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# Modernizing PH's transit system: PBBM Inaugurates LRT-1 Cavite Extension Phase 1

By: PCO

MANILA — President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. fulfilled his promise to enhance the country's transportation system by inaugurating the Light Rail Transit Line 1 (LRT-1) Cavite Extension Project (LICE) Phase 1 on November 15, 2024.

which began operations on November 16, introduces five new stations namely: Redemptorist-ASEANA, Manila International Airport Road, Parañaque Integrated Terminal Exchange (PITX), Ninoy Aquino Avenue, and Dr. Santos (formerly Sucat).

The new line is the first railway project *Continued on page 3...*



President Ferdinand R. Marcos on Friday led the inauguration of the Light Rail Transit Line 1 (LRT-1) Cavite Extension Project (LICE) Phase 1, marking a significant milestone in modernizing the transport system in the Philippines. Photo courtesy of Presidential Communications Office.

## DSWD-Calabarzon disburses P5.13B in crisis aid in 2024

By Zen Trinidad

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna – The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Field Office 4-A (Calabarzon) has extended assistance totaling PHP5.13 billion to over 1.2 million clients under its Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) as of Dec. 9, 2024.

The amount of assistance granted to each client is based on the assessment conducted by a social worker, taking into account the individual's or family's specific crisis situation.

As the year concludes, the field office is engaged in the liquidation process for all financial transactions, including those under the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) program.

The program provided aid for medical, food, burial, and educational needs.

Joseph Arceo, the public information officer of DSWD-Calabarzon, said in a statement on Thursday that the CIP offers financial assistance and referrals to individuals and families in crisis who cannot meet their immediate needs.

*"This process is integral to the field office's financial accountability report and ensures transparency in all financial transactions,"* Arceo said.

*"This includes individuals affected by economic shocks due to hospitalization, illness, job loss, death, or disasters, among other circumstances,"* Arceo said.

The DSWD-Calabarzon's CIP continues to serve as a lifeline for vulnerable populations in the region, addressing urgent needs and supporting recovery during challenging times. (PNA)

## PBBM signs 2025 budget, vetoes P194-B projects

By: PCO

MANILA — After thorough review and scrutiny, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. signed the 2025 national budget on Monday, December 30, 2024.

to PhP6.352 trillion was reduced to PhP6.326 trillion following the veto of PhP194 billion worth of line items deemed inconsistent with the administration's priority programs.

The 2025 national budget, initially amounting

The signing, originally scheduled before Christmas,

## Mary Jane Veloso moved to regular dorm after quarantine: BuCor

By Wilnard Bacelonia

MANILA – Mary Jane Veloso has been transferred to a regular dormitory at the Reception and Diagnostic Center (RDC) of the Correctional Institution for Women (CIW) in

Mandaluyong City, the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) said Friday.

In a news release, BuCor Director General Gregorio Pio Catapang Jr. said Veloso's transfer was implemented after her five-

day quarantine period ended Thursday.

Veloso will remain at the RDC for the next 55 days, during which she will undergo mandatory orientation, diagnostics and

*Continued on page 3...*



WELCOME HOME. Mary Jane Veloso gives the audience a heart hand sign upon arriving at the Correctional Institution for Women in Mandaluyong City on Dec. 18, 2024. She was moved to a regular dormitory at the Reception and Diagnostic Center of the CIW on Thursday (Dec. 26) after ending a five-day quarantine period. (PNA photo by Avito Dalan)

was postponed to allow for an extensive review of the budget's provisions following calls of several sectors to scrutinize its particulars.

*"While the final version of the budget reflects many of our shared*

*priorities, some provisions required careful scrutiny. The Filipino people have spoken: every centavo must go to programs that truly uplift lives, strengthen communities, secure the future development of the Philippines,"* President

Marcos said.

*"We take our role as stewards of our taxpayers' money seriously. And for this reason, after an exhaustive and thorough review, we have directly vetoed over PhP194*

*Continued on page 3...*

## Comelec en banc affirms Quiboloy's Senate bid

By Ferdinand Patinio

MANILA – The Commission on Elections (Comelec) has denied the motion for reconsideration seeking to block the senatorial bid of detained Kingdom of Jesus Christ founder and alleged child abuser Apollo Quiboloy.

In a seven-page ruling made public on Friday, the Comelec en banc dismissed the motion for reconsideration filed by labor leader Sonny Matula, citing lack of merit.

The Comelec said no valid ground was raised in the motion that would compel the body to rule against the First Division.

*"We find no cogent reason to depart from the Assailed Resolution of the Commission (First Division). The arguments raised by Petitioner in his Motion were already thoroughly passed upon and incisively examined*

*by the Commission,"* the ruling added.

The en banc noted that the procedural and substantive issues raised by Matula had already been addressed by the First Division when it decided to allow the televangelist to run in the Senate.

*"At the outset, the combination of different remedies and prayers in a petition to declare as nuisance candidate or*

*disqualification or cancellation of a certificate ground is a ground for summary dismissal, and this is clearly and explicitly mandated by our rules,"* the decision said.

The poll body also emphasized that even if procedural flaws in the petition were overlooked, the substantive issues were exhaustively discussed and resolved by the First Division. (PNA)



Apollo Quiboloy (PNA file photo)

### Ph...

a joint vision for the future, underscoring the importance of collective responsibility in advancing an open, inclusive, resilient and prosperous region.

The Philippines and South Korea also issued a joint declaration, announcing the elevation of relations to a Strategic Partnership.

On Dec. 31, 2024, the free trade agreement between Manila and Seoul formally took effect, granting preferential duty-free entry on at least 11,164 Philippine products.

For the past 12 months, Manalo has also held over 100 bilateral meetings with his counterparts, including from Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Brazil, the Holy See, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Singapore, New Zealand, the United Arab Emirates, the US, India, Germany, Malaysia, Thailand and Japan.

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*"These engagements have allowed us to enhance cooperation on regional and international issues, and help promote our national concerns,"* he said.

*"We are expanding our network of cooperation by also reaching out more to our partners in the Pacific and South America. Strengthening South-South Cooperation remains high on our foreign policy agenda, and we are committed to putting the Pacific into the Indo-Pacific,"* he added.

The Philippines also opened its new embassies in Bogota, Bucharest, Dublin, and Helsinki, forming a crucial part of its efforts to expand its diplomatic reach.

*"We hope to establish more resident Embassies and Consulates General in the near future, thus bolstering our ability to promote Philippine interests*

*and serve overseas Filipinos more effectively,"* Manalo said.

Still, at the heart of DFA work is the protection of Filipino welfare abroad.

In countries marked by unrest and conflict, especially in the Middle East, the DFA flew in more than a thousand distressed overseas Filipinos back to the Philippines.

The transfer of Filipino death row convict Mary Jane Veloso, a victim of human trafficking and exploitation, to Philippine custody before Christmas also demonstrated the efficiency of Philippine diplomacy.

From years of appeals for the Indonesian government to grant leniency to the Filipina, talks between the two countries finally culminated in a *"practical arrangement"* that saw her return to the country after more than a decade of incarceration in the Southeast Asian state. (PNA)

### Minimum...

similarly granted increases in their salaries ranging from PHP500 to P1,100.

There are a total of 717,508 domestic workers in the regions of Metro Manila, Cordillera, 1, 2, Mimaropa, 6, 8, 10 and Caraga.

Recently, the Metro Manila wage board issued Wage Order No. NCR-DW-05 granting a PHP500 monthly increase for household helps across the region.

The monthly minimum wage in the sector is now PHP7,000.

#### Amended guidelines

The National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC) Resolution No. 05 issued in May 2024 amended Rule IV of Guidelines No. 03, Series of 2020, or the

from page 8

Omnibus Rules on Minimum Wage Determination.

This allowed the RTWPBs to not only initiate review within the 60-day period prior to their wage order anniversary but also to issue a new one, if necessary, provided the same will not take effect within the 12-month period from their last wage order's effectivity.

Four RTWPBs (3, 4-A, 7, and 10) assisted by the NWPC simplified their wage structures and successfully implemented streamlining in accordance with the Omnibus Rules, as amended, and NWPC Resolution No. 04, Series of 2024 which encourages the RTWPBs to regularly review their wage classifications to ensure consistency with

socioeconomic demographics.

According to the DOLE, the initiative aims to ensure clarity and enhance minimum wage compliance, ultimately supporting a more efficient and transparent wage system for both employers and workers.

Additionally, the RTWPBs have been instructed to roll out productivity improvement programs and gainsharing schemes designed to foster sustainable and long-term wage growth.

These programs particularly target areas within the regions with lower productivity levels, where their implementation can significantly enhance overall efficiency.

**2 regions yet to issue wage hikes**

### Education...

from page 8

Defense College of the Philippines, Philippine Military Academy, Philippine Science High School System, Science Education Institute, and state universities and colleges.

The DPWH is left with PHP1.007 trillion.

According to Finance Secretary Ralph Recto, it is the first time that education and infrastructure budget both hit the trillion-peso mark.

*"That would augur well for the economy's growth for 2025,"* he said in a Palace press briefing.

Other agencies with the biggest budget allocation for 2025 are the Department of National Defense with PHP315.1 billion; Department of the Interior and Local Government with PHP279.1 billion; Department of Health with PHP267.8 billion; and Department of Agriculture with PHP237.4 billion.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development has an allocation of PHP217.5 billion; Department of Transportation, PHP123.7 billion; Judiciary, PHP64.0 billion; and Department of Justice at PHP42.2 billion.

#### DepEd budget cuts

The administration is also looking to remedy the budget cuts in the DepEd, in

line with the promise of the President to *"restore"* the slashed appropriations.

Although the executive cannot increase the funding of agencies once the bicameral conference committee submitted the budget bill to the President, Pangandaman said the government may still tap unprogrammed appropriations and excess revenues for education programs.

*"As long as mayroon tayong (we have an) additional revenue from the DoF [Department of Finance], we can actually augment or increase the budget of DepEd. Specifically for computerization program,"* she said.

Recto agreed, saying that the President prioritizes education.

*"I think the President wants to prioritize the additional spending on education which is found in the unprogrammed portion of the budget. So, if there are excess revenues, we would immediately release that part of the budget,"* he said.

The DepEd earlier decried the PHP10-billion budget cut in its Computerization Program, saying that it would widen the digital divide among students. (PNA)

Two RTWPBs (5 or Bicol and 11 or Davao) have yet to issue wage orders.

Region 5 has resolved to defer the minimum wage determination process due to the impact of Severe Tropical Storm Kristine in October that left Bicol in a state of calamity.

It will resume the process as soon as circumstance permits or after three months from Nov. 7, 2024 or in February 2025.

On the other hand, RTWPB-XI is still conducting consultations with various stakeholders in the region, the outcomes of which will be factored into their minimum wage determination process scheduled for January 2025.

#### Relief mechanism

The DOLE, through the NWPC, reiterated the guidelines that provide for an exemption mechanism for calamity-affected enterprises following the several typhoons that hit the country and caused significant challenges to businesses in affected areas.

It noted that enterprises may inquire and apply through the RTWPB with jurisdiction over their business areas whether they may be eligible for a full exemption or a specific minimum wage tranche, if

any.

Businesses and workers are encouraged to visit the NWPC website at <https://nwpc.dole.gov.ph/> or follow the NWPC Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/dole.nwpc/> for more details on the exemption process.

Likewise, the Department urged businesses and workers to avail of its existing programs, such as the Adjustment Measures Program (AMP), and take full advantage of the opportunities available.

The AMP aims to reduce and mitigate the vulnerability of workers and enterprises to economic disruptions, including those resulting from natural calamities.

*"As 2024 ends, the NWPC remains committed to supporting the Marcos administration in maintaining a regular and predictable schedule for wage review, with a continued focus on a fair and transparent wage determination process; simplifying wage structures, and promoting productivity improvement programs to foster long-term wage and productivity growth,"* it said. (PNA)

## SolGen to start ‘massive’ post-POGO exit tasks



Solicitor General Menardo Guevarra (PNA file photo)

By Benjamin Pulta

MANILA – State lawyers will initiate a thorough inventory of assets of shuttered Philippine overseas gaming operators (POGOs) after the deadline set by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. for a ban on the industry lapsed at the end of 2024, the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) said Wednesday.

“The OSG’s massive post-POGO tasks will consist of cancelling all certificates of birth fraudulently acquired by aliens/foreign nationals and forfeiting their illegally acquired real properties and other assets in the Philippines,” Solicitor General Menardo Guevarra said in a message to reporters.

He said they are yet to estimate the scale of the value of assets involved, which may include vast swaths of real estate outside the capital.

“At this time, we have no definite figures on the aggregate value of these assets. The first order of the day is to take possession

of and control over them,” Guevarra said.

Congressional probes have determined that some Chinese nationals used fake birth certificates to gain Filipino citizenship, enabling them to form corporations and acquire properties for illegal activities, including drug trafficking.

Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin earlier said the government is exhausting all efforts to fast-track the process of acquiring the seized properties and assets of POGO.

He stressed that while there are already laws on forfeiture of properties, the process is “very slow.”

Both the Senate and the House of Representatives are eyeing the passage of a measure authorizing the forfeiture of all POGO assets “in favor of the government.”

Under the proposed measure, the government will take over all buildings, materials, equipment and proceeds of illegal POGOs. (PNA)

## Modernizing...

completed under the Marcos administration. It reduces travel time between Baclaran, Pasay City, and Bacoor, Cavite, from 1 hour and 10 minutes to just 25 minutes, serving 80,000 additional passengers daily.

Phase 1 of the extension adds six kilometers to the existing 20.7-kilometer LRT-1 line, bringing its total length to 26 kilometers.

### A Legacy Fulfilled

In his speech, President Marcos paid tribute to his father, former President Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr., for laying the foundation of Metro Manila’s first urban rail transit system.

Despite early criticism, President Marcos Sr. pushed forward with the project, which has since transformed daily commutes for millions of Filipinos.

The LRT-1 became Southeast Asia’s first urban light rail system.

“No one is happier than his son today, seeing my father’s foresight validated as this system grows to serve more of our people,” the President remarked.

### Decades in the Making

from page 1

The LRT-1 Cavite Extension Project has spanned multiple administrations, with contributions from various leaders over the years.

“This project has been a long time coming—spanning five administrations, from President (Joseph) Estrada to President (Gloria Macapagal) Arroyo, President (Benigno) Aquino (Jr.), President (Rodrigo) Duterte, and now my own,” President Marcos said.

“We owe its success to the hard work of my predecessors, and we recognize their efforts in making this dream a reality.”

### Future Phases: Expanding Connectivity

The next stages of the LRT-1 Cavite Extension are already in motion. The construction of Phase 2 and Phase 3 is scheduled to begin in 2026, according to the Department of Transportation.

Phase 2 will include the opening of the Las Piñas and Zapote Stations, further extending the reach of the commuter railway system.

Phase 3 will culminate with the Niog Station in Bacoor, Cavite, serving as

the final stop in the extension project.

### Driving Economic Growth and Easing Traffic

Once fully operational, the entire extension is expected to accommodate an additional 300,000 passengers daily and significantly ease traffic congestion in Parañaque, Las Piñas, and Bacoor.

The project is part of the administration’s broader vision for a seamless, modernized public transportation system, which includes other major rail projects like the MRT-7 and the North-South Commuter Railway, according to President Marcos.

“The LICE ensures a more efficient, reliable, and seamless mode of transport, benefiting commuters across Metro Manila, Cavite, and nearby regions,” he said.

The inauguration of the Phase 1 Cavite Extension project is a testament to the Marcos administration’s commitment to build a transformative infrastructure that connects communities, boosts economic growth, and improves the lives of Filipinos. (PND)



Photo courtesy of Presidential Communications Office.

## Mary...

classification to integrate into the corrections system.

Catapang said this initial phase is designed to help new persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) get familiar with the facility’s rules, regulations and their rights and privileges.

The orientation program will also introduce Veloso to various rehabilitation initiatives, health services, time allowance policies and grievance mechanisms available to PDLs.

CT/Supt. Marjorie Ann Sanidad, CIW acting superintendent, said Veloso has been placed in a regular dormitory measuring 48 by 32 feet, along with 30 other newly admitted PDLs.

“This arrangement fosters a sense of community and emphasizes the importance of shared experiences and

from page 1

mutual support as the women begin their journeys toward reform and rehabilitation,” Sanidad said.

In a related development, Catapang directed the CIW to translate Veloso’s prison records from Indonesia, originally documented in Bahasa.

The translation will enable BuCor to determine whether Veloso’s time served in Indonesia can be officially credited as part of her sentence under Philippine jurisdiction.

Veloso was jailed and sentenced to death in Indonesia in 2010. She was given a last-minute reprieve in April 2015 when Manila informed Jakarta that her recruiters had surrendered.

She was turned over to Philippine officials on Dec. 17, and returned to the country on Dec. 18. (PNA)

## PBBM...

billion worth of the line items that are not consistent with our programmed priorities,” he added.

Of the P194-billion, President Marcos vetoed PhP26.065 billion worth of projects under the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and PhP168.240 billion allocated under “Unprogrammed Appropriations.”

President Marcos also pursued Conditional Implementation on specific items to ensure funds are utilized effectively, emphasizing that the government must not be merely a provisional solution, but address long-term issues.

The Ayuda sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP) will be implemented in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare

from page 1

and Development (DSWD), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

“This way we ensure that its implementation will be strategic leading to the long-term improvement of the lives of qualified beneficiaries, while guarding against misuse, and duplication, and fragmented benefits,” President Marcos said.

“This approach is anchored on a simple yet profound truth: the appropriation of public funds must not break the public trust,” he added.

The President assured the commitment of the government of prudent fiscal management, ensuring all budget increases and new appropriations undergo cash

programming, compliance with budget execution rules, and approval by concerned offices.

The President explained this approach guarantees the programs and projects are properly implemented and redound to the benefit of the Filipino people.

“Makakaasa naman po kayo na sa budget na ito, ipagpapatuloy at papalawigin pa natin ang ating serbisyo sa inyo, alinsunod sa ating Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028,” President Marcos said.

Before concluding his speech, President Marcos reiterated the government’s prioritization of social services, particularly education and health, alongside economic services, infrastructure and agriculture, among others. (PND)

# EDITORIAL

## Chance for renewal

"WHILE the closing months of 2024 may paint a bleak picture, the dawn of 2025 offers a chance for renewal.

As 2024 draws to a close, the Philippines finds itself engulfed in a cacophony of political controversies, economic uncertainty, and public discontent. The atmosphere, thick with the unresolved tensions of the past year, leaves many Filipinos questioning whether 2025 will bring the brighter horizon they desperately hope for.

At the heart of this uncertainty lies a controversial budget, fraught with accusations of misallocation and lacking transparency, alongside an array of issues that continue to dog the Marcos administration.

The national budget, pegged at a record-high P6.352 trillion, has been a lightning rod for criticism. Critics argue that while the allocation for infrastructure remains robust, other sectors such as education, healthcare, and disaster resilience have been underfunded.

This perceived imbalance raises questions about the administration's priorities. For instance, despite the devastating floods caused by tropical storm "Kristine," which underscored glaring gaps in the country's flood control measures, the proposed funding for disaster mitigation remains modest at best. Similarly, while education received a significant share, concerns linger over how effectively these funds will be utilized given systemic issues in the Department of Education.

The Marcos administration's response to these criticisms has been to tout its infrastructure push as a driver of economic recovery. Dubbed "Build Better More," this initiative aims to create jobs and stimulate growth. Yet, its success hinges on the government's ability to address bureaucratic inefficiencies and corruption — long-standing issues that have hampered similar programs in the past. Moreover, with the country's debt at an all-time high of P15.69 trillion, the sustainability of such massive spending plans remains a pressing concern.

Adding to the nation's woes is the specter of political instability. The year saw heightened tensions between the Marcos administration and key political figures, including Vice President Sara Duterte. Her resignation as education secretary and subsequent criticism of the government's priorities have sparked speculation about a brewing political rift. This internal discord, coupled with calls for accountability over human rights abuses and environmental lapses, further erodes

public confidence.

Yet, amid these challenges, there are glimmers of hope. The business sector, buoyed by a growing interest in renewable energy and digital transformation, continues to show resilience. The successful rollout of electric vehicle incentives and the expansion of e-commerce platforms demonstrate the private sector's capacity to adapt and innovate despite government shortcomings.

Likewise, the Filipino spirit of bayanihan, or communal unity, remains a powerful force, as evidenced by grassroots efforts to aid disaster-stricken communities and promote voter education ahead of the 2025 midterm elections.

The upcoming elections could serve as a pivotal moment for the nation. With the filing of certificates of candidacy revealing a mix of seasoned politicians and fresh faces, the electorate has an opportunity to demand accountability and champion reform-oriented leaders.

However, the persistence of political dynasties and celebrity candidates underscores the need for systemic change to ensure a more merit-based political landscape.

To make 2025 a year of progress rather than stagnation, several steps are imperative. First, the government must address the root causes of public distrust by committing to transparency and inclusive governance. This includes a thorough review of the national budget, ensuring that funds are allocated based on genuine needs and not political expediency.

Second, disaster preparedness must be prioritized, with adequate funding for flood control and climate resilience measures. Third, the administration should engage in meaningful dialogue with critics and opposition figures, fostering a climate of collaboration rather than division.

Equally important is the role of the Filipino people. Civic engagement, whether through voting, advocacy, or community action, remains a cornerstone of democratic progress. As history has shown, the collective will of the populace can drive significant change, even in the face of entrenched challenges.

While the closing months of 2024 may paint a bleak picture, the dawn of 2025 offers a chance for renewal. It is a call to action for both the government and the citizenry to rise above partisan divides and work towards a shared vision of progress.

The road ahead is undoubtedly fraught with obstacles, but with resilience, accountability, and unity, Filipinos can hope to reclaim the promise of a brighter future.



Photo courtesy of tribune.net.ph

# KAPIRASONG Kritika

Ni Teo S. Marasigan

## Kontraktwalisasyon 101

### PART 2

Sa kabila ng dambuhalang tubo at yaman nila, o para nga rito, ang pinakamalalaking kapitalistang dayuhan at lokal sa bansa ang mga pangunahing tagapagpatupad ng kontraktwalisasyon.

Espesyal na kaso ang mga empleyado sa sektor ng Business Process Outsourcing sa bansa. Sa kabila ng relatibong mas mataas nilang sahod at benepisyo, sa esensya'y kontraktwal ang katayuan ng kanilang pagtatrabaho.

Batas. Mismong Batas Paggawa o Labor Code ng 1974 ang nagsisilbing ligal na batayan ng kontraktwalisasyon. Dito, sinasabing bawal ang Labor-Only Contracting habang ligal ang tinatawag na Job Contracting. Binibigyan ng masaklaw na kapangyarihan ang Labor Secretary na maglabas ng mga alituntunin para sa pagpapatupad ng Job Contracting. Sa aktwal, ang naturang mga alituntunin ay pagtuturo sa mga kapitalista kung paano magkokontraktwalisa nang ligal.

Sa pakahulugan ng batas, tinutukoy ng Labor-Only Contracting ang kalagayan kung saan ang isang kumpanya ang tunay na may kontrol sa mga manggagawa at dummy lang nito ang agency. Tinutukoy naman ng Job

Contracting ang kalagayan kung saan ang agency umano ang tunay na may kontrol sa manggagawa at nagagawa nito ang gawain nang walang pakikialam ng kumpanya.

Ipinataw ni Ferdinand Marcos ang Batas Paggawa sa pamamagitan ng Presidential Decree 442. Kaakibat ng hakbanging ito ang pagtatayo ng mga Export-Processing Zones o EPZs na nagbibigay ng maraming insentiba sa malalaking kapitalistang dayuhan na mamuhunan sa bansa, at ang pagtatayo ng dilawan, maka-kapitalista at kontra-manggagawang Trade Union Congress of the Philippines o TUCP.

Sa ilalim ni Cory Aquino, nagsabatas ng maraming pagsusog sa Batas Paggawa sa pamamagitan ng Republic Act 6715. Tinatawag itong "Herrera Law," nakapangalan kay dating Sen. Ernesto Herrera na dating lider ng TUCP. Hindi nito binago ang mga probisyon ng Batas Paggawa kaugnay ng kontraktwalisasyon. Naging malaganap ang kontraktwalisasyon sa bansa sa panahon ng mga rehimen nina Fidel Ramos, Joseph Estrada at Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Alinsunod sa Labor Code, naglabas ang mga sekretaryo ng Department of Labor and Employment ng mga Department Order (DO) na siyang nagsilbing alituntunin sa pagpapatupad

ng kontraktwalisasyon. Sa ilalim ni Arroyo, ipinatupad ang DO 18-02. Pinalitan naman ito sa ilalim ni Noynoy Aquino ng DO 18-A Series of 2011.

Noynoy. Kumpara sa DO 18-02, may mga "papogi" ang DO 18-A Series of 2011. Una, itinaas nito ang mga pamantayan para matawag ang isang agency na "lehitimong kontraktor," kumpara sa hindi. Ikalawa, itinakda nito ang pagtalima sa Labor Standards ng mga lehitimong kontraktor. Ikatlo, isinaad dito ang pagregularisa sa mga manggagawa ng agency, hindi ng mga pangunahing employer o kumpanya. Pero matatapos ang kontrata ng manggagawa-agency kasabay ng pagtatapos ng kontrata ng kapitalista-agency.

Sa isang banda, resulta ang naturang mga "papogi" ng mga pagkondena at protesta laban sa kontraktwalisasyon. Umigting ang pagtutol sa kontraktwalisasyon dahil sa pagtanggap, noong 2010, ng 2,600 regular at unyonisadong manggagawa sa Philippine Airlines o PAL at pagpapabalik sa kanila sa parehong trabaho nang kontraktwal, walang unyon, at sumasahod lang ng kalahati ng nauna nilang sahod. Si Lucio Tan, pangalawang pinakamayamang Pilipino, ang siyang may-ari ng PAL — at ang pagpayag sa tanggalan at kontraktwalisasyon sa ipagpapatuloy...

Ang  
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# TOWN in FOCUS

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## BI: PH logs 19M travelers in 2024



BI Commissioner Joel Anthony Viado (Photo courtesy of BI)

By Ferdinand Patinio

MANILA – Over 19 million inbound and outbound travelers were recorded in 2024.

Based on the figures from the Bureau of

Immigration (BI), a total of 14,540,533 passengers arrived in the country last year.

Of the number, 7,922,052 are Filipinos while 6,618,481 are foreign nationals.

It also recorded a total of 15,050,136 individuals

who have departed from the country, majority of them are Filipinos numbering 8,348,283.

Foreign departures, on the other hand, are at 6,701,853.

Commissioner Joel

Anthony Viado attributed the robust numbers to the resurgence of international travel and the Philippines' appeal as a premier destination, as a result of the Department of Tourism's aggressive campaign to re-invite foreign tourists back to the country.

"These figures reflect a thriving travel industry and highlight the Philippines' growing reputation as a global hub for tourism and business," he said in a statement Tuesday.

### Fighting human trafficking

At the same time, the Bureau noted its vigilance in combating human trafficking has also contributed to maintaining the Philippines' Tier 1 status in the 2024 US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report. It exposed schemes involving fake pilgrimages, mail-order brides, and illegal surrogacy.

The BI's immigration protection and border enforcement section (I-PROBES) reported a total of 998 trafficking victims referred to the inter-agency council against trafficking, as well as 215 Filipinos referred to the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) for illegal recruitment.

He also reported the barring of 140 sex offenders from entering the country.

In collaboration with government agencies, the BI has remained steadfast in addressing child exploitation and abuse.

This year, report mechanisms such as the Commissioner's helpline as well as the Makabata Helpline 1383 of the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) were launched to report cases involving foreign nationals suspected of crimes against children.

Other notable accomplishments include the inauguration of three additional forensic

document laboratories at major international airports, bringing the total to six.

These facilities bolster border security by ensuring the authenticity of travel documents and support immigration offices nationwide.

The BI also prioritized partnerships with government agencies, enhancing interoperability and data sharing to create a seamless framework for addressing illegal activities and improving border management.

The Cruise Visa Waiver initiative further positioned the Philippines as a premier cruise destination by streamlining entry processes for international passengers. Online applications for student visas and special study permits were also introduced to provide more convenient options for travelers.

"As we move forward, the Bureau of Immigration is committed to modernization, efficiency, and ensuring the safety of every traveler," he said.

"Through innovation and collaboration, we are setting the stage for a new era of Philippine immigration and moving towards a Bagong Immigration, in line with the President's vision of a Bagong Pilipinas," added Viado.

Among the Bureau's accomplishments in 2024 was the successful implementation of label-free processing at electronic gates, providing faster access and electronic travel confirmation for Filipino travelers. The program, which has enhanced efficiency at key airports, is set to expand with the procurement of additional e-gates next year.

"As we enter 2025, we will focus on modernization through advancements in technology and legal reforms to simplify immigration processes and improve overall efficiency," he said. (PNA)

## CAVITEVIEW

### Seeds of Hope: Rizal Day tree-planting activity symbolizes National Hero's vision

By Pamela Joyce L. Fumero

DAPITAN CITY (PIA) – The air was thick with nostalgia and patriotism as Dapitan City, headed by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, paid homage to Dr. Jose Rizal during his 128th death anniversary in Rizal Shrine through a tree planting activity and the annual Arnis Tournament.

Dubbed "Puno ng Pag-asa: Pagtatanim ng Punla", the activity had city officials and locals planting fifty Narra and Molave seeds in front of Casa Residencia.

Endemic to the Philippines, these species serve to symbolize the strength and endurance that Rizal hoped to provide for future generations.

Much like Rizal during his time, the propagation of these native trees serve to represent his unwavering strength and dedication to instill Filipino values and imprint their identity for future generations to grow into and enjoy.

Meanwhile, the "kabataan" Rizal looked so highly upon as the "pag-asa ng bayan" also paid him tribute through the annual Arnis Tournament, paying homage to the National Hero's prowess in the sport.

According to Dapitan City Mayor Seth Frederick Jalosjos, Rizal Day is always the highlight of the year for Dapitanons, emphasizing that it is an honor to be part of Rizal's life and to have Rizal be part of Dapitan.

"Even up to this day, Rizal's work is still very relevant," Mayor Jalosjos said.

He went on to say that the City is constantly reflecting upon the National Hero's values.

"We constantly ask ourselves, if Rizal were still alive today, would he be happy with what Dapitan has become?" he explained.

With the theme "Rizal sa Bagong Pilipinas: Buhay at Aral, Aming Nilalandas", today's celebration of the National Hero's martyrdom looks to reflect on Rizal's life and values, and bring them into the modern world embodied by the modern Filipino. (EDT/PJF/PIA9-Zamboanga del Norte)



Photo courtesy of PIA

#### DEED OF EXTRA JUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF ESTATE OF AILEEN ROMULO PASTORITE WITH WAIVER OF RIGHTS

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late AILEEN ROMULO PASTORITE who died in MARCH 9, 2021 in Pasig City who left one motor vehicle registered under her name which described as Make/Series/Body type: FORD EVEREST TITANIUM WAGON Year Model:2017, Plate No. NBI8631, Fuel:Diesel, Color: Aluminium Metallic, MV File No. 130100001011075, Engine No. P4AT2499588, CR. NO. 292953835 which has been extra judicially settled by her heirs which DENISE MARGARETTE ROMULO PASTORITE waive her rights in favor of REY DURAN PASTORITE with postal add at Blk. 11, Lot 01, Lvl. Faraday St Lancaster Estates San Sebastian, Kawit Cavite, as per Doc. No. 134, Page No. 28, Book No. 2, Series of 2024, Notary Public Zeldania D. T. Soriano.

Ang Caviteño Newsweekly  
December 16, 23 & 30, 2024

## PH envoy to US to attend Trump inauguration – Palace

By Darryl John Esguerra

MANILA – Philippine Ambassador to the United States (US) Jose Manuel Romualdez will attend US President Donald Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20, on behalf of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., Malacañang said on Jan. 01.

In a statement, Presidential Communications Office Secretary Cesar Chavez said the US invited the chief of diplomatic missions to represent their respective countries at Trump's inauguration.

*"The Palace confirms that the Secretary of State, on behalf of the Joint Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies, invited the Chiefs of Diplomatic Missions, along with their spouses, to represent their respective heads of state and their governments at the principal inaugural events,"* Chavez said.

*"In this case, Ambassador Jose Manuel Romualdez will represent PBBM [President Bongbong Marcos] at the inauguration,"* he added.

Trump, who served as US president from 2017-2021, earned a fresh mandate from the Americans in the 2024 elections after defeating outgoing US vice president Kamala Harris.

Chavez also said there was no confirmation yet whether Marcos would visit the US to meet with Trump in the early months of 2025.

In a phone call in November, Marcos congratulated Trump for his second term as US president.

They also discussed the longstanding alliance between the US and the Philippines.

The US has been the Philippines' oldest and strongest military ally. (PNA)

## DHSUD to release more 4PH units to beneficiaries in 2025

By Ma. Teresa Montemayor

MANILA – The Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) on Wednesday vowed to deliver more units to Pambansang Pabahay para sa Pilipino (4PH) Program beneficiaries as the year opens.

*"Sa mga susunod na linggo ay inaasahan namin ang sunud-sunod at tuluy-tuloy na turn over*

*ng mga 4PH units sa ating mga beneficiaries (The continuous turnover of 4PH units to beneficiaries is expected in the next few weeks),"* DHSUD Secretary Jose Rizalino Acuzar said in a statement.

In December 2024, 4PH units in Palayan City, Nueva Ecija were turned over to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) during the Pamaskong Handog para sa OFWs at the Malacañan Palace.

More than 1,000 applications under the 4PH are now being processed by the Pagtutulungan sa Kinabukasan: Ikaw, Bangko, Industria at Gobyerno (Pag-IBIG) Home Development Mutual Fund in at least four project sites.

The Pag-IBIG Fund supports the 4PH Projects in Palayan City, Bacolod City, and Bocaue town in Bulacan, among others.

Meanwhile, the Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC) has two projects in the final phases of completion of some buildings.

These are the Crystal Peak Estates in the City of San Fernando in Pampanga, and the People's Ville in Davao City.

Currently, there are 56 ongoing projects under the 4PH in various phases of construction and development in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Acuzar said the DHSUD's key shelter agencies continue with its regular housing programs.

It took two years for these 4PH projects to be realized due to the shift to vertical housing or the condominium-type development, and delays in documentary requirements on the part of private partners, he said.

*"Sa 4PH, ang dating na-e-enjoy lamang ng mga may kaya sa buhay ay ma-e-experience na rin ng ordinaryo nating mga kababayan (Through 4PH, our ordinary fellowmen can now experience those enjoyed by the fortunate people,"* he said.

The DHSUD prioritizes condominium buildings to maximize the use of government lands in housing. (PNA)

## Gov't aid to Kanlaon-affected families nears P150M

By Priam Nepomuceno

MANILA – The amount of assistance provided by the government and its local counterparts to families affected by the ongoing restiveness of Mt. Kanlaon has now reached PHP149.9 million, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said Wednesday.

In its situation report, the agency said this includes PHP45.72 million for Western Visayas and PHP104.21 million for Central Visayas.

This assistance consists of family food packs, hygiene and sleeping kits, and financial help.

A total of 9,762 families have benefitted from the assistance -- 7,309 families in Western Visayas and 2,453 families in Central Visayas.

As of this posting, affected families in the two regions have totalled 12,043 or 46,259 persons in 26 barangays.

Of these, 4,407 families or 14,393 persons are being aided in 34 evacuation centers while 2,195 families or 6,987 individuals are being helped outside. (PNA)



Mount Kanlaon (PNA file photo)

## PH embassy saddened by Filipino maid's alleged killing of Kuwaiti lad

By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

MANILA – The Philippine Embassy in Kuwait on Saturday condoled with the family of a Kuwaiti child allegedly killed by a Filipino domestic worker.

*"The Philippine Embassy in Kuwait is shocked and deeply saddened by the tragic incident of a Filipino domestic worker involved in the death of a Kuwaiti child in her employer's household,"* the embassy said in a statement.

*"We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to the bereaved family during this difficult time,"* it added.

According to a report by the Arab Times, the unnamed Filipino domestic helper placed the Kuwaiti child inside a washing machine at her employers' residence, leading to his tragic death.

The parents reportedly rushed to rescue their son upon hearing his screams and brought him to the hospital where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

The embassy said it is cooperating with Kuwaiti authorities investigating the "isolated" incident.

*"This isolated incident does not reflect the character of Filipinos and the Filipino community in Kuwait, who are recognized for their hard work, reliability, and positive contribution to society,"* it said.

The embassy is also assisting the detained Filipino domestic worker, within the framework of Kuwaiti law and in line with its mandate. (PNA)

## Senior citizen dies from 'cracker' injuries, DOH reports

By Ma. Teresa Montemayor

MANILA – A 78-year-old man from Central Luzon succumbed to injuries sustained from a firecracker incident, the Department of Health (DOH) reported on Dec. 28, 2024.

DOH Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Albert Domingo confirmed that the senior citizen lit a Judas Belt on Dec. 22. He was hospitalized due to multiple injuries and passed away on Dec. 27, with pre-existing health conditions compounding his situation.

As of 6 a.m. on Dec. 28, the DOH has recorded 24 new fireworks-related injuries (FWRIs), bringing the total to 125.

This marks a 29 percent increase compared to the 97 cases logged during the same period in 2023.

*"Fireworks, even if legal, are dangerous. They are bombs. They explode. They can kill. Avoid fireworks for the sake of our lives,"* Domingo said.

Illegal firecrackers, including boga, five-star, and piccolo, accounted for 91 cases or 73 percent of the total incidents. Among the victims, 75 individuals —or 60 percent—were active users who personally lit the fireworks.

Of the reported injuries, 114 victims were male and 11 were female. A significant majority, 102 cases, involved individuals aged 19 years and below, while 23 were 20 years old and above.

Domingo urged the public to avoid firecrackers and consider safer alternatives for celebrating the New Year, such as playing loud music or using horns.

In case of firework-related injuries, the public is advised to call the 911 emergency hotline or the DOH's 1555 emergency number. (PNA)

## DSWD distributes 8M food packs to 7M disaster-hit families in 2024

MANILA – More than 8 million boxes of family food packs (FFPs) were distributed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to 6,864,735 families who were affected by the series of disasters across the country in 2024, an official reported on Wednesday.

DSWD Assistant Secretary for Disaster Response Management Group (DRMG) Irene Dumlao said these food packs were part of the 10 million boxes of FFPs produced in record time by the National Resource Operations Center (NROC) in Pasay City and the Visayas Disaster Response Center (VDRC) in Mandaue City, Cebu province.

*“While we can relatively attribute this huge number to the severity of tropical cyclones and other calamities, we also see this as a result of our enhanced disaster response operations and stronger collaboration with partner-agencies that enabled us to reach more affected-families,”* Dumlao said.

From January to early October 2024, the DSWD focused on humanitarian efforts for families affected by Typhoons Aghon and Butchoy, Severe Tropical Storms Carina and Enteng, Typhoons Ferdie and Gener, Tropical Storm Helen and Tropical Depression Julian, as well as major fires, earthquakes, and volcanic incidents.

*“The successive storms that started with Kristine, followed by Leon, Marce, Nika, Ofel and Pepito, and the recent eruption of Kanlaon, increased the number of affected families who were aided by the DSWD,”* Dumlao said.

The DRMG official reported that 524,334 families were also provided with the agency’s Cash-for-Work (CFW), Food for Work (FFW), and Emergency Cash Transfer (ECT) programs.

The ECT recipients were given outright cash aid to help them purchase their priority needs and rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

The CFW and FFW beneficiaries were given cash or food after participating in community work and training activities.

### 1,000 storage facilities

In line with initiatives to fast-track aid delivery in disaster-stricken areas, Dumlao said the DSWD now has close to 1,000 storage facilities nationwide, which include warehouses, hubs, spokes, and last mile facilities.

*“The strategic expansion of our warehousing capacity falls under the Buong Bansa Handa (BBH) Project, which establishes two parallel supply chain mechanisms to ensure comprehensive coverage and timely assistance to affected families in all disaster-affected areas,”* she said.

The first mechanism features a national and local government-driven supply chain that seeks to increase the production capacities and processes of the NROC and VDRC, and the warehouse and storage facilities across the 16 Field Offices.

For the second mechanism, the department forged partnerships with established large and small groceries, supermarkets, manufacturers, and distributors to leverage on their technical expertise and resources to create a private sector-driven supply chain.

### Mobile Command Centers

The year 2024 also showcased the agency’s decisive efforts to disaster-proof its digital monitoring system and communication lines for disaster response and emergency operations through the launch of the Disaster Response Command Center (DRCC), and the Mobile Command Center (MCC).

*“These were the projects that were closely spearheaded and supervised not just by our Secretary Rex Gatchalian. These were also shepherded through President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.’s vision of a technology-driven disaster management system,”* Dumlao said.

In January 2024, the newly-renovated DRCC was unveiled, which coincided with the annual celebration of the DSWD’s founding anniversary.

The DRCC utilizes advanced information and communication equipment/assets to ensure the seamless collaboration between the DSWD’s Central Office, Field Offices (FOs), member-agencies of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), and local government units (LGUs).

The DRCC was soon reinforced by the MCC and provided linkage from the disaster-stricken areas to the Regional Operations Center (ROC), Disaster Response Command Center (DRCC), or the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (RDRRMC).

Each MCC is equipped with state-of-the-art satellite internet, gadgets, and generators that have been highly utilized not just as a stable source of power supply and internet connection for disaster responders, but also to disaster-affected communities.

### Ready-to-eat food

The DSWD also launched its ready-to-eat food (RTEF) in 2024, the first ever of its kind in the country, particularly intended to supplement free food provision to disaster-hit families.

The RTEF was introduced as the new addition to the agency’s relief items, which will be distributed to affected families within 24 to 48 hours after the onset of a disaster.

The DSWD will start repositioning RTEF in seaports by 2025 to facilitate the seamless food provision for stranded passengers in times of disasters, including other strategically identified storage facilities nationwide.

### Climate change mitigation

From July 2023 to May 2024, El Niño conditions were observed in the tropical Pacific Ocean and its effects were felt in the Philippines resulting in agricultural damages and water shortages reported in various Regions.

In response, the DSWD recalibrated its Risk Resiliency Program (RRP) and launched Project Local Adaptation to Water Access (LAWA) and Breaking Insufficiency through Nutritious Harvest for the Impoverished (BINHI).

*“The twin project was particularly designed to mitigate the impact of food insecurity and water scarcity caused by the El Niño while preparing for the potential effects of the rainy season,”* Dumlao said.

The gains of LAWA and BINHI were showcased in a national convention in the last quarter of 2024, reporting that the project has helped over 137,654 beneficiaries from 310 localities across the country for this year alone.

A total of 1,842 LAWA facilities were able to irrigate more than 7,234 hectares of agricultural land by providing a viable source of water to communities most affected by drought and climate change.

A total of 4,317 BINHI sites were also established this year which were able to harvest over 21,014,574 kilos of produce that helped feed more than 810,756 families.

The project was hailed by the United Nations Office of Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) as one of the best practices to minimize the effects of the climate crisis, particularly the El Niño. (Jose Cielito Reganit/PNA)

## Marbil eyes modern, apolitical PNP in 2025

By Christopher Lloyd Caliwán

MANILA – The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Thursday reaffirmed its commitment to becoming a modern force that remains apolitical and dedicated to protecting peace and order and upholding the Constitution.

*“Peace and order are the cornerstones of a thriving community. As we begin a new chapter, I*

*assure every Filipino that the PNP remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting lives, securing properties, and upholding the rule of law,”* PNP chief Gen. Rommel Francisco Marbil said in his New Year message.

He also emphasized the PNP’s readiness to meet the evolving demands of law enforcement in the modern era.

Highlighting the organization’s forward-looking vision, Marbil said he envisions a *“modern police force for a modern Filipino society”* that is *“responsive, professional, and attuned to the times.”*

The country’s top cop outlined the organization’s focus on technology-driven policing, highlighting initiatives, such as the deployment of body-worn cameras, real-time crime mapping, and enhanced cybercrime prevention units.

*“In today’s interconnected world, technology is not just a tool – it is an indispensable partner in law enforcement. From advanced analytics in crime prevention to artificial intelligence in tracking criminal activities, the PNP is committed to employing innovative solutions to ensure public safety,”* Marbil said.

Reiterating the PNP’s commitment to impartiality, he cited its role as a professional institution devoted to serving the people.

*“The PNP stands as a pillar of democracy, adhering to the principles of justice, impartiality, and service above self. We are a police force that prioritizes the welfare of the people, untainted by political affiliations or influences,”* he said.

Marbil also called for stronger collaboration between the police and communities, recognizing public support as vital to effective policing.

He added that the police force’s modernization efforts and unstinting commitment to impartiality aim to solidify its role as a trusted institution in maintaining peace and security across the country.

*“Let us move forward into this New Year with hope and determination. The PNP is here to serve, protect, and modernize for the benefit of every Filipino,”* he said. (PNA)

## PH envoy to US to attend Trump inauguration – Palace

By Darryl John Esguerra

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Trump, who served as US president from 2017-2021, earned a fresh mandate from the Americans in the 2024 elections after defeating outgoing US vice president Kamala Harris.

Chavez also said there was no confirmation yet whether Marcos would visit the US to meet with Trump in the early months of 2025.

In a phone call in November, Marcos congratulated Trump for his second term as US president.

They also discussed the longstanding alliance between the US and the Philippines.

The US has been the Philippines’ oldest and strongest military ally. (PNA)

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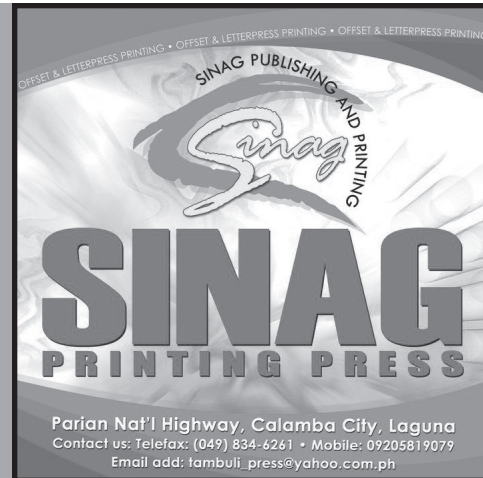
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## Education has highest budget at P1.055-T

### after DPWH cuts

By Darryl John Esguerra

MANILA – The education sector now has the lion's share of the 2025 national budget as President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. struck down some items under the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

Marcos on Monday signed into law the 2025 national budget after he vetoed PHP194 billion in line items.

Next year's government budget was originally set at PHP6.352 trillion, but the President's vetoes trimmed it down to P6.326 trillion.

Of the vetoed items, PHP26.065 billion were

projects under the DPWH and PHP168.240 billion allocated were under unprogrammed appropriations.

Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman said the education sector now has the highest allocation with PHP1.055 trillion following the cuts in the DPWH budget.

The funding is spread across the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, Local Government Academy, Philippine National Police Academy, Philippine Public Safety College, National

*Continued on page 2...*



FUNDING FOR 2025. President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. signs the 2025 General Appropriations Act at Malacañang Palace in Manila on Monday (Dec. 30, 2024). Next year's government budget is down to P6.326 trillion from PHP6.352 trillion after the President vetoed line items deemed inconsistent with the administration's priorities. (PNA photo by Joan Bondoc)

## Minimum wage up in 14 regions, benefits 5M workers

By Ferdinand Patinio

MANILA – Close to five million private sector workers who are minimum wage earners will directly benefit from wage increases approved by 14 Regional Tripartite Wage Productivity Boards (RTWPBs) in 2024.

Data from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) revealed that 4,907,584 minimum wage earners in the private sector have been granted daily wage increases.

The wage hikes range from PHP21 to PHP75.

The RTWPBs issued wage orders in the National Capital Region (NCR), Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), and Regions 1 (Ilocos), 2 (Cagayan Valley), 3 (Central Luzon), 4-A (Calabarzon), 4-B (Mimaropa).

The other areas that were granted wage adjustments were Regions 6 (Western Visayas), 7 (Central Visayas), 8 (Eastern Visayas), 9 (Zamboanga Peninsula), 10 (Northern Mindanao), 12 (Soccsksargen and 13

(Caraga).

### NCR workers

On June 27, RTWPB-NCR issued Wage Order NCR-25, granting a PHP35 increase. It will benefit some four million workers.

The order raised the minimum wage in Metro Manila to PHP645 from PHP610.

Meanwhile, Northern Mindanao was the latest region to grant an increase in the minimum wage.

Wage Order No. RX-23 issued by RTWPB-10 for private sector workers granted an increase of PHP23 for the non-agriculture sector and PPH35.00 for the agriculture sector to be given in two tranches.

The wage adjustment will bring the minimum wage rates in the region from PHP446 to PHP461 upon full implementation. The increase will be effective on Jan. 12, 2025 while the second tranche will start July 1, 2025.

### Domestic workers

On the other hand, domestic workers or household helps in nine regions were

*Continued on page 2...*

## PH ends leap year sealing wins in diplomacy

By Joyce Ann L. Rocamora

MANILA – The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) rang in 2025 on a good note, closing out a leap year accentuated by its diplomatic strides that saw it skillfully navigating complex shifts in regional geopolitics while continuing to advance national interest.

From an arduous work at the negotiating table, the Philippines in July was able to reach a "provisional arrangement" on the country's rotation and resupply missions in the Ayungin Shoal.

This marked the first formal deal reached between the Philippines and China on the West Philippine Sea feature, a feat that came only a few weeks after the June 17 tense confrontation between the Chinese Coast Guard and Filipino vessels carrying supplies to the troops stationed at the BRP Sierra Madre.

The standoff, the worst and most violent in recent years, injured a Filipino soldier and caused severe damage to the Filipino vessels that triggered public outcry and condemnation from the international community.

For the DFA, the "provisional arrangement" among other diplomatic initiatives served as a testament

to the Marcos administration's commitment to a peaceful approach to defending Philippine interests over the West Philippine Sea.

As part of Manila's promotion of a rules-based order, especially in the maritime space, the government also submitted its formal claim over an extended continental shelf (ECS) in the Western Palawan region in the West Philippine Sea before the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in June.

In his State of the Nation Address, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. himself said the government would continue asserting its rights over the resource-rich waters while "continuously try to find ways to de-escalate tensions" without compromising the Philippine position.

Anchored on its independent foreign policy, Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo said the country would continue choosing "the path of diplomacy and the rule of law in addressing national security challenges".

"The bedrock of our foreign policy is the strengthening of an open, inclusive, and rules-based order, grounded on the sovereign equality of states and governed by international law," he said at a recent year-

end reception for the diplomatic corps," Manalo said.

"As President Marcos Jr. has clearly enunciated on a number of occasions, a rules-based order provides a credible legal regime that guarantees just and equitable access to the global commons, especially in the oceans. The predictability and stability it engenders provides an enabling environment for nations, large and small, intent on pursuing their legitimate interests," he added.

Productive year  
 In the diplomatic arena, 2024 had been a banner year for the Philippines' pursuit of reinvigorated relations with longstanding and new partners.

The DFA began the year with engagements in Africa and Manalo's participation in the 19th Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Kampala, Uganda, and held 20 bilateral meetings with nine African partners.

In the succeeding months, the DFA conducted high-level engagements with countries, such as Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Mongolia and Ukraine.

In the first Philippines-Japan-United States Trilateral Summit between Marcos, President Joe Biden, and former Prime Minister Kishida Fumio in April, the three states unveiled

*Continued on page 2...*