

PBBM SIGNS NEW LAWS UPGRADING TWO STATE COLLEGES, ESTABLISHING FIVE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE PROGRAMS

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has signed into law seven legislative measures, which aim to enhance and expand capacities of at least seven higher education

institutions (HEIs) in different provinces across the country.

Under Republic Act (RA) No. 11968, President Marcos granted the conversion of San Isidro Satellite campus of the

Leyte Normal University (LNU) in San Isidro, Leyte to a regular campus, which will be referred to as the "LNU-San Isidro Campus."

He also signed into law RA No. 11969, converting

the Bataan Peninsula State University (BPSU)-Bagac Extension Campus in Bagac, Bataan to a regular campus that will be known as "BPSU-Bagac Campus."

The President also signed laws which

established Colleges of Medicine such as the Benguet State University-College of Medicine (RA 11970) in La Trinidad, Benguet, and Southern Luzon State University-College of Medicine (RA

11971) in Lucban, Quezon. The chief executive also signed into law RA No. 11972, which established University of Eastern Philippines-College of Medicine in Catarman, **► PBBM SIGNS • 4**

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ECLIP - Package of Services for Friendly Returnees

Recently at the SP Session Hall of the Legislative Building in Trece Martires City. The initiative provided an extensive package of services aimed at facilitating the seamless reintegration of returnees into the community, addressing their immediate needs and providing a foundation for a brighter future.

Provincial Director of DILG-Cavite, Engr. Danilo A. Nobleza, along with Mr. Patricio Pello, Chief of Staff of Vice Governor Athena Bryana D. Tolentino, warmly greeted the returning individuals and expressed wholehearted support for their reintegration.

The package of services includes grocery packs and



agricultural products from different partners and stakeholders, school supplies for children, and financial assistance from PGC and Department of Social Welfare and Development Office-Regional Office goes beyond mere resettlement, embodying a holistic approach to empower returnees and foster their successful integration in the community.

Additionally, a crucial component of the program involved a concise introduction to the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) presented by Ms. Maria May Ambata, the DILG-Cavite E-CLIP Focal Person. Ms. Ambata

► ECLIP • 4



MAYOR AGUINALDO

COUNCILOR ARMIE AGUINALDO

PUSO AT MALASAKIT PARA SA ATING KAWIT

DOST instills culture of punctuality to the young in time for National Time Consciousness Week



In an era marked by incessant distractions, the art of respecting and valuing one another's time often takes a back seat, which may cause, in some instances, inconvenience to both parties. The pressing demands of modern life, coupled with a myriad of diversions, contribute to the oversight of responsible time management. The consequence, however, extends beyond the individual level, impacting relationships with family, friends, partners, and coworkers in ways often underestimated.

Recognizing the critical need for a cultural shift towards time consciousness, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) is set to **► DOST INSTILLS • 4**

PhilHealth to adjust benefit package rates in 2024

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) is set to adjust the rates of most of its benefit packages starting 2024.

PhilHealth must adjust its rates in order for members to cope with the increasing cost of medical care, PhilHealth president and chief executive officer Emmanuel Ledesma Jr. said in a statement on Friday.

"We want our members to feel the value of their benefits which translates to meaningful financial risk protection. Dapat ramdam ng mga kababayan natin ang benepisyo nila sa PhilHealth (Our fellowmen must be able to feel their benefits from PhilHealth)," he added.

The state health insurer first implemented the case rate payment system in 2013, wherein it reimbursed a fixed amount for a specific medical condition or surgical case.

With the set adjustment, the case rates are likely to increase to a maximum of 30 percent across all cases, resulting to lower out-of-pocket expenses during hospitalization and even during outpatient care.

To minimize untoward inflationary effects after rate adjustments, PhilHealth will prescribe a cost-sharing mechanism wherein health facilities and the members will have fixed co-payment rates on top of what is being paid for by PhilHealth.

This way, health facilities will be more efficient in the use of resources to achieve desired health outcomes while members can predict how much they should pay for amenities

and other extra services availed of beyond those provided in basic or ward accommodations.

Other strategies to control the untoward effects of this adjustment include measures to prevent insurance fraud and doctor moral hazard.

"This will be our way of controlling healthcare costs, in making member's expenses predictable, and in discouraging irrational use of healthcare services among facilities," Ledesma said.

The PhilHealth shall adopt a variable inflation adjustment across types of health facilities, which means that higher-level facilities shall get higher adjustments in rates up to a maximum of 30 percent.

Ledesma said the upward adjustment in case rates is on top of the ongoing benefit expansion and rationalization that was already approved by the PhilHealth Board.

For 2023, PhilHealth has implemented the expansion of dialysis coverage to 156 sessions from the previous 90 sessions, and rationalized the rates for conditions mostly availed of among Filipinos.

Through Circular 2023-0021, it increased the coverage for ischemic stroke from PHP28,000 to PHP76,000, and hemorrhagic stroke from PHP38,000 to PHP80,000.

It is set to release a circular before yearend to widen its coverage for pneumonia high-risk from PHP32,000 to



PHP90,100.

In 2024, Z Benefits for breast cancer shall likewise be expanded, which will include coverage of targeted therapy of up to PHP1 million per patient per year.

Z Benefits cover 20

catastrophic illnesses and health conditions requiring expensive treatments and hospitalizations: acute lymphocytic leukemia, early breast cancer, prostate cancer, kidney transplant, standard risk coronary bypass graft,

tetralogy of Fallot, ventricular septal defect, cervical cancer, Z MORPH (Mobility, Orthosis, Rehabilitation and Prosthesis Help), selected orthopedic implants, peritoneal dialysis, colon cancer, rectal cancer, expanded mobility orthosis

rehabilitation help, premature and small newborns, children with developmental disabilities, children with mobility impairment, children with visual impairment, children with hearing impairment, and rheumatic heart disease. (PNA)

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THE COOLEST DESSERTS ARE HERE: ICE BAR OFFICIALLY OPENS AT SM CITY BACCOOR FOOD COURT: SM CITY BACCOOR, CAVITE - Introducing a refreshing blend of Cold Filipino desserts infused with trendy vibes, Ice Bar offers an array of Polar Combinations with its traditional favorites like the Polar Halo Halo alongside innovative creations such as its Polar Rainbow Crunch. Ice Bar sets itself apart by prioritizing food quality, ensuring that each cup is a delightful experience for customers. Located at the 4th Level of the SM City Bacoor Food Court, Ice Bar invites dessert enthusiasts to savor the cool and delightful Polar Combinations, establishing itself as the go-to destination for Shaved Ice Desserts. Don't miss the chance to indulge in a unique fusion of flavors – visit Ice Bar at SM City Bacoor and elevate your dessert experience today!

P210-M under DepEd's 2024 budget big boost for mental health program

Senator Sherwin Gatchalian said Thursday the PHP210 million under the Department of Education's (DepEd) budget for 2024 is a big boost for the implementation of mental health programs.

Gatchalian said he originally proposed PHP160 million for carrying out mental health programs to address the mental crisis plaguing the country's schools.

Based on DepEd data, he said, 1,686 learners died by suicide between School Year (SY) 2017-2018 and SY 2022-2023, while 7,892 learners attempted suicide.

"Mahalagang matutukan natin ang pagpapatibay at epektibong pagpapatupad ng mga programa ng ating mga paaralan para sa mental health (It is important that we focus on strengthening and ensuring the effective implementation of programs for mental health in our schools)," Gatchalian said in a

Asia, the Philippines' Grade 5 learners had the highest exposure to bullying (63.2 percent), aggression (9.2 percent), violence (12.3 percent), and offensive behavior (28.8 percent).

The latest round of the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) also indicated that one in three 15-year-old learners experienced being bullied at least once a week.

While the number of Filipino learners who experienced bullying decreased between 2018 and 2022, the DepEd emphasized that bullying remains a pervasive problem, especially in public schools and more so for boys.

The PISA report also found that learners who

statement.

"Kaya tiniyak natin na sa ilalim ng 2024 budget, makakapaglaan tayo ng pondo para sa mga programa ng DepEd para sa mental health at masuportahan ang ating mga mag-aaral (That is why we made sure that under the 2024 budget, we could allot funds for DepEd's programs for mental health so we could support our students)."

He said large-scale international assessments showed the high prevalence of bullying in the country's schools.

Gatchalian said that based on the analysis conducted by his office using the 2019 Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) data, they found that compared to their peers in Southeast



President Corazon C. Aquino Elementary School, Quezon City (PNA photo by Joan Bondoc)

were bullied at least a few times a month scored 11 to 44 points lower in mathematics.

Gatchalian has been advocating for the passage of Senate Bill 2200 or the Basic Education Mental

Health and Well-Being Promotion Act to institutionalize a school-based mental health program.

The Senate approved the proposed measure on third and final reading in

September.

On Dec. 20, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. signed into law the 2024 General Appropriations Act (GAA), which contains the PHP5.768-trillion budget. (PNA)

Salary hike to complement bill on teachers' supplies allowance – solon

A lawmaker on Thursday pushed for the approval of a measure upgrading the minimum salary grade level of teachers from Salary Grade 11 to 19 in support of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s campaign promise of a salary increase.

Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Raymund Villafuerte Jr. said the proposal would complement the bill bumping up the teaching supplies' allowance of some 800,000 public school teachers that was recently approved by both houses of Congress.

Villafuerte said the low salary rates for around 800,000 public school teachers have resulted in "disincentivization" to improve their skills and pursue further education and training.

"Despite their heavy workload and essential role as agents of constructive intellectual, social, cultural, political and moral change in our society, our public school teachers are among the most underpaid workers in the country," he said in a statement.

"Increasing their take-home pay and providing for a permanent teaching supplies allowance with a provision for a steady bump per school year (SY) will hopefully incentivize them to strive for excellence in their field and make teaching a more



PAY HIKE. A teacher at President Corazon C. Aquino Elementary School in Quezon City makes the first day of classes joyful and memorable for her students in this photo taken on Aug. 29, 2023. Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Raymund Villafuerte Jr. said on Thursday (Dec. 28, 2023) a measure upgrading the minimum salary grade level of teachers from Salary Grade 11 to 19 would support President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s campaign promise of a salary increase. (PNA photo by Joan Bondoc)

attractive profession for our students," he added.

According to Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Duterte, the Department of Education (DepEd) has started looking into a long-term approach to raising teachers' salaries.

President Marcos has also directed the education department to conduct a study on raising teachers' pay.

The salary upgrade, under House Bill 1851,

shall be "differentiated in accordance with the 5 qualifications and length of service rendered by teachers and shall not be prejudiced by across-the-board salary adjustments."

Villafuerte said House Bill 1851 complements House Bill 9682, which proposes that the yearly teaching allowance will increase from the current PHP5,000 to PHP7,500 per teacher for school year 2024-2025, and

PHP10,000 per teacher in the succeeding school years.

Under Section 4 of HB 9682, the allowance can be used to buy tangible or intangible teaching supplies and materials, pay incidental expenses and implement or conduct various learning delivery modalities.

In May, the Senate approved its counterpart bill, Senate Bill 1964, or the Kabalikatan sa Pagtuturo Act. (PNA)

AFP 'moves as one' in defeating threats to nat'l security – chief

The leadership of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has vowed to "move as one" under the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. in defeating threats to peace and national security, assuring that the military remains loyal to the Constitution.



In a statement Thursday, AFP chief, Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. said the military continues to exemplify the "highest standards" of professionalism.

"With the strong leadership of our Commander-in-Chief, the AFP will move as one in defeating all threats to our peace and national security," Brawner said on the "emerging challenges of 2024."

The AFP, he said, stands firm in its "unwavering loyalty to the Constitution and its solemn commitment to fulfill its mandate."

"The men and women of the AFP remain steadfast in their role as the guardians of our nation's sovereignty and defender of democratic principles," Brawner said.

AFP spokesperson Col. Medel Aguilar, when sought for clarification as to Brawner's statement, declined to comment, saying "the statement is good enough."

PNP validating reports of destabilization plot

Philippine National Police spokesperson Col. Jean Fajardo said the PNP, along with the AFP, is "validating information" about any destabilization plots.

"We want to assure the public that the PNP remains apolitical, intact, solid, and professional," she added.

Echoing Brawner's statement, Fajardo said the PNP is loyal to the Constitution and would only obey legal orders of the duly constituted authorities. (With a report from Lloyd Caliwang/PNA)

DOST instills... (FROM PAGE 1)

take the lead, once more, in promoting the National Time Consciousness Week (NTCW) in 2024. From January 1 to 7, under the resonating theme "G na G! Oras Pinas para sa Bagong Pilipinas," the DOST aims to synchronize all timepieces across the nation, creating a unified commitment to punctuality and respect for each other's time.

As the New Year unfolds, the DOST emphasizes the significance of instilling a habit of punctuality in the minds of every Filipino. Beyond the mere ticking of the clock, the department envisions a broader impact on the fabric of society, recognizing that the habit of being on time is a cornerstone in all aspects of businesses and activities.

The theme for 2024 speaks directly to the heart of the matter, urging Filipinos to embrace a culture where time is regarded with utmost importance. "G na G! Oras Pinas para sa Bagong Pilipinas" encapsulates the spirit of enthusiasm, vibrancy, and commitment towards a new and punctual nation towards a progressive society.

At its core, this year's NTCW theme is designed to focus on the younger generation. The DOST aims to impart the value of punctuality to the youth, emphasizing the profound impact of time management on their future success. By

cultivating an understanding of the essence of time, early on, the department believes that young Filipinos can harness this knowledge as a powerful tool in shaping their personal and professional trajectories.

The Philippine Standard Time (PhST) Act of 2013.

This advocacy aims to promote the new Pilipino time which is under Republic Act No. 10535 or The Philippine Standard Time (PhST) Act of 2013.

The law requires all national and local government agencies as well as broadcasting companies to adhere to and display the PhST in their respective offices. This makes these entities not only united but also in sync with each other, a perfect gesture of synergy needed to efficiently run a bureaucracy.

The DOST-Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) is tasked to be the official timekeeper.

However, it was started in 2011 as an advocacy campaign which was called as "Juan Time", a play of words on "One Time" (single or unified time) and "Juan" being the common name for Filipinos.

Thereafter, the main campaign was rebranded two years ago into "Oras Pinas" which hopes to institutionalize the new Filipino culture of being always on time and having only one time as a nation.

The GPS and the atomic

clock The PhST must be kept according to the Coordinated Universal Time (UCT)—the world's official time. How does this office ensure that we get the correct time all the time? Since 2003, DOST-PAGASA has been using a very accurate clock, specifically a rubidium atomic clock for timekeeping. The rubidium clock is one of the two most widely used atomic clocks in the world (the other one being the more accurate cesium clock).

The rubidium clock in the DOST-PAGASA station is equipped with a receiver that receives timing signals from at least four orbiting satellites in the Global Positioning System (GPS) within its range. These satellites are each equipped with up to four atomic clocks which are periodically updated from a cesium atomic clock based in Boulder, Colorado.

This system keeps the DOST-PAGASA clock synchronized to the UTC. GPS is the same technology being used for modern navigation consisting of 24 satellites that broadcast their location, status, and precise time. Precise time is necessary for the GPS to work, as this will be used to compute the exact location of a receiver using geometry principles.

To sync your timepieces, just visit the DOST-PAGASA website (<http://bagong.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/>) and get the official Oras Pinas.

Presidential Adviser on Investment and Economic Affairs Frederick Go earlier said that Php169 billion worth of investment pledges from President Marcos' state visit in Japan have already been actualized, providing thousands of job opportunities to Filipinos. | PND

reintegration efforts. The diverse representation highlights a collective commitment to addressing the multifaceted needs of returning individuals and fostering a supportive environment for their successful reintegration.

Beyond the tangible services provided, the unveiling of this comprehensive package underscores the commitment of the provincial government to create an environment where friendly returnees feel not only accepted but also empowered to rebuild their lives. (OPIO)

For more updates about Oras Pinas campaign, please visit the DOST

Philippines official Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/>

DOSTph. (By Allan Mauro V. Marfal, DOST-STII)



SM CITY MOLINO

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PBBM... (FROM PAGE 8)

to China on January 3-5 has resulted in 32,722 employment; 24,000 job opportunities from his visit to Japan from February 8-12; 6,386 from his visit in Washington, DC on April 30 to May 4; and 8,365 from Malaysia on July 25 to 27.

The President's visit to Singapore on September 14-17 also generated 450 job opportunities; 2,550 employment from his visit to the US on November 14-17; and, 15,750 employment from his visit to Japan on December 15-18.

ECLIP... (FROM PAGE 1)

discussed that E-CLIP goes beyond the provision of fundamental needs, adopting a more expansive strategy aimed at empowering returning individuals and guaranteeing their ongoing success. The program takes a comprehensive approach, addressing various aspects to facilitate the smooth reintegration of returnees into their communities and contribute to their sustained well-being.

Furthermore, in

attendance at the event were representatives from TESDA, Department of Trade and Industry, Philippine Statistics Authority, Cavite Police Provincial Office, 202 Brigade of the Philippine Army, and the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist. Their presence underscored the collaborative nature of the program, bringing together key stakeholders from various sectors to contribute their expertise and support for the comprehensive

PBBM signs... (FROM PAGE 1)

Northern Samar and RA No. 11974, the Visayas State University-College of Medicine in Baybay, Leyte.

Under the newly created laws, the HEIs can now proceed with offering a Doctor of Medicine Program, including an Integrated Liberal Arts and Medicine Program to develop a corps of professional physicians and help strengthen the country's healthcare

system.

The laws also aim to respond to the human resource development needs of their respective provinces.

The President also signed into law RA No. 11973, which established Bicol University-College of Veterinary Medicine in Ligao City, Albay to produce a corps of professional veterinary physicians who are adept

in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and control of animal diseases, including terrestrial and aquatic animals.

President Marcos signed the new laws on December 20, which will take effect 15 days after its publication in the Official Gazette, or in a newspaper of general circulation. Complete copies of the newly-signed laws are accessible in the Official Gazette. | PND

CHED directs SUCs, LUCs to handle K-12 transition program

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) on Wednesday called on board members of public universities and colleges to discuss issues concerning the transition of senior high school students currently enrolled in their institutions.

This was after the CHED confirmed the discontinuation of the senior high school program in state universities and colleges (SUCs), and local universities and colleges (LUCs) nationwide.

In a Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon interview, CHED chairperson J. Prospero de Vera III said the Commission is not mandated to decide on the admission policies of SUCs and LUCs.

"Under Republic Act 8292 - admission, retention, graduation of students is the exclusive jurisdiction of the board of regents of individual state universities and colleges. So, itong isyung ito ay isyu na dapat pag-usapan ng kanilang board (So, this issue is an issue which must be discussed by the board)," he said.

The CHED, through the commission en banc, can only take action when the SUCs and LUCs encounter problems and they decide to request help from the Commission, he added.

"But we cannot do that now because the board of regents of state universities have not discussed the matter, at least itong mga mayroong pang-senior high (those that still offer senior high [program])," de Vera said.

"It has to be acted upon first by the board of regents, and if there is a

concern, then that is the time that we will bring it to the attention of the Department of Education (DepEd)," he added.

He noted senior high school classes had already closed two to three years ago in state universities.

Meanwhile, SUCs and LUCs with current Grade 11 and 12 students were advised to allow the students to complete the program.

Admission of new or incoming Grade 11 students is the main concern regarding the transition, said de Vera.

When the K-12 Law was passed in 2016, the lack of qualified teachers and rooms for senior high students were the main problems in basic education while public universities had extra classrooms and teachers since there were no incoming freshman students.

The CHED and the DepEd had an agreement that public universities could offer senior high school programs during the transition period and the students paid through the voucher program.

Since the transition period is over, there is no longer a legal basis for the agreement between the CHED and the DepEd.

Only public universities offering teacher education degrees with a laboratory school can continue to

offer the senior high school program.

"Ito'y ngayon lang namin talaga tinutukan dahil bagama't natapos na ang K-12 transition program noong 2021, panahon ito ng Covid kaya hindi tinutukang maigi ito dahil nagta-transition tayo papunta sa new normal (We're focusing on this just now even though the K-12 transition program already ended in 2021, it was the coronavirus disease 2019 season and we were still transitioning then to new normal)," de Vera said.

Meanwhile, the DepEd is confident that all SHS learners who will leave SUCs and LUCs will be accommodated by basic education institutions.

This, after the Commission on Higher Education confirmed its decision to discontinue SHS programs among SUCs and LUCs.

DepEd spokesperson Undersecretary Michael Poa told reporters in a Viber message on Wednesday that based on their database, around 17,700 Grade 11 learners, who are non-voucher recipients, are enrolled in SUCs and LUCs across the country this school year.

"Nonetheless, based on the reports of our Regional Directors, our public schools will be able to accommodate those that may be displaced. May mga regions rin po na wala



Commission on Higher Education chairperson J. Prospero de Vera III. (File photo)

ng SHS learners sa mga (There are also regions which have no more SHS learners in) SUCs and LUCs so no one will be displaced in these regions," Poa said.

He also assured that no SHS Voucher Program recipient will be affected by the order, considering that for the current school year 2023-2024, there are no more Grade 11 Voucher recipients in SUCs and LUCs.

"The voucher application system no longer accepted Grade 11 applicants in schools tagged as SUCs and LUCs. However, nagbigay pa rin po tayo ng vouchers sa Grade 12 learners in SUCs and LUCs para po makatapos sila (we still give vouchers for Grade 12 learners in SUCs and LUCs so they can finish)," he said.

Poa noted that those who will be displaced can

either enroll in public schools or "if they would prefer to do so, they may also enroll in private schools and avail of the voucher program."

Senators agree with CHED ordering SUCs and LUCs to stop their senior high school programs.

In a Zoom interview on Wednesday, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel III said that given that a sufficient amount of time already passed for the transition to K-12 program, it is just right that SUCs and LUCs should cease accepting SHS students.

"Ang mandato kasi ng SUCs natin and the LUCs would be higher education na - post senior high. In the first place, kaya sila nagkaroon ng ganyang programa para walang maapektohan nung transition natin sa K-12 (The mandate of our SUCs and LUCs would be already

higher education -- post senior high. In the first place, they had the program so no one will be affected by our transition to K-12)," Pimentel told reporters.

In an earlier statement, Senate Majority Leader Joel Villanueva pointed out that the move to discontinue the offering SHS programs in SUCs and LUCs is in line with the mandate of our Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

"While they were allowed to provide SHS during the transition period, we agree that it is not the role of HEIs to offer basic education, except for those with laboratory schools," Villanueva said in a statement.

However, both senators called out the DepEd to make sure that the order would not cause difficulties among SHS learners. (PNA)

PBBM: Gov't to work hard to keep commodity prices affordable

The government will continue to work hard to make the prices of commodities affordable, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said Friday.

Marcos made the vow as he welcomed the latest Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) report showing that the Philippines' headline inflation further eased to 3.9 percent in Dec. 2023, lower than the 4.1 percent recorded in November of the same year.

"Natutuwa akong ibalita na bumaba pa ang inflation rate sa bansa noong Disyembre 2023 sa 3.9 percent - ang pinakamababa noong nakaraang taon, mula sa 4.1 percent para sa Nobyembre 2023 (I am happy to report that the inflation rate in the country in Dec 2023 further decreased to 3.9 percent - the lowest in the previous year, from 4.1 percent for Nov. 2023)," he said in an X post.

Marcos said his administration continues

to work hard to improve the condition of the Philippine economy, assuring the public that the government is committed to implementing programs and measures that would ensure the affordability of food and other basic commodities.

"Para sa bagong taon, lalo nating palalakasin ang mga programa para sa agrikultura, at tututukan ang mga hakbang upang mapanatiling abot-kaya ang presyo ng pagkain at iba pang pangunahing bilihin (For the new year, we will further strengthen programs for agriculture and focus on measures to keep the prices of food and other basic commodities affordable)," Marcos said.

According to the PSA report, the downtrend in the overall inflation in Dec. 2023 was primarily driven by the lower year-on-year

growth in the index of housing, water, electricity, and gas and other fuels, at 1.5 percent from Nov. 2023's 2.5 percent.

This was followed by food and non-alcoholic beverages, with 5.4 percent inflation in December from 5.7 percent in November.

Lower annual increments were also noted in clothing and footwear (4.2 percent from 4.3 percent); furnishings, household equipment, and routine household maintenance (4.5 percent from 4.7 percent); health (3.7 percent from 3.8 percent); information and communication (0.5 percent from 0.6 percent); recreation, sport, and culture (4.2 percent from 4.9 percent); and personal care, and miscellaneous goods and services (4.6



FRESH PRODUCE. Pasay City residents buy affordable produce and other food items at the Kadiwa ng Pangulo at the Pasay City Hall parking grounds on July 17, 2023. The Philippines' headline inflation further eased to 3.9 percent in Dec. 2023, lower than the 4.1 percent recorded in November of the same year, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority on Friday (Jan. 5, 2024). (PNA photo by Yancy Lim)

percent from 4.8 percent). The PSA reported that the top three commodity groups contributing to the Dec. 2023 headline inflation were food and

non-alcoholic beverages (53 percent share or 2.1 percentage points); restaurants and accommodation services (14 percent share or 0.6

percentage points); and housing, water, electricity, and gas and other fuels (8.3 percent share or 0.3 percentage points). (PNA)

DILG: 2023 'prolific year' for gov't anti-drug drive via BIDA program



DILG Secretary Benjamin Abalos Jr. (File photo)

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) on Wednesday touted 2023 as a prolific year for the Marcos administration's anti-drug efforts.

This as the government's flagship anti-drug program "Buhay Ingatan, Droga'y Ayawan" (BIDA) has reached 15 regions and drew 230,000 people who participated in its activities and other initiatives, DILG Secretary Benjamin Abalos Jr. said in a news release.

"Sa nakalipas na taon, naging bagong mukha ng kampanya kontra ilegal na droga ang ating BIDA Program (For the past year, the BIDA Program became the new face of our campaign against illegal drugs). Thanks to your efforts, we have conducted BIDA Fun Runs, training programs, Serbisyo Caravans, and other BIDA activities in 15 regions across the country involving various sectors," Abalos said.

Abalos said the DILG

forged strategic partnerships with different sectors to promote the BIDA Program and raise awareness about the ill effects of illegal drugs.

They also had tie-ups with more than 30 big business establishments through the "BIDA Workplace" initiative.

Recognizing sports as an effective means to encourage people, especially the youth, to ditch illegal drugs, the DILG also linked up with major sports leagues in the country such as the Philippine Basketball Association, Premier Volleyball League, and University Athletic Association of the Philippines.

Aside from working with athletes, the DILG also tapped some of the country's up-and-coming entertainment stars from

ABS-CBN and GMA to become BIDA ambassadors.

Major cinemas, such as SM Cinemas and Megaworld Lifestyle Malls also played the program's ads before the start of every movie to encourage the public to join the government in combating illegal drugs.

"We are definitely off to a good start. We were able to bring the spirit of BIDA down to our communities in just over a year since its launch. Asahan po ninyo na magpapatuloy at lalo pang palalakasin ang kampanyang ito sa tulong ng iba't ibang sektor ng lipunan (Rest assured that we will continue our efforts and further strengthen this campaign through the help of various sectors of society)," Abalos added. (PNA)

Obiena's success inspires young, aspiring athletes

World's No. 2 pole vaulter Ernest John "EJ" Obiena is busy preparing for the Paris Olympics, the world's biggest sports event scheduled from July 26 to Aug. 11 this year.



ROLE MODEL. Filipino pole vaulter EJ Obiena delivers the first country's gold medal in the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China on Sept. 30, 2023. Obiena on Wednesday (Jan. 3) said he wants to inspire young and aspiring athletes through his dedication and perseverance. (File photo courtesy of PSC photo)

The first Filipino to qualify for the Summer Games continues to bring pride to the country as a MILO ambassador, showing the importance of grit and perseverance to become successful.

"The goal is to win, and to do that, there's going to be a lot of training, training camps outside of the country," Obiena said in a press statement on Wednesday.

He said he is determined to excel as a competitor on the field and wants to serve as an inspiration to young and aspiring athletes.

Winning the silver

medal at the World Athletics Championship with a new personal record and his gold medal victories at the Hangzhou Asian Games and Cambodia SEA Games proved Obiena's unwavering dedication.

One of his inspirations to excel in sports was Swiss tennis player, Roger Federer.

"I want to understand what made him so composed – the way he matured into what he is now. Roger has done so much in tennis that is not achievable by just being an ordinary guy," the 28-year-old Obiena said.

The 6-foot-1 Olympian also acknowledged the support of MILO, a brand known for nurturing young athletes to become champions.

Aside from helping elite athletes, MILO is also involved at the grassroots level through partnerships, such as the Philippine Sports Commission-organized Batang Pinoy which Obiena himself competed in as a kid.

His story is not just about athletic triumphs, but about the unwavering spirit of a young man reaching for the stars, both on and off the pole vault pit. (PNA)

Hundred Islands Park records 438K tourist arrivals in 2023

MALASIQUI, Pangasinan – Tourist arrivals in the Hundred Islands National Park (HINP) in Alaminos City in this province reached 438,619 last year, higher by 12 percent compared to the 389,006 visitors in 2022.

In a phone interview on Tuesday, city tourism officer Miguel Sison said out of the total number, 289,413 were domestic tourists, 140,970 were local tourists, and the rest were foreign tourists.

Sison attributed the increase in tourist arrivals to the easing of travel restrictions, the natural scenery at the famous national park, and the activities it offers.

The increase in arrivals also resulted in higher tourism receipts of some PHP44 million against the PHP33.3 million income in 2022.

Although the number of tourist arrivals has not yet fully returned to its pre-pandemic level of 520,000 in 2019, the number is already beyond the number of visitors to the national park in 2020 at 93,000 and in 2021 at 50,000.

He said most tourists came during the Holy Week, while cruise ships have also visited the HINP.

Sison said they recently opened the Bonsai Garden at Ramos Island to serve as another attraction, catering to "bonsai" lovers.

Other attractions included the Pilgrimage Island and a 448-meter-long boardwalk at the Mangrove Park in Barangay Bued, which is open to the public from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Activities allowed at the park include bird, bat, and monkey watching, and water sports.

The city also has the engineered "kawayan" (bamboo) factory where visitors can buy souvenirs

or accessories or watch in groups a demonstration on how engineered or e-bamboos are used for livelihood.

Entrance to the park requires a minimal fee, while the entrance to the factory is free.

Meanwhile, the city government of Alaminos City revised its tourism code to align with the standards of the Department of Tourism to benefit both the tourists and the workers.

"We will also have local accreditation but we will be using local registration form. We will have an initial categorization of the establishment's classification according to the DOT standard," City Tourism and Cultural Affairs Office assistant head Rose Aruelo said in a separate interview.

The city government implemented the new tourism code starting Dec. 1 last year.

Aside from business permits, the city government also requires annual general liability insurance for guests, a schedule of current rates, and a safety declaration certificate in compliance with the occupational safety and health standards, among others, she said.

There will be changes in fees at the Hundred Islands National Park (HINP) in line with the new tourism code.

"Some fees were retained while some increased. The rationale is for the development of the islands. The developments require a higher amount of revenue for maintenance of facilities and cleanliness of areas," Aruelo said.

Registration fee for the day tour at HINP will be

increased by PHP20 to PHP120 per person, while the overnight tour registration will be PHP200 per person. The registration fee covers the environmental and entrance fees and insurance coverage.

Motorboat rates also have slight changes.

HINP is now offering an island exclusivity package from PHP80,000 to PHP150,000, depending on the island and the schedule.

"The package will include security personnel, first aider, and helper to assist guests in the islands," Aruelo added.

Within the HINP, the "Basura Mo, Iwi Mo" is still being implemented, where guests deposit PHP200 and are provided with two bags to dispose of their biodegradable and non-biodegradable wastes.

Guests can have their PHP200 deposit back once they surrender the garbage bags with their disposed waste.

Another best practice in the city is their Scubasurero program (from the words scuba diving and "basurero" or garbage collector), which started in 2016 and involves volunteer scuba divers cleaning the seas quarterly.

Sison said the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) conducts regular inspections to ensure water quality is fit for swimming.

He assured the public that Alaminos is a very peaceful and drug-free. (PNA)

More exciting food stops at SM City Dasmariñas!

No other fun way to spend holiday but eating, right? SM City Dasmariñas got you with its newest food stops of different food choices that will surely make you stay for the whole day!



Spend your brunch at Bonchon SM City Dasmariñas and satisfy your Korean chicken cravings! Located at the lower ground floor.

After a quick run at the mall for some errands, make a stop for lunch at

Out of Nowhere Kitchen at the lower ground floor for a wider variety of food choices.

Lunch at Out of Nowhere was really a not-your-ordinary meal of the day and it is nice to also have some not-

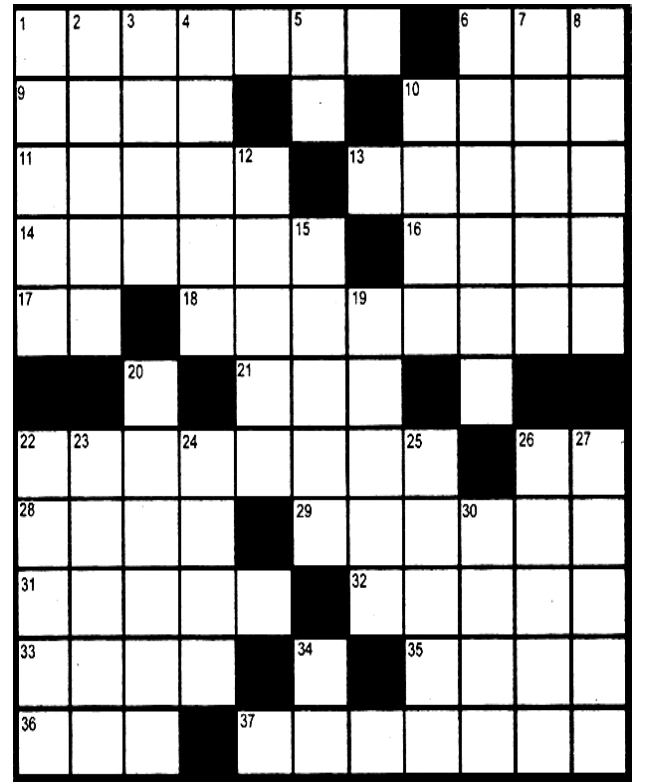
your-ordinary dessert at Puffy's Soufflé Pancake Café at the lower ground floor.

After enjoying your lunch and dessert, shopping is what you need to do and while going around the mall

or before going home carry a very healthy food that will set a good mood, grab a froyo at the first ever branch of BLK 513 in SM Malls in Cavite.

Located at the upper ground floor near H&M.

PALAI SIPAN



PAHALANG

- 1 Iparte
- 6 Marahil
- 9 Sumbat
- 10 Onda
- 11 Dalhin sa tabi
- 13 Panggatong
- 14 Panggabing hayop
- 16 Tilapya o bangus
- 17 Simbolo ng silver
- 18 Kasunod
- 21 Pan de__
- 22 Ipagupit
- 26 La Union
- 28 Higit
- 29 Kulay ng kabayo
- 31 Boy o Joel
- 32 Dahong medisinal
- 33 Kubli
- 35 Maalat na butil
- 36 Aliwalas
- 37 Intindi

PABABA

- 1 Ipadyak
- 2 Silo
- 3 Tanong ng naghahanap
- 4 Palahaw
- 5 Berde sa trapiko
- 6 Alerto
- 7 Distrito sa Manila
- 8 Dam sa Bulacan
- 10 Tanong sa pumipili
- 12 Ihanda ang baril sa pagputok
- 15 Ilapag
- 19 Sira ng Kamote
- 20 Paglalagay sa posisyon
- 22 Ilagay sa lata
- 23 Tanim sa bukid
- 24 Himig
- 25 Halu-halong kilatis ng ginto
- 26 Sobra
- 27 Pandak
- 30 Nanay ni Basilio
- 34 Bansa ni Obama

SAGOT SA NAKARAAN



Ang pag-inom ng alak habang buntis ay nakakababa ng IQ ng sanggol.

PBBM BROUGHT HOME OVER 200K JOB OPPORTUNITIES FROM HIS FOREIGN TRIPS – DTI

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has brought home not only billions of pesos worth of investment pledges in the Philippines, but has also brought over 200,000 job opportunities for the Filipino people from his official foreign trips from the last quarter of 2022 until 2023.



President Bongbong Marcos

In its update on investment leads from the presidential and state visits of President Marcos, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said that the President's visit last year generated 7,100 job opportunities from Indonesia on September 4-6; at least 14,932 from Singapore on September 6-7; and, 98,000 from New York on September 18 to 24.

President Marcos also brought home 5,500 job opportunities from his visit to Thailand on November 16-19; at least 6,480 from his visit to Belgium on December 11-14; and 730 from the Netherlands on December 15-17 (a department investment mission), according to the DTI.

For 2023, the DTI noted that President Marcos' visit

► PBBM • 4

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Bringing healthcare to the heart of Barangay Anabu II-C, Imus, Cavite!



On December 21, 2023, the Office of the Provincial Governor's Medical Mission Team in partnership with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer conducted a compassionate health outreach activity in Brgy. Anabu II-C in the City of Imus, providing 260 residents with free medical check-ups, consultations, and essential medicines. The program is a testament to the Provincial Government of Cavite's commitment to community health and well-being. (OPIO)

Medical Mission in Medicion I-D



In a collaborative effort to enhance community health, the Office of the Provincial Governor's Medical Mission Team joined forces with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer on December 20, 2023, for an impactful Medical Mission Program in Barangay Medicion I-D, City of Imus, Cavite. A total of 141 residents benefited from the program, receiving free medical check-ups, consultations, and essential medicines. In addition, 24 individuals were provided with complimentary tooth extractions, contributing to both oral health and overall well-being. The successful initiative reflects the commitment of local leaders to prioritize the health and welfare of their constituents. The Office of the Provincial Governor and the Provincial Health Officer express gratitude to all volunteers and participants for making the Medical Mission a resounding success. (OPIO)

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IT'S THE END OF SEASON SALE AT SM CITY BACOR, SM CITY MOLINO AND SM CENTER IMUS! Just when you think the celebrations are over, #EndOfSeasonSaleAtSM is here once again! Get ready to enjoy up to 70% off on selected items from January 2-7! Start the year right and #ExperienceTogetherAtSM a sale that will definitely make your year AWESOME! Visit SM City Bacoor, SM City Molino, and SM Center Imus and grab everything you need for the new year.



2-DAY KATARUNGANG PAMBARANGAY TRAINING: Tungo sa mas mahusay na kakayahan ng ating mga barangay sa pagganap sa kanilang tungkulin na pangalagaan ang katarungan sa kanilang nasasakupan, isinailalim natin ang mga lupon at barangay officials sa Katarungan Pambarangay Training. Pinangunahan ng MPOC, DILG, at Kawit PNP ang training na ito upang mahasa ang ating mga barangay official sa kanilang responsibilidad. Maraming salamat po sa MPOC, sa DILG, at sa Kawit PNP para sa kanilang pagbabahagi ng kaalaman, at sa ating mga barangay official na taos ang #PusoAtMalasakitParaSaAtingKawit na serbisyo. #RatedTripleA #MayorAguinaldo #AksyongAngeloAguinaldo