigned Ako Bicol Party-List Rep. Elizaldy Co must be worried sick about the prospect of deportation from his hiding place abroad to face justice in this country and spend the rest of his life in jail if found guilty.

The Office of the Ombudsman has filed graft and malversation of public funds cases against him and others over an allegedly irregular P289.5-million flood-control/road-dike project in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro.

He is also charged under Section 3(h) of the same law for allegedly receiving "unwarranted financial or pecuniary benefits."

But the former legislator and now wanted fugitive from the law appears unrepentant and wants to evade culpability for the charges against him by dragging no less than President Marcos Jr. and former House Speaker Martin Romualdez into the mess of his own making by claiming the two top officials allegedly received kickbacks from budget insertions for anomalous public works projects.

President Marcos Jr. and Rep. Romualdez have both stoutly denied Co's baseless allegations. While the President can defend himself should an impeachment complaint be filed against him, Leyte Rep. Romualdez, a lawyer and Constitutionalist, can defend himself in any judicial forum should formal charges be lodged against him.

As things now stand, Romualdez has already appeared before the Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI) The ad hoc body has no adverse finding against the former Speaker nor recommended the filing of charges against him.

In fact, there is no sworn testimony, document, or credible evidence that has directly linked Romualdez to any irregular flood control project transactions or kickbacks. He has repeatedly emphasized this and highlighted his clear conscience, which remains the foundation of his defense.

Romualdez has also declared his full cooperation with investigative bodies, appearing voluntarily before the ICI, remaining in the country, and submitting relevant documents and statements.

The former Speaker has also underscored his trust in the independence of the Ombudsman and fairness of the legal system.

Reaffirming faith in an impartial, thorough evaluation by constitutional bodies supports his stance that justice will prevail through evidence-based scrutiny, not political pressure.

In defending himself, Romualdez can challenge statements not made under oath or lacking evidence, as he has done regarding unsubstantiated allegations from contractor testimonies and accusations. His defense remains fact-driven, respectful of due process, and focused on legal arguments rather than emotions or political rhetoric.

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**TIN NO. ----- 237756418-000**  
**Email ad: newsstraight172@gmail.com**  
**soberanmavic@gmail.com**  
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**Publisher : Maria Victoria S. Soberano**  
**Editor-In-chief : Dominador C. Soberano**  
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## BIR...



Quezon City — The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) today led the Simultaneous Nationwide Destruction of Illicit Vape Products, spearheaded by the BIR National Office and carried out concurrently across various Revenue Regions nationwide. The activity underscores the government's firm and uncompromising stance against the illegal trade of excisable goods.

A total of 448,494 units of illicit vape products were scheduled for destruction beginning today and continuing over the next three days as part of a nationwide operation that is being livestreamed online 24/7. These products carry an estimated tax liability of P1.34 billion, inclusive of penalties.

The nationwide destruction follows sustained enforcement operations conducted pursuant to Section 6(C) of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended, and implemented through duly issued Mission Orders.

In his message during the destruction, Commissioner of Internal Revenue Charlito Martin R. Mendoza emphasized the importance of conducting the activity publicly and simultaneously nationwide.

"The government does not—and will not—tolerate the sale of vape and vapor products without the full and proper payment of excise taxes,

as evidenced by the excise tax stamps that must be affixed to every vape product sold," Commissioner Mendoza said.

He stressed that excise taxes on vape products and other so-called sin products serve a dual purpose: to regulate consumption by raising retail prices and discouraging use, especially among the youth, and to generate revenues that help fund essential public services, particularly healthcare programs.

Commissioner Mendoza further warned that, beyond unpaid taxes, these unstamped products are unsafe and dangerous.

"Moreover, the absence of excise tax stamps tells us that these distributors and sellers undermined and evaded government oversight of these sin products, including our authority to monitor, regulate, and control their sale and distribution," he added.

He explained that illicit vape products cannot simply be taxed and released into the market, as their contents and device safety cannot be assured, particularly with battery-powered devices placed close to the face.

The destruction of the seized vape production is being carried out in accordance with Sections 224, 225, and 279 of the Tax Code, as implemented under Revenue Regulations Nos. 14-2024 and 16-2024, and other related BIR issuances govern-

ing the seizure, forfeiture, and disposal of excisable goods.

Today's activity was witnessed by senior government officials and representatives, led by Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Raphael P. M. Lotilla, together with Department of Finance (DOF) OIC Undersecretary Euvimil Nina R. Asuncion and DOF Director Emeo I. Macabales; Bureau of Customs Commissioner Ariel F. Nepomuceno and Deputy Commissioner Romeo D. Rosales; representatives of the Department of Trade and Industry led by Atty. M. Marcus Valdez, Assistant Secretary and Supervising Head for the Special Mandate on Vaporized Nicotine and Non-Nicotine Products, their Devices, and Novel Tobacco Products, representing Secretary Ma. Cristina Aldeguer-Roque; and Commission on Audit State Auditor Jezebel Torres, representing Supervising Auditor Emilda G. Navarro.

Also present were Department of Environment and Natural Resources—Environmental Management Bureau Chief of the Hazardous Waste Management Section Irvin Cadavona; National Bureau of Investigation Assistant Director Glen Ricarte, representing Acting Director Angelito D. L. P. Magno; Philippine National Police representative PCol. Vicente Legario Bumalay, Jr. of the

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Quezon City Police District; Department of Health representative Dr. Jean Pauline Tee, OIC Program Coordinator for the Non-Communicable Disease Program of the Quezon City District Health Office; National Security Council representative Col. Ernest Mark Rosal (Ret.); Anti-Money Laundering Council Director Emmett Manantan.

Commissioner Mendoza reiterated that enforcement efforts will continue to intensify in the coming year.

"We will continue to seize, destroy, and permanently remove unstamped vape products from the market to ensure that no one profits by placing consumers at risk," he said. "Our enforcement actions will be more intensified, coordinated, and uncompromising to protect public health, uphold the law, and safeguard legitimate government revenues."

The BIR also urged consumers to report the sale of vape products without excise tax stamps, reminding the public that unstamped vape products are illegal, untaxed, and unsafe for use.

The Simultaneous Nationwide Destruction of Illicit Vape Products highlights the BIR's sustained commitment to combating illicit trade, strengthening regulatory compliance, and upholding fiscal integrity in support of national public health and revenue objectives.

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mga programa but that's not our question. You might be hitting the target pero mali target mo," he said.

The senator said for one, utilizing the DPWH's target savings can help curb the alarming effects of child stunting, emphasizing that addressing it early will give the "best return on investment" because it will prevent bigger challenges for the government later on.

"Marami sa stunted na bata ang magiging future PWDs. The more that we take care of the stunting now, the less we have to spend on the interventions later on," he said.

Cayetano also said the savings can address classroom shortages that have caused double and triple shifting in many public schools through coordinated and targeted construction efforts, citing the City of Taguig as a model for managing school shifting schedules.

"Maybe we can take Taguig as an example because we started building seven-storey buildings na may elevator," he said. He also reiterated his long-standing push for stronger financial aid programs, saying government savings should help families struggling with ris-

ing prices and the continuing impact of inflation.

Cayetano said the DPWH's effort to lower material costs is a good start toward more accountable spending, but emphasized that the real challenge is ensuring that the savings reach sectors that have long suffered from limited budgets.

He added that true reform in public spending is not only about saving money but also about making sure government funds uplift lives and serve their intended purpose.

"You cannot have good governance if you have a corrupt mentality," he said. PR



Like the kernels of corn that endure heat, pressure, and time, yet remain full of potential to grow tall and strong, Chella Baraquel, a corn vendor from San Vicente North, Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro, embodies survival and resilience in both life and business. From a simple kariton they built themselves to a permanent stall in the market, Chella and her family turned their humble beginnings into a lasting space to sell corn.



**Chella Baraquel operates a food cart that offers freshly boiled corn, peanuts, and buttered corn kernels, each product telling the story of her hard work and homegrown success**

At an early age, Chella learned the values of perseverance and self-reliance. She had to leave school early due to family circumstances, having only reached the third year of high school, which prompted her to start working and support herself. She left home at the age of 16 and worked various jobs: a household helper in Manila, a contractual factory worker in Laguna, and then a cashier and waitress in Batangas. Each role refined her work ethic and determination to persevere.

When she returned to Oriental Mindoro in 2007, fate introduced her to Jeffrey Casalla, the man who later became her partner. Together, they faced the daily challenges of making ends meet. With little to no capital, they started selling root crops and fruits, such as singkamas and rambutan, using a kariton they had built themselves.

By 2009, they turned to selling corn, which soon became their steady source of income. Without a fixed supplier, they learned to adapt, constantly finding ways to keep their business running. Their persistence enabled them to meet customer demand and support their growing family.

But in 2014, everything changed. A series of financial challenges struck their family, draining their business capital and even their daily funds for food and expenses. With no resources left to sustain the business, Chella made the painful decision to seek work abroad in Egypt as a domestic helper.

Unfortunately, even there she faced hardships. Chella experienced maltreatment and abuse by her employers and was forced to return home after several months.

That same year, her partner, Jeffrey, became a client of CARD Bank, a microfinance-oriented rural bank, and applied for a PHP 5,000 loan to revive their corn business while Chella was abroad. In 2015, when Chella decided to stay home for good, she also became a member of CARD Bank and applied for another PHP 5,000 loan to help expand their small enterprise. Together, they slowly rebuilt what they had lost.

By 2016, their perseverance paid off. They were able to rent a stall in the Calapan City Public Market while continuing to sell at the night market.

Their stall became a familiar sight, offering a variety of corn cobs. They also continued selling from their kariton, but this time, they improved it into a more durable food cart. They nurtured a simple yet thriving business that continues to sustain their family.

Their business helped them send their children to school. Their eldest is now a college nursing student, and the younger two are in senior and junior high school.

Then came the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, their most formidable challenge yet. Lockdowns halted their selling, their savings were depleted, and they were forced

to sell their tricycle just to survive. Before this happened, they had taken out a loan of almost PHP 80,000 from CARD Bank to expand their business further.

That very loan became their lifeline, helping them keep their business afloat by selling within nearby neighborhoods and covering their daily expenses. After the pandemic, they gradually repaid the loan little by little while rebuilding their business.

With only limited resources left, they began again with just two sacks of corn as their supply, steadily earning and saving until their livelihood regained its strength.

They expanded their product offerings to include peanuts, boiled corn, and buttered corn. They were even able to purchase a new tricycle, gradually recovering what they had lost during the pandemic.

Chella believes that true capital in life and business is not just money, but also patience, hard work, and perseverance. Like a kernel of corn that grows into a strong, sustainable livelihood, her story reflects steady effort overcoming challenges.

In the future, she and her partner, Jeffrey, hope to have their own non-rented stall and expand into fruits and condiment retail, a dream they will once again pursue step by step, believing that setbacks are never final for those who keep moving forward.

The Cavite Career Caravan organized by the Office of the Provincial Public Employment Service Manager was successfully conducted at SM City Bacoor on December 11, in line with the celebration of the 92nd Anniversary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

The activity provided a valuable platform for jobseekers to explore employment opportunities and access government services in one convenient venue.

A total of 116 jobseekers tried their luck during the job fair, where 31 participating companies offered 5,913 job vacancies covering various industries and positions.

Notably, 21 applicants were hired on the spot, highlighting the effectiveness of the initiative in directly linking employers with qualified jobseekers.

In addition to the participating companies, several national government agencies were present

to extend on-site assistance and information to applicants.

These included Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), the Social Security System (SSS), and the Office of the Provincial Legal Officer (OPLA), ensuring a holistic and supportive job fair experience.

Board Member Chelsea Sarno, SK Federation President also graced the event and expressed her support for initiatives that bring employment opportunities closer to the people.

The Cavite Career Caravan continues to serve as a vital program in strengthening employment generation and reinforcing the Provincial Government of Cavite's commitment to empowering its workforce through accessible and inclusive job facilitation activities.

— OPIO

**REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
 REGIONAL TRIAL COURT  
 FOURTH JUDICIAL REGION  
 BRANCH 109, CARMONA, CAVITE  
 2ND FLR, HALL OF JUSTICE BLDG, BRGY.  
 MADUYA, CARMONA, CAVITE  
 EMAIL ADD: rtc2cac109@judiciary.gov.ph Tel  
 No. (046) 4828527**

**RURAL BANK OF LUISIANA, INC.,**  
*Petitioner,*

-versus- **CASE NO. LRC-C-GMA-2025-63**  
 For: Writ of Possession with Damages

**SPOUSES EFIFANIO INFANTE  
 CADION, JR. and ALMA GASPAR  
 CADION,**  
*Respondents,*  
 x-----x

**NOTICE OF HEARING**

There is a petition filed by petitioner through counsel for the issuance of writ of possession with damages on Transfer Certificate of Title No. T-645562 on the grounds alleged therein.

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that said petition has been set for hearing on **February 5, 2026 at 1:30 o'clock in the afternoon**, before this Court, on which date, time, and place, any person interested is cited to appear and show cause why the same should not be granted.

Let a copy of this Notice be published once a week for three (3) consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the Province of Cavite.

Further, let a copy of this Notice and that of the pe-

tion be furnished the Registry of Deeds, Trece Martires City, Cavite, Land Registration Authority, and the Office of the Solicitor General and the same be posted by the sheriff of this Court in three (3) conspicuous places in the Municipality of Carmona, Cavite, where the property is located.

Witness my hand under the seal of this Court this  
 17th day of November 2025 at Carmona, Cavite, Philippines.

(SGD) CATHERINE A. PERAN  
 Officer-In-Charge  
 Court Legal Researcher

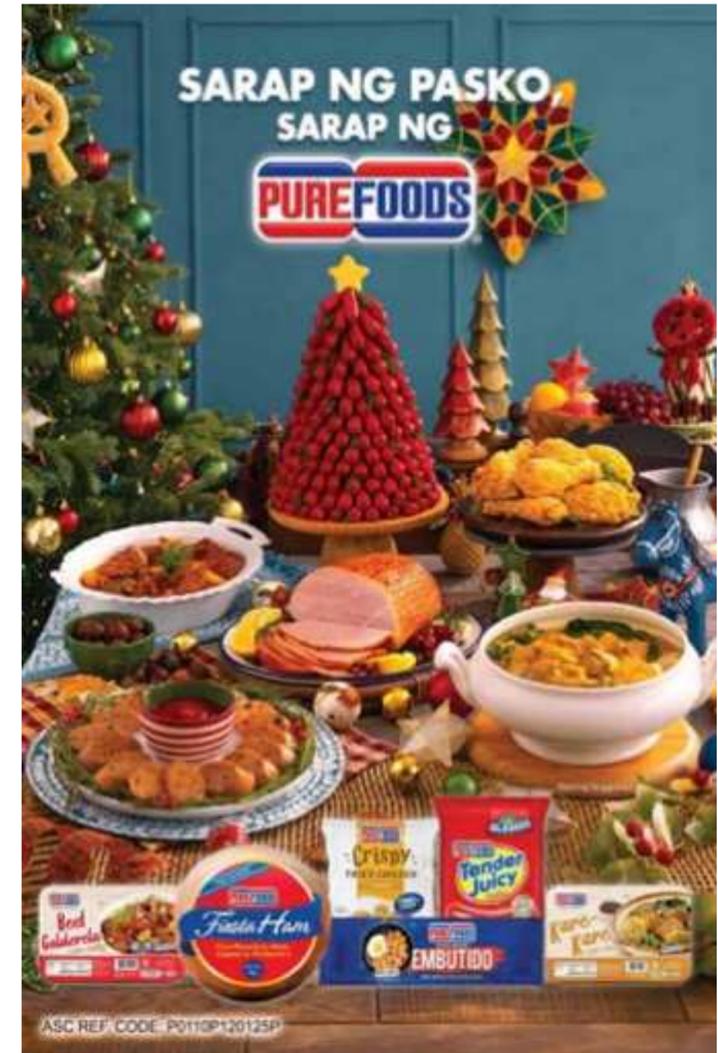
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Office of the Provincial Prosecutor - OPP, Hall of Justice Bldg, Brgy. Maduya, Carmona Cavite  
 Atty. Eric Paul Peralta - 2nd Flr., Caritas Building, Brgy. Dila, Bay, Laguna 4033 (attyericperalta@gmail.com/ peraltalaw.mail@gmail.com) 0917-312-2570  
 Rural Bank of Louisiana, Inc. - Brgy. Halang, Calamba City, Laguna  
 Sps. Epifanio I. Cadion & Alma Cadion - Blk 43 Lot 23, Brgy. Memije, General Mariano Alvarez, Cavite  
 Office of the Solicitor General - 134 Amorsolo St., Legaspi Village, Makati City  
 The Registry of Deeds-Cavite - LRA Bldg., Capitol Cmpd, Trece Martires City, Cavite  
 Land Registration Authority - East Avenue cor. NIA Road, Diliman 1128 Quezon City  
 Sheriff Joseph Diokno - RTC Br. 109, Hall of Justice Bldg, Brgy. Maduya, Carmona Cavite

**STRAIGHTNEWS:  
 Dec. 17, 24 & 31, 2025**



**SARAP NG PASKO,  
 SARAP NG PUREFOODS**



Purefoods Helps Families Celebrate Cherished Traditions, New Additions This Holiday Season

In a country of more than 7,600 islands, Christmas in the Philippines is celebrated in many ways, varying across the regions through traditions that have remained through generations, along with new iterations that reflect the growing diversity among Filipino families.

Today's Christmas celebrations in Filipino households range from grand gatherings among extended families, along with OFW households, dual-income no kids (DINKs)

couples, single parents, and same-gender partners who are marking the season in their own meaningful way. Through it all, the desire to gather, to share, and to connect remains at the heart of each celebration.

**Feast for Filipino families**

This holiday season, Purefoods recognizes both the traditions that have been passed down through generations, along with the new meaningful ones that we create along the way. Around the Noche Buena table, families remember the Christmases past, while embracing the present, and celebrating what brings

them together.

Whether its recipes that have been handed down through many generations, or new dishes to celebrate the joy of togetherness, Purefoods provides a wide range of products to make every holiday meal more memorable.

As a legacy brand with generations-long trusted consistency in quality and taste, Purefoods products have long been a part of occasions that matter most to Filipino families. The different Purefoods products help make homecooked Noche Buena feasts easier and more enjoyable. What's more, the products



**Mekeni Christmas Hams**

As the Christmas season approaches, many of us are thinking about how to make our Noche Buena celebrations truly special. It's a time for family, togetherness, and delicious food that brings everyone closer.

One delightful option to consider is Mekeni's range of Christmas hams. Known for their quality and commitment to safety, Mekeni offers a variety of hams that cater to different preferences and budgets, ensuring that everyone can join in the festive cheer.

Whether it's the rich smokiness of the Gold Premium Ham, the traditional sweet-savory profile of the Deli Premium Ham, or the unique glaze of the Jamon De Bola, each option is crafted with care to enhance your Christmas

meal. For anyone seeking a healthier alternative, Premium Chicken Ham is an excellent choice. These hams can serve as a stunning centerpiece or a thoughtful gift for loved ones, making them a versatile choice for any gathering.

Launched as the specialty of the season, these hams are not just food; they're a way to uphold cherished traditions, especially during Noche Buena. With a focus on accessibility without compromising quality, Mekeni is dedicated to elevating your Christmas experience.

As a trusted name in food processing, Mekeni is committed to safety and community upliftment, providing Filipino families with a reliable and delightful alternative this

festive season. The Pear-Shaped Ham and Brick Ham offer budget-friendly options without compromising the flavor of the festive celebration.

This season, let the flavors of Mekeni Christmas Hams add a touch of joy to your celebrations. For more festive inspiration, follow Mekeni Food Corp on Facebook and Instagram. Explore their offerings and see how you can bring warmth and tradition to your table, this Noche Buena!

Mekeni also provides attractive packages and competitive deals for those interested in exploring business opportunities as resellers and distributors - a perfect chance to partner with a reputable brand and bring quality products to your community. PR

are easily available in supermarkets, groceries, and markets to support different regional traditions and unique family celebrations across the country.

As part of its mission to spread Christmas cheer, Purefoods turned the homecoming of OFWs into a full-blown holiday celebration this December, taking center stage at the newly refreshed Ni-

noy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 just as its new facilities officially opened. Seizing this landmark moment, the "Sarap ng Pasko, Sarap ng Purefoods" installation at the Arrival area and a dazzling LED display at the new Mezzanine Food Hall transformed the terminal into a festive gateway home, filling arrivals with warmth, joy, and inspira-

tion to create new Christmas memories with their loved ones through food. Food that is lovingly prepared and joyfully shared is at the core of every Christmas celebration. No matter how Filipino families celebrate, Purefoods helps bring the joy of the season to every table.

