

# SMC among the highest-ranked Filipino firms in Forbes' World's Best Employers list

Conglomerate San Miguel Corporation (SMC) landed as among the top-ranked Filipino firms in American business magazine Forbes' annual list of the World's Best Employers, which includes 800 firms from some 57 countries.

SMC landed number 174 overall, and is one of just two firms based in the Philippines—along with fast-food giant Jollibee Foods—to make it within the top 200.

The survey, compiled for the past six years by Forbes, was conducted together with its partner, Statista.

According to Forbes, Statista surveyed some 150,000 full-time

and part-time workers from 57 countries working for multinationals and institutions, to determine which of these firms excel in key areas such as corporate impact and image, talent development, gender equality, and social responsibility.

"It's a major honor for us at San Miguel to be included in such a list, and to be ranked within the top 200 in the world, and one of the very best in the Philippines. We're also very proud to stand together with other Filipino companies who have emerged as among the best in the world in advancing the welfare of employees and workers," SMC President and Chief Executive Officer Ramon S. Ang said.

"For all the time I have been in SMC, and for most of its 132-year history, "malasakit" has been the core foundation of our corporate values. We look out for the welfare of our employees, partners, stakeholders, communities. On the part of our employees, the company's malasakit towards them also means they show malasakit for the company."

Ang added that apart from compensation and benefits, SMC also implements various programs to help employees hone their skills, maintain their health, advance in their careers, as well as pursue their passions. Assistance during times of need is also a hallmark of "the SMC way", Ang said.

Throughout the COVID-19 global pandemic, SMC not only extended extraordinary assistance to the country, but also to

its employees.

SMC was the first Filipino company to build a dedicated RT-PCR testing laboratory for its workforce at the start of the pandemic. It also guaranteed the full salaries and benefits of employees and workers in its nationwide network, through the most difficult and uncertain periods of the pandemic when most businesses lost income.

SMC also invested in putting in place additional health and safety protocols for employees, to ensure the continued delivery of essential goods and services to the public.

For its support workers, SMC launched several initiatives, including providing interest-free loans with easy payment schemes, so they can buy alternative modes of transportation such as bicycles

and motorcycles.

SMC also converted a part of its grounds at its head office complex for an urban farming project to augment the income and food supplies of repair and maintenance and security workers. The company partnered with the School for Experiential and Entrepreneurial Development (SEED) Philippines to train workers in urban farming.

Ultimately, SMC allotted P1 billion to procure COVID-19 vaccines and set up numerous vaccination centers nationwide, for its over 70,000 employees and extended workforce and their families, even as it also donated significant resources—including the expertise of over 100 healthcare practitioners it hired—to support the national vaccination effort.

Meanwhile, according to Forbes, the surveys conducted to determine the World's Best Employers, were all anonymous, in order to allow participants to share their opinions openly.

"Respondents were asked to rate their willingness to recommend their own employers to friends and family. They were also asked to evaluate other employers in their respective industries that stood out either positively or negatively. Participants were asked to rate the companies on aspects such as economic impact and image, talent development, gender equality and social responsibility," Forbes said in the opening statements of the list, published on www.forbes.com.

# Philhealth Implements One-Time Interest Waiver to Help Employers and Members Settle Contributions

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# LTO reiterates call to avoid engaging with fixers

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## DTI CAVITE'S CAVITIENDA LIGHTS UP ACIENDA WEST PLAZA THIS VALENTINE SEASON



The DA-ATI CALABARZON, led by Dr. Rolando V. Maningas, RAg, together with the Management Committee, paid a courtesy call at the DA-ATI Central Office as part of continuous coordination and institutional collaboration. The visit served as a platform to strengthen partnerships, align priorities, and foster a unified direction in the implementation of agricultural extension programs.

During the meeting, Dr. Maningas presented the proposed plans, key strategies, and priority programs of DA-ATI CALABARZON for 2026. These initiatives focus on enhancing capacity-building efforts, improving service delivery, and strengthening support for farmers, fisherfolk, and other stakeholders in the region. The discussion highlighted the shared commitment of both offices to advancing sustainable and inclusive agricultural development.

## Expanding digital solutions: LANDBANK enables fully digital loan processing for SSS members



LANDBANK and the Social Security System (SSS) have strengthened their long-standing partnership with the introduction of the SSS Loan Lite Program, a micro-loan facility powered by LANDBANK's fully digital platform.

LANDBANK President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz and SSS President and CEO Robert Joseph Montes de Claro formalized the initiative during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 11 December 2025 at the SSS *story on page 2*

## Cayetano-led Minority Bloc presses full transparency on 2026 budget amendments



## PGC conducts Medical and Dental Mission in Kawit

## CARD Bank opens 2nd Islamic banking branch in Marawi City



CARD MRI Founder and CARD Bank Chairman Dr. Jaime Aristotle B. Alip, BSP Senior Assistant Governor Atty. Arifa Ala, Bangsamoro Board of Investment Chairman Mohamad Omar Pasigan, CARD MRI Managing Director Aristeo Dequito, CARD MRI President and CEO Marivic M. Austria, CARD MRI advisers, executives, staff, and clients, graced the opening of the new Islamic banking branch along Narciso Ramos Highway, Biaba Damag, Marawi City. The branch aims to provide Shari'ah-compliant services to promote financial inclusion among Muslim communities in the region.

CARD Bank officially opened its second Islamic banking branch in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, on November 24, *story on page 2*

# Year-ender Message: Face 2026 with Readiness & Resolve

Profriends ended the year with a meaningful gathering of valued stakeholders in separate occasions – for its sales networks, contractors, outsourced personnel, and employees – as President Kathleen Choa shared a message of gratitude, partnership, and renewed commitment to the families we serve. "What we have achieved this year is because of your passion and belief in our mission," she shared.

She highlighted how Profriends communities in Cavite and Iloilo continue to grow alongside the surrounding townships. In Cavite, particularly in General Trias and in Tanza, and in Pavia, Iloilo, expanding opportunities for work, business, and recreation are helping families enjoy more complete and convenient lifestyles. This year also marked the warm welcome of more kapitbahays into our communities.

Ms. Choa shared that Profriends is strengthening its reach in interna-

tional markets, especially among OFWs. Many of our homeowners come from OFW families who trust Profriends to provide safe and nurturing homes for their loved ones while they work abroad.

Looking ahead, she acknowledged that 2026 may bring challenges, but emphasized that Profriends remains focused on serving families and helping protect and grow the value of their hard-earned investments.

The annual appreciation for sales networks honored the top performing partners, most of whom have been with Profriends for most of its 26 years and celebrated stories of lives changed, with many now homeowners themselves. Messages of gratitude were also given to contractors and outsourced personnel for the hard-work and dedication they have put in. For the employees, a rundown of accomplishments were mentioned, apt for the projects running up in 2026.

Ms. Choa's mes-



sages ended with a renewed commitment to move forward together, with readiness, resolve, and a shared purpose to foster collaborative relationships that truly make a difference. "With this, I invite everyone: let us face the challenges ahead with confidence, unity, and a renewed commitment to building communities that endure," ended Ms. Choa.

Since its inception in 1999, Profriends has delivered more than 64,000 homes in Cavite and Iloilo to uplift the lives of the families it serves. Its on-going projects include Lancaster New City, Micara Estates – Tanza, Westwind at Lancaster New City, Minami Residences, Parc Regency Residences, Monticello Villas, and Monticello Intimo.



From Page 1

EDITORIAL: Moral rightness

RANK or prominence must, under whatever circumstance, be entitled to the same standards of justice expected of any citizen.

After all, justice means fairness, impartiality, and moral rightness, ensuring people are treated equitably by law and society, often involving fair consequences for actions, upholding rights, and restoring balance, though interpretations vary from legal systems to philosophical ideals of "rendering to each their due."

Depending on context, but justice centers on equitable treatment and rightness, whether through legal processes or moral conduct.

Equitable treatment means treating people fairly according to their individual needs and circumstances to ensure a just outcome, different from equal treatment, which means treating everyone exactly the same, regardless of their individual situation.

Rightness refers to the moral quality of an action, decision, or system, characterized by adherence to established ethical principles and moral integrity, fairness, and justice

Dragging names through the mud without proof does not strengthen accountability; it weakens institutions and cheapens public debate.

We underline that dragging names to crimes without proof does not strengthen accountability; instead, it undermines the justice system, violates basic rights, and can lead to false accusations.

Accountability in a legal and ethical sense relies on due process, evidence, and the rule of law.

A cornerstone of justice systems worldwide is the Constitutional presumption of innocence, meaning any person accused of a crime is considered innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Accusations without evidence preempt this process.

True accountability ensures that if an individual is found guilty, it is based on the strength of the evidence presented by the prosecution. Bypassing this process weakens the legitimacy of the outcome.

In essence, accountability is achieved through transparent, evidence-based legal processes, not through public shaming or accusations made without sufficient proof.

Expanding...

From Page 1

Main Office in Quezon City, alongside former LANDBANK Executive Vice President Leila C. Martin and SSS Executive Vice President Elvira Alcantara-Resare.

"This relationship has deepened and intensified through the years, and that is really because, from LANDBANK and SSS' move towards expanding our mandate, we are very much aligned. This new product clearly is something that is going to be a game changer, even for us. And what we are really hoping to bring to the table, will be all our digital solutions, to make loans and credit facilities available in a more accessible, efficient way," said LAND-

BANK President Ortiz.

Under the agreement, LANDBANK will provide the digital infrastructure designed for speed, convenience, and security, which enables SSS members to apply for loans anytime and anywhere through the LANDBANK Mobile Banking App. The platform features automated eligibility checks, streamlined loan processing, and fast crediting of loan proceeds to the their LANDBANK account—even beyond banking hours. This provides easy access to short-term financial assistance and reinforces both institutions' commitment to digital innovation and financial inclusion.

PhilHealth...

PhilHealth welcomes the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to implement a one-time waiver program for incurred interests from missed premium payments. This is a concrete measure to help employers, self-employed individuals, and other covered members settle long-standing contribution obligations and restore good standing with the National Health Insurance Program.

The waiver policy underscores the administration's commitment to fairness, economic recovery, and sustained access to healthcare by addressing the accumulated burden of interest arising from missed premium payments.

To provide clarity, the one-time waiver applies strictly to interest charges, and does not cover unpaid premium contributions. The policy is designed to assist employers and self-employed individuals whose arrears have ballooned primarily because of compounded interest, while ensuring continuous delivery of benefits of employees and members of PhilHealth.

To further ease the financial burden on covered entities, PhilHealth is providing a one-year settlement window

from the effectivity of the Circular, during which outstanding premium contributions may be paid. Employers who settle earlier within the prescribed period may qualify for greater reductions in interest, including partial or full waiver, depending on the length of the payment term.

For the employed sector, the guidelines for availing waiver will be published soon. Meanwhile, the detailed implementing mechanics for the self-employed sector are being finalized and will be issued separately to ensure proper guidance and orderly implementation.

As part of the program safeguards, employers availing of the one-time waiver are required to register their employees under the Yaman ng Kalusugan Program (YAKAP) and ensure completion of the First Patient Encounter (FPE), in line with PhilHealth policy. This requirement reinforces the intent of the waiver—not only to recover missed contributions, but also to connect workers and their families to accessible primary care services

PhilHealth encourages all eligible employers and members to take advantage of this limited, one-time opportunity, and advises the public to await official announcements for further details on

implementation timelines and payment arrangement options, particularly for the self-employed sector.

For accurate information and updates,

#MyPhilHealth #SagotKaNgPhilHealth

Aboitiz Foods completes the acquisition of Diasham Resources to expand Specialty Nutrition Business' Regional Reach

Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc.'s ("AEV") food group, Aboitiz Foods, through its subsidiary Gold Coin Management Holdings Pte. Ltd. ("GCMH"), announces the completion of the acquisition of Diasham Resources Pte. Ltd. ("Diasham"), a Singapore-based manufacturer and distributor of high-quality animal nutrition and health solutions.

Conditions have been completed for the full equity acquisition of Diasham, which significantly expands Aboitiz Foods' specialty nutrition portfolio and strengthens its manufacturing capabilities. The final consideration is subject to customary closing adjustments, including cash, debt-like items, and working capital.

With nearly five decades of expertise, Diasham is well-regarded for its high-quality solutions, including feed additives,

water-soluble products, injectables, and liquid products, serving a broad customer base across the Asia-Pacific region. It has established distribution networks in key markets—including Thailand, Indonesia, China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Bangladesh—bolstering Aboitiz Foods' regional footprint.

"This acquisition gives us a more complete range of products and solutions to offer our customers across the region," said Tristan Aboitiz, President and CEO of Aboitiz Foods. "Diasham has built a strong legacy and developed deep customer relationships over many decades; factors that mattered very much in our decision to engage in this transaction. We look forward to carrying on the legacy and to working with

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Cayetano...

From Page 1

The Senate Minority bloc led by Senator Alan Peter Cayetano on Tuesday demanded full transparency in the handling of amendments to the proposed 2026 national budget, warning that unclear authorship of major realignments undermines the integrity of the deliberations.

During the period of amendments for House Bill No. 4058 under Committee Report No. 18 or the General Appropriations Bill (GAB) for F.Y. 2026 on December 2, Cayetano questioned the appearance of several large adjustments in the committee report without the identities of individuals who proposed them.

"Either we believe in transparency or not. So if we're going to ask members now to propose their individual [amendments], maliit iyon... Hindi ba dapat malaman natin kung sino ang nag-propose ng mga ito at ang proseso ng pag-a-approve nito?" he said.

Senator Sherwin "Win" Gatchalian, the sponsor of the budget, explained that the committee

report itself represents the committee's amendments to the House version of the GAB, with any subsequent changes falling under individual amendments.

Cayetano pointed out that the chamber still needs clarity on who introduced the major adjustments contained in the committee report, noting that none of the matters raised over the Senate's 11 days of interpellations appeared in the amendments.

"If you're saying now na ito na rin y'ung amendments from the House, I want to point out that parang nabale-wala y'ung interpellation. Having said that, kung ito na y'ung sa House, in the spirit of transparency, I'd like to know who moved [for them]," he said.

Minority 'all the way' in pushing reforms

In a media interview the same day, the Minority Leader also raised the issue of unprogrammed funds, noting that despite earlier discussions that these funds should be avoided due to uncertainty in revenue

projections, the committee report still retained a significant amount.

"Since 2023 budget, ang problema natin ay y'ung unprogrammed funds. Pero dito sa version natin meron pa rin. Bakit hindi na lang tanggalin yun?" he said.

He cautioned against passing a budget without fully addressing these issues, saying it would complicate reforms and weaken public confidence.

"Given not only the stigma, the flood control, and also itong unprogrammed funds, kailangan himayin because this is another animal. Until we figure this out may magiging lamat pa rin itong budget na ito," he said.

Cayetano emphasized that the Minority Bloc is committed to supporting reforms that ensure accountability in the 2026 budget.

"We want to go all the way with the reforms...Anything that's reformative, anything na dapat ipagbawal, anything that can lead to resolve the present problems ng ating bansa, gusto ng Minority iyon," he said. PR

DMW cites comprehensive assistance to increased OFW deployment in Calabarzon

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — Strengthened government programs aimed at protecting and equipping Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) with in-demand skills helped improve deployment across Asia.

Citing 2024 data, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that Asian countries remain the top destination, hosting 74.5 percent of OFWs. In particular, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are leading the region, accounting for 21.9 percent and 12.4 percent of the workforce, respectively.

The PSA also noted that the CALABARZON region contributes the largest share of workers at 20.5 percent, followed by Central Luzon (11.3 percent), and Western Visayas (9.5 percent).

Meanwhile, the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) attributed this growth to improved enhanced programs for OFWs ranging from em-

ployment to welfare services.

Lawyer April Casabuena, Regional Director for DMW CALABARZON, underscored that the comprehensive support for OFWs and their families—including skills training, welfare, legal assistance, onsite and post-arrival support, and emergency response services for distressed OFWs—kept Filipinos highly competitive and in-demand to foreign employers.

"The strong presence of CALABARZON Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in key destination countries further highlights the region's role in supplying a skilled, adaptable, and competitive workforce that effectively responds to evolving international labor market demands, thereby reinforcing the Philippines' position in the global labor landscape."

Noting the migrant workers' significant contributions to the coun-

try's economy, the DMW ensured that its services go beyond skills training and assistance to distressed OFWs.

"The Department's proactive coordination with foreign posts, host-country institutions, and local government units has ensured timely intervention and effective case resolution, reinforcing trust in government-led migration governance," Casabuena said.

More than em-

CARD...

From Page 1

2025. The Marawi Islamic branch is designed to provide financial services accessible to all, in accordance with Shari'ah principles, and to address the needs of Muslim communities.

The opening of this branch follows the successful establishment of CARD Bank's first Islamic banking branch in Cotabato City on January 22, 2024, which paved the way for broader financial inclusion in areas with significant Muslim populations.

According to CARD MRI Founder and CARD Bank Chairman Dr. Jaime Aristotle B. Alip, "The opening of this branch is more than just the construction of a bank. It is proof that every corner of the country deserves services that meet the dreams and needs of its communities. In BARMM, we have witnessed the courage, faith, and hope of our Muslim brothers and sisters. It is only fitting that we bring services here that foster development

opportunities, Casabuena underscored that the DMW's programs include reintegration initiatives for OFWs looking to permanently settle in the Philippines after years of working abroad.

"Equally important are DMW's accomplishments in reintegration and livelihood development, which aim to transform overseas employment into a pathway for long-term socio-economic mobility."

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late LUISITO RICASATA VICTA, consisting of a parcel of land, known as Lot 2458-G-8, Psd-04-115037, being a portion of Lot 2458-G, Psd-04-012731, L.R.C. Rec. ) located at Brgy. Calibuyo, Mun. of Tanza, Province of Cavite, Island of Luzon with a total area of 100 square meters and embraced and covered by Transfer Certificate of Title No.989517 of the Register of Deeds of Cavite Province, has been the subject of an Extra-Judicial Settlement of Estate of the Deceased Luisito Ricasata Victa With Absolutes Sale, as per Doc.No.336; Page No.69; Book No. XXV and series of 2026 of Notary Public Jameswell M. Resus of Naic, Cavite.

Dateline Weekly Newspapers: January 19, 26 & February 02, 2025

rooted in their culture and beliefs."

Shari'ah-compliant services

The branch will strictly implement Shari'ah guidelines to ensure that every transaction aligns with religious principles. It offers various Wadiah deposit accounts for safe, transparent, and reliable savings, including Wadiah Basic Savings, Wadiah Regular Savings, and Wadiah ATM Savings.

To meet livelihood needs, the branch provides Shari'ah-compliant financing products, including Murabahah, Mudarabah, and Musharakah for Micro-Agri and Micro-Enterprise, as well as Murabahah 2 for Supplemental Commodity Financing. Ijarah is also offered for motorcycle and vehicle leasing. All products are designed to support clients' livelihoods without conflicting with their religious beliefs.

Underscoring the significance of this expansion, Bangsamoro Board of Investments Chairman (BBOI) Mohamad Omar Pasigan emphasized, "The opening of the second Shari'ah-compliant branch in BARMM is clear proof that there is space for services that truly respond to the needs of the Muslim community. It creates greater opportunities for families and entrepreneurs in the region."

Expanding financial inclusion in Muslim communities

CARD Bank's move into Islamic banking responds to the call of Muslim communities for financial services that reflect their faith. In BARMM, many families remain unbanked due to the lack of culturally and religiously aligned services.

Through Shari'ah-compliant banking, women, small entrepreneurs, and Muslim households gain equal access to safe, fair, and affordable financial services. It is a crucial step toward more resilient and sustainable livelihoods in the region.

To ensure the proper and sensitive implementation of Islamic banking, CARD Bank collaborated with Islamic finance and Shari'ah advisory experts. With their guidance, the services are reliable, compliant, and respectful of clients' culture and beliefs. This collaboration is part of the bank's long-term goal to provide community-centered services.

The Islamic Banking branch began operations with 1,307 clients, of whom 1,246 have financing. These clients were originally CARD, Inc. Paglamba clients, who later transitioned to Islamic banking.

According to CARD Bank President and CEO Marivic M. Austria, "This second Islamic banking branch proves that inclusive development is possible when services are brought closer to communities. By engaging with leaders and families in BARMM, we believe that every Filipino, regardless of religion or origin, has the right to progress. It is what we continue to advocate."

The branch's opening was highlighted by an opening prayer and ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by CARD MRI Founder and CARD Bank Chairman Dr. Jaime Aristotle B. Alip, BSP Senior Assistant Governor Atty. Arifa Ala, Bangsamoro Board of Investment Chairman Mohamad Omar Pasigan, CARD MRI Managing Director Aristeo Dequito, CARD Bank President and CEO Marivic M. Austria, consultants, institutional heads, staff, and clients.

The new branch is located along Narciso Ramos Highway, Biaba Damag, Marawi City. Aside from Islamic financing, CARD Bank continues to provide not only financial products in its conventional banking branches but also access to microinsurance, business development, marketing support, education, health programs, and other services for Filipino families.

For more information, visit CARD Bank's official website at cardbankph.com.

# MPT South Recommends: Summer Escapades in Tagaytay

The first thing that strikes one's mind on hearing the word "summer" is that of vacations. As exciting as it may sound, selecting the best summer holiday destinations can be a tedious task. Fret not, because Metro Pacific Tollways South (MPT South) has got you covered.

Road trip is a popular summer activity, and so MPT South invites travelers to "Biyaheng South" (travel to the South), explore hidden gems and treasures of the provinces of Cavite and Laguna that will surely give you that refreshing summer spirit, made even more accessible through its Cavite-Laguna expressway (CALAX).

Here are some suggested activities that you can enjoy down South, courtesy of MPT South:

### 1) Cafe-Hopping

Tagaytay has always been a perfect spot for cafes, thanks to its good weather and perfect scenic view of Taal Lake. Visit these fairly new instagrammable cafes in the city, sip on their delicious beverages, and relax with its overlooking view.

**HOW TO GET THERE: via CALAX, take the exit at Santa Rosa-Tagaytay Rd., turn right onto Tagaytay-Calamba Rd., drive straight until you reach Tagaytay, Cavite.**

### 2) Food trip

Your Tagaytay food trip will never be completed without a satisfying bowl of the most famous Bulalo (beef

shank soup). But have you also tried the 'rising star' dish in the city? The Sizzling Bulalo. This is one of the best sellers, aside from their lechon belly, of this new farm-to-table restaurant located near Tagaytay.

**HOW TO GET THERE: via CALAX, take the exit at Santa Rosa-Tagaytay Rd., turn right onto Tagaytay-Calamba Rd., drive straight until you reach Tagaytay, Cavite**

### 3) Staycation

To fully enjoy your much awaited trip, spend a night or two with your loved ones, family, or friends in this cozy city. Book a stay here in a breezy, quiet, and serene bed and breakfast located near Tagaytay that offers forest cabin rooms perfect for unwinding!

**HOW TO GET THERE: via CALAX : exit at the Laguna Blvd. Interchange, turn right onto South Blvd., turn right onto Cardiac Rd., drive straight onto Brgy. Tibig Rd., turn left then turn right onto Munting Ilog, turn left onto Iba Elementary School, turn right onto E Asuncion, turn left onto J Rizal then merge on Emilio Aguinaldo Hwy., turn left onto Daang Balite Rd. (Infront of Acienda Designer Outlet)**

"We invite travelers to make use of CALAX to reach summer destinations such as Tagaytay, so that they can save on time, and make the most of their summer experience. To add to making sure your road trip goes smoothly, we encourage travelers to have an RFID installed and make sure it has sufficient load, to avoid

queues at our cash lane", said MPT South Assistant Vice President for Communication and Stakeholder Management and Spokesperson, Ms. Arlette V. Capistrano.

The toll road company also assures 24/7 motorist assistance as seasonal travelers on its network is expected to increase during the period.

"Our social media page and hotline 1-35000 is available 24/7 for customer assistance. We also have emergency call boxes along CALAX that directly connects to our traffic control room, for emergency roadside assistance" added Capistrano.

MPT South holds the concession for the 18-kilometer Cavite-Laguna Expressway (CALAX); the 14-kilometer Manila-Cavite Toll Expressway (CAVITEX); and the CAVITEX C5 Link Segment. These are ongoing projects that will soon be interconnected and will shorten the travel time from Metro Manila to Cavite and Laguna by 45 minutes.

For more travel tips going to South, follow MPT South's tourism page @biyahengsouth on Facebook and TikTok!

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

For inquiries about this press release please email us at: corpcomm@mptsouth.com

## Over 13.7 million in Calabarzon registered under nat'l identification system

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — More than 13.7 million Filipinos in Calabarzon have registered under the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys), according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) Region IV-A. Based on the PSA's preliminary count as of December 15, 2025, Cavite recorded the highest number of registrants with 3,503,633, followed by Rizal with 2,938,672. Batangas and Laguna posted comparable figures at 2,729,112 and 2,722,663, respectively, while Quezon registered 1,931,698 individuals.

PSA Regional Director Charito Armonia said the number of registrants reflects strong public participation in the government's national identification program.

"We attribute the steady increase in registrations to the expanded availability of national ID services through fixed and mobile registration centers across Calabarzon," Armonia said.

Armonia also reaffirmed PSA's commitment to ensuring inclusive identification and improving service delivery by bringing National ID registration and related services closer to the public.

The National ID is widely recognized as a valid proof of identity and facilitates access to government services, social protection programs, and financial transactions.

On Dec. 22, the PSA conducted National ID services to bring essential government programs closer to communities. The initiative aimed to improve accessibility for elderly residents and katutubong 4Ps beneficiaries who often face mobility challenges and difficulty

traveling to distant registration centers.

"By deploying the National ID Registration Team directly to communities, PSA Quezon ensured a convenient, efficient, and responsive registration process tailored to the needs of katutubong 4Ps beneficiaries," Armonia added.

The PSA continues to encourage unregistered residents in the region to register at the nearest PSA offices, malls, and partner local government units.

Registered individuals are also reminded that updating or correcting demographic information in the National ID System is free of charge at select registration centers.

### Aboitiz ...

the talented team at Diasham to continue to enhance the ways in which we add value to our customers' businesses across the region."

This acquisition builds on Aboitiz Foods' successful expansion in Asia, following its initial international investment in Vietnam over a decade ago and the 2018 acquisition of GCMH, which now represents the company's largest operations outside the Philippines.

From Page 2

## DTI Cavite's Cavitienda 3.0 Lights Up Acienda West Plaza this Valentine Season

Silang, Cavite — The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Cavite, in partnership with Acienda Designer Outlet, is set to stage Cavitienda 3.0, a four-day market and lifestyle event showcasing Cavite's vibrant micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) from February 14 to 17, 2026 at the West Plaza, Acienda Designer Outlet in Silang, Cavite.

Designed as both a shopping destination and a cultural experience, Cavitienda 3.0 invites the public to celebrate love, creativity, and local entrepreneurship this Valentine season. Visitors can browse and purchase unique Cavite-made products, including handmade charms, artisan crafts, food items, and Valentine's gift ideas from participating local merchants.

Beyond shopping, the event offers a full-day lineup of engaging activities. Guests can enjoy live music performances, interact with the beloved Acienda Mascots, and witness a traditional Chinese & Lion Dance Exhibition that highlights cultural heritage. Attendees will also have the chance to meet Cavitienda's featured influencers and content creators during a special meet-and-greet session. As an added treat, the public is invited to join a FREE flower arrangement workshop, where participants can learn floral design tips just in time for Valentine's Day.

Visitors, couples, families, and shoppers are encouraged to drop by, support local businesses, and experience Cavite's best in one vibrant venue. **PR**



SM is proud to be the home of spaces built for the sole purposes of bringing the best out of every athlete.

SM Supermalls: Making spaces that max out the potential of ice athletes and build champions With the mission of revolutionizing sports engagement in the country, SM SLC ensures its Skating Rinks are the best spaces conducive for coaches and athletes to simulate their winning plays and routines.

Prior to the SEA Games, SM's Olympic-sized skating rinks served as the main training space for the country's representatives: The Ice Hockey teams found their home base at SM Skating Mall of Asia and the Speed Skating athletes maximized their plays at SM Skating Megamall.

"SM believes that effectively supporting our skating athletes is a

holistic effort to max out their talent, not just giving them a base to train. This means building up our local skaters starts earlier in their career, when they may have limited resources and highly depend on accessible spaces that can nurture their grit without wasting their passion," Silva said. "The other side of that coin is giving them opportunities for exposure to allow them to shine and build their confidence."

In this regard, SM Skating has hosted international tournaments for Figure Skating, Speed Skating, and Ice Hockey. This in turn, provided athletes more competitive avenues to gain experience, testing their plays and routines against skaters from different countries. Silva also noted that exposure

was a key contributor to strengthen support for ice sports such as in the case for Ice Hockey where international competitions like the SEA Games increased the growing popularity of the game in a nation not native to ice-based competitions. Beyond its celebration of the athlete's wins, SM also awarded supplementary ice time to the winners to further support their training and practice sessions.

"Our celebration today goes beyond acknowledging the wins of our athletes—people may sometimes forget that the fast moment of their winning plays and flawless routines took months, even years, to build and perfect. That meant tireless practice and gruel-

ing repetition, and SM is proud to be the home that provides them spaces built for the sole purpose of bringing the best out of every athlete—whether they are just starting out or have grown into competitive skaters," said Silva.

### SM Sports and Leisure Center

With the mission of revolutionizing fitness and sports engagement in the country, SM Sports and Leisure Center (SLC) is dedicated to max out the sports experiences of Filipinos—whether through fun bonding moments or high adrenaline competition. Its commitment is to building spaces Where Winning Begins, conducive for bringing out the best in every moment, play, and routine.

## The Magical Journey of Ribbons and Rhythm Continues at SM City Trece Martires



The magic continues at SM City Trece Martires as Ribbons and Rhythm comes alive in a vibrant musical spectacle filled with color, music, and heart. Featuring 35 characters—humans and mascots—bringing the story to life in a joyful celebration of harmony and imagination.

Now, the journey reaches its grand finale—join us for the final run at SM City Tanza on December 21, your last chance to witness this enchanting musical adventure. Let the magic move you one last time!

#SMRibbonsAndRhythm  
#SMGrandMagicalChristmasParade  
#ChristmasFestivitiesAtSM  
#EverythingsHereAtSM

### LTO...

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) – The Land Transportation Office (LTO) in Calabarzon has reiterated its appeal to the public to refrain from transacting with fixers, stressing that dealing with unauthorized individuals puts applicants at risk of fraud.

In an interview with the Philippine Information Agency CALABARZON, LTO CALABARZON Legal Officer Patrick Peter Pol De Quiros emphasized that all its frontline services, such as driver's license applications and renewals, vehicle registration, and other transactions, are processed only through official channels and personnel inside LTO offices.

"Fixers have no authority to transact on behalf of the LTO. Engaging with them exposes the public to possible scams, overcharging, and invalid documents," De Quiros said. Spearheaded by the Office of the Provincial Governor, the initiative highlighted the province's continued commitment to accessible, people-centered healthcare, made possible through the support of health personnel, barangay officials, and volunteers. — **R. Dones**

LTO then noted that the crackdown on fixers forms part of the agency's Seven Point Agenda, particularly its zero-tolerance stance on corruption to ensure clean, honest, and efficient public service.

"Number one in

the 7-point agenda is zero corruption and non-appearance, which is a strict ban on fixers and personal transactions. Its goal is to ensure that all systems go through the correct process and are free from irregularities," the legal officer stated.

The agency also continues to address the problem of fixers through intensified information and education campaigns aimed at informing the public about legitimate procedures and official transaction channels.

De Quiros then reminded the public that dealing with fixers may result in penalties, including the cancellation of licenses or registrations obtained through illegal means, aside from possible criminal liability.

This year, reforms will also be continuously implemented to simplify procedures, reduce processing time, and eliminate opportunities for corruption, including the use of online appointment systems, digitized records, randomized inspection within LTO offices, and publication of clear step-by-step guidelines posted in offices and official platforms.

## January 2026 transmission rates down due to lower ancillary rate

MANILA – Transmission rates for January 2026 have declined by around PHP1 per kilowatt hour (kWh) nationwide due to lower ancillary service (AS) cost, an official of the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) said Wednesday.

From the PHP8/kWh rate in December 2025, transmission rate for this month went down by less than PHP1/kWh or around 0.68 percent to PHP1.3455/kWh, NGCP Assistant Vice President and Regulatory Management head Julius Ryan Datingaling said in a briefing.

"Based on our coordination with IEMOP (Independent Market Operator of the Philippines), there is a decrease in AS prices due to the increase in the reserve offer," he said.

AS rate — the cost of services sourced from the AS Reserve Market and from providers

tapped by the NGCP — is at PHP0.5971/kWh for the month.

NGCP said the transmission wheeling rate, or the fee for delivering electricity through its grid, is at PHP0.6058/kWh.

In terms of rate per grid, the effective transmission rate for Luzon went down by PHP0.0204/kWh, Visayas by PHP0.0205/kWh, and Mindanao by PHP0.0283/kWh.

### Demand outlook

Meanwhile, NGCP Assistant Vice President and head of public relations department Cynthia Alabanza, during the same briefing, said demand during the "summer" remains pure projections.

She explained that their forecasts rely not only on the growth of demand and capacity but the loss of load expectations "or the probability of a plant going offline."

She said pow

er plants have scheduled shutdown for maintenance purposes but power outages will happen if there are unscheduled shutdown of power plants.

"There is no certainty when within the year that will happen because it will already depend on the operations of the plant," she said.

In terms of using renewable energy (RE) and their respective technologies, Alabanza

## Free healthcare services for Barangay San Juan residents

The Provincial Government of Cavite brought essential healthcare services to the community through a medical mission held on December 26, 2025, at Brgy. San Juan, Dasmariñas City, benefiting a total of 364 residents.

During the one-day activity, 356 patients received free medical consultations, while eight residents availed them-

selves of ECG examinations, reinforcing the importance of early detection and preventive care.

Spearheaded by the Office of the Provincial Governor, the initiative highlighted the province's continued commitment to accessible, people-centered healthcare, made possible through the support of health personnel, barangay officials, and volunteers. — **R. Dones**

## DOST Cavite recognized by National University-Dasmariñas for community development efforts



The National University (NU Dasmariñas) awarded a Certificate of Recognition to the Department of Science and Technology-Cavite (DOST-Cavite) for its valuable partnership in community development and extension initiatives. The recognition was presented during NU Dasmariñas' 4th Founding Anniversary celebration held at the university campus. DOST-Cavite was acknowledged as one of the institution's key government partners in advancing community-based programs and outreach efforts. The partnership between DOST-Cavite and NU Dasmariñas highlights a shared commitment to fostering innovation, technology transfer, and sustainable development for local communities. At DOST, we continuously serve the people through science, technology, and innovation by showcasing programs, products, and services that provide opportunities and benefits to every community in the country.

## Over 116,000 Calabarzon children benefit from DSWD supplementary feeding program

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has provided critical nutrition support to more than 116,000 children in the CALABARZON Region through its Supplementary Feeding Program (SFP), reinforcing government efforts to address malnutrition during early childhood.

In 2025, a total of 116,809 children enrolled in child development centers across 121 cities and municipalities benefited from the program, receiving ₱350.43 million worth of meals and nutrition interventions designed to improve and maintain healthy growth. Prior to implementation, around 9,000 children were identified as nutritionally at risk, including those classified as stunted, wasted, overweight, or obese.

As of December 31, 2025, 73,077 children have already completed the program's required 120-day feeding cycle, while the remaining beneficiaries are expected to finish within the first quar-

ter of 2026. Among the five provinces, Laguna recorded the highest number of beneficiaries with 28,599 children, followed closely by Cavite with 28,102. Batangas served 23,396 children, Rizal reached 18,817, and Quezon accounted for 17,895, underscoring the wide coverage of the SFP across the region.

Jennylyn Rapiso, a National Child Development Center (NCDC) Teacher in Victoria, Laguna, shared that feeding sessions typically consist of hot meals with rice and viand, complemented by nutritious snacks such as nutribun paired with milk. These meals are prepared to be age-appropriate and nutritionally balanced, supporting children's physical and cognitive development.

Beyond improving children's nutrition, the program has also positively influenced family practices at home. Liezel Estrada, a parent of a child-beneficiary from Barangay Longos, Kalayaan, Laguna, noted that her

child developed healthier eating habits, including a greater preference for vegetables. "Natutunan ko din dito kung paano gawing mas masustansya ang mga niluluto kong pagkain sa aming bahay," Estrada shared, adding that the knowledge she gained from the program helped improve the overall nutrition of her household.

Parents like Estrada actively supported the program by volunteering in food preparation throughout the feeding period. Through hands-on participation, they gained practical skills in proper food handling, meal planning, cooking, and basic nutrition, enabling them to sustain healthy practices beyond the program's duration.

In CALABARZON, the SFP was implemented through a fund transfer scheme to local government units (LGUs). Local social welfare and development offices oversaw the procurement of supplies, conduct of feeding sessions, monitoring of children's nutritional sta-

## LANDBANK offers ASENSO Bonds to support agricultural development, sustainability and inclusive growth

LANDBANK is set to raise at least ₱5 billion through a sustainability bond issuance to fund projects that promote environmental sustainability and strengthen community development across the country.

The bonds — officially referred to as Agriculture, Sustainability, Environment and Socio-economic Development (ASENSO) Bonds — form part of LANDBANK's broader sustainable finance strategy to mobilize funding for priority development sectors.

These Philippine Peso-denominated, fixed-rate ASEAN Sustainability Bonds, with tenors of 1.5 years and 3 years, will provide investors with a secure fixed-income investment while directly supporting initiatives with

measurable environmental and social benefits.

The ASENSO Bonds offering was first announced to Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) on January 12, 2026, and will be available to the public from January 28 to February 6, 2026 via the LANDBANK Mobile Banking App for a more convenient way to subscribe, with a minimum investment of ₱10,000 and in increments of ₱10,000. The bonds are expected to be listed on the Philippine Dealing & Exchange Corp. on February 16, 2026.

Interest on the ASENSO Bonds will be paid quarterly starting from the issue date and will be subject to final withholding tax. China Bank Capital Corporation (Chinabank Capital) is the Sole Issue Manager for the bond offering, with LANDBANK and Chinabank Capital acting as the Selling Agents.

Proceeds from the issuance will be allocated exclusively to eligible green projects, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, green buildings, clean transport, sustainable water management, and pollution prevention, as well as social projects such as food security, affordable housing, health, education, access to essential services, employment generation, and broader socioeconomic development.

"The ASENSO Bonds offer investors a unique opportunity to earn competitive, fixed returns while contributing to meaningful projects that benefit communities and the environment," said LANDBANK President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz.

"With rising demand for

sustainable investments, there is no better time to invest in initiatives that generate positive social and environmental impact while supporting long-term national growth."

The issuance is aligned with LANDBANK's Sustainable Finance Framework, which integrates environmental, social, and governance principles into the Bank's operations in support of the Philippine Development Plan, the Philippine Sustainable Finance Roadmap, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has confirmed that the issuance complies with the requirements under the ASEAN Sustainability Bond Standards and the SEC ASEAN Sustainability Bond Circular.

Recognized by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) as one of the first mover banks in promoting sustainable finance, LANDBANK continues to expand its portfolio of green, social, and sustainability-labeled financial instruments.

In 2020, LANDBANK launched its maiden sustainability bond issuance and successfully raised ₱5 billion. The offering drew overwhelming investor interest, with total bids reaching ₱16.6 billion — more than five times the initial target of ₱3 billion.

**For more information, interested investors can access the Offering Circular (OC) on the LANDBANK website at <https://www.landbank.com>.**

### ABOUT LANDBANK

LANDBANK is the largest development financial institution in the Philippines promoting financial inclusion, digital transformation, and sustainable national development. Present in all 82 provinces in the country, the Bank is committed to provide accessible and responsive financial solutions to empower Filipinos from countryside to countryside.



## No Learner Left Behind: Gatchalian Assures ALS, PWD Learners Backed in 2026 Budget

The 2026 General Appropriations Act (GAA) strengthens inclusive education by ensuring sustained funding for learners with disabilities and the Alternative Learning System (ALS), Senator Win Gatchalian assured.

Under the 2026 national budget, ₱4.917 billion is allotted under the Flexible Learning Options, which includes ₱897 million for ALS and ₱400.67 million for the Alternative Delivery Mode (ADM). The amount of ₱3.62 billion is allotted for learning resources for ALS and ADM.

Fifty-six million pesos under the Basic Education Facilities Program is set aside for the construction of ALS Community Learning Centers (CLCs). In selecting sites for ALS CLCs, priority will go to areas with limited access to formal education, communities with high numbers of out-of-school children and adults lacking basic literacy skills or have dropped out of school, or both.

The Special Needs Education Program, meanwhile, will receive ₱1.04 billion to better support learners with disabilities. The amount of ₱209 million is also allotted to establish Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) across the country or convert existing Special Education (SPED) centers, while ₱100 million is allocated for textbooks and other instructional materials for learners with disabilities.

"Sa 2026 budget, malinaw ang ating paninindigan sa inclusive education. Walang ALS learner o learner with disability ang maiiwan," said Gatchalian, chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance.

## PGC CONDUCTS MEDICAL AND DENTAL MISSION IN KAWIT

The Provincial Government of Cavite (PGC), through the collaborative efforts of the Office of the Provincial Governor and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, successfully conducted a medical and dental mission in Brgy. Magdalo, Poto, Kawit on January 6, 2026, delivering free healthcare services to a total of 425 residents.

The activity provided essential health interventions, with 350 residents receiving medical check-ups, 49 availing of dental extractions, and 26 underwent electrocardiogram (ECG) examinations. Free medicines were also distributed to

beneficiaries. Medical and dental professionals from OPHO shared their expertise, underscoring the importance of preventive care and the promotion of healthier communities.

The mission was made possible through the combined efforts of the provincial government, healthcare practitioners, and the barangay officials led by Brgy. Chairperson Francis V. Fernandez, ensuring the smooth and efficient delivery of services.

This health initiative reaffirms the Provincial Government of Cavite's commitment to uphold the law, protect the public, and sustain peace and order throughout the region. Additionally, the

## CALABARZON POLICE REAPS MAJOR OPERATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2025, COMMITS TO PEOPLE-CENTERED POLICING IN 2026

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — As a result of the intensified efforts in maintaining peace and order in the Calabarzon region, the Philippine National Police Regional Office IV-A records significant operational accomplishments in 2025.

Under the leadership of PRO IV-A Regional Director Police Brigadier General Paul Kenneth Lucas, the Calabarzon police conducted 8,770 operations in its anti-illegal drug campaign, leading to the arrest of 11,391 individuals.

During the said operations, the authorities confiscated 84,235.02 grams of shabu and 91,349.27 grams of marijuana, with a combined estimated value of ₱646,319,834.60, which led to a major blow of illegal drug networks operating in the region.

According to PBGen Lucas, these achievements reflect the hard work, discipline, and unity of Calabarzon police officers and personnel in carrying out the agency's mandate to maintain peace and security across the region.

"These achievements are a testament to the hard work, discipline, and unity of our personnel and our partners. Guided by the principle of Bagong PNP para sa Bagong Pilipinas: Serbisyong Mabilis, Tapat at Nararamdaman, PRO 4A will continue to deliver responsive, honest, and people-centered policing for the people of CALABARZON." PBGen Lucas said in an official press release.

He also highlighted the crucial support of partner government agencies and local communities, emphasizing that these successes are crucial in the police's commitment to uphold the law, protect the public, and sustain peace and order throughout the region. Additionally, the

Calabarzon police has successfully arrested 4,073 wanted individuals under its campaign against most wanted persons. This includes the arrest of 6 National Level; 1,006 Regional Level; and 1,433 Provincial Level Most Wanted Persons.

As part of its intensified campaign against illegal gambling, PRO IV-A conducted 9,686 operations across the region, resulting in 22,619 arrests and the confiscation of over ₱4 million in betting money.

Meanwhile, campaign against loose firearms in the region has yielded notable results, with 1,478 operations leading to the confiscation, surrender, and recovery of 2,708 firearms, helping reduce election-related and other gun-related incidents.

As the new year begun, PRO IV-A sets its sight in delivering responsive, honest, and people-centered policing, making law enforcement fair and effective to build trust and maintain community engagement to deter crimes. (CO/PIA-CALABARZON with reports from RPIO)

## City Government of Bacoor concludes the 2nd Day of ISO Management Review

The City Government of Bacoor, under the leadership of Mayor Strike B. Revilla, successfully concluded the 2nd Day of the ISO Management Review, led by the Human Resources Development and Management Department (HRDMD) headed by Ms. Natividad Ludwig Ople.

All city departments proudly remain ISO Certified, reflecting Bacoor's strong commitment to international standards, efficiency, and quality public service. During the review, department, unit, and assistant heads pre-

## DILG commits to support LGUs, strengthen disaster resilience programs under 2026 budget

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) CALABARZON has committed in supporting local government units (LGUs), strengthening disaster resilience initiatives, and prioritize community development as key programs following the approval of the ₱310.5-billion budget for the department under the 2026 General Appropriations Act (GAA).

In a statement released on January 9, DILG Calabarzon Regional Head Ariel Iglesia emphasized that a significant portion of the funding will be directed toward capacitating LGUs to deliver efficient, transparent, and responsive public services.

These include governance reforms, community-based development programs, disaster preparedness and response initiatives, and projects that improve basic service delivery at the grassroots level.

"The 2026 national budget gives us the capacity to further strengthen our priority programs that directly empower our local government units and bring es-

sential services closer to the people," Iglesia stated.

The DILG director adds that local programs and services aimed at improving the way of life of communities are among the urgent matters for the year.

"Through this allocation, LGUs will be better equipped to enhance disaster preparedness sustain peace and order initiatives, and implement development programs that respond to the actual needs of our communities."

Iglesia then noted that under the leadership of Interior and Local Government Secretary Jonvic Remulla, DILG will intensify the monitoring of fund utilization to ensure accountability, efficiency, and measurable results including close coordination with LGUs to guarantee that priority programs are implemented properly and contribute to long-term development goals.

"Under the leadership of Secretary Jonvic Remulla, we remain steadfast in monitoring the effective utilization of these funds to foster peace, order, and progress throughout the region. Together, we move forward with our collective pursuit of a safer and more prosperous Bagong Pilipinas for every citizen in CALABARZON," Iglesia said.

The 2026 General Appropriations Act serves as the national government's annual spending plan, outlining the allocation of public funds to sustain government operations, deliver essential services, and implement priority development programs nationwide.

For 2026, the DILG received the fourth highest allocation among national government agencies, after the Department of Education, Department of Public Works and Highways, and Department of Health. (AM