

MPT SOUTH EXTENDS AID TO HABAGAT, TYPHOON-HIT CAVITEX AND CALAX COMMUNITIES



Kawit, Cavite Mayor Armie Aguinaldo, and other municipal officials received donations from MPT South at Kawit Municipal Hall.

July 25, 2025 – In the wake of the recent typhoon and intensified southwest monsoon (Habagat) that battered parts of Metro Manila, Cavite, and Laguna, Metro Pacific Tollways South (MPT South), a unit of Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation (MPTC), has launched immediate relief operations to assist severely affected communities along the Manila-Cavite Expressway (CAVITEX) and Cavite-Laguna Expressway (CALAX).

MPT South swiftly coordinated with local government units of its expressways' alignment communities to distribute a total of 3,000 relief packs to families temporarily displaced by the widespread flooding. The company also announced plans to extend support to public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers and operators plying CAVITEX whose livelihood and mobility were disrupted by days of relentless rains.

"We're more than just a tollway operator. We are part of these communities—committed partners and neighbors who show up, especially in times of crisis," said Enlora D. Rumawak, Officer-in-Charge of MPT South. "We understand the hardships that our communities are facing, and we are here to help ease their burden."

The relief initiative forms part of MPT South's broader commitment to corporate social responsibility and disaster response, reinforcing its role not only in infrastructure but also in community care.

About MPT South
MPT South is a subsidiary of Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation (MPTC), the infrastructure arm of Metro Pacific Investments Corporation (MPIC). Aside from the CALAX and CAVITEX network of toll roads, MPTC's domestic portfolio includes the concessions for the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX), the NLEX Connector Road, the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEX), and the Cebu-Cordova Link Expressway (CCLEX) in Cebu.



MPT South, LGU employees, and personnel of the Philippine National Police demonstrated "Bayanihan" for the displaced families in Kawit, Cavite.



MPT South turned over relief aids to Imus City, received by the City Social Welfare and Development led by Ms. Josephine Villanueva.nations from MPT South at Kawit Municipal Hall.



MPT South turned over relief aids to Bacoor City, which were received by Councilor Karen Evaristo.

CWD Brings Clean Water to Calamba Evacuees Affected by Typhoon Emong



Mayor Ross Rizal Leads Tireless Relief Efforts Amid Storm Emong's Onslaught in Calamba

Calamba City, Laguna — As Severe Tropical Storm Emong continues to lash Calamba with relentless rain and flooding, Mayor Ross Rizal remains at the forefront of relief and response operations—personally ensuring that affected residents



checked on evacuees and handed out aid. In an inspiring display of community partnership, Jollibee Calamba donated 1,000 Yumburgers to support the city's relief drive. The burgers, paired with hot lugaw, were distributed especially to children and elders in evacuation sites, bringing warmth and comfort amid the cold, stormy weather.

"Thank you so much, Jollibee Calamba," Mayor Rizal said. "Your generosity brings smiles and hope to our fellow Calambeños during these difficult times." Through it all, Mayor Rizal continues to rally the spirit of bayanihan—proving that in Calamba, leadership means service that never stops. (Edjun Mariposque)

"We will not leave our people behind in the midst of this storm," the mayor stated during one of his visits to local evacuation centers, where he personally

DALAWANG YFC AWARDEE SA CALABARZON, WAGI SA BUONG PILIPINAS



Dalawang representante ng Department of Agriculture IV-CALABARZON (DA-4A) ang nagkamit ng parangal sa Young Farmers Challenge (YFC) National Competition noong ika-17 ng Hulyo sa Baguio City.

Tinatayang ₱500,000 ang natanggap ng Hiyas Urban Mushroom Farm nina Jeck Iyas at Ma. Regina Patungan mula sa probinsya ng Rizal na ginawaran bilang Top 3 sa kategoryang YFC Upscale sa buong Pilipinas. Ilan sa mga produkto nilang kinilala ay ang bagoong, chicharon, polvoron, atchara, at cracker.

Samantala, pinarangalan din ang Banahaw Creations ni Queen Anne Xyza Salayo mula sa probinsya ng Quezon ng Excellence in Product Packaging and Labeling Enterprise sa kategoryang YFC Start Up tampok ang kanilang anim na flavored Fried Rice Seasoning paste.

Ang YFC ay isang kompetisyon na inilunsad ng DA upang hikayatin ang mga kabataang pumasok sa sektor ng agrikultura na pamamagitan ng pagtulong sa pinansyal at teknikal na aspeto ng mga agribusiness. Ang Start Up ay para sa mga nagsisimula pa lamang na negosyo habang ang Upscale naman ay para sa patuloy na pagbibigay suporta sa mga umiiral nang negosyo.

Ayon kay Ms. Patungan ng Hiyas Urban Mushroom Farm, ang pagsali sa YFC ang nagsilbing pag-asa nila na palakihin at ipakilala pa ang mga produkto hindi lamang sa buong rehiyon kundi sa bansa. Aniya, maka-kaasa ang Kagawaran na buo ang kanilang panata sa walang sawang pagpapaunlad ng agribusiness.

DSWD bares 1.M beneficiaries of 2014 AICS in Calabarzon

Editorial

BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION NAG-BABALA SA TAONG BAYAN NA MAG INGAT SA MGA SCAMMER NA NAGSOSOLICIT PARA SA BIKTIMA NG BAGYO

Pinag-iingat ngayon ng Bureau of Immigration ang publiko sa pagkakat ng ilang mga scammer na nagso-solicit ng pera para umano sa mga biktima ng bagyo.

Kung saan nagbigay babala si Immigration Commissioner Joel Anthony Viado hinggil sa mga indibidwal na ginagamit ang kanyang ngalan makapangolekta lamang ng pera.

Ayon sa pahayag ng kawanihan, ang babala ay bunsod ng makatanggap sila ng mga ulat hinggil sa 'scammers' na nagpapanggap na may koneksyon kay Commissioner Viado.

Nanghihingi raw ang mga ito ng 'monetary donations' na siyang layon gamitin sana umano para sa mga nasalanta ng bagyo.

Sa pag-iimbestiga, natuklasang ang sangkot na scammer ay kaparehong cellphone number pa na gamit sa ilang insidente ng panloko na target naman ang iba pang ahensya ng gobyerno.

Kaya't kinundena ni Immigration Commissioner Joel Anthony Viado ang maling paggamit sa kanyang ngalan at maring pinabulaanan ang pakikibahagi nito sa anumang uri ng solication para sa donasyon.

Nakikipag-ugnayan naman aniya sila sa National Bureau of Investigation o NBI para mapaimbestigahan ang naturang insidente ng pangloko.

DE LIMA...

FROM PAGE 5

implementing a total ban on online gambling would likely drive the industry underground, this measure mandates relevant government agencies to conduct an all-out crackdown on illegal platforms and activities related to online gambings, similar to what we did to Philippine Off-shore Gaming Operators (POGOs)," she added.

For her environmental justice and good governance advocacy, De Lima renewed her call for the passage of a comprehensive land use policy to ensure the sustainable use of our country's land and physical resources through HB 2130 or the "National Land Use Act".

If passed into law, a nationwide hazard mapping and hazard risk assessment program shall be implemented to determine areas in the country which are prone to severe

flooding, landslides, river erosion, coastal erosion, lahar, earthquake, and other natural hazards.

"The enactment of a National Land Use Act is long overdue as efforts to pass this significant legislation already span over three decades. This measure would put an end to illegal conversion of prime agricultural lands to other uses and protect our countrymen from the ill-effects of natural disasters," De Lima said.

"We must seriously address land use misgovernance and prevent destructive developments and exploitation of land areas to the point of endangering the lives and livelihoods of our countrymen, and undermining our efforts for food security and disaster risk mitigation. Hindi pwedeng magkakasalungat ang direksyon ng mga ahen-

Humigit kumulang 432K Halaga ng Iligal na Droga Nasabat, Dalawang Indibidwal Tiklo

Camp BGen Paciano Rizal - Arestado ang dalawang indibidwal sa magkahiwalay na buy-bust operation ng Sta. Cruz pulis.

Kinilala ni Laguna Police Provincial Director, PCOL JONAR R YUPIO, ang mga suspek na sina alyas Sam at alyas Ruel pawang mga residente ng Sta.Cruz, Laguna.

Sa ulat ng Sta. Cruz Municipal Police Station, sa pamumuno ni PLT-COL ALEXANDER S ALVAREZ, OIC, nagkasa ang kanilang mga operatiba ng magkahiway na drug buy-bust operation. Arestado si alyas Ruel dakong 10:30 ng gabi kahapon Hulyo 9, 2025 sa Brgy. Pagsawitan, Santa Cruz, Laguna matapos magbenta ng ng hinihinalang shabu sa pulis na nagpanggap bilang poseur buyer kapalit ang buy-bust money.

Matapos maaresto nakumpiska sa suspek ang limang (5) pirasong heat-sealed transparent plastic sachet na naglalaman ng hinihinalang

shabu na may bigat na humigit kumulang 20.60 gramo na may standard drug price na aabot sa PhP140,080.00; isang (1) piraso ng one thousand peso bill na ginamit bilang buy-bust money at isang (1) pirasong coin purse.

Sa hiwalay na operasyon ng nasabing istasyon timbog din si alyas Sam bandang 3:30 ng umaga Hulyo 10, 2025 sa Brgy. Sto Angel Central, Sta Cruz, Laguna. Nasasam ng mga awtoridad sa suspek ang apat (4) piraso ng small heat sealed transparent plastic sachets na naglalaman ng hinihinalang Shabu na may bigat na humigit kumulang 43 gramo na may standard drug price na aabot sa PhP 292, 400.00; isang (1) pirasong one thousand peso bill ginamit bilang buy-bust money, isang (1) pirasong coin purse at isang (1) unit ng cellular phone.

Sama n t a l a , kasalukuyang nasa kustodiya ng Sta. Cruz MPS ang mga arestadong suspek habang inihahanda



ang kaukulang dokumento para sa pagsasampa ng kaso laban sa mga ito na paglabag sa Republic Act 9165 o ang Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

"Magsilbi sanang babala ito sa mga kababayan natin na patuloy na tumatangkilik sa pagbebenta at pag gamit ng

ipinagbabawal na droga, ang Laguna PNP po ay aktibo katuwang ang komunidad sa pagsugpo ng iligal na droga sa ating lalawigan. Hindi namin hahayaan na wasakin at siraan ng bawal na gamot ang buhay ng bawat isa lalo na ang ating kabataan". Pahayag ni PCOL YUPIO. (LPIO)

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CWD...

FROM PAGE 1

Calamba City, Laguna — July 24-25, 2025 — In response to the severe flooding brought about by Typhoon Emong, the Calamba Water District (CWD), headed by General Manager Exequiel "Jhun" Aguilar Jr., conducted a two-day relief

operation to deliver clean and safe drinking water to flood victims housed in various evacuation centers.

From July 24 to 25, CWD deployed water rationing trucks to distribute potable water—processed through UV-Hydro



Optic Disinfection—to the most affected areas, including Brgy. Pansol, Brgy. 2, 4, and 6, San Juan, Parian, Palingon, and Prinza.

The initiative was a vital step in preventing waterborne diseases and ensuring the health and well-being of evacuees during the ongoing ef-

fects of Typhoon Emong. CWD's quick action exemplifies its commitment to public service, especially during times of crisis.

Local residents and barangay officials extended their appreciation to CWD for its timely and life-sustaining support. (Edjun Mariposque)



SHFC ENHANCES COMMUNITY MORTGAGE PROGRAM FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

The Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC) is relaunching its Community Mortgage Program (CMP) with significant enhancements to better serve low-income families and informal settler communities.

In a Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon interview on Monday, SHFC President and Chief Executive Officer Federico Laxa said the enhanced CMP will not only finance land acquisition for organized communities

but will now also provide additional loans for community development and site upgrading.

"Magiging transformative tayo, hindi tayo titigil doon sa acquisition lang ng lupa; kung hindi puwede tayong magbigay ng additional loan dito sa ating mga kababayan para mapaayos nila iyong kanilang lupa at saka iyong komunidad nila (This time, we are making the program transformative;

cont. on page 3

PDEA Agent Killed in Calamba Drug Sting; Massive Manhunt Underway

Calamba City, Laguna — The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) is mourning the loss of one of its brave operatives, Intelligence Officer I Raffy Escobido, who died in the line of duty following a shootout during a buy-bust operation on July 20, 2025.

Escobido, 31, was a member of the Regional Special Enforcement Team 2 under PDEA Regional Office IV-A. He joined the agency as part of the Drug Enforcement Officers' Basic Course (DEOBC) Class 2017-11 "Gandilan" of the PDEA Academy.

The fatal operation took place at around 9:15 PM in an open parking lot of a mall in Barangay Real, Calamba City. According to reports, PDEA operatives from Regional Office 4A and the Laguna Provincial Office conducted a buy-bust operation against a suspect known only by the alias

"Mark" and his cohorts.

PDEA agents posing as buyers confirmed the transaction and signaled for the arresting team to move in. However, the suspects, realizing the presence of authorities, opened fire on the agents. A gun battle ensued, during which Escobido sustained a critical gunshot wound to the head. The suspects escaped aboard their vehicle, prompting a full-scale manhunt.

Escobido was rushed to the nearest hospital and placed under intensive care but succumbed to his injuries on July 23, 2025, at 11:07 PM.

PDEA Director General Undersecretary Isagani R. Nerez expressed deep sorrow over the agent's passing. "We are deeply saddened by the untimely loss of one of our own. We extend our sincerest condolences to the bereaved family. May his soul rest

in eternal peace," Nerez said.

He added that all national and regional PDEA offices will fly their flags at half-mast as a sign of mourning and respect.

"PDEA will make sure that Escobido's death will not be in vain. We will remain unfaltering on the ideals he died for. This will

only heighten our resolve to pursue every member of the illegal drug industry. For those behind this dastardly act, we will not rest until you face the full force of the law," Nerez warned.

The suspects remain at large as authorities continue their hot pursuit operations. (Edjun Mariposque)



DSWD...

FROM PAGE 1

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna —Over 1.8 million Calabarzon residents have received financial aid from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) since 2024 under its Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS).

The program aligns with the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to ensure the swift and efficient delivery of aid, reaffirming the "Bawat Buhay Mahalaga" vision of Bagong Pilipinas.

According to DSWD Calabarzon, a total of 1,833,996 individuals have been provided with financial support since 2024 to help them cope with various economic shocks such as illness, hospitalization, or the

death of a family member. Of this number, 587,000 individuals were assisted in the first half of 2025.

"If there's death in the family or hospitalization, you can't prepare for it, so we are helping them get back on track and recover. With the assistance that we give, it will help them be productive, start anew, and provide again for their needs," said Regional Director Barry Chua of DSWD Calabarzon.

DSWD emphasized that the provision of financial assistance under the program is based on the assessment and interview conducted by social workers, as well as the status of the clients.

According to DSWD data in 2024, a total of 1,246,996 individuals

were assisted through the AICS program, with a total amount of P5.13 billion disbursed to cover medical, subsistence, burial, and educational needs.

To enhance the efficiency of aid delivery, DSWD partnered with the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Universal Storefront Services Corporation (USSC) to implement hybrid digital payments and streamlined disbursement methods.

"We started the implementation of hybrid digital payment of financial assistance in Batangas City last January 17, 2025, with 577 clients receiving a total of 1.8 million in medical or burial assistance. This is for efficient disbursement and minimizes security risks

for DSWD personnel by handling large amounts of cash during payouts," Chua explained.

Through guarantee letters (GLs), the AICS program now allows access to medical assistance via selected branches of the leading drugstore chain, Mercury Drug. These GLs ensure that the government covers the cost of products and services, including medicines, provided by partner service providers.

"In Calabarzon there are five participating Mercury Drug outlets accepting guarantee letters, including Bayanan in Bacoor City, P. Guevarra Sta. Cruz in Laguna, Kumintang Ilaya in Batangas City, Cathedral in Antipolo City, and Merchan in Lucena City".



DOE Reassures Public on Grid Stability Amid Storms as NGCP Confirms Normal Transmission Operations

The Social Security System (SSS) announced today that it will be issuing the revised Calamity Loan Program (CLP) guidelines aimed at helping members in areas declared under State of Calamity (SOC) due to various natural disasters, including Tropical Storm Crising which struck various parts of the Philippines with strong winds and rain showers.

Enhanced financial assistance – lower interest rate and renewal allowed after 6 months

“Following through on the announcement of His Excellency President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. last 1 May 2025 on the reduction of interest rates for salary and calamity loans, we proposed and obtained approval of the Social Security Commission, headed by our Chairperson Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto, to reduce interest rates for calamity loans to 7% per annum from the current rate of 10%. This follows the reduction of in-

terest rate for salary loans to 8% per annum from the previous 10% which was implemented last month,” SSS President and Chief Executive Officer Robert Joseph M. De Claro said. Such a reduced interest rate is for members with good credit records (i.e., for applicants without availment of penalty condonation for the past 5 years).

To further enhance financial assistance to members, the revised guidelines have been liberalized to allow calamity loan renewal after six (6) months provided that the existing CLP is not past due.

Streamlined activation process for immediate financial assistance/relief

“An important improvement in the revised guidelines is the streamlining of the activation process of the Calamity Loan Program (CLP) which will allow activation of the program within seven (7) working days from the calamity event date.

Previously, activation of the calamity loan program takes about one month,” De Claro said.

“SSS Branch Operations Sector and International Operations Group units will have a more active role in the activation process when they endorse State of Calamity declarations to the SSS Member Loans Department within two (2) calendar days from date of issuance,” De Claro added.

Features of the revised Calamity Loan Program (CLP) guidelines Loanable amount Equivalent to one (1) Monthly Salary Credit (MSC) computed based on the average of the last 12 MSCs rounded up to the nearest thousand or the amount applied for, whichever is lower and capped at P20,000.

Availment period Up to 30 calendar days to commence on the date of announcement of the availability of the CLP in a newspaper of wide circulation.

Eligibility require-

ments Members must have at least 36 monthly contributions – 6 of which must be posted within the last 12 months prior to the month of filing. For individually paying members, they must also have at least 6 posted contributions under their current membership type (self-employed, voluntary, or land-based OFW).

Member must be registered in the SSS website (My.SSS facility) for filing of online application.

Member must have no past due loan accounts and no outstanding restructured loan.

Member must have not been granted any final benefit.

Member must be of legal age and under 65 years of age at the time of application for loan.

Member must have not been disqualified due to fraud committed against the SSS.

Employer of employed member must be updated in payment of contributions & loan remit-

tances. Filing of loan application

A member may file / submit the calamity loan application online through the SSS website by accessing his / her My.SSS account or through the SSS Mobile App.

Release of loan proceeds

Loan proceeds shall be released through active UMID ATM card or active single account in any PESONet participating bank in the name of the member which must be enrolled in the Disbursement Account Enrollment Module (DAEM) of the member-borrower’s My.SSS account.

Repayment term and schedule of payment

The loan shall be payable within two (2) years in 24 equal monthly amortizations. The loan amortization shall start on second month following the month of approval of the loan.

Service fee Service fee of 1%

of loanable amount shall be charged and deducted from proceeds of the loan.

Penalty Loan amortization not remitted on due date shall bear a penalty of 1% per month computed and charged for every day of delay. If the loan remains unpaid after 24 months, 10% annual interest and 1% monthly penalty will apply until fully paid.

“With the issuance of the revised CLP guidelines, SSS will provide emergency financial relief to mitigate impact of natural disasters to members and help get them toward the path of recovery under liberalized terms and conditions,” De Claro said.

In 2024, the SSS disbursed nearly P10 billion in calamity loans to over 560,000 affected members. To further strengthen the CLP this year, the SSS is earmarking approximately P20 billion, underscoring its commitment to helping members recover financially from natural disasters.

In Calamba, “Hindi ka nag-iisa”, Mayor Ross Rizal’s Relentless Aid for Calambeños



CALAMBA CITY, LAGUNA — After enduring the wrath of three consecutive typhoons—Carina, Dindo, and Emong—Calamba has found unwavering leadership in Mayor Roseller

“Ross” H. Rizal. His tireless compassion shines as he continues to lead intensive relief efforts, long after the rains have stopped.

Over the past week, Mayor Rizal’s

team has brought aid to storm-battered barangays across the city, distributing hot meals, essential relief goods, Jollibee and Goldilocks products. The initiative reflects not just urgency, but sincere empathy



for Calambeños who were severely affected by the back-to-back weather disasters.

The relentless rainfall caused by the trio of typhoons led to flooding and disrupted daily life. Yet, Mayor Rizal’s resili-

ence has been a beacon for those in need. Locals say he’s been working virtually nonstop since the first downpour.

“Sama-sama nating nilalabanan ang hirap na dulot ng kalamidad — dahil sa Calamba, hindi ka

nag-iisa,” he reaffirmed.

His message of solidarity continues to echo through every relief pack handed out and every meal served—showing that in Calamba, leadership is fueled by heart, not just duty. (**Edjun Mari-poque**)



Pointer

Pau Dela Cruz

Recto Cuts Interest Rates, Speeds Up SSS Calamity Loans for Disaster Relief

To expedite the supply of relief, Recto authorizes a reduced interest rate and a quicker disbursement of SSS catastrophe loans.

In order to provide immediate financial assistance to Filipinos in areas designated as being in a State of Calamity, Finance Secretary and Social Security Commission (SSC) ex-officio Chair Ralph G. Recto has approved a reduced interest rate and a significantly accelerated activation process for the SSS Calamity Loan Program.

“Napakabuting balita nito para sa ating mga kababayang nangangailangan ng maagap na tulong pinansyal. Kung dati isang buwan bago mo makuhang loan, ngayon pitong araw na lang. Bukod pa dito, mas pinababa pa natin ang interest para hindi mabigat sa bulsa,” he said.

The action is in response to a directive issued by President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. in May of last year to lower interest rates and speed up the provision of government financial services to Filipinos affected by the disaster. Calamity loan interest rates were lowered from the current 10% annual rate to 7%. The SSS had lowered the annual inter-

est rate for salary loans from 10% to 8% last month.

In addition to this, the SSS reduced the activation period for its disaster loans from one month to just seven days, which is a major improvement. As long as they make their current Calamity Loan Program (CLP) payments on schedule, participants can also extend their calamity loans after six months. The calamity loan will be paid back in 24 equal monthly installments over the course of two years, starting the month after the loan was approved.

The loan revenues will be used to pay a service fee equal to 1% of the loanable amount. The loan proceeds will be disbursed using members’ active Unified Multi-Purpose ID (UMID) ATM cards or active single accounts at any participating PESONet bank in order to guarantee process efficiency and transparency. Good credit histories allow SSS members to take advantage of the lower interest rates.

After the program is announced in a widely read newspaper, interested candidates have 30 days to take advantage of it.

SHFC...

we’re going beyond just acquisition of land, we can provide additional loans to our fellowmen to develop their land and improve their community,” he said.

CMP is a key component of the expanded Pambansang Pabahay para sa Pilipino Program (4PH).

It is designed to assist organized homeowners’ associations or cooperatives whose members live on land they do not own.

Through SHFC financing, these communities can purchase the land and gradually pay affordable amortizations of just PHP500 to PHP600 monthly —amounts considered accessible even to families earning as little as PHP3,000 per month.

“This makes housing truly affordable for our poorest families,” Laxa

said. He also clarified that CMP is not for individuals but for communities that organized themselves into homeowners’ associations, as the program offers loans to the community.

These groups must register with the appropriate agency, like the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) or the Cooperative Development Authority if they are a cooperative.

To date, the DHSUD has approved 34 on-site CMP projects, which are expected to benefit more than 5,000 families. SHFC targets to start awarding these projects by October 2025.

In addition to CMP, SHFC is also implementing vertical hous-

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ing developments in various areas, including San Fernando, Tagoloan in Misamis Oriental, Davao City, and Palawan. Some beneficiaries have already occupied their units, while others are awaiting formal awarding.

Laxa also underscored SHFC’s involvement in resettlement projects in partnership with the Department of Transportation, specifically for families displaced by the South Railway Project.

According to SHFC, more than 10,000 families have already been housed under their programs, and the number is expected to increase rapidly with the rollout of the enhanced CMP and expanded 4PH initiatives. (PNA)

PUBLISHER CORNER

GAMBLING WITH FREEDOM: THE LEGAL PERILS AND POTENTIAL CRIMINAL CONSEQUENCES OF DELAYING IMPEACHMENT TRIALS, OBSTRUCTING CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES, AND PROTECTING PUBLIC OFFICIALS FROM ACCOUNTABILITY



Chiz Escudero is gambling with his freedom, and Tito Sotto is absolutely right to warn him. The law isn’t on Escudero’s side, and no amount of political maneuvering will protect him once the right Ombudsman takes over.

The 1987 Constitution is unambiguous: Article XI, Section 3(6) states, “When the House of Representatives has filed the Articles of Impeachment, the Senate shall proceed forthwith to trial.”

“Forthwith” has a clear legal meaning—immediately, without undue delay or discretion.

Escudero, as Senate President, controls the calendar. If the impeachment trial of Sara Duterte isn’t happening, it’s because Escudero is blocking it. And that’s not just a political decision—it’s potentially criminal.

Under Article 207 of the Revised Penal Code, any public officer who “maliciously refrains from instituting prosecution or proceeding according to law” faces prisión correccional (6 months to 6 years) and disqualification. Article 208 adds liability for “tolerating the commission of offenses or protecting offenders by inaction.”

By delaying Sara Duterte’s impeachment, Escudero effectively shields her from accountability—this is textbook tolerance of an offense.

The Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act (RA 3019, Section 3[e]) makes it worse. Giving “unwarranted benefits” or acting with “manifest partiality” or “evident bad faith” to protect another public official carries 6 to 15 years in prison and perpetual disqualification. RA 6713 (Code of Conduct) further requires public officials to act “promptly and expeditiously” on matters pending before them. Every day of Escudero’s delay violates these mandates.

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This is not theatrical. The Supreme Court in Daza v. Singson (G.R. No. 86344, Dec. 21, 1989) ruled that public officials who obstruct constitutional processes can be held criminally and administratively liable. Escudero cannot hide behind the “political question” defense—the Constitution’s command to “proceed forthwith” is absolute.

And here’s where it gets worse for Escudero: the Duterte-appointed Ombudsman, Samuel Martires, is stepping down this year. His replacement, almost certainly appointed by President Marcos Jr., will not carry the same political baggage and will have no reason to protect

Escudero.

Once Martires leaves, the new Ombudsman is expected to be far less tolerant of political stalling. Any citizen can file a case, and the Ombudsman is mandated under RA 6770 to investigate and prosecute neglect of duty.

If probable cause is found, it goes straight to the Sandiganbayan.

History has shown that cases like this don’t die quietly—Chief Justice Renato Corona and Ombudsman Mercedes Gutierrez were both removed because ordinary citizens filed complaints. Escudero is not immune.

So to summarize, Tito Sotto is correct—this isn’t a political warning, it’s a legal reality. Escudero is committing at least three crimes by stalling: neglect of duty (Art. 207), tolerance of offense (Art. 208), and graft (RA 3019).

With Martires stepping down, Escudero’s legal shield disappears. The next Ombudsman will have every reason to make an example out of him. “Forthwith” means now, not when it’s convenient. If Escudero keeps playing Duterte’s game, he may end up in a prison-cell like Rodrigo Duterte.



SMC EXPANDS URBAN FARMING PROJECT TO SIX SITES, TARGETS NATIONWIDE ROLLOUT



Support personnel who are members of SMC's Backyard Bukid program tend to day-to-day farming chores at the SMC Head Office Complex in Mandaluyong City.

San Miguel Corporation (SMC), through its San Miguel Foundation (SMF), has expanded its community farming initiative Backyard Bukid to six sites nationwide, with plans to establish at least three new locations annually as part of a broader push to improve food access and support livelihoods in low-income communities.

Originally launched in 2020 at the company's head office complex in Mandaluyong during the COVID-19 pandemic, the program began as a way to help utility,

maintenance, and security staff grow their own food and earn additional income.

The initial 750-square-meter farm has since evolved into a multi-site model combining organic farming, skills training, and community enterprise.

The project now covers a total of 3,300 square meters and involves over 120 active volunteers, composed of San Miguel workers, third-party personnel, and residents from surrounding barangays.

"We wanted to

provide more than just livelihood. We wanted to give our people a sense of purpose and ownership. That small patch of land gave us proof that the model could grow," SMC Chairman and CEO Ramon S. Ang said.

Participants undergo a three-month intensive training program provided by SEED Philippines, covering organic farming methods including composting, seedling production, natural pest control, and biopesticide formulation.

Since the program's inception, the farms have

produced over 3,000 kilograms of vegetables, which are sold at up to 50% below retail prices. Proceeds are managed by each farming group, with 80% distributed as cash benefits to members and 20% allocated for farm maintenance and reinvestment.

SMF aims to ex-

Volunteers may

expand the program further, targeting three new farm sites per year, particularly in areas near its facilities.

Backyard Bukid is part of SMC's broader corporate social responsibility initiatives, which also include river rehabilitation, livelihood support, and environmental conservation.



Crafted by Hand

Handcrafted shell accessories have long been a staple in Cebu's local craft industry. But to stand out in a competitive market, Bridgette Calledo took a different route by bringing her products outside the province.



Next to Bridgette Calledo are piles of handmade accessories, ready to be shipped to Bacolod.

Her strategy paid off as she now supplies around 25 retailers and wholesalers across nearby islands like Panay and Negros.

Bridgette has spent almost her entire life making accessories, a skill passed down by

her mother, who had the same business. Starting at a young age gave her an advantage in mastering her craft. As she grew older, she worked with her mother to sustain their family business.

But after getting married in her mid-20s, she started her own business with her husband, building on the knowledge and experience she had gained over the years. With the consistent product quality and a growing customer base, demand steadily increased. To meet rising orders, the couple eventually brought in more help. What began as a small business run by two people has now grown to include over 20 home-based workers. Together, they managed to produce around 1,000 shell accessories daily, a testament to their teamwork and dedication.

NGCP starts restoration of 'Emong'-affected transmission lines

MANILA – Restoration on transmission lines affected by Typhoon Emong (international name Co-May) in Northern Luzon has started, the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) said Friday.

In an advisory, the power transmission operator did not give specifics on what lines are being restored but said its crews are now inspecting and assessing the damage.

As of 1 p.m., the affected lines include the Labrador-Bolinao 69kV Line, which serves the Central Pangasinan Electric Cooperative (CENPELCO) and the Pangasinan 1 Electric Cooperative (PANELCO 1).

Also, the Bauang-San Fabian 69kV Line, the Bauang-Naguilian 69kV Line, the Bauang-San Fernando 115kV Line, and the Bacnotan-Bulala 69kV Line, all of which serve the La Union Electric Cooperative (LUELCO).

"Please note that loss of power may be caused by affected transmission facilities of NGCP or distribution facilities of local distribution utilities or electric cooperatives. Specific cities and munic-

ipalities affected by the power interruptions are determined by concerned Distribution Utilities, unless the outage affects the entire franchise area," the advisory said.

The weather bureau, in its 2 p.m. bulletin, said Emong weakened into a tropical storm and packs maximum sustained winds of 85 kph near the center and gustiness of up to 115 kph.

It was last located over Calayan, Cagayan. (PNA)



ULAT SA PAG-ANGAT

PARA SA ISANG PHILHEALTH NA MABILIS, PATAS, AT MAPAGKAKATWALAAN ISYU BLG. 2 (Marso 10 - Abril 9, 2025)

PINALAWIG NA BENEFISYO PARA SA MGA MIYEMBRO

Bagong benepisyo sa atake sa puso, kinilala at pinasalamatan!

"Dahil ang procedure para sa atake ng puso na angipalasy ay hindi mura, karanivan ay kailangang mag-shell out-of-pocket. Kawawa naman ang mga nahihirap na pasyente na hindi kayang i- afford ang procedure na ito. Dahil sa bagong polisiya ng PhilHealth na nalabas ang mga nahihirap na pasyente ay nabibigyan namin ng serbisyo ng Mayo... ang pasyente na nagkaron ng malubhang atake sa puso ngunit wala siyang pangastos. Dahil nalaman ko na ang The Medical City - Clark ay kahit private hospital ay naka-implement ang PhilHealth package para sa mga atake sa puso at sa galing iyon ay ginawa po namin agad-agad ang angipalasya na sakamit naman ay naging successful at nakarecover at nakaawi ng maayos."

Dr. Edgar Wilson Timbol
Interventional Cardiologist, The Medical City - Clark

97% ng kabuuang bill ang binayaran ng PhilHealth o P525,583 total na benepisyo

"Si Dr. Timbol ang nakapagsabi na may bala na ang puso ko at kailangang ma-opera. Dahil sa laki ng hinhiyang pera, wala po kaming kakayahang magbayad, maghanap ng ganong katanggap-tanggap na operasyon. Si Dr. Timbol na sapag ng PhilHealth ang pag-opera sa puso. Siya po ang nagisabi na kaya mag-opera na wala kaming babayaran. Sabra pang pagpapasalamat namin lalo na po kay Dr. Timbol at sa PhilHealth, Mariwala kayo o hindi, tatao po ang PhilHealth, wala po kaming binayaran. Ang bill po namin ay P4900,000 pero naitakop po ng PhilHealth kaya malaki ang pasasalamat namin talaga."

Ehren Lopez (patient) and Arlene Lopez
PhilHealth members

PINAGAAN AT PINABUTING PAG-PROSESO NG CLAIMS

Pagproseso sa denied claims, pinuri at sinuportahan ng malalaking hospital groups sa bansa

Ayala Healthcare Holdings, Inc. "This is a significant step in rebuilding trust and paves the way for more meaningful collaboration between PhilHealth and healthcare providers. We remain committed to do our part in improving efficiency of claims process as these ultimately benefit our Filipino patients."

Unihed-Paralique Hospital and Medical Center "We appreciate your commitment and support to the private hospital institutions. Together, we shall work harder to enhance access, ensure efficiency, and provide quality healthcare services across the country. We are honored to be part of this journey and look forward to a fruitful partnership."

Global Care Medical Center Group of Hospitals "We trust your vision and strategic initiatives for the Corporation shall move towards a sense of purpose and commitment among all your accredited hospitals. We look forward to taking part in contributing to the success of PhilHealth."

UHCWatch "This policy change is especially beneficial for indigent and financially struggling patients. [They] can now receive extended care without fear of additional out-of-pocket expenses. This is a victory for [UHC] where every Filipino can receive the medical care they need for as long as necessary, without financial hardship."

The Medical City "This is a crucial step towards enhancing efficiency and rebuilding trust within the national healthcare system. We are committed to collaborating with your office to ensure the efficient resolution of these claims and to contribute to the strengthening of our national healthcare system."

Metro Pacific Health "We greatly appreciate the quick action taken by PhilHealth to process denied claims. We look forward to collaborating more closely in improving healthcare access and affordability in the country."

St. Luke's Medical Center "This represents a significant step towards ensuring that patients receive uninterrupted access to healthcare services. We look forward to ongoing collaboration in strengthening the healthcare landscape for all Filipinos."

PINALAKAS NA PARTNERSHIPS PARA SA MAS ABOT-KAMAY NA SERBISYONG PANGKALUSUGAN

MARSO 3, 2025 Amal Pak-Pak Medical Center (APMC) Heart Institute nakipagkontrata para magbigay ng serbisyo Coronary Artery Bypass Graft (CABG) sa mga miyembro sa BARM.

MARSO 7, 2025 Pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga pharmaceutical groups para pababain ang gastos ng mga miyembro sa mga gamot.

MARSO 10, 2025 Ang Ciudad Medical Zamboanga (CMZ) na ang unang pasilidad na nag-otok ng Z-Benefit para sa kinatawan, Transportation sa Zamboanga Peninsula.

MARSO 17, 2025 Pagpapalig ng kasama ang mga HMOs para mapadali ang paggamit ng PhilHealth, patuloyin ang komunikasyon at bigyang prayoridad ang pagpaparehistro ng mga plan holders na hindi pa naka-enroll sa konsulta.

MARSO 18, 2025 Pagkilala ng Sangguniang Pankalawigan ng Sarangani sa mabilis na pagbayad para sa mga ospital sa Iloilo nilo na umabot hanggang P4470M.

MARSO 25, 2025 Ang Chinese General Hospital and Medical Center (CGHMC) ay naging accredited na Health Package Provider (HPP) para mas mabuting access ng mga miyembro ng benepisyo.

MARSO 27, 2025 Pakikipag-ugnayan sa Commission on Higher Education (CHED) para patawihin ang abot-kamay ng serbisyo pangkalusugan sa pamamagitan ng Konsulta Program para sa mga nahihirap na estudyante at kanilang pamilya sa mga State Universities and Colleges (SUCs).



SAMA-SAMANG PAG-ANGAT SA BAGONG PILIPINAS

BAYANI MULA SA AURORA, ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR: ALVIN JALASAN VELASCO, NURSE, AMBULANCE DRIVER AT LDRRMO RESPONDER, NASAWI HABANG NAGLILIGTAS SA GITNA NG BAHA SA SAN JOSE, NUEVA ECIIJA

Isang trahedyang punò ng kabayanihan ang gumimbal sa bayan ng San Jose, Nueva Ecija at Aurora, Zamboanga del Sur matapos masawi si Alvin Jalasan Velasco, isang nurse at aktibong miyembro ng Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (LDRRMO), habang nagsasagawa ng rescue operation sa Nueva Ecija.

Si Alvin, tubong Aurora, Zamboanga del Sur at nakapag-asawa ng taga-San Jose, Nueva Ecija, ay kilala bilang mat-

apang at mapagmalasakit na frontliner. Sa gitna ng matinding baha, isinagawa niya ang tungkulin ng walang pag-aalinlangan upang igtas ang mga residenteng nasa panganib. Ngunit sa isang iglap, may isa sa kanila ang nadala ng agos, napalayo. Walang pag-aalinlangang hinablot ito ng katabi ni Alvin, at si Alvin, mahigpit na humawak, tumulong.

Subalit tila isang dambuhalang kamay ang tubig—bigla itong lumakas, bumugso, at maging si Alvin ay nadala na rin

ng agos. Pilit siyang hinila pabalik, ngunit ang lakas ng baha ay masyadong malupit, at si Alvin ay napalayo... at tuluyang nawala sa ilalim ng tubig.

Ang kanyang buhay ay patunay ng tunay na diwa ng serbisyo: pagtulong nang walang kapalit, kahit pa ang kapalit ay sariling buhay.

Ngayon, hindi lamang siya inaalaalala bilang nurse o rescuer, kundi bilang isang bayani—anak ng Zamboanga del Sur, asawa at ama sa Nueva Ecija, na nag-alay ng buhay para sa kapwa.

DOE Reassures Public on Grid Stability Amid Storms as NGCP Confirms Normal Transmission Operations

Luzon, Philippines — As the country continues to face the effects of the southwest monsoon (habagat) following the recent passage of Tropical Storm Crising, the Department of Energy (DOE) is taking proactive steps to ensure the stability and reliability of the nation's power supply.

Energy Secretary Sharon Garin, accompanied by Undersecretary Wimpy Fuentebella, personally visited the Luzon Regional Control Center to receive a full briefing from the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) on the operational status of the country's transmission network.

They were welcomed by NGCP's System Operations Vice President Reynaldo Abadilla, who led the technical presentation alongside the System Operations (SO)

team. According to NGCP, all transmission facilities nationwide remain fully operational, with no major disruptions reported despite heavy rains and gusty winds triggered by the combined weather systems.

"The safety and stability of the transmission grid are top priorities, especially during extreme weather events," said Sec. Garin. "We appreciate NGCP's round-the-clock monitoring and preparedness in upholding energy security for Filipino households and industries."

While the system remains in normal condition, NGCP assured the DOE of continued surveillance and readiness should weather conditions escalate. Real-time data monitoring, preventive measures, and coordination with local power distributors are in place to im-

mediately respond to any grid-related concerns.

The DOE's visit is part of the government's intensified efforts to strengthen resilience in the energy sector, particularly in the face of climate change-induced weather disturbances. It also underscores the importance of strong public-private collaboration in securing critical infrastructure.

As rains persist in parts of Luzon and Visayas, both the DOE and NGCP have committed to transparency and real-time communication to keep stakeholders and the public informed.

Measures for women in state custody, PWDs, national land use for food security and disaster risk mitigation, total ban on online gambling, political dynasty.

DE LIMA FILES HER 3RD BATCH OF PRIORITY BILLS

Mamamayang Liberal (ML) Partylist Representative Leila M. de Lima has filed her 3rd batch of priority measures to ensure full respect for the rights of women in state custody, provide additional support for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), prohibit all forms of online gambling, institute a national land use policy for food security and disaster risk reduction, and put an end to political dynasties.

"This set of priority measures seeks to, once and for all, address long-standing issues and a growing menace in our country that adversely affect the lives and quality of service that our government provides for our countrymen," De Lima said.

Among De Lima's 3rd set of priority measures is House Bill (HB) No. 2127 or the "Women in State Custody Act" to protect female detainees from physical and sexual assault and other forms of

abuse and neglect in the course of their detention or imprisonment.

As a former Justice Secretary and women's rights and restorative justice champion, De Lima stressed the need to guarantee minimum standards of treatment for women detainees given their gender-specific needs, set mechanisms for proper redress of their complaints and make the heads of the prison institution accountable should they fail to act on these complaints.

A staunch social justice champion, De Lima also proposed HB 2128 or the "National Disability Support Allowance Act," which seeks to provide two thousand peso (P2,000) monthly disability support allowance to augment the basic income of households with PWDs and supplement the other services and programs provided by the government for them.

"The lived realities of PWDs that hinder the full enjoyment of their rights necessitate govern-

ment interventions. With this measure, we acknowledge the additional economic costs that PWDs and their families often incur to live independently and participate fully in society," said De Lima.

Moreover, the lady solon from Bicol filed HB 2129 or the "Anti-Online or E-Gambling Act" which seeks a total ban on online gambling in the country.

Responding to the argument that online gambling provides billions in government revenue, De Lima said "earnings from online gambling are worthless if they come at the cost of ruining Filipino families, mental health of many individuals, the future of our youth, and the moral fiber of our nation."

"It will also be difficult to regulate online gambling as Filipinos, especially the youth, have easy access to technology and digital applications catering to these games. As to the concern that cont. on page 2