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January 5-20, 2026

Monday-Thursday, 8:00 AM-7:00 PM



Approved! Kasama ang inyong Ate Lani sa nag-apruba ng bicameral conference committee report ukol sa House Bill 4058 o ang 2026 General Appropriations Bill. Ang panukala ay bunga ng inisyatibo ng inyong mga mambabatas tungo sa mas malinaw, maayos, at makatarungang pamamahala ng buwis ng bayan. Sama-sama, tulong-tulong tayo sa mas maunlad na Pilipinas!



FRONT PAGE NEWS

PUBLISHING

Vol. 4 No. 26 January 5-11, 2026 P10.00



Mas mapapadali na ang pag-aasikaso ng amilyar ngayong darating na tax season dahil dalawang service vehicles ang inilaan natin sa City Treasurer's Office, bilang bahagi ng one-stop services sa General Trias. Magagamit din ang mga sasakyang ito sa pagpapadala ng notices para sa mas epektibong tax collection at iba pang operasyon gaya ng calibration sa mga gasolinahan.



Mas naging makabuluhang po ang aking kaarawan dahil pinili nating ipagdiwang ito sa pamamagitan ng pagbabahagi sa mga Imuseño. Maraming salamat sa mga kawani na tumulong upang maisakatuparan ito, kasama ang Engineering Action Team, GSO Team, Logistics Team, Task Force Team, CENRO Team, at CIO Team. Maraming salamat din sa inyong patuloy na tiwala at suporta. Kayo po ang nagbibigay inspirasyon upang ipagpatuloy ko ang paglilingkod para sa bawat Imuseño.



FRONT PAGE NEWS

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Bacoor police launch new alert system to strengthen crime prevention



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

SSS enforcement drive boosts employer compliance in W.Visayas



ILLOILO CITY (PIA) — The Social Security System (SSS) has recorded improved employer compliance in Western Visayas, allowing workers easy access to their benefits, following a heightened implementation of its Run After Contribution Evaders (RACE) campaign.



BACOOR POLICE BOOSTS CRIME PREVENTION WITH NEW SOS ALERT SYSTEM

PhilHealth to disable old eClaims systems, version 3.0 mandatory by April 2026



NAVOTAS CITY (PIA) — The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) is requiring all accredited healthcare facilities (HFs) to migrate to the eClaims 3.0 system, with the mandatory shift taking effect on April 1, 2026.

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SSS...

Amiel Y. Genova, senior communications analyst of SSS Western Visayas, stated that regular inspections of business establishments have encouraged employers to fulfill their contribution obligations, enabling more employees to enjoy the benefits they are entitled to.

Speaking during the SSS Media Appreciation Day on December 12, Genova said the results of the enforcement drive have been encouraging.

He noted that many employers immediately comply once inspected, which directly benefits employees who can now file claims and avail themselves of SSS services.

SSS, he added, remains committed to continuing the RACE initiative. The agency will sustain its monitoring efforts to ensure that employers consistently fulfill their responsibilities to their workforce.

"We will continue as long as there are employers who need to be reminded of their compliance responsibilities to their employees," he added.

Records show that 12 RACE operations were conducted in Iloilo this year, while 60 inspections were carried out across Panay Island and Guimaras, reflecting the agency's intensified enforcement efforts in the region.

Beyond compliance monitoring, Genova emphasized that SSS is also prioritizing service accessibility through programs designed to reach members directly, particularly those in underserved areas.

One of these initiatives is the SSS e-Wheels program, which will continue next year.

The e-Wheels program deploys mobile service vehicles equipped to deliver a wide range of SSS transactions to communities, especially in remote locations and among informal sector workers.

Through these mobile units, members can register for SSS numbers, update personal information, apply for loans, generate payment reference numbers, enroll in the Disbursement Account Enrollment Module, and submit benefit claims without visiting an SSS branch.

Genova explained that the combination of strict enforcement through RACE and expanded outreach through mobile services has made a meaningful difference. While RACE ensures employers meet their legal obligations, programs like e-Wheels help members conveniently access SSS benefits and services, strengthening overall social protection for workers in the region. (AAL/JNH/PIA Iloilo)

SMC to waive toll fees on the eve of Christmas and New Year; expressways ready for holiday rush

MANILA – Organizers of the annual celebration of the feast of Jesus Nazareno set the blessing of replica images and banners (istandarte) on Jan. 3.

Priests who will be blessing the im-

ages and banners are situated at the Quezon Boulevard footbridge, near the Minor Basilica of Jesus Nazareno, according to a statement Friday.

Blessing will start at 1 p.m.

The church established three entry points for devotees:

Entrance 1: Rizal Avenue - Carriedo St. - Plaza Miranda, pass through Quezon Boulevard;

Entrance 2: Plaza Lacson - Carlos Palanca - Villalobos St. - Plaza Miranda, pass through Quezon Boulevard;

Entrance 3: Carlos Palanca - Quinta Market - Quezon Blvd. southbound under Quezon Bridge, pass through Quezon Boulevard

Participants must exit through P. Paterno, Gonzalo Puyat (Raon) and towards Recto Avenue.

Alex Irasga, technical adviser of the Quiapo Church, asked devotees who will have their images and banners blessed on Saturday to refrain from bringing these to the Traslacion on Jan. 9 "so as not to interfere with the celebration."

He added that there will be a special Mass for members of the media, national and local government agencies and volunteers on Jan. 7 at 6 p.m. at Quirino Grandstand.

"For the members of the media, Philippine National Police, Armed Forces of the Philippines, local government unit, Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Health and medical volunteers ... they will be given a chance to touch the image of Jesus Nazareno with their handkerchief or towels," he said.

AFP help in Traslacion
Meanwhile, Metro Manila-based units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) will help secure this year's Traslacion.

The DepEd is seeking to build 165,000 classrooms to tackle the significant existing shortage and support rising enrollment.

"This support is in line with the AFP's mandate to assist civil authorities in ensuring peace and order, public safety, and the safe and orderly conduct of this significant religious event," AFP spokesperson Col. Francel Margaret Padilla said in a message to reporters.

Padilla clarified that the police will be in charge of securing the event. The AFP's roles will include crowd management assistance, mobility, communications, and rapid response capabilities. (With a report from Priam F. Nepomuceno/PNA)



'Floating' fertilizer in Ilocos caused by misuse – DA

MANILA – Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian on Friday said the 2026 national budget will significantly accelerate classroom construction to address the persistent backlog in basic education facilities.

Under the enrolled 2026 budget measure, PHP85 billion is allotted for the construction and rehabilitation of classrooms.

Of this amount, PHP65.9 billion is allocated for the construction, replacement and completion of kindergarten to secondary school buildings, as well as technical-vocational laboratories.

"Hindi lamang tayo naglaan ng mas malaking pondo para sa pagpapatayo ng mga classrooms, tiniyak din nating mapapabilis ito sa pamamagitan ng akitibong pakikilahok ng iba't ibang sektor (We didn't just allocate more funds for classroom construction, we also ensured that it will be accelerated through the active participation of various sectors)," Gatchalian said.

The chair of the Senate Committee on Finance pointed out that the 2026 national budget will give the Department of Education (DepEd) flexibility when it comes to the modalities for classroom construction, including public-private partnership.

To allow simultaneous constructions nationwide, the DepEd may enter into a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Public Works and Highways, qualified local government units, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and even the Armed Forces of the Philippines Corp of Engineers.

The DepEd is seeking to build 165,000 classrooms to tackle the significant existing shortage and support rising enrollment.

The effort involves partnerships with LGUs, the private sector and the DPWH. (PNA)



NEW BUILDING. The ongoing construction of a two-story building of the Bukidnon National High School in Malaybalay City on Sept. 9, 2025. Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian on Friday (Jan. 2, 2026) said the 2026 national budget will significantly accelerate classroom construction to address the persistent backlog in basic education facilities. (Contributed photo)

Bacoor...

The initiative was formally introduced during a recent coordination meeting held at the Strike Multipurpose Hall in the Bacoor Government Center, Barangay Bayanan. P/Lt. Chief Alexie A. Desamito led the meeting attended by local officials, police officers, program developers, and representatives from major convenience store chains operating in the city.

Among those present were Provincial Board Member Hon. Alde Pagulayan, City Councilor Hon. Manolo "Noly" Galvez, P/Lt. Chief Basman A. Macarangal Jr., P/Maj. Kris Albin B. Gonzales, Project SOS programmer, Yvan Mercado, and various business stakeholders.

Participants reviewed crime data covering calendar years 2023 to 2025 and discussed ways to strengthen preventive measures in commercial establishments. These measures included the enforcement of window transaction and clear-face policies, the use of advanced CCTV systems, door-clamping mechanisms, and intercom integration to improve security and monitoring.

A highlight of the meeting was the demonstration of the OR-MS-ART, a rapid-response device capable of instantly sending alerts to law enforcement during robbery incidents. PLT Chief Macarangal suggested incorporating an acknowledgment feature to confirm that responding police units receive alerts in real time.

Local officials expressed strong support for the project. Board Member Pagulayan and Councilor Galvez both committed to backing the initiative and exploring the passage of a local ordinance to institutionalize its implementation throughout Bacoor.

P/Lt. Desamito thanked all stakeholders and the Bacoor local government unit for their cooperation, underscoring the city's continued commitment to public safety and ensuring the protection of convenience store employees and customers. (RBF/Bacoor Component City Police Station)



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Camiguin Water completes Cuña Bypass project to boost supply

MANILA – A survey commissioned by the think tank Stratbase indicated that Filipinos want government leaders to make food prices affordable, reduce corruption, and create more jobs in their communities.

Stratbase, in a statement Friday, said it commissioned Pulse Asia for this survey,

which was conducted from Dec. 12 to 15, 2025.

"The nationwide survey shows that 38 percent of respondents identified making food prices more affordable as the most urgent action government leaders should take," it said.

This was followed by reducing or eliminating corruption to improve service delivery (31 percent) and creating more jobs and livelihood opportunities (21 percent), making these the highest-ranked concerns across regions and socio-economic classes.

The survey indicated that Filipinos view economic hardship and corruption as closely linked issues.

While food prices emerged as the most pressing concern nationwide, corruption ranked alongside economic priorities, underscoring public awareness that governance failures directly affect service delivery, household expenses, and livelihood opportunities.

Meanwhile, Stratbase Group founder and chief executive officer Victor Andres Manhit said the findings show that corruption is widely understood as an economic issue rather than a purely moral one.

"Filipinos recognize that corruption has direct consequences on their daily lives. When public funds are misused, people feel it through higher prices, weaker public services, and fewer job opportunities," he said.

Manhit noted that the survey reflected expectations for parallel government action.

"The public is not presenting an either-or choice," he added.

Manhit also said that Filipinos expect government leaders to address urgent economic concerns while ensuring accountability through investigation, arrest, and prosecution of those involved in corruption.

The data also highlights increasing public scrutiny of governance performance, as Filipinos increasingly assess leadership based on tangible improvements in economic conditions alongside credible action to uphold accountability.

"The message from the survey is clear. People want concrete economic relief alongside credible action against corruption, because these issues are deeply interconnected in everyday life," Manhit said. (PNA)



PhilHealth...

PhilHealth is set to disable all earlier iterations of eClaims on March 31, 2026, making version 3.0 the exclusive platform for submitting healthcare claims. This aims to enable a more efficient, standardized, and digital-first submission process.

To ensure uninterrupted service and claim processing, all healthcare providers are encouraged to complete their migration to the eClaims version 3.0 ahead of the scheduled deadline.

Key changes to claims processing

In addition to the software upgrade, the system migration introduces enhanced digital standards for documentation. The full implementation of the eClaims 3.0 now enforces strict digital filing rules for financial records:

Mandatory electronic SOA: For all admissions starting April 2026, claims must include a Statement of Account (SOA) in electronic format.

No more scanned PDFs: PhilHealth warned that claims submitted with SOAs in scanned PDF format will be automatically Returned to Hospital (RTH). This aligns with PhilHealth Circular 2023-0026, which aims to standardize electronic data submission for All Case Rates (ACR) and other identified benefits.

eClaims, or the electronic claims submission system, allows PhilHealth-accredited healthcare institutions to submit claims for patients' reimbursements directly to the state insurer, streamlining the process from patient admission to payment while reducing the need for physical paperwork and speeding up turnaround times.

The move to eClaims 3.0 and electronic SOAs is part of PhilHealth's initiative to automate data validation, reduce manual errors, and expedite the reimbursement cycle for healthcare providers.

To avoid disruptions in claim reimbursements, PhilHealth advises all accredited facilities to coordinate with their service providers and the PhilHealth Regional Office – IT unit to schedule the system upgrade and receive technical guidance during the migration process.

For assistance or further clarification, healthcare providers may reach out to PhilHealth through the Corporate Action Center Hotline at (02) 8662-2588 or via email at actioncenter@philhealth.gov.ph. (JMP/PIA-NCR)

Raising Mayon Volcano's alert status to Level 3 unlikely for now

MANILA – Raising Mayon Volcano's alert status to Level 3 is unlikely for now, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said Friday.

"As of today, we are not seeing clear and sustained indicators to raise the alert to Level 3," Phivolcs Director Teresito Bacolcol told the Philippine News Agency.

Phivolcs recorded 43 rockfall events at Mayon Volcano from 12 a.m. Jan. 1 to 12 a.m. Jan. 2, slightly lower than the 47 events recorded from Dec. 31, 2025 to Jan. 1.

"If we observe an escalation of parameters, we may raise the alert level to 3. This will be assessed on a day-to-day basis," Bacolcol said.

Phivolcs raised Mayon's alert status from Level 1 (low-level unrest) to Level 2 (increasing/moderate level of unrest) on



Thursday due to a sharp increase in rockfall events and continued inflation of the volcano's edifice.

Bacolcol said the increased rockfalls were caused by the upward movement of hot material inside the volcano, which destabilizes the summit dome and older lava deposits.

Because of Mayon's steep slopes, these materials easily break off, resulting in rockfall events, the Phivolcs chief explained. Such activity indicates internal unrest and could lead to increased rockfalls and pyroclastic density currents. (PNA)


DSWD-10 honors top livelihood partners, personnel at Gawad Sulong 2025

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY (PIA) — The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Field Office 10 recognized outstanding partners, local government units (LGUs), and personnel during the Gawad Sulong: Pasundayag sa Kalampusan 2025.

This annual ceremony celebrates excellence in livelihood development and job placement across Northern Mindanao. Held at Pearlmont Hotel in Cagayan de Oro on December 11, the event highlights successful efforts to move vulnerable families toward self-reliance through the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP).

LGU San Fernando, Bukidnon, earned the Best Program Implementing Partner award. Vice Mayor Jeaser Mae Yeke accepted the plaque on behalf of Mayor Rogelio C. Yeke, marking the town's sustained support for SLP participants.

Individual success stories took center stage in the Gawad Ani category. Maribell R. Verano of Talakag, Bukidnon, won Best Microenterprise Development (Individual), while Masigasig Association SLPA of Cagayan de Oro City topped the group category.

For special projects, Alican B. Ali of Balo-i, Lanao del Norte, and Uswag Darbu Fishers SLPA of Lala, Lanao del Norte, secured top honors. Charelyn R. Bartiguin of Kalilangan, Bukidnon, received recognition for Best Employment Facilitation.

Provincial clusters also garnered awards for operational efficiency. Bukidnon Cluster Two bagged both Best Performing Provincial Cluster and Best in Capability Building, while Bukidnon Cluster One won for Excellence in Partnership.

Misamis Oriental Cluster Two was named Most Compliant in Liquidation.

The Sulong Kawani category highlighted internal staff excellence, naming Nice Ann F. Pacturan of Bukidnon Cluster Two as Best Implementing Project Development Officer. Richard R. Tener of Lanao del Norte Cluster Two earned Best Provincial Coordinator, while Gretchen J. Quiamanhang of the Regional Office received the Best Technical Staff award.

DSWD also presented the Gawad Duyog sa Panerbiso to personnel with over 10 years of service, citing their loyalty and long-term commitment to poverty reduction.

Assistant Regional Director for Operations Glofelia J. Uyan emphasized that the awards represent more than just individual trophies.

"Gawad Sulong is a celebration of the collective effort behind every successful livelihood project," Uyan said. She added that these achievements result from strong partnerships and participants striving for sustainability.

The SLP continues to provide poor families with access to resources, skills training, and jobs. Through Gawad Sulong, the agency aims to replicate best practices and strengthen community service across Northern Mindanao. (DSWD 10/PIA-10)


Holiday road crash injuries double amid increased travel, alcohol use

MANILA – The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) reported zero stranded passengers in all ports nationwide on the first day of 2026, signaling smooth sea travel operations during the New Year holiday.

In a radio interview over True FM on Thursday, PCG spokesperson Capt. Noemie Cayabyab said there were no reports of stranded travelers or shortages of passenger vessels in any port as of New Year's Day.

Cayabyab noted that PCG Commandant Adm. Ronnie Gil Gavan had earlier directed the deployment of available Coast Guard vessels to provide free transport in the event passengers were stranded due to vessel shortages or disruptions.

To ensure the safety and security of sea passengers, the PCG said it will continue implementing heightened port safety measures.

"We will strengthen our vessel safety inspection. Sisiguraduhin natin na walang makakasakay na excess passengers sa mga barko. Meron din tayong K9 working dogs sa baggage inspection (We will ensure that there will be no excess passengers on ships. We also have K9 working dogs for baggage inspection)," Cayabyab said.

According to the latest data from the PCG, there were a total of 12,992 outbound passengers and 15,515 inbound passengers across all ports nationwide from 12 midnight to 6 a.m. on Jan. 1.

On the other hand, there were 150,203 outbound passengers and 148,668 inbound passengers in all ports nationwide on Dec. 31, 2025. (PNA)



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BAN Toxics Appeals to PNP and Regulatory Agencies to Intensify Action Against Illegal Firecrackers and Prevent Injuries to People and Animals

Days before the New Year's Eve celebrations, environmental watchdog BAN Toxics appealed to the Philippine National Police and regulatory agencies to intensify enforcement against the manufacture, distribution, sale, and use of prohibited firecrackers to prevent physical injuries and harmful health exposures.

During recent market monitoring, the group found several illegal firecrackers being sold by ambulant vendors along M. De Santos Street in Divisoria, Manila, including Super Pla-pla, Five Star labeled as Three Star, and Piccolo. Super Pla-pla was discreetly offered for sale at PHP 450 per pack, Five Star at PHP 220 per pack, and Piccolo at PHP 280 per pack.

"The continued manufacture, sale, and use of illegal firecrackers are deeply alarming and frightening, especially when these end up in the hands of the public, particularly children. Firecrackers and pyrotechnics pose serious risks to health and to our environment," BAN Toxics Advocacy and Campaign Officer Thony Dizon explained.

"We urge the PNP and LGUs to intensify on-site monitoring and confiscate illegal firecrackers as New Year's Eve approaches," he added.

According to reports from the Department of Health, firework-related injuries (FWRI) have already reached 28 cases, most of which involved minors aged 19 and below. The majority of victims were injured while using Five Star, Triangle, and boga, or improvised cannons. In 2025, firework-related injuries rose to 843 cases, representing an increase of about 38 percent from the 610 cases recorded in 2024.

The use of firecrackers in the Philippines is regulated under Executive Order No. 28, which limits fireworks use to authorized community displays conducted under controlled conditions. The group reminded the public that dangerous and illegal firecrackers remain prohibited under Republic Act No. 7183. These include Watusi, Poppop, Pla-pla, Piccolo, Five Star, Giant Bawang, Giant Whistle Bomb, Atomic Bomb, large-size Judas Belt, Super Lolo, Goodbye Bading, Goodbye Philippines, Goodbye De Lima, Goodbye Napoles, Coke-in-a-Can, Bin Laden, Pillbox, Kabasi, Super Yolanda, Boga, Kwiton, Hello Columbia, Tuna, GPH Nuclear, Special, Goodbye Chis-mosa, King Kong, and Dart Bomb.

Furthermore, unlabeled locally made

Firecracker and Pyrotechnic Device (FCPD) products, other firecrackers sold under different brand names but of equivalent types, all imported finished products, and all overweight or oversized firecrackers containing more than 0.2 grams of explosive powder are likewise prohibited.

On December 12, BAN Toxics launched a nationwide campaign, "Iwas Paputok, Iwas Disgrasya, Iwas Polusyon," to raise awareness of the dangers of using firecrackers, protect children from toxic chemical exposure, promote safe and eco-friendly holiday practices, and help prevent or reduce FWRI.

Firecrackers release harmful pollutants, including PM2.5, PM10, nitrogen oxides, ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and heavy metals such as cadmium, lead, and chromium. Prolonged exposure to these pollutants can damage the respiratory and nervous systems and increase the risk of cardiovascular and other serious health problems.

To prevent injuries, especially among children, the group urges the public to avoid spending money on firecrackers and fireworks. Instead, they promote safer alternatives, such as shakers made from old plastic containers, tambourines fashioned from used bottle caps, pots and lids, and maracas created from recycled cans, for a healthier and more environmentally friendly New Year's celebration.

"We also remind the public of the hazards and harmful effects of firecrackers and fireworks on humans and animals," Dizon added.

Firecrackers can cause significant distress to animal companions, particularly dogs, cats, and other domestic and stray animals. The sudden, jarring noises can be deeply upsetting. Studies show that up to 50 percent of dogs exhibit fear of firecrackers and fireworks. Because animals have more sensitive hearing than humans, high-intensity noises affect them more severely, often inducing fear and anxiety. Repeated exposure to such abrupt and unpredictable sounds can lead to phobias and heightened panic in many animals.

Nartatez warned that drunk driving, overspeeding, and other traffic violations that compromise the safety of all road users will not be tolerated and will be punished in accordance with the law.

Police forces across the country, he said, continue to intensify their monitoring and enforcement operations nationwide. (PNA)



Motorists urged to follow road safety rules amid New Year travel surge

MANILA – The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Tuesday called on motorists and travelers to strictly follow road regulations to ensure public safety, especially with the influx of travelers for the New Year celebration.

In a statement, PNP acting chief Lt. Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez, Jr., emphasized that strict adherence to traffic rules is crucial to prevent road crashes, which have increased in recent days amid the holiday rush.

"We are coordinating with concerned government agencies for road safety intervention as we monitor an increase in road crashes in the past few days," said Nartatez.

"At the same time, we appeal to the motorists to strictly observe road safety measures that include checking your own vehicles and adhering to traffic rules and regulations. Sama-sama nating salubungin ang Bagong Taon na maayos ang kalagayan kasama ang ating pamilya (Let's welcome the New Year together in good health with our families)."

On Dec. 29, a bus crashed along the Marilao Highway in Infanta, Quezon, killing a man and injuring 28 others. Earlier, at least five people died in a road crash in Camarines Sur involving a passenger bus.

Among the interventions being done by the government are roadworthiness inspections of passenger buses at the terminal and checking on the mental and physical readiness of bus drivers.

Nartatez warned that drunk driving, overspeeding, and other traffic violations that compromise the safety of all road users will not be tolerated and will be punished in accordance with the law.

Police forces across the country, he said, continue to intensify their monitoring and enforcement operations nationwide. (PNA)



PBBM backing pushes TESDA's success and key reforms in 2025

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) capped 2025 with major policy reforms, international recognition, and expanded access to skills training, reaffirming its commitment to deliver quality training that leads to decent jobs.

With strong backing from President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., a consistent advocate of technical vocational education and training (TVET), TESDA strengthened the role of skills development as a pillar of the country's education and workforce agenda.

"Napatunayan na nating mabisa ang tech-voc. Kaya, unti-unti nang pinapasok sa senior high ang TVET ng TESDA. Diretso pagka-graduate, puwede na kaagad na maghanapbuhay kung gugustuhin, dahil para na rin siyang nakapag-aral sa TESDA at nakakuha ng NC II or NC III," the President said during his State-of-the-Nation Address in July.

The Philippines achieved historic success in global skills competitions in 2025. As the host of WorldSkills ASEAN Manila 2025, the country delivered its best performance to date, winning 30 medals. The Philippine team also earned four medals at WorldSkills Asia 2025 in Taiwan, underscoring the world-class competence of Filipino skilled workers.



TESDA likewise intensified alignment with international standards. Secretary Kiko Benitez represented the Philippines at the Education World Forum 2025, where he shared strategies on aligning TVET with evolving labor markets and digital transformation.

At the national level, TESDA strengthened collaboration with the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to ensure smoother transitions from edu-

cation to employment.

Key initiatives in 2025 included the integration of TechPro programs into basic education, free assessment for senior high school tech-voc graduates, and the creation of a Tripartite Council with CHED and the Professional Regulation Commission to harmonize standards across learning pathways.

TESDA also advanced lifelong learning through the expansion of micro-credentials, with 375 registered courses now offered by 190 training providers nationwide.

Major policy milestones included the rollout of the Early Childhood Care and Development Services NC III following the passage of the ECCD Law. The implementation of the Enterprise-Based Education and Training (EBET) was also strengthened after the signing of its Implementing Rules and Regulations, with latest data showing 240 enterprises implementing 410 EBET programs nationwide.

To support innovation and regional development, TESDA broke ground on Regional TVET Innovation Centers in Tuguegarao City, Tacloban City, and General Santos City.

Meanwhile, it can also be remembered that President Marcos visited TESDA headquarters on October 10, highlighting the administration's continued priority for skills development. The President toured the facilities of TESDA Regional Training Center – National Capital Region (RTC-NCR), and the National Training Center for Women (NTCW), both located within the TESDA Complex in Taguig City.

"These gains reflect the collective efforts of TESDAns, industry partners, and stakeholders nationwide. By working together and breaking silos, we are building a stronger, more inclusive skills ecosystem for Filipinos," TESDA Secretary Kiko Benitez said.

As TESDA moves into 2026, the agency aims to build on the momentum of 2025 to further expand access to quality, industry-aligned skills training.



PCSO allot P202-M for jackpot prizes of Ultra Lotto 6/58 draws

MANILA – The Department of Agriculture (DA) will focus on ensuring fair palay prices, expanding the PHP20-per-kilo rice program and fast-tracking farm-to-market roads (FMRs) construction as its top priorities in 2026.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said these measures are crucial to sustaining rice production, keeping food affordable and improving farmers' access to markets.

"The most urgent task is maintaining fair palay prices to keep rice farming profitable and secure our staple supply," Tiu Laurel said in a press release on Thursday.

To support farmers, the DA will continue the National Food Authority's procurement at PHP17 per kilo for wet palay and PHP21 per kilo for dry palay.

The agency has also coordinated with industry stakeholders to prevent import surges from driving farm-gate prices down.

In 2025, a rice import freeze capped imports at 3.5 million metric tons, down from 4.8 million tons in 2024.

Another major focus for 2026 is the full rollout of the PHP20-per kilo rice initiative under the "Benteng Bigas, Meron Na!" program, which aims to reach up to 15 million households, or about 60 million Filipinos.

Tiu Laurel said the expansion will require sufficient buffer stocks, efficient logistics and coordination with local governments.

The DA will also implement PHP33 billion in farm-to-market road projects, transferred from the Department of Public Works and Highways.

These roads aim to reduce post-harvest losses, lower transport costs, and improve market access, boosting rural development and farm incomes.

"Restarting these projects is a challenge, but we aim to complete them transparently, efficiently, and at high quality," Tiu Laurel said. (PNA)

