

Mayor Ross Rizal Opens Home to Godchildren, Spreads the True Spirit of Christmas in Calamba



CALAMBA CITY, Laguna — True to the spirit of Christmas, Calamba City Mayor Roseller “Ross” H. Rizal once again opened his home on December 25, 2025, to personally share Christmas gifts with his godchildren and loved ones, continuing a heartfelt tradition observed by the Rizal family every year.

The simple yet meaningful gathering took place on Christmas Day, celebrating not only the birth of Jesus Christ but also the values of generosity, gratitude, and compassion that define the season.

Mayor Rizal welcomed his godchildren from various milestones in life—baptism, wedding, and confirmation—underscoring the importance of enduring personal relationships beyond public service.

Mayor Rizal shared, “Ngayong araw ng Kapaskuhan, gaya ng ating taon-taon na tradisyon, binuksan natin ang aming tahanan upang mag-abot ng munting pamasko sa aming mga inaanak—sa binyag, kasal, kumpil, at sa lahat ng bahagi ng aming buhay.”

He emphasized that Christmas is most meaningful when blessings are shared with others, reminding everyone of the deeper essence of the celebration.

“Isang paalala na mas masaya ang Pasko kapag ang biyaya ay ipinapasa at ang pagmamahal ay pinaghahati-hatian.” Residents and



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



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 Cangatba, 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 Porac, 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 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 Campangang, Office of Senator Imee Marcos, Eagles, BNI Pampanga, Philippine Air Force (PAF), PAF Reservists, and Scrubbed BPO.

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

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Tag na terorista kay Teves, iba pa inalis ng CA

Pope Leo may 'Christmas gift' suggestion

SSS MARKS 2025 WITH PENSION REFORM AND PROGRAM UPGRADES; LOOKS FORWARD TO 2026

The Provincial Government of Cavite, under the leadership of Governor Francisco Gabriel “Abeng” D. Remulla, continues to prioritize education through the Iskolar 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 Iskolar ng Lalawigan ng Cavite, the province reaffirms its commitment to empowering the youth and building a more educated and resilient Cavite. — A. Sarte



PROVINCIAL MOST WANTED PERSON, ARESTADO SA ANGONO, RIZAL

PAGSASANAY SA ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS, IMPOUNDING AT POUND MANAGEMENT, ISINAGAWA SA PLARIDEL

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2ND INFANTRY DIVISION, IPINRESENTA ANG MGA NABAWING BARIL NG NPA

EDITORIAL: BAGONG TAON, BAGONG PANATA PARA SA PAMAHALAAN

Sa bawat pagsalubong ng Bagong Taon, karaniwan na ang paggawa ng New Year's resolution—mga pangakong inaaahang magdudulot ng pagbabago. Ngunit sa harap ng patuloy na suliranin ng bansa, hindi lamang ang mamamayan ang dapat mangako ng pagbabago. Higit sa lahat, ang pamahalaan ng Pilipinas ang kailangang magtakda ng malinaw, makabuluhan, at maisasakatuparang mga panata para sa bagong taon.

Una sa listahan ang tapat at episyenteng pamamahala. Hindi na bago ang isyu ng katiwalian, mabagal na serbisyo, at pananagutan na tila lag-ing nauuwi sa salita. Sa bagong taon, nararapat na resolusyon ng pamahalaan ang gawing konkretong aksyon ang mga kampanya laban sa korapsyon—mula sa mas mahigpit na procurement rules hang-gang sa mabilis at patas na pag-usad ng mga kaso laban sa tiwaling opisyal.

Ikalawa, kailangang tutukan ang kabu-hayan at presyo ng bilihin. Patuloy na pinapasan ng mga Pilipino ang bigat ng mataas na presyo ng pagkain, kuryente, at pamasah. Ang resolusyon ng pamahalaan ay dapat malinaw: palakasin ang lokal na produksyon, protektahan ang mga magsasaka at mangingisda, at tiyaking ang mga polisiya sa im-portasyon at buwis ay hindi lalong nagpapahirap sa karaniwang mamamayan.

Ikatlo, hindi dapat mapag-iwanan ang transportasyon, edukasyon, at kalusugan. Ang pang-araw-araw na pakikipaglaban ng mga com-muter, kakulangan sa silid-aralan at guro, at siksikang ospital ay paalala na ang “pangmata-galang plano” ay kailangan nang maramdaman ngayon. Resolusyon ng pamahalaan ang pabilisin ang mga proyektong may direktang pakinabang sa mamamayan—hindi yaong nababaon sa red tape at pulitika.

Higit sa lahat, ang pinakamahalagang pa-nata ay ang pakikinig sa tinig ng taumbayan. Ang pamahalaang handang tumanggap ng puna, mag-wasto ng pagkakamali, at makipagdayalogo ay pamahalaang may malasakit at direksiyon.

Sa bagong taon, hindi sapat ang pagbati at pag-asa. Ang kailangan ng bayan ay malinaw na resolusyon ng pamahalaan—na ang kapangyarihan ay gagamitin para maglingkod, hindi maghari; para magbigay-solusyon, hindi dahilan. Sapagkat ang tunay na diwa ng Bagong Taon ay hindi nasusukat sa paputok, kundi sa pagbabago na tunay na nar-aramdaman ng bawat Pilipino.

CAVITE CAREER CARAVAN BRINGS JOB OPPORTUNITIES TO BACOOR DURING DOLE ANNIVERSARY JOB FAIR

The Cavite Ca-reer Caravan organized by the Office of the Pro-vincial Public Employment Service Manager was suc-cessfully conducted at SM City Bacoor on December 11, in line with the cele-bration of the 92nd Anni-versary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

The activity pro-vided 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 compa-nies offered 5,913 job va-cancies covering various industries and positions.

Notably, 21 ap-plicants were hired on the spot, highlighting the ef-fectiveness of the initiative in directly linking employ-ers with qualified jobseek-ers.

In addition to the participating companies, several national gov-

Cayetano...

Senate Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayeta-no welcomed the Depart-ment of Public Works and Highways' (DPWH) plan to align construction ma-terial prices with market rates, saying the projected P60-billion savings should be redirected to basic gov-ernment services that di-rectly benefit Filipinos.

Cayetano said the funds can strengt-hen priority sectors such as education, health, and social aid where addition-al resources are urgently needed to reinforce exist-ing programs.

"If we go to the programs of all the depart-ments, ang gaganda ng 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 DP-WH's target savings can help curb the alarming ef-fects of child stunting, em-phasizing that addressing it early will give the "best return on investment" be-cause it will prevent bigger challenges for the govern-ment later on.

"Marami sa stunt-ed 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.



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Cayetano also said the savings can ad-dress classroom short-ages that have caused double and triple shifting in many public schools through coordinated and targeted construction ef-forts, citing the City of Taguig as a model for managing school shifting schedules.

"Maybe we can take Taguig as an example because we started build-ing seven-storey buildings na may elevator," he said.

He also reiterat-ed his long-standing push for stronger financial aid programs, saying govern-ment savings should help families struggling with ris-ing prices and the continu-ing impact of inflation.

Cayetano said the DPWH's effort to low-er material costs is a good start toward more ac-countable 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 gov-ernment funds uplift lives and serve their intended purpose.

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

EX-PNP...

MANILA, Philip-pines — Former Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief General Nicolas Torre III has officially taken the helm of the Metropol-itan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) after being sworn in as its new General Manager on Fri-day, Dec. 26, 2025.

Torre, who was appointed to lead the agency overseeing traffic management, flood con-trol, and urban services across Metro Manila by President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., took his oath of office at Malacañang Palace be-fore Executive Secretary Ralph Recto.

The appointment was first confirmed by Malacañang on Dec. 19, with Presidential Commu-nications Office Undersec-retary Claire Castro an-nouncing that Torre would replace outgoing MMDA General Manager Pro-copio Lipana.

Lawmakers and agency leaders have wel-comed Torre's appoint-ment, citing his extensive experience in public ser-vice and law enforcement.

Resignation from Police Service

Following his

acceptance of the MMDA post, the National Police Commission (NAPOL-COM) has declared Torre "ipso facto resigned" from the PNP, effectively ending his police career.

The development also clears the way for the current PNP Chief, Police Lieutenant General Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr., to assume the full four-star rank normally held by the top police official.

Background and Career

Torre previously served as the 31st Chief of the PNP earlier in 2025 be-fore being relieved of that post in August. During his police career, he was in-volved in several high-pro-file operations and was noted for his leadership roles in major police units.

Looking Ahead

As the new MMDA general manag-er, Torre faces the task of addressing some of Metro Manila's most persistent challenges — from traffic congestion to disaster pre-paredness — with expec-tations that his leadership experience will contribute to improved urban gov-ernance across the National Capital Region.

(EDJUN MARIPOSQUE)

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2nd Infantry...

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Camp Capinpin, Tanay, Rizal — Nagsaga-wa ng isang press con-ference ang 2nd Infantry (Jungle Fighter) Division (2ID) sa kanilang himpi-lan sa Camp Capinpin noong Martes, Disyem-bre 23, upang ipresenta sa publiko ang mga baril na nabawi mula sa New People's Army (NPA) sa magkakahiwalay na oper-asyon.

Ipinakita sa nasabing aktibidad ang mga armas na nasamsam sa sunod-sunod na pinag-sanib na operasyon ng 16th Infantry (Magliling-kod) Battalion ng 201st In-fantry (Kabalikat) Brigade, 42nd Infantry (Tagapag-tanggol) Battalion ng 9th Infantry (Spear) Division, at ng Special Action Force ng Philippine National Po-lice (PNP) na isinagawa noong Disyembre 16 at 17 sa Labo, Camarines Norte. Kasama rin sa ipin-resenta ang mga baril na nakuha ng 85th Infantry Battalion, na kabilang din

sa 201st Infantry Brigade, sa isang hiwalay na oper-asyon sa Lopez, Quezon noong Disyembre 21.

Ayon sa 2ID, ang mga baril na ito ay baha-gi ng kabuuang 65 armas na kanilang nabawi mula Setyembre 2024 hang-gang sa kasalukuyan.

Ang mga tagumpay na ito ay na-ging posible sa tulong ng mahahalagang impor-masyong ibinigay ng mga nagmamalasakit na mam-amanan, na nagpapakita ng lumalakas na tiwala at kooperasyon sa pagitan ng komunidad at ng mga puwersang panseguridad.

Binigyang-diin din sa briefing ang ka-halagahan ng tuluy-tuloy na pinagsanib na opera-syon at pagiging bukas ng mga awtoridad sa impor-masyon, bilang mahalag-ang hakbang sa pagkitil sa kakayahan ng mga arma-dong grupo na magbanta sa kapayapaan at kalig-tasan ng publiko.

(Pau Mojar)

Pope Leo...

FROM PAGE 1

Nagpahayag ng isang mahalagang regalo si Pope Leo XIV ngayong Pasko—ang kapayapaan.

Ayon sa Santo Papa, ito ay “mas mahalaga kaysa anumang regalong mabibili” dahil ito ay nagmu-mula sa puso.

Hinikayat niya ang mga Katoliko na magba-lik-loob at magpatawad sa iba, lalo na sa panahon ng Simbang Gabi.

Sa ikalawang araw ng Simbang Gabi, binig-yang-diin ng mga pari ang kahalagahan ng pagpapa-tawad at paggawa ng tama bilang paghahanda sa Pas-ko.

Idinagdag pa ng Papa na dapat nating panatili-hin ang ating pananampalataya kahit na may mga prob-lema at pag-aalala.

Ang Simbahan ay nanawagan sa mga Katoliko na magkaroon ng “Christ-centered” na pagdiriwang ng Pasko na magdudulot ng kagalakan at paghilo.

By: Sol Luzano

Pagsasanay...

FROM PAGE 1

PLARIDEL, QUEZON — Bilang ba-hagi ng mandato nitong palakasin ang kalusugan, kapakanan, at wastong pamamahala ng mga ha-yop sa lalawigan, nag-sagawa ang Office of the Provincial Veterinarian (OPV) ng Training of Ani-mal Control Officers, Impounding and Pound Management noong Di-syembre 17–18, 2025 sa bayan ng Plaridel, Que-

zon.

Pinangunahan ni Dr. Camille Calaycay at ng technical personnel ng OPV ang naturang pag-sasanay, katuwang ang Office of the Municipal Ag-riculturist sa pangunguna ni Municipal Agriculturist Albert Saavedra. Layun-in nitong mapagiting ang kaalaman at kakayahan ng mga Barangay Ani-mal Control Officers at LGU personnel sa maay-

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SMC...

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 Express-way (NAIAX), South Luz-on Expressway (SLEX), STAR Tollway and the Tar-lac-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 ben-efit motorists traveling late at night to reach their fam-ilies during the holidays.

SMC Infrastruc-ture, the company's infra-structure arm, said it has placed safety and security personnel on heightened alert and rolled out mea-sures to manage the ex-pected increase in traffic during the holiday period.

Beginning noon on Dec. 20, additional pa-

Provincial...

Camp MGen Licerio I. Geronimo, Rizal — Matagumpay na naaresto ng mga tauhan ng Angono Municipal Po-lice Station (MPS) ang isang Provincial-Lev-el Most Wanted Person noong Disyembre 25, 2025, bandang alas-10:46 ng umaga sa Barangay Mahabang Parang, Ango-no, Rizal.

Kinilala ang naaresto na si alyas Inday, 35 taong gulang, may asa-wa, at residente ng nasa-bing barangay. Isinagawa ang pag-aresto sa bisa ng Warrant of Arrest kaugnay ng paglabag sa Republic Act 9165 o Comprehen-sive Dangerous Drugs Act os na pagpapatupad ng impounding procedures at epektibong pamama-hala ng animal pound sa kani-kanilang na

Binatikos ng korte ang ATC dahil sa kabiguang ipaliwanag kung paano umano guma-wa ng mga aktong teroris-mo si Teves, na ayon dito ay malinaw na indikasyon ng grave abuse of discre-tion.

Sa desisyong isinulat ni Associate Jus-tice Ruben Reynaldo Roxas, kasama ang pag-sang-ayon nina Associate Justices Lorenza Bordios at Eduardo Ramos Jr., sin-abi ng CA na ang naging basehan ng ATC ay nag-ugat sa maling pag-unawa sa mga pangyayari at mal-ing aplikasyon ng Anti-Ter-rorism Act (ATA).

Bagama't kinilala ng korte ang kahalagahan ng paglaban sa teroris-mo, iginiiit nito na hindi ito dapat isagawa kapalit ng paglabag sa karapatang pantao at due process.

By: Sol Luzano

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trol and security personnel have been deployed in critical areas, while emer-gency response teams are placed on standby to quickly clear any road ob-structions, the company said.

Traffic monitoring centers across SMC-operated expressways are staffed around the clock to track traffic conditions and coordinate with emer-gency responders. Road-works that may affect traffic flow have been sus-pended 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 en-sure faster response to incidents.

SMC Infrastruc-ture advised motorists to plan their trips ahead, al-low extra travel time and ensure sufficient balance in their Autosweep ac-counts to avoid delays at toll plazas.

The company added it has coordinat-ed with local government units and national agen-cies to help manage traffic on public roads connect-ing to the expressways.

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of 2002, na inisyu ng Re-gional Trial Court, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 68, Binangonan, Rizal.

Ayon sa pulisya, maayos na ipinaalam sa akusada ang kanyang mga karapatan matapos ang pag-aresto.

Siya ay kasalu-kuyang nasa kustodiya ng Angono MPS para sa kaukulang dokumenta-syon at paghahanda sa turnover sa kinaaukulang hukuman.

Samantala, mul-ing nanawagan ang Rizal Police Provincial Office (RPPO) sa publiko na pa-tuloy na makipagtulungan sa mga awtoridad upang mapanatili ang kapaya-paan at kaayusan sa buong lalawigan ng Rizal, at upa-ng mas maging epektibo ang kampanya laban sa kriminalidad.

(Pau Dela Cruz)

Tag...

Inalis ng Court of Appeals (CA) ang terror-ist designation laban kay dating Negros Oriental Gov. Pryde Henry Teves at idineklarang “walang basehan at hindi narara-pat” ang ipinataw na tag ng Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC).

Sa 45-pahinang desisyon na inilabas noong Disyembre 18, pinaboran ng CA ang pe-tisyon ni Teves na alisin ang kanyang pangalan sa listahan ng mga itinuturing na terorista ng ATC, kabil-ang ang kanyang kapatid na si Arnolfo Teves at 11 iba pa, kaugnay ng pag-paslang kay dating Gov. Roel Degamo noong 2023.

Inalis din ng korte ang freeze order sa mga ari-arian ni Teves, kahit wala naman umanong naisampang kaso laban sa kanya ng ATC kaugnay ng mga paratang.

Ayon sa CA, kung totoo umanong sangkot si Teves sa mga mabibigat na krimen, nar-arapat lamang na siya ay kasuhan batay sa mga aktong kanyang ginawa at hindi basta lagyan ng ter-rorist label.

Naaresto si Teves noong Hunyo 2024 dahil sa umano'y pagpo-

Quezon...

PROBINSIYA NG QUEZON — Nag-sagawa ang Office of the Provincial Veterinarian, sa pangunguna ng Livestock and Poultry Development Division, ng pagsasanay sa meat processing o pag-gawa ng pork tapa, pork tocino, at pork skinless longganisa para sa mga residente ng Sariaya at Tayabas City, Quezon.

Layunin ng pro-grama na palawakin ang kaalaman at kasanayan ng mga lumahok upang maging karagdagang ka-buhayan, lalo na para sa mga miyembro ng Tum-baga 1 SLP, Solo Parent Association, 4K Kababai-han, at Rural Improvement Club (RIC).

Sa unang bahagi ng aktibidad, tinalakay ang mahahalagang kaalaman sa wastong pagproseso

pondo sa isang lokal na teroristang grupo ngunit kalaunan ay pinalaya matapos magpiyansa ng P600,000.

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Binigyang-di-in din ng CA na ang de-sisyon ay hindi pagtalikod sa layunin ng gobyerno laban sa terorismo, kundi paalala sa mas maingat at epektibong pagpapatupad ng batas

By: Sol Luzano

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ng karne, tamang kalini-san, at food safety stan-dards. Sinundan ito ng ak-twal na hands-on training kung saan aktibong na- kilahok ang mga kalahok sa paggawa ng iba't ibang produktong karne.

Inaasahang ang mga sumailalim sa pag-sasanay ay magiging katuwang sa pagpapalak-as ng industriya ng meat processing sa kanilang komunidad at magsisilbing inspirasyon sa pag-unlad ng lokal na ekonomiya ng Quezon.

Matagumpay na naisakatuparan ang aktibi-dad sa tulong ng Office of the City Agriculturist ng Ta-yabas City, Sangguniang Barangay ng Tumbaga 1 sa Sariaya, at mga pinuno ng iba't ibang asosasyon na nakiisa sa programa.

By: Sol Luzano

— OPIO



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 retirement 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 functionality, 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 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. Merceditas 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 uss-aptayo@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

DAR LAUDS LANDBANK FOR DRIVING AGRI GROWTH AT 2025 AGRARYO TRADE FAIR

LANDBANK has formally launched the LANDBANK’s Innovative Financing Thrust Towards Inclusive National Growth thru Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (LIFTING MSMEs) Lending Program, a comprehensive financing initiative aimed at strengthening support for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) across the Philippines.

The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) lauded LANDBANK for its unwavering commitment to agricultural development and rural progress during the opening of the 2025 Agraryo Trade Fair (ATF) on December 1 at Gateway Mall 2, Quezon City.

In a press conference at the event, DAR Secretary Conrado M. Estrella III highlighted LANDBANK’s pivotal role in uplifting small farmers, fishers, and agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) through accessible and responsive financing programs nationwide.

“Noong umupo ang bagong administrasyon, yung dating 11 pages na loan application forms, ngayon isang pahina na lang — may tumutulong pa. I will say this with authority, that LANDBANK is indeed performing their mandate. They are serving our farmers. Mahusay talaga sila,” Estrella said.

As of October 2025, LANDBANK’s agriculture, fisheries and rural development (AFRD) loan portfolio reached ₱829.15



Agrarian Reform Secretary Conrado M. Estrella III and LANDBANK EVP Ma. Celeste A. Burgos formally launch the Enhanced ARISE Lending Program at the 2025 Agraryo Trade Fair (ATF), expanding credit support for ARBOs and small farmholders whose livelihoods have been disrupted by various disasters and calamities.

billion, accounting for 58.93% of the Bank’s total loan portfolio—reflecting focused support for infrastructure development, value chain strengthening, sustainable agribusiness, and farmer- and fisher-centered initiatives nationwide.

Expanding market access

The Agraryo Trade Fair forms part of DAR’s key support services to strengthen market access and enterprise opportunities for ARBs and agrarian reform beneficiaries organizations (ARBOs). This year’s fair features over 80 ARBs and ARBOs from across the country, showcasing more than 300 products—including fresh produce, processed foods, traditional delicacies, natural fibers, handicrafts, and artisanal items rooted in local culture.

Building resilience for ARBs

During the event, DAR and LANDBANK formally launched the Enhanced Assistance to Restore and Install Sustainable Enterprises (Enhanced ARISE) Lending Program, which provides expanded credit support for ARBs and ARBOs, particularly those whose livelihoods have been affected by natural calamities, human-made disasters, pest infestations, and disease outbreaks.

The Enhanced ARISE program is designed to help the agriculture sector recover and build resilience. It offers a simplified application process, fewer requirements, and higher loan ceilings for production, enterprise, and livelihood needs. Beneficiaries can access financing for recovery and rehabilitation, with interest rates of 2% to 3% per annum for agri-production and enterprise loans, and zero interest for provident loans intended for house or office repairs. “Through the Enhanced ARISE Program, we reaffirm our collaboration with DAR and offer expanded financing support. As your steady partner, we look forward to continuing to drive change together — para sa mas masagana at mas ligtas na buhay para

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

“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



PUBLISHER CORNER

MALAKANYANG TINAWAG NA KWESTIYUNABLE ANG 'CABRAL LISTS' AT UMANO'Y DPWH LEAKS

Tinawag ni Palace Press Officer Undersecretary Claire Castro na kuwestiyonable at walang sapat na batayan ang tinaguriang “Cabral lists” o ang mga umano’y DPWH leaks na iniinugnay sa isang ₱100-milyong infrastructure project na sinasabing konektado kay First Lady Liza Araneta Marcos.

Ayon kay Castro, walang anumang patunay na ang mga dokumentong kumakalat ay tunay na nagmula sa Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

Sa isang mensahe, sinabi ni Castro na hanggat hindi malinaw

at nabeberipika ang mga dokumento mula mismo sa DPWH, hindi itomaaaring bigyan ng anumang kahalagahan.

Dagdag pa ng opisyal, ang naturang mga dokumento ay maituturing lamang na hearsay at posibleng mga gawa-gawa o peke.

Nilinaw rin niya na wala ring makapag-sasabi sa ngayon kung ang sinasabing proyekto ay aktuwal na naipatupad.

Tugon ito ni Castro matapos lumabas ang ulat na nagsasabing may dokumentong nakuha umano na naglalaman ng isang ₱100-milyong infrastructure project na nakalista sa ilalim ng Department of Public Works



and Highways sa panukalang 2025 National Expenditure Program.

Lumitaw sa dokumento ang kategoryang “OP” na may anotasyong “Care of First Lady Liza Araneta Marcos with request letter from District Representative Faustino Inno Dy.”

Binigyang-diin ni Castro na mahalagang sumunod sa tamang proseso at beripikasyon bago maglabas ng paratang, lalo na kung sangkot ang matataas na opisyal ng pamahalaan.

Partner LGUs in CALABARZON pledge their commitment during 2025 NSTW towards climate-smart agriculture



Local government units (LGUs) in CALABARZON — Magallanes in Cavite, Siniloan in Laguna, and Lucena City in Quezon — take center stage as they join the “Presentation of DOST-UPLB SARAI CentTRO LGU Partners” during the 2025 National Science, Technology, and Innovation Week (NSTW) held on November 19 at the Ilocos Norte Centennial Arena, Laoag City. DOST-CALABARZON partnered with these LGUs in the implementation of the program,

Smarter Approaches to Reinstantiate Agriculture as an Industry in the Philippines – Centralized National Hub for Regional Operations (SARAI CeNTRO) in the region which involves adopting innovative tools that support smarter farming decisions.

Representatives from these partner LGUs—Engr. Freddie D. Sisante of Magallanes, Cavite; Ms. Agnes G. Morales of DOST Laguna for Siniloan, Laguna; and Ms. Jocelyn C. Guin-to of Lucena City, Que-

zon—joined other Year 1 program partners of the SARAI Regional Hubs nationwide. Each received a 3D-printed plaque, symbolizing not only their official acknowledgement but also their commitment to adopting Project SARAI’s science-based decision-support systems and technologies to improve agricultural planning and deliver enhanced services to their respective communities.

The event also served as a venue for mutual learning and col-



Pointer

Pau Dela Cruz

Ligtas na Kagat, Handog na Buhay: Libreng Anti-Venom Hatid ni Gov. Sol Aragoness sa mga Ospital ng Laguna

Sa bawat patak ng anti-venom ay nakapaloob ang pag-asa—pag-asang sa oras ng panganib, may handang sumagip sa buhay ng isang Lagunense.

Bilang patunay ng maagap at malasakit na pamumuno, personal na pinangunahan ni Laguna Governor Sol Aragoness ang kauna-unahang pamamahagi ng Purified Cobra Anti-Venom (PCAV) sa mga ospital na nasa ilalim ng Pamahalaang Panlalawigan ng Laguna noong Disyembre 23, 2025. Layunin ng inisyatibo na palakasin ang kahandaan ng lalawigan laban sa mga insidente ng kagat ng makamandang na ahas—isang banta na tahimik ngunit maaaring ikamatay kung walang agarang lunas.

Unang nakatanggap ng anti-venom ang JP Rizal District Hospital sa Calamba City, kasunod ang Laguna Medical Center (LMC) at San Pablo City District Hospital. Ang mga life-saving serum ay nagmula sa Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM)—ang pangunahing institusyon ng bansa sa pananaliksik at paggamot sa mga sakit na tropikal.

Kasama ni Gov. Aragoness sa makabuluhang aktibidad sina Former Department of Health Undersecretary Dr. Eric Tayag at Dr. Odilon Inonillo, Officer-in-Charge ng Provincial Health Office, na kapwa nagpahayag ng buong suporta sa programang magligtas ng buhay.

Binigyang-diin ni Dr. Tayag ang kritikal na papel ng anti-venom, lalo na sa mga lalawigang may presensya ng iba’t ibang uri ng cobra. “Life-saving ho iyan. Dito sa Laguna may iba’t ibang klase ng co-

bra, pero itong anti-venom na ito ay angkop at epektibo sa mga alam natining uri ng cobra sa lalawigan,” paliwanag niya.

Para kay Governor Aragoness, malinaw ang mensahe: kaligtasan ng mamamayan bago ang lahat. Tiniyak niyang ganap na libre ang anti-venom para sa mga pasyente sa mga ospital ng probinsya.

“Sa atin libre ito. Walang dapat bayaran ang mga pasyente,” maring pahayag ng gobernador.

Dagdag pa niya, pagsapit ng Enero 2026, inaasahang mabibigyan na rin ng PCAV ang iba pang district hospital sa lalawigan. Tatlo muna ang inuna dahil patuloy pa ang produksyon ng RITM. Kasabay nito, sinisiguro rin ng pamahalaang panlalawigan ang sapat na pagsasanay ng mga medical personnel upang masiguro ang tamang paggamit at epektibong pangangasiwa ng anti-venom.

Nagpahayag naman ng pasasalamat si Dr. Petersan Uy, Chief of Hospital ng JP Rizal District Hospital, sa dagdag na kakayahan ng kanilang pasilidad.

“Sana po ay wala namang makagat, pero kung sakali man, handa po ang aming departamento na tumugon,” ani Dr. Uy.

Sa likod ng mga vial ng anti-venom ay ang mas malawak na mensahe ng programang ito—isang pamahalaang handang umakson bago pa man dumating ang sakuna. Ipinapakita ng inisyatibong ito na sa Laguna, ang bawat buhay ay mahalaga, at sa oras ng pangangailangan, may maaasahang tulong na handang sumagip.

laboration among participating LGUs and DOST Regional Offices. Through this showcasing of partner LGUs at NSTW 2025, the event highlighted the essential role of local governments as frontline implementers in bringing science-driven interventions closer to farming communities.

DOST-CALABARZON commends its partner LGUs for champi-

oning smart and sustainable agriculture and looks forward to working closely with them as the SARAI CeNTRO program enters full implementation in the region.

With continued collaboration, the program aims to improve local agricultural planning and ensure that scientific innovations reach farmers where they are most needed.



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.

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



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.

jobs: a household helper in Manila, a contractual factory worker in Laguna, and then a 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.

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 (PGEC), ACEN, and PNOC-Renewables Corporation (PNOC-RC). PGEC 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 achieving 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., PGEC's flagship biodiversity-focused environmental initiative which champions conservation, awareness, restoration, and ecotourism in regions hosting PGEC renewable energy projects.

MGI commits to adopt Kapa-kapa (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 PGEC and MGI's call for collective action to protect natural ecosystems while advancing clean energy use.

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The paper that stand for real values and gives you real value for money

SARAP NG PASKO, SARAP NG PUREFOODS

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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 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 Ninoy 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 inspiration 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.

BRING FESTIVITY TO YOUR NOCHE BUENA WITH MEKENI CHRISTMAS HAMS



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