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In celebration of the holiday season, Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation (MPTC) is pleased to announce a toll-free initiative for motorists during select hours over the Christmas and New Year celebrations.

Motorists can enjoy free toll passage on the following expressways — NLEX, SCTEX, NLEX Connector, CAVITEX, and CALAX — during the festive hours of December 24

from 10:00 PM to December 25 at 6:00 AM, and again from December 31 at 10:00 PM to January 1 at 6:00 AM.

Manuel V. Pangilinan, MPTC Chairman and CEO, said, "Family time is priceless, especially during the holidays. Offering toll-free access is our humble gift to families who wish to maximize their time together."

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ated hours, standard toll fees will be applicable.

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**MPTC**  
METRO PACIFIC TOLLWAYS

**PAMASKONG Handog**

MULA SA NLEX | SCTEX | CAVITEX | CALAX

## Mayor Ross Rizal Dominates 2025 Election Survey with 69% Voter Support

**RPMD**  
**CALAMBA CITY**

**"Boses ng Bayan" - Mayor 2025 Elections**  
December 25, 2024

**RIZAL ROSS 69%**

**CHIPECO TIMMY 27%**

Calamba City Mayor Roseller "Ross" Rizal has emerged as the clear frontrunner in the latest "Boses ng Bayan" survey conducted by RPMD Foundation Inc., securing an impressive 69% voter preference ahead of the 2025 mayoral elections. The survey, conducted from November 1-10, 2024, highlights the incumbent mayor's strong performance, with voters expressing high satisfaction with his governance and the city's progress under his administration.

His closest rival, former Mayor Timmy Chipeco, trailed significantly, garnering only 27% of the respondents' support. The survey, which included 1,800 randomly selected residents, used a margin of error of ±2% at a 95% confidence level, ensuring the reliability of its findings.

Dr. Paul Martinez, Executive Director of RPMD, noted that Mayor Rizal's commanding lead reflects his ability to deliver tangible results, particularly in infrastructure development, social services, and economic initiatives. "These numbers showcase the public's trust in Mayor Rizal's leadership and their alignment with his vision for Calamba City," Dr. Martinez remarked.

The survey's findings also serve as a wake-up call for Chipeco, who faces the formidable task of reshaping his campaign strategy to bridge the wide gap in voter support. With the elections nearing, the results underline the importance of policies that resonate with the electorate and deliver measurable benefits.

Mayor Rizal's administration has been credited for creating a wave of optimism among residents, making this survey a validation of his leadership. As the race heats up, the spotlight remains on Rizal's ability to sustain his momentum and Chipeco's efforts to mount a comeback.

(Edjun Mariposque)

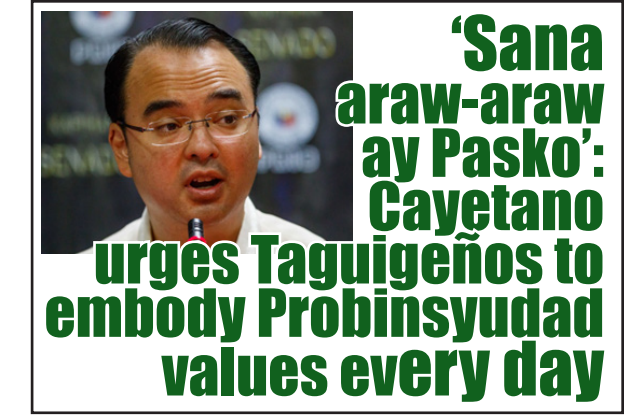
# DERETSAHAN WEEKLY PUBLISHING

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

Vol. I - Series 24 - Dec. 29, 2024 - Jan. 4, 2025

# FREE MOVIES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS LAUNCHED BY MAYOR ROSS RIZAL!

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## 15 km-kalsadang DA-PRDP, itatayo sa Mulanay



**15 KM-KALSADANG DA-PRDP, ITATAYO SA MULANAY**

Isang proyektong kalsada ang itatayo sa apat na barangay ng Mulanay, Quezon, matapos aprubahan ng Department of Agriculture - Philippine Rural Development Project Regional Project Advisory Board Calabarzon ang pondo para dito sa ilalim ng DA-PRDP Scale-Up. Tatakbo ito ng 15.33 kilometro at magkakahalaga ng Php 495,675,169.82.

Tutulong ang kalsada sa 9,140 katao at 2,299 kabahayan sa mga barangay ng Bagupaye, Cambuga, Mabini, at San Pedro.

Pagdadugtungin nito ang dalawang magkalahayag bahagi ng Mulanay-San Francisco national road upang mas mapabilis at mapadali ang byahe sa mga kalapit na bayan tulad ng San Francisco at San Narciso. Batay sa pag-

aaral, magiging 19 minuto na lamang ang byahe mula sa komunidad hanggang sa pamilihan sa tulong ng kalsada. Mababawasan rin ang lugi mula sa transportasyon mula 2.3% na magiging 1.2% na lamang. Sa kasalukuyan, hirap ang mga residente sa transportasyon lalo na tuwing tag-ulan.

Hindi rin ligtas ang pagtawid sa mga tulay dahil gawa lamang ang mga ito sa kawayan.

Nagpasalamat si Mulanay Mayor Aristotle Aguirre sa RPAB at DA-PRDP Regional Project Coordination Office Calabarzon para sa suporta at tulong na kanilang natanggap. Tungo sa tagumpay at pagtagal ng proyekto, ipinahayag ni-

yang tututukan at makikipagtulungan ang lokal na pamahalaan sa DA at sa kanilang magiging contractor. Dagdag niya, sisikapin rin ng LGU na masulit ang mga oportunidad na dadalhin ng proyekto tulad sa produksyon, marketing, kabuhayan, atbp.

"Nagpapasalamat po kami sa LGU for taking the initiative to propose this subproject to further develop its local agriculture and fishery sector. Atin po itong pagtulong-tulungan upang marami pang farmers ang umunlad at ma-encourage pa na mag-produce ng pagkain ngayong may faster and easier access na sila sa merkado," ani RPAB Chairperson at DA-4A Regional Executive Director Fidel Libao.

# Editorial

## CHRISTMAS MARKED BY JOY AND TRAGEDY: PLANE CRASH IN KAZAKHSTAN AND AVIATION INCIDENT IN JAPAN

The Christmas holiday, a season of celebration and reflection, was marred by contrasting events that brought both joy and sorrow to the global community. While many gathered with loved ones, tragic aviation incidents in Kazakhstan and Japan reminded the world of the fragility of life.

**Kazakhstan Plane Crash Claims 38 Lives**  
On December 25, a devastating crash involving Azerbaijan Airlines Flight J2-8243 left 38 people dead near Aktau, Kazakhstan. The Embraer 190, carrying 67 individuals, encountered a catastrophic event suspected to involve a Russian Pantsir-S air defense missile. This theory emerged after survivors reported hearing loud bangs before the plane descended.

Despite the tragedy, the heroism of the pilots ensured the survival of 29 passengers, some of whom are still receiving medical care. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev declared a national day of mourning, emphasizing the need for a transparent investigation. The global community is united in its call for accountability.

**Collision at Tokyo's Haneda Airport**  
Meanwhile, earlier in the year, Japan witnessed an aviation scare when a Japan Coast Guard aircraft collided with a Japan Airlines plane at Haneda Airport. Thankfully, there were no casualties, but the incident highlighted gaps in safety protocols. An interim report cited miscommunication and procedural lapses as the primary causes.

**A Season of Mixed Emotions**  
As the world celebrates the joy of Christmas, these tragedies serve as a sobering reminder of the importance of vigilance and safety. The resilience of the human spirit shines through in the efforts of the pilots and the survivors who have lived to tell their stories.

This holiday season, while many count their blessings, our thoughts go out to those mourning their loved ones and those affected by these tragic events. The aviation industry must take these lessons to heart, ensuring safer skies for everyone.

By: Edjun Mariposque



## Babae na kayang kumain nang maraming cotton candy sa loob ng 60 seconds. nakatanggap ng Guinness record!

ISANG bagong Guinness World Record ang nasungkit ng speed eater na si Leah Shutkever matapos niyang maubos ang 49 grams ng kulay berdeing cotton candy sa loob lamang ng 60 segundo.

Ipinaliwanag ni Shutkever na kaya kulay green ang kinain niyang cotton candy ay dahil may tema itong "The Grinch" para sa kapaskohan

Para sa kanyang world record attempt, kailangang makakain si Shutkever ng 45 grams, na madali naman niyang nalampasan at nahigitan.

Bagamat natapos na may "malagkit na mga daliri at mukha," masaya si Shutkever sa

kanyang tagumpay at nagdagagan na naman ang kanyang Guinness world record sa kakaibang abilidad sa pagkain nang mabilis.

Bukod dito, hawak din ni Shutkever ang mga record para sa pagkain ng 19 chicken nuggets sa loob ng isang minuto at 10 jelly doughnuts sa loob ng tatlong minuto, na nagpapakita ng kanyang walang kapantay na bilis at disiplina sa larangan na ito.

Patuloy na pina-hahanga ni Shutkever ang mundo bilang isa sa pinakamatagumpay na speed eaters, na nagbibigay-inspirasyon sa mga mahilig sa pagkain. (Nelson Dimapiis)

## Ilang araw bago ang New Year: Bilang ng mga naputukan, pumalo na sa 69

Bunsod ng mga naturang bagong kaso, umaabot na ngayon sa 69 ang naitatalang fire-works-related injuries (FWRI) ng DOH sa bansa, mula noong Disyembre 22 hanggang 6:00AM ng Disyembre 26, base sa ulat ng kanilang 62 sentinel sites.

Matapos ang pagdiriwang ng Pasko ay iniulat ng Department of Health (DOH) na nakapagtagala pa sila ng 26 bagong kaso ng paputok sa bansa.

Bunsod ng mga naturang bagong kaso, umaabot na ngayon sa 69 ang naitatalang fire-works-related injuries (FWRI) ng DOH sa bansa, mula noong Disyembre 22 hanggang 6:00AM ng Disyembre 26, base sa ulat ng kanilang 62 sentinel sites.

Ayon sa DOH, 58 sa mga biktima ay nagkakaedad lamang ng 19-taong gulang pababa habang ang 11 naman ay nagkakaedad ng 20-taong gulang pataas.

Nasa 65 ng mga biktima ay mga lalaki habang apat naman ay mga babae.

Ang 51 naman sa mga biktima o 74% ng mga FWRI cases ay pawang active users ng paputok.

Iniulat din ng DOH na 59 o 86% ng total cases na nasangkot sa pagpapaputok ay gumamit ng mga ilegal na paputok, gaya ng boga.

Sa datos ng DOH, nabatid na ang naturang kaso ay mas mababa o kalahati lamang ng 52 kaso na nailata noong nakaraang Pasko.

(Nelson Dimapiis)



## CAYETANO...

Choose to be part of the solution rather than the problem.

This was the holiday message of Senator Alan Peter Cayetano to his fellow Taguigeños during the grand opening of this year's "The Lights of CHRISTmas" Park (TLC Park) on Saturday, November 30.

Thousands of Taguigeños attended the ceremony, which marked the third year of the largest lights park in the country.

In his speech, Cayetano urged Taguigeños to live out the core values of the "Probinsyudad" – love, progress, and integrity – not just during Christmas but throughout the year.

"Yung prinsipyong pinaniniwalaan natin sa Taguig – pagmamahal, progress dahil ipinagbawal ang lahat ng klase ng sugal, prinsipyo na walang droga – sana po araw-araw 'yan ay magiging totoo," he said.

"Kung tayo ay tunay na Probinsyudad, sana araw-araw ay Pasko," he added.

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He gave a practical example of this mindset where he emphasized the importance of taking responsibility for the community.

"Tayo dapat ay makatulong, at kung hindi tayo makakatulong, 'wag na tayong makasakit pa," he said.

"Example: Napakaganda ng ating park. Sana kung may makita tayo na nagtapon ng basura, tayo na rin ang pumulot. Pero kung ikaw pa ang magtatapon – e nakinabang ka na, dudumihan mo pa 'yung ating park," he continued.

Cayetano closed his message by wishing for a brighter future for all Filipinos, expressing his hope that 2025 would be a "year of light."

"Ang aking wish sa inyong lahat sa 2025 ay taon ng liwanag... Let's not underestimate the importance of truth and fighting for the truth," he said. The TLC Park, which is the brainchild of Cayetano's wife Taguig Mayor Lani Cayetano, is open to all until January next year. PR



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## DTI Rizal hosts successful orientation for Negosyo Serbisyo sa Barangay (NSB) Program



The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) – Rizal successfully conducted the Negosyo Serbisyo sa Barangay (NSB) Program Orientation for 34 beneficiaries from the municipalities of Tanay, Jala-jala, Piililla, Baras, Morong, and Cardona. The event, held on December 19, 2024, at the MSWD Activity Area of Tanay Municipal Hall, brought together sari-sari store owners from marginalized sectors of these municipalities. The activity was attended by DTI Business Development Division Chief Ms. Sharon F. Dioco, Trade-Industry Development Specialist Ms. Noralyn Halimao, and Negosyo Center Business Counselors (NCBC) Ms. Faye Javier (Cardona), Ms. Leah Clemente (Morong), Ms. Karla Reynes (Tanay), Ms. Cristine Joy Padayao (Sampaloc-Tan-

ay), and Mr. Jerome Montealegre (Piililla/Jala-jala). The Negosyo Serbisyo sa Barangay (NSB) program, previously known as the Livelihood Seeding Program – Negosyo Serbisyo sa Barangay (LSP-NSB), is an initiative by DTI aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and fostering economic development at the grassroots level. The program's primary goal is to support micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by bringing business resources, services, and information directly to the barangay level. This initiative helps reduce poverty and encourages sustainable economic growth by equipping local businesses with the skills and resources needed for success. Ms. Sharon F. Dioco, DTI BDD Chief, delivered an inspiring message to the attendees, empha-

sizing the department's commitment to supporting local entrepreneurs. "Nandito lamang po ang DTI Rizal para umalalay sa inyo. Hangad po namin na makatulong ang programang ito para mas lalo pa ninyong mapalago ang inyong mga negosyo," she said. The event also featured discussions on various DTI programs and services by Mr. Jerome Montealegre, while Ms. Faye Javier gave an overview of the Barangay Micro Business Enterprise (BMBE), lastly, Ms. Leah Clemente provided in-depth insights into the opportunities and benefits of the NSB program. The orientation session concluded leaving the participants with valuable knowledge and resources to help grow their businesses and contribute to their community's economic development. PR

## CARD, Inc. and ASKI Skills and Knowledge Institute, Inc. Forge New Scholarship Partnership



From left to right: CARD MRI Managing Director Aristeo Dequito, CMDI President Dr. Edzel Ramos, CARD, Inc. Executive Director Vicente P. Briones Jr., ASKI Skills and Knowledge Institute, Inc. Executive Director Mary Jane Macapagal, and ASKI Microfinance Cluster Manager Dexter Ong.

Marking a significant step towards providing further educational support for young students of local communities, CARD, Inc. (A Microfinance NGO) and ALALAY SA KAUNLARAN Inc. Skills and Knowledge Institute, Inc. (ASKI-SKI) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for a new scholarship partnership on August 2, 2024, held at CMDI Bay in Laguna. CARD, Inc. Executive Director Vicente P. Briones Jr. said, "Such scholarship is significant for our young students because it is a step to reaching their dreams. We continue to see that education is the key to combat poverty, so we give our youth the opportunity for quality

education, change their lives, and rise above poverty." Briones also emphasized that the institution continues to develop partnerships with other organizations such as ASKI as part of our continued advocacy to eradicate poverty. The collaboration aims to provide quality education and scholarships to 50 selected senior high school students from Talavera and nearby towns in Nueva Ecija. The MOA commits to fund PHP 1 million, translating to PHP 20,000 per student for over two years. This initiative will benefit children of clients from CARD, Inc., and ASKI, as well as members of CARD Mutually Reinforcing Institutions (CARD

MRI). Moreover, CARD, Inc. will send these selected students to the CARD-MRI Development Institute, Inc. (CMDI) campuses in Bay, Laguna, Tagum City, Davao del Norte, and Buenavista, Agusan del Norte to offer scholarship and educational opportunities. CARD, Inc. and ASKI Skills and Knowledge Institute's partnership underscores both organizations' dedication to promoting educational advancement in local communities and supporting the country's next generation of leaders. To know more about CARD, Inc. (A Microfinance NGO), please visit <https://www.cardmri.com/cardinc/>

## Tugon Feedback Mechanism Year End Assembly Matagumpay



Naging Matagumpay Ang pag tatapos Ng taon para sa mga officer ng Tugon Feedback Mechanism sa pangunguna ng masipag na Chairman Jose Estrera, Vice Chairman Egay Larena. Nag umpisa muna sa Isang pagdarasal at pag awit Ng Pang bansang awit ng Lupang Hinirang, nag sagawa din Ng Isang election para sa

nabakante Ng BOD position kung saan Ang bawat Isa ay malayang tumakbo sa nasabi puesto. Matapos Ang BOD election ay nag karoon Ng mga palaro, at raffle na labis naman kasiyahan ng bawat Isa, ayon Kay Jose Estrada ay labis labis Ang pasasalamat nya sa ama Ng Lungsod Mayor Ross Rizal sa walang tigil na pag SUPORTA

sa ating mga NGO, ayon pa sa kanya umasa po kayo Mayor Ross Rizal na Ang aming suporta ay mananatili Sayo at Isa rin kami sa mga bumabalangkas Ng mga batas para sa kapakinabangan Ng Calambeño.



# Mystery in the Skies: Kazakhstan Plane Crash Investigated Amid Missile Strike Allegations



Authorities are racing to uncover the truth behind the tragic Azerbaijan Airlines Flight 8243 crash near Aktau, Kazakhstan, on December 25, 2024. The crash claimed 38 lives and left 29 survivors hospitalized. While initial theories pointed to bird strikes or technical malfunctions, compelling evidence now suggests the possibility of a Russian missile strike.

Survivors have recounted hearing explo-

sions before the aircraft's final descent. Wreckage photos reveal shrapnel damage, intensifying suspicions of external interference. Azerbaijan Airlines has ruled out internal mechanical failures, further fueling international calls for clarity.

Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Russia have launched joint investigations, with black box data expected to shed light on the incident. Global aviation experts

# Troops overrun NPA hideout in another clash in Mindoro



CAMP CAPIN-PIN, Rizal - Several war materiel have been recovered by the soldiers of the 2nd Infantry (Jungle Fighter) Division (2ID) following their encounter against NPA terrorists in Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro.

Per reports from the 203rd Infantry Brigade, troops from the 1st Infantry Battalion acted on reports from concerned citizens regarding the presence of armed individuals at Barangay Lisap.

While conducting security operations in the area, they were fired upon by the local terrorists.

This resulted in a 15-minute firefight before the NPA terrorists fled the area.

No casualties from the government's side have been reported while casualties on the terrorists are still being verified.

The soldiers were able to seize the NPA terrorists' hideout which contained various ordnance materials and other items including nine anti-personnel mines, a landmine, two rounds of 40mm high explosives, 555 rounds of live ammunition, 20 liters of gasoline, two flash drives, 16 raincoats, an estimated 60 kilos of rice, assorted food supplies, a writing notebook, one medicine box, and personal belongings.



It can be recalled that last December 18, the 4th Infantry Battalion engaged in an encounter against the NPA terrorists at Brgy. San Vicente in the neighboring municipality of Roxas wherein a female rebel died and war items were captured by the troops.

It is believed that the terrorists are now hopping from one place to another to flee from the sight of the community and the government forces.

In a statement,

2ID Commander Major General Cerilo Balaoro Jr. said that the terrorists in the area have no more place to hide due to the active cooperation and vigilance of the local community.

"The terrorists have no more place to hide because of the strong partnership between the military and the communities we serve," Maj. Gen. Balaoro said.

He further condemned the continued use of anti-personnel mines by the NPA, stating that the use of these prohibi-

ed weapons is not only a blatant violation of international humanitarian law but also a clear disregard for the safety and well-being of innocent civilians.

Maj. Gen. Balaoro also assured the public that the sustained security operations would continue to ensure the safety of the communities in Southern Tagalog while encouraging the people to cooperate with authorities by reporting any suspicious activities.

(Nelson Dimapilis)



## Pointer Pau Dela Cruz

### BUWAYA SA LIKOD NG MGA MASKARA

Naging napakalaking isyu at pakakasangkot pangalan ni Bise Presidente Sara Duterte dahil sa kahina-hinalang alokasyon ng confidential at intelligence funds sa Office of the Vice Presidentat Department of Education noong deliberasyon para sa 2024 national budget. Bagamat hindi naaprubahan ang Php650 milyong hinihiling ni Duterte, nananatiling nakababahala ang kahalangalan ng mga politikong itinuturing na tila pagmamay-ari nila ang kaban ng bayan.

Hindi na rin bago sa mamamayang Pilipino ang makarinig ng isyu patungkol sa hindi maayos na paggamit ng badyet ng ating bansa. Sa katunayan, paulit-ulit na lamang ito mula sa isyu ng korapsyon ni dating Pangulong Joseph Estrada, Priority Development Assistance Fund ng administrasyong Aquino, at ngayon confidential at intelligence fund ng administrasyong Marcos-Duterte. Iba't ibang mukha at pangalan, subalit sa likod, tila pare-parehong mga buwaya pagdating sa pera ng taumbayan.

Palagi na lamang ikinakatuwiran ng mga politikong ito na para sa mga programang nakasentro sa pangangailangan ng masa ang mga pondong nasa kanilang kamay. Gayunpaman, kung ihahalimbawa natin si Duterte, sa Php125 milyong nahawakan

at nagasta niya noong 2022, tunay bang nadama ng mga Pilipino ang ginhawa mula sa naturang halaga?

Ayon sa tala ng Philippine Statistics Authority noong 2023, nasa 22.4% pa rin ang antas ng kahirapan sa bansa. Nangangahulugan itong tinatayang isa sa bawat limang Pilipino ang lubog sa kahirapan. Bagamat bahagyang bumaba ang datos na ito kompara sa 23.7% noong 2021, hindi pa rin ito sapat upang umalwan ang antas ng pamumuhay ng mga Pilipino.

Dapat lamang ilagay ng mga pinuno ng bansa sa tama ang paggamit ng pera ng taumbayan. Hindi dapat ito nagmimistulang pagmamay-ari ng mga politikong maaaring gamitin sa mga pansariling interes. Sa halip, dapat siguruhing nakatuon ang bawat sentimo ng pondo ng gobyerno sa pagpapaunlad ng kabuhayan ng mamamayang kanilang pinaglilingkuran

Karapatan ng bawat Pilipino namalaman ang pinatutungahan ng buwis na kanilang pinaghihirapan. Sinisimbolo ng bawat sentimo ng kaban ng bayan ang dugo't pawis ng mga mamamayan.

Kaya huwag sanang mag - anyong buwaya sa likod ng kanilang maamo at kapita-pitagang mga mukha.

### FREE MOVIES...

Under the leadership of Mayor Ross Rizal, the FREE MOVIES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS program was officially launched at SM City Calamba. This initiative is part of the CalambaGONG Pamahalaan's commitment to bringing joy and support to our beloved elders.

Starting January 8, 2025, senior citizens in Calamba can enjoy free movies! They simply need to present their Senior Citizen ID and Movie Pass to avail of this benefit.

In addition to the free movies, Mayor Rizal also announced the upcoming Social Pension Program for senior citizens, set to begin in 2025. This is another step in ensuring that the government's care is felt in their daily lives.

"The CalambaGONG Pamahalaan remains dedicated to delivering meaningful reforms for every Calambeño. This program is a token of gratitude to our elders who have been the foundation of our community," Mayor Rizal stated.

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For more details about the program, visit the Office for Senior Citizens Affairs (OSCA) or check the official page of the local government.

This is to a brighter and more meaningful future for the beloved senior citizens specially of Calambeños. (Edjun Mariposque)

## PUBLISHER CORNER

### QUAD COMMITTEE, WAKE UP: P20.3 BILLION DPWH SCANDAL DEMANDS IMMEDIATE ACTION



The nation watches in stunned silence as the Commission on Audit (CoA) exposes a shocking breach of financial integrity within the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH). With a staggering P20.3 billion in disbursements flagged for lack of documentation, this is not just a bureaucratic lapse—it's a slap in the face of taxpayers who demand transparency and accountability.

The DPWH, an agency that wields immense influence through its infrastructure budget, is now under scrutiny for irregularities that cast doubt on the legality and propriety of its transactions. From the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) alone, over P9 billion was spent without proper records. Meanwhile, DPWH Regional Office V shelled out more than P4 billion for items as trivial as trees, furnishings, and transplanting—expenses that now reek of potential graft. The rest of the audit findings are equally appalling: P592.2 million in advance payments in Region IV-A and inexplicable overtime expenses in Region I.

**Quad Committee: Are You Watching?**

The Quad Committee, chaired by Congressman Ace Barbers, prides itself on being the government's watchdog, yet remains deafeningly silent on this scandal. Is the committee too preoccupied with political vendettas to fulfill its mandate? Barbers himself has been vocal about credibility and transparency in other investigations. Where is that same fire now?

House Speaker Martin Romualdez must also answer to the public. As the leader of the lower house, his silence on this colossal misuse of funds raises serious questions. Is the House of Representatives willing to let this slide, or does it lack the courage to investigate an agency as influential as the DPWH?

Moreover, both the Quad Committee and Romualdez have been accused of obsessively targeting former President Rodrigo Duterte and his family. This relentless pursuit has consumed their time and energy, diverting attention from critical national issues like the DPWH scandal. It is high time they widen their scope and prove they are not merely political pawns but true defenders of public interest.

**The People Are Watching**

The Filipino people demand an immediate, no-holds-barred investigation. If the Quad Committee and Congress are truly committed to good governance, they must summon DPWH officials, contractors, and auditors to testify. The CoA's findings are a damning indictment, but without action, they risk becoming another forgotten report buried under political noise.

Barbers, Romualdez, and the Quad Committee: this is your moment to prove that public service isn't just a slogan. The people are watching, and they will not forgive complacency.

**Accountability Starts Here**

This P20.3 billion scandal isn't just a test for the DPWH; it's a litmus test for the Quad Committee and Congress. Will they uphold their duty to the Filipino people, or will they turn a blind eye to this blatant misuse of public funds?

Congressman Barbers, Speaker Romualdez: Focus on the real issues. The DPWH's questionable spending is an urgent matter that deserves your full attention. Governance is not about settling scores with the Dutertes alone; it's about protecting the people's interests. The nation is waiting. Don't let them down.



# SENIOR CITIZENS NO LONGER NEED PURCHASE BOOKLETS FOR MEDICINE DISCOUNTS; DOH IMPLEMENTS NEW POLICY



Calamba City, Philippines – In a move that simplifies access to benefits for senior citizens, the Department of Health (DOH) has officially removed the requirement for purchase booklets to avail of the 20 percent discount on medicines.

Health Secretary Teodoro J. Herbosa announced on Monday the signing of Administrative Order No. 2024-0017, which eliminates the need for senior citizens to present a purchase booklet alongside a valid ID and doctor's prescription at drugstores.

"I am also a senior citizen. I know it is

hard to always bring a purchase booklet with you. Seniors need the discount on their medicines, and we must make it easy for them to get that," Herbosa said.

The new order aligns with Republic Act 9994, or the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010, revising some provisions of previous administrative orders without affecting other stipulations still in force.

"On behalf of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., we at the DOH give this gift of convenience and more affordable medicines to all of our senior citizens. Merry

Christmas po!" Herbosa added.

### Lawmakers Laud the Decision

The DOH's move has garnered widespread support from lawmakers.

Albay Representative Joey Salceda, chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, praised the initiative, saying it addressed long-standing concerns raised during joint committee hearings.

"Bye-bye booklet. Thank the DOH for making permanent the change we requested. Salamat PBBM and salamat, Secretary Ted Herbosa," Salceda said. He noted that the

booklet requirement often caused seniors to miss out on critical medicines when misplaced or forgotten.

Rep. Milagros Aquino-Magsaysay of the United Senior Citizens Partylist also celebrated the announcement, calling it an "early Christmas gift" to the nation's over 12 million senior citizens.

"The deletion of the requirement not only gives premium to elderly convenience, but it is also ecologically sound and friendly," Magsaysay said.

She further urged other government agencies, including the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), to abolish similar booklet requirements for discounts on basic goods and services.

This development marks another step in the government's efforts to improve accessibility and quality of life for senior citizens, providing them with greater convenience and dignity in availing of

their rights.

Concerns Raised Over DOH's Move to Scrap Purchase Booklets for Senior Citizens' Medicine Discounts

While many hailed the Department of Health's (DOH) new policy removing the need for purchase booklets for senior citizens to avail of the 20 percent discount on medicines, some expressed concerns over potential loopholes in its implementation.

### Potential for Abuse and Fraud

Some critics raised concerns about the risk of abuse under the new system. What if, drugstores, for instance, could falsely claim that all medicines purchased were for senior citizens to avoid paying taxes? Without the purchase booklet, there is no clear audit trail to verify if the medicines sold at discounted rates were genuinely for seniors.

"What's stopping unscrupulous drugstores from declaring all their transactions as senior citi-

zen purchases? This might lead to revenue losses for the government," said one critic from the retail sector.

Others questioned how relatives of senior citizens would avail of the discount on their behalf, particularly in cases where the senior is unable to visit the drugstore themselves.

"Without the purchase booklet, how will relatives prove that the medicines they are buying are for a senior citizen? The requirements must be clear to prevent confusion," one observer pointed out.

Another concern raised was the potential misuse of the new policy. Some worried that individuals might falsely claim the discount by presenting forged IDs or prescriptions.

While the initiative aims to simplify access to medicine discounts for seniors, ensuring accountability remains a key challenge moving forward.

(Edjun Mariposque)

# PHILHEALTH'S NEW BENEFITS A STEP FORWARD, BUT MORE ACTION NEEDED, SAYS REP. LEE

MANILA, Philippines – Bicolano lawmaker and staunch health advocate Manoy Wilbert "Wise" Lee welcomed the recent benefit enhancements announced by PhilHealth but emphasized that more needs to be done to alleviate the healthcare burden on Filipinos.

"Kaya pang mas iparamdam ang tulong sa mga Pilipino. Kung mas maagang nagdagdag ng mga benepisyo, hindi na sana umabot sa zero subsidy!" Lee remarked, referencing the billions in unused PhilHealth funds he exposed in September 2023.

The recently approved 50% increase in select case rates, expand-

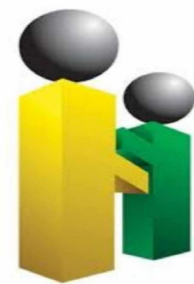
ed packages for heart ailments, new outpatient emergency care, preventive oral health services, and Z benefits for kidney transplantation and peritoneal dialysis were acknowledged by Lee as significant but overdue measures.

"Bahagi lang ito sa mga commitment na pinimahan ng DOH at PhilHealth na itinulak natin noong nakaraang budget deliberations," Lee said. He reminded PhilHealth and the Department of Health (DOH) to fulfill their promises, including comprehensive measures to reduce out-of-pocket expenses and broader access to diagnostic tests and cancer treatments.

Lee's advocacy has already led to a 30% increase in PhilHealth benefits earlier this year and significant expansions in free dialysis and breast cancer treatment coverage. His efforts also pushed for free eye checkups and prescription glasses, which are now in the final stages of implementation.

"Tigilan na ang pagiging manhid at kawalan ng pakialam sa mga nagdurusang Pilipino," Lee urged, calling for PhilHealth to maximize its funds to avoid another zero government subsidy scenario.

He vowed to continue championing healthcare reforms, stat-



## PhilHealth

Your Partner in Health

ing: "Dagdag lang nang dagdag ng mga benepisyo hanggang maging libre na

ang gamot at pagpapagamot ng mga Pilipino. Ang ipinaglalaban ko: Gamot

Mo, Sagot Kol!" (Edjun Mariposque)

# TRAINING WORKSHOP PARA SA KATUTUBO NG RAGAYNON ISINAGAWA



Lokal na Pamahalaan ng Ragay at 81st Infantry (SPARTAN) Battalion, Philippine Army, matagumpay na isinagawa ang Indigenous People Training Workshop sa SK Building, Ragay, Camarines Sur

Pinangunahan ito ng lecture mula sa Mu-

nicipal Agriculture Office at pangangalaga ng gulay, na dinaluhan ng 50 katutubo at residente ng Barangay Amomokpok. Nagbahagi rin ang kasundaluhan ng kaalaman ukol sa Anti-Terrorism Law at mga taktika ng panlilinlang ng mga teroristang grupo. Namahagi ang

Lokal na Pamahalaan ng mga toolkit, vegetable seeds, at family food packs bilang suporta sa mga katutubo.

Patuloy na nakikipagtulungan ang 81st Infantry Battalion sa mga lokal na pamahalaan upang mapabuti ang kalagayan ng mga katutubo at iba pang nangangailangan. (Nelson Dimapilis)

# LOST DOG RETURNS HOME, RINGS DOORBELL FOR CHRISTMAS REUNION



A Florida family received the best Christmas Eve surprise when their lost dog, Athena, returned home after a week-long disappearance and rang the doorbell to signal her arrival at GREEN COVE SPRINGS, Florida. Athena, a four-year-old German Shep-

herd and Husky mix, escaped her home on December 15th, leaving her family heartbroken and concerned.

Despite extensive searches throughout the community and neighboring towns, there was no sign of the beloved pet. However, on

Christmas Eve, Athena made a miraculous return. In the middle of the night, the family's doorbell rang.

To their astonishment, it was Athena standing on the porch, wagging her tail and eager to be reunited with her family.

The heartwarming reunion brought



tears of joy to the family, who had feared they might never see Athena again.

The dog's ability to find her way back home

and her clever use of the doorbell to alert her family has captivated the local community and beyond.

This incredible story serves as a remind-

er of the unwavering bond between humans and their pets, and the remarkable resilience and intelligence of our canine companions.

(Edjun Mariposque)