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**INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION**

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## PASAY CITY PROSECUTOR FILES CHARGES IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASE TIED TO SURROGACY SCHEME


**PAGE 3**


PSA TO RELEASE THE RESULTS OF THE



**PROVINCIAL PRODUCT ACCOUNTS**

on the 2023 economic performance of all the 82 provinces and 33 highly urbanized cities (HUCs) in the Philippines. This is through the conduct of a series of provincial dissemination fora from 12 November to 09 December 2024.




[www.psa.gov.ph](https://www.psa.gov.ph)

## PSA TO UNVEIL

# PROVINCIAL PRODUCT ACCOUNTS FOR ECONOMIC INSIGHTS

**PUBLIKO REPORTORIAL TEAM**

**MANILA, Philippines** —The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) is poised to release the results of the Provincial Product Accounts (PPA), offering valu-

able insights into the economic performance of all 82 provinces and 33 highly urbanized cities (HUCs) across the Philippines. The dissemination of these

findings will take place through a series of provincial fora, scheduled from November 12 to December 9, 2024. *(turn to page 4)*

### ERC COMMITS TO SWIFT REGULATORY ACTION FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION AMID 2025 BUDGET PROPOSAL P.5



### DOLE BAGS MULTIPLE AWARDS FOR EFFICIENT SERVICE DELIVERY P.4



## ACCEPTING PUBLICATION OF LEGAL NOTICES

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## EDITORIAL

# THE SUPREME COURT'S RULING: A WAKE-UP CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND CLARIFICATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The recent decision by the Supreme Court acquitting Mayor Antonio M. Talaue of Sto. Tomas, Isabela, of charges related to the non-remittance of Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) contributions raises significant questions about accountability and the delineation of roles within local government. By asserting that mayors are "chief execu-

tives" and not "heads of offices," the Court has drawn a critical line between executive responsibilities and the operational duties that traditionally fall to other municipal employees.

While the ruling may provide a legal shield for Talaue, it also reveals the underlying complexities and potential gaps in the implementation of laws that govern local governance. The Court

clarified that under Republic Act 7160, the Local Government Code, the specific duty to remit GSIS contributions does not explicitly fall within the official functions of a mayor. This distinction is crucial, as it emphasizes the need for clear delineation of duties among local officials and employees to prevent any confusion or misinterpretation of responsibilities. (turn to page 5)



## A VICTORY AGAINST GHOST RECEIPTS: UPHOLDING ACCOUNTABILITY IN CORPORATE TAX EVASION

In a significant victory against tax fraud, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) has once again proven its commitment to pursuing justice by cracking down on corporate officers involved in "ghost receipts" schemes. Following the Department of Justice's findings of

probable cause against two corporations and their officers, warrants of arrest will soon be issued, marking a crucial step forward in holding accountable those responsible for corrupt practices that undermine our tax system. This success underlines the impact of the BIR's

Run After Fake Transactions (RAFT) program, which is actively dismantling the chains of deception that allow businesses to evade taxes through fictitious transactions.

The existence and widespread use of ghost receipts are a direct affront to the integrity of the country's revenue system. These fake receipts allow businesses to fabricate expenses and reduce their tax liabilities illegally, depriving the government of resources that could otherwise support public services and infrastructure. It is not merely a case of corporate misconduct; it's a calculated exploitation of the law at the expense of honest taxpayers. (turn to page 6)



## PUBLIKO NEWS PUBLISHING: REDEFINING ACCESSIBLE PUBLICATION

Since its re-launch on August 15, 2023, Publiko News Publishing has embarked on an ambitious journey to redefine what it means to be a "go-to" publication in the Philippines. With a fresh new look, a new location, and a revitalized mission, Publiko remains unwavering in its dedication to serving Filipinos' documentation and legal needs at an affordable price while

upholding standards of integrity, credibility, and accessibility.

Publiko's name is itself a testament to its mission—derived from "Publi" for publication and "ko," meaning "mine" in Filipino, it signifies "my publication." Publiko isn't just a news outlet; it's a publication people can trust and rely on. Our purpose is to be there for individuals, law firms, businesses, and govern-

ment agencies, ensuring that essential information and documentation needs are met with ease, professionalism, and affordability.

Since its founding, Publiko has made it its mission to serve as a reliable, customer-centered publication. While our original foundation was built on the principles of transparency and client service, our journey has not been without its hurdles. Relocating and rebranding the business was a decision grounded in our desire to better connect with our readers and clients. It was a challenge to bring a fresh face to Publiko while staying true to its original purpose. However, we are now stronger than ever, with a team well-equipped to tackle the growing needs of our clients. (turn to page 6)



## HOW TO RUN BACK TO JESUS WHEN HE FAIL

No matter our generation, we all face failures. But hiding our mistakes won't lead to healing because true restoration comes from God. Peter denied Jesus but was restored by Him, showing us that real restoration isn't in a process—it's found in a Person.

**HE REACHES OUT.**

Read: John 21:1-5.

After failing, Peter returned to his old life—fishing. But Jesus reached out to him from the shore, reminding Peter of his true calling to be a "fisher of men".

Like Peter, we sometimes fall back into old habits, let-

ting sin take hold. Yet, God doesn't leave us there; He actively reaches out through people, His Word, and even small reminders, seeking to draw us back into His love and purpose.

**HE RECOMMIS-**  
**SIONS.**

Read: John 21:18-22.

Jesus commissioned Peter with the instructions to "tend My lambs," "shepherd My sheep," and "follow Me," preparing him for the challenges he would encounter as a church leader. (turn to page 4)



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## EDITORIAL BOARD

Mark Anthony B. Caiña  
Publisher

Michelle V. Caiña  
Editor

Website: [www.publikonews.com](http://www.publikonews.com)

Email: [ads@publikonews.com](mailto:ads@publikonews.com)

Office Address:

Unit 301, Aurora Arcade, Alabang-Zapote Road,  
Almanza Uno, Las Piñas City

Tel No.: (02) 8816-1150

Mobile No.: (0953) 061 4635 | (0997) 294 2656

DTI No. 5190105 (National) | TIN 212-464-318-00000

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## DEPED PARTNERS WITH JAPANESE FIRM TO ENHANCE MATH PROFICIENCY FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS NATIONWIDE

Pasig City, October 31, 2024 — In a significant initiative aimed at improving mathematics skills among public school students across the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has partnered with Japan-based Sprix, Inc. The collaboration will provide free access to the Test of Fundamental Skills (TOFAS), a program designed to help students master essential math concepts critical for their academic success.

The partnership was formalized through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed at the Bulwagan ng Karunungan in DepEd, attended by key figures including Education Secretary Sonny Angara, Hiroyuki Tsuneishi, President and Representative Director of Sprix Ltd., Leo Shoji, Lead Development Officer of Sprix Ltd.'s

Global Strategy Division, and Algrace Avancena, Chief Representative of Sprix Co. Ltd. — Philippines.

"Strengthening our students' math skills is essential," Secretary Angara stated during the signing ceremony. "With TOFAS, we have a targeted tool that identifies math proficiencies and areas for growth, and we are confident this will empower students across the country. Initial feedback from our regional directors has been overwhelmingly positive, and we're eager to expand its use to more learners."

TOFAS is designed to accurately assess students' calculation and problem-solving abilities, enabling teachers to gather valuable data tailored to each learner's specific needs. This assessment tool not only highlights students' strengths but also pin-

points areas requiring improvement, fostering enhanced communication among teachers, students, and parents. This collaborative approach aims to create a supportive environment that encourages motivation and academic progress in mathematics.

In addition to academic advantages, TOFAS emphasizes student well-being by offering teachers and parents clear insights into each learner's mathematical journey. This transparency paves the way for increased engagement in mathematics and programming, reinforcing the importance of foundational math skills in the modern educational landscape. "We're thrilled to see TOFAS support students in the Philippines," said Mr. Tsuneishi. "Our goal is to equip teachers with insights to better address the

A shadow puppet presentation brought to life the Manobo epic Tulalang through the story of The Heron and the Eagle. This featured shadow puppets inspired by Tin Javier's artwork in the book, capturing Tulalang's battle with Banug, the giant eagle.

The event concluded with an art workshop, where participants created Philippine eagle masks and shadow puppet characters, celebrating the artistic legacy of the Indigenous tales. One participant, Jamela Austria, expressed gratitude, writing to the Embassy, "Thank you for today's Shadow Puppet and Storytelling day... I'm grateful to have this opportunity to show my family our rich culture and to have amazing people like Denise to teach them."

Certificates of appreciation were awarded to Ms. Orosa, closing a day of cultural learning, celebration, and shared stories. (PRT)

## PHILIPPINE EMBASSY IN OTTAWA CELEBRATES INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MONTH WITH STORYTELLING AND SHADOW PUPPETRY EVENT

OTTAWA, 30 October 2024 — In honor of Philippine National Indigenous Peoples Month, the Embassy of the Philippines in Canada, through its Senro Rizal Ottawa, hosted a vibrant cultural event entitled *Once Upon the Sun and Sea: Explore Philippine Indigenous Tales on October 19, 2024*. Held in the Embassy's Mindanao Hall, the gathering featured storytelling, a shadow puppet show, and an art workshop, attended by around 40 Filipino-Canadian community members, both young and old.

The program began with the Philippine National Anthem, followed by welcome remarks from Philippine Ambassador to Canada Maria Andreilita S. Austria. In her address, Ambassa-

dor Austria highlighted the role of Indigenous peoples as "bearers of culture and custodians of stories," noting that their tales embody values and beliefs deeply connected to nature and community, key pillars in Filipino heritage.

The event was facilitated by Ms. Denise Orosa, an award-winning educator and co-author of *Once Upon the Sun and Sea*. Ms. Orosa, who has over two decades of experience as a teacher, artist, and storyteller, shared three traditional tales from different Indigenous groups in the Philippines, such as The Carabao and the Shell, Silalak and Sibabay, and The Comb, Crown, and Necklace. She also provided background on the tribes each story represented, further enriching the audience's cultural understanding.

## PASAY CITY PROSECUTOR FILES CHARGES IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASE TIED TO SURROGACY SCHEME

PASAY CITY— The Pasay City Prosecutor's Office has filed charges against Freeze Mae Balondo y Ricanor, who was arrested by the National Bureau of Investigation's Human Trafficking Division (NBI-HTRAD) on October 12, 2024, for her alleged involvement in a surrogacy-for-profit scheme. Balondo fac-

es multiple charges, including attempted trafficking in persons, in connection with a syndicate that allegedly exploits women through illegal surrogacy arrangements.

The charges fall under Section 4(A) of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, as amended by Republic Acts 10364 and 11862. Balondo also

faces charges under the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 (RA 10175) for allegedly recruiting surrogate mothers online. Authorities claim that she orchestrated the transport of two women to Thailand, who were later intercepted by the Bureau of Immigration's Immigration, Protection, and Border Enforcement Section



DEPED AND JAPANESE FIRM'S PARTNERSHIP TO BOOST PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS' MATH PROFICIENCY NATIONWIDE

PHOTO (L to R): DepEd Assistant Secretary Georgina Ann Yara, DepEd Undersecretary Gina Gonong, Education Secretary Sonny Angara, Sprix, Inc. President and CEO Hiroyuki Tsuneishi, Sprix, Inc. Lead Development Officer Leo Shoji, Sprix, Inc. Director Shinya Sato, and Sprix, Inc. Philippines Chief Representative Algrace Avancena.

deped.gov.ph

DepEd Philippines

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learning needs of every student."

The initiative aligns with DepEd's ongoing commitment to elevate education quality across the Philippines, resonating with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s vision of providing equal opportunities and resources for all Filipino learners. By leveraging

international expertise through this partnership, the Philippines is taking a proactive step towards enhancing the mathematics proficiency of its students, a critical factor for success in today's increasingly competitive academic environment.

As this program rolls out, stakeholders in

education are optimistic that it will bridge gaps in student learning, ensuring that every Filipino child has access to the tools they need to excel in mathematics. With the support of innovative solutions like TOFAS, the future of math education in the Philippines looks promising. (PRT)

## PHILIPPINES CONCLUDES INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY WITH CALL FOR GLOBAL COLLABORATION

PASAY CITY, 30 October 2024 — The Philippines has successfully wrapped up the International Conference on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) at the Philippine International Convention Center, highlighting the critical role of women in fostering peace and security worldwide. Organized by the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity (OPAPRU), the conference focused on "Forging Collaboration and Convergence for Advancing Women, Peace, and Security."

Prominent speak-

ers, including Department of Budget and Management Secretary Amenah Pangandaman, Philippine Commission on Women Chairperson Ermelita Valdeavilla, and Department of Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo, emphasized the necessity of global cooperation to advance women's participation in peacebuilding efforts. Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy President Amina Rasul-Bernardo and OPAPRU Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. also addressed challenges in achieving gender-responsive peace initiatives, stressing the need for sustained support and resources.

The event marks a key moment for assess-

ing the progress of the WPS agenda, as nations reaffirm their commitment to creating inclusive pathways for women in peace and security. As part of this agenda, ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation's Executive Director Ambassador Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja highlighted regional cooperation as essential to empowering women across sectors and societies.

With renewed commitment and insights gained, the Philippines and international stakeholders aim to strengthen collaborative efforts that ensure women's contributions to peace are acknowledged and amplified globally. (PRT)

(I-PROBES). I-PROBES referred the case to the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking - NAIA Task Force Against Trafficking (IACAT-NAIATFAT), which in turn directed it to the NBI-HTRAD for further investigation.

Investigators are currently tracking leads on two additional suspects: Joyce Mlang,

alleged to have posted online advertisements offering \$8,000 to \$10,000 as compensation for surrogate mothers, and Wensen Shen, reportedly associated with ML&MLANG International Surrogacy and under investigation for suspected involvement in the trafficking scheme.

The case under-

scores the Philippine government's commitment to combating all forms of trafficking, including the exploitation of women through illicit surrogacy operations. Balondo remains in custody as investigations continue, with authorities working to dismantle the broader network involved in the surrogacy scheme. (PRT)



## ATTY. VOLTAIRE P. AGAS APPOINTED OFFICER-IN-CHARGE OF SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM (SSS)

PRESS RELEASE



**PBBM designates Branch  
Operations executive as SSS  
officer-in-charge**



**Manila, Philippines – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has appointed Atty. Voltaire P. Agas, Executive Vice President of the Branch Operations Sector of the Social Security System (SSS), as the Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of the state-run pension fund. The appointment was formalized through a memorandum signed by Executive Secretary Lucas P. Bersamin on October 17, 2024.**

Agas, a seasoned public servant, will temporarily assume leadership of the SSS to ensure the continuous and efficient delivery of services to its members, pensioners, and beneficiaries. His appointment follows the end of Commissioner Robert Joseph M. De Claro's term as acting head, who remains a member of the Social Security Commission (SSC) representing the Employers' Group.

Agas began his tenure at the SSS in 2012 as Chief Legal Counsel, a role he held until 2022. Since March 2022, he has overseen branch operations nationwide, focusing on membership expansion programs, contribution collections, and benefits processing.

His recent appointment as OIC marks a significant milestone, as he becomes the first career official within the ranks of the SSS to lead the organization in this capacity. Agas's leadership will play a crucial role in upholding the trust and welfare of SSS members while ensuring seamless operations across the pension fund's branches.

With over three decades of public service, Agas has held various roles, including in the Public Attorney's

Office (PAO) and the National Prosecution Service under the Department of Justice. He also served as a trial judge in Quezon City, contributing to the justice system with distinction.

In August 2024, Agas received the Outstanding Public Servant Award from PAO during its 8th MCLE-Accredited National Convention of Public Attorneys, recognizing his exemplary contributions to public service.

Beyond the public sector, Agas worked as a socio-economist on community development projects under the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank after graduating from the University of the Philippines. In the private sector, he spent more than a decade as a corporate legal manager and chief compliance officer for Ayala Life Insurance Group, now known as BPI AIA Life Assurance Corporation.

Agas replaces De Claro, who was appointed by the Social Security Commission to ensure the day-to-day operations of the fund until the new OIC was appointed by the President. As the SSS faces ongoing efforts to expand membership and improve benefits, Agas's experience and institutional knowledge will be vital in navigating operational challenges.

The SSS is one of the country's most essential government institutions, providing social protection and financial security to millions of Filipino workers. Agas's appointment reflects the administration's focus on continuity, accountability, and service excellence to benefit members, retirees, and their families. (PRT)

## DOT ASSISTS STRANDED TOURISTS AMID TROPICAL STORM KRISTINE'S DISRUPTIONS

**Manila, Philippines – The Department of Tourism (DOT) has launched assistance efforts for hundreds of tourists stranded across various regions of the country due to the impact of Tropical Storm Kristine. The storm, which has caused severe travel disruptions and damaged multiple tourist sites, has affected both local and international travelers.**

In a recent advisory released by the DOT, as of midnight on October 25, 529 tourists have been reported stranded across different regions. The affected areas include:

- Region II (Batanes): 179 tourists
- Region IV-A (Mauab, Quezon, and Lobo,

- Batangas): 16 tourists
- MIMAROPA (Oriental Mindoro and Marinduque): 33 tourists
- Region VI (Boracay): 12 tourists
- Region VIII (Maasin): 25 tourists
- Region XIII (Surigao del Norte): 264 tourists

Several tourist attractions in Sorsogon, Masbate, Batangas, and the Dinagat Islands have also sustained damage from the storm.

The DOT is closely monitoring the situation and verifying reports of additional stranded tourists, especially in Northern Luzon and the Bicol Region, which have been hit hardest by the storm. Updated advisories will be issued as information becomes available.

Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco assured the public of the DOT's commitment to safeguarding the well-being of both local and foreign visitors. "We are working closely with our regional offices, local government units (LGUs), and other government agencies to ensure immediate assistance to stranded tourists. The safety of our tourists remains our top priority," Secretary Frasco stated.

Through its regional offices, the DOT is coordinating with accommodation establishments to provide temporary shelter for affected travelers. The agency is also working hand-in-hand with the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC)

and local authorities to extend assistance swiftly.

Travelers are urged to stay informed by following official weather updates from PAGASA and local advisories. The DOT advises travelers to avoid visiting storm-affected areas until local authorities declare them safe.

For those seeking help or information, the DOT's Tourist Assistance Agents are available through various channels:

- Mobile: 0995-835-5155

- Facebook: Department of Tourism – Philippines

- Email: touristassistance@tourism.gov.ph

- Live Webchat: beta.tourism.gov.ph

## PSA TO UNVEIL...

from page 1

The PPA initiative is expected to enhance understanding of local economies, showcasing their respective contributions to the national economy. The release aims to support evidence-based decision-making and encourage economic planning at both the provincial and municipal levels.

The dissemination for a will serve as a platform for stakeholders to engage in discussions about the economic data, share insights, and explore opportunities for regional development. This initiative is anticipated to foster collaboration among local government units (LGUs), business sectors, and other relevant organizations, driving

collective efforts towards economic growth and resilience.

By making this economic data accessible, the PSA aims to empower local communities with the information necessary to identify growth areas and address economic challenges effectively. The initiative underscores the importance of data-driven governance in achieving sustainable development goals across the Philippines.

As the November release date approaches, anticipation builds among local leaders and economists who recognize the potential impact of the PPA findings on regional development strategies and initiatives.

## DOLE BAGS MULTIPLE AWARDS FOR EFFICIENT SERVICE DELIVERY

**The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) reaffirmed its commitment to ease of doing business and efficient service delivery in the government as it bagged on Wednesday multiple gold and silver awards at this year's Anti-Red Tape Authority Report Card Survey (ARTA RCS) Awarding Ceremony.**

The report card survey of all agencies providing government service is pursuant to Republic Act No. 11032, also known as the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018, which mandates government agencies, including local government units and government-owned and -controlled corporations, to streamline processes and reduce red tape for both business and non-business transactions.

DOLE's Central Office, Regions 1, and 11 received gold awards, with an overall RCS score of 97.37 percent, 100.33 percent, and 99.33 percent, respectively. Scorecards of the top-performing DOLE offices revealed high compliance with ARTA mandates, including compliance with the Citizen's Charter, designating a Committee on Anti-Red Tape, having an initial reengineering plan, establishing a zero backlog program, and submitting

a client satisfaction measurement report, among others.

DOLE Regions 1 and 11 were also recognized as the second and fourth top-performing agencies in the national government sector.

Meanwhile, DOLE CALABARZON was honored with a silver award for a very satisfactory RCS score of 93.82 percent.

Receiving the award for the DOLE Central Office is Labor Undersecretary Felipe N. Egargo, Jr., together with Assistant Secretary Warren M. Micalat and FMS OIC-Director Edithliane P. Tadeo. Regional Director Exequiel Ronie A. Guzman received the gold award for DOLE Region 1, while Assistant Regional Director Jason P. Balais received the award for Region 11 and Assistant Regional Director Marion Sevilla accepted the award for DOLE CALABARZON.

ARTA RCS is the Authority's tool to quantitatively measure the perception of clients on the quality, efficiency, and adequacy of different government services. Survey agencies were also scored based on their institutionalization of Republic Act 11032 mandates. The first full cycle of the RCS was implemented for Financial Year 2023. (PRT)

## HOW TO RUN...

from page 2

Like Peter, we may feel unworthy after experiencing failure, but God's purpose for us remains unchanged. Jesus invites

us to follow Him and embrace the work He has for us, regardless of our past.

God restores, run back to Jesus.



## DTI RIZAL HONES ENTREPRENEURS ON WRITING BUSINESS PLAN



**Antipolo City, Philippines – October 30, 2024** – The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Rizal successfully hosted a seminar/workshop titled "Writeshop on Business Plan Preparation," aimed at empowering local entrepreneurs. The event, attended by 24 enthusiastic beneficiaries of the Champs Program, took place in the DTI Rizal Training Room and was facilitated by Business Counselor John Francis L. Sta. Rita.

The workshop was energized by the welcome remarks of Provincial Director Ms. Cleotilde M.

Duran, who emphasized the importance of solid business planning in today's competitive market. Following her inspiring introduction, participants were guided by the knowledgeable speaker Ms. Melanie Convento, Dean of the College of Business and Accountancy at World Citi College Antipolo. Dean Convento shared valuable insights into the process and significance of crafting a comprehensive business plan, providing attendees with practical tools and strategies.

Throughout the workshop, participants engaged in lively discussions,

sharing their personal business experiences and applying the concepts presented by Dean Convento to their unique situations. The collaborative environment fostered a sense of community and support, with attendees gaining not only knowledge but also valuable networking opportunities.

The DTI Rizal remains committed to supporting local entrepreneurs through initiatives like the Champs Program, which aims to nurture small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Province of Rizal.

## SELF-CONFESSED DRUG LORD KERWIN ESPINOSA EYES MAYORAL SEAT IN ALBUERA, LEYTE AMID CONTROVERSY



**MANILA, Philippines — Self-confessed drug lord Kerwin Espinosa has set his sights on the mayoral position in Albueria, Leyte, officially filing his certificate of candidacy on October 1. Accompanied by fellow aspirants from his political slate, "Bando Espinosa-Pundok Kausaban," and a throng of supporters from various barangays, Espinosa's candidacy has sparked widespread concern and debate over the implications of a criminal figure seeking public office.**

Espinosa is the son of the late mayor of Albueria, Ronaldo Espinosa, who was alleged to have been involved in illegal activities before his death in 2016, which was described by the Commission on Human Rights and the Senate as an "extrajudicial killing." The Espinosa family has long been embroiled in controversy, particularly during former President Rodrigo Duterte's administration, which aggressively targeted drug trafficking in the Philippines.

Despite a tumultuous legal history that includes an indictment for illegal drug trade in West-

ern Visayas in August 2021 and ongoing money laundering charges in a Pasay court, Espinosa has managed to navigate through various legal challenges. A Leyte court dismissed several cases against him due to insufficient evidence, and he was ordered to be reimbursed P600,000 in June 2023.

Espinosa's bid for mayor has not only raised eyebrows but has also ignited discussions among lawmakers and opposition senators who provided him with the opportunity to share his perspective. In a striking move, these senators offered Espinosa the floor to narrate his side of the story during a recent hearing, extending him consideration that many argue is unwarranted given his criminal background. Critics have questioned the appropriateness of providing such a platform to someone with Espinosa's reputation, fearing it might normalize the acceptance of criminals in political spaces.

During his testimony, Espinosa discussed the dynamics of his family's legacy in Albueria, defending his aspirations

to serve the community despite the shadows cast by his past. He previously made headlines in 2016 when he alleged that he had funneled P8 million in drug money to former senator Leila de Lima through her former driver, Ronnie Dayan. However, in a dramatic turn, Espinosa recanted these allegations in April 2022, claiming he was coerced into making the claims.

The implications of Espinosa's candidacy extend beyond his legal battles, highlighting a significant shift in the political landscape of Albueria and raising questions about the standards of eligibility for public office in the Philippines. His aspirations to become mayor are viewed by some as a challenge to the integrity of public service, while his supporters argue that he deserves a chance to contribute to his community.

As the elections approach, the political environment in Albueria will undoubtedly become a focal point of debate, reflecting broader societal issues surrounding crime, governance, and the expectations of public officials in the Philippines. (PRT)

## THE SUPREME...

from page 2

However, the ruling could inadvertently set a dangerous precedent, allowing elected officials to distance themselves from accountability for their municipal responsibilities. The rationale that the prosecution failed to prove intentional wrongdoing by Talaue does not alleviate the fact that the non-remittance of over PHP 12 million in contributions is a significant financial oversight, potentially affecting the social insurance benefits of countless municipal employees. It is essential for local executives to take ownership of their entire operational landscape, including financial obligations, rather than absolving themselves of responsibilities due to a lack of explicit statutory language.

Moreover, this case

highlights a broader systemic issue within local government structures in the Philippines. Many mayors and local officials often operate under ambiguous guidelines regarding their functions, which can lead to mismanagement and neglect of duties that significantly impact their constituents. Local government codes should be revisited and revised to ensure that all officials understand their roles and responsibilities, particularly regarding financial management and accountability.

As we reflect on the Supreme Court's ruling, it is imperative to consider the long-term implications for governance in the Philippines. While legal technicalities are necessary in the pursuit of justice, they should not undermine the fundamental

principles of accountability and public service. Elected officials must remember that their primary duty is to their constituents, and they should be held responsible for ensuring that the financial obligations of their offices are met diligently and transparently.

In conclusion, the acquittal of Mayor Talaue serves as both a legal clarification and a clarion call for improved governance practices. It is an opportunity for the local government to reevaluate its structures and responsibilities to prevent similar oversights in the future. As we move forward, let us advocate for clearer guidelines that empower local executives while holding them accountable for their roles as stewards of public welfare.

## ERC COMMITS TO SWIFT REGULATORY ACTION FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION AMID 2025 BUDGET PROPOSAL

**PASIG CITY — The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) is committed to enhancing the efficiency and responsiveness of its regulatory functions, prioritizing consumer protection and the equitable application of energy laws. This commitment was emphasized as the ERC presented its proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 budget to the Senate Committee on Finance on Wednesday, Octo-**

**ber 9, 2024.**

Despite structural and manpower limitations, the ERC, led by Officer-in-Charge Chairperson and CEO Jesse Hermogenes T. Andres, assured the Senate that it is steadfast in its mission to complete a comprehensive performance audit of the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) by year-end. This audit aims to scrutinize power transmission services to ensure fair and reasonable rates are passed on to Filipino consumers. Chair-

person Andres underscored the urgency of this initiative, stating, "Lives of Filipinos are affected day in and day out, so we need to act more expeditiously on the matters before the ERC."

In his address, Chairperson Andres reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to uphold the highest standards of independence, credibility, and public accountability. "It is our duty to protect the interests of the consumers because this industry is deeply imbued with public

interest," he asserted. He also stressed that the ERC's regulatory role ensures a level playing field for investors and energy stakeholders, assuring them of a fair and impartial application of the law.

To support its mission, the ERC intends to streamline internal processes to expedite regulatory functions. "We will conduct a comprehensive process audit within the ERC to deliver timely services that are expected of us," Andres noted, recognizing that ef-

iciency within the ERC is essential for its regulatory responsibilities to be met effectively.

The ERC also aims to strengthen its engagement with energy sector stakeholders and local communities, enhancing public awareness of its pivotal role in protecting consumer rights and regulating fair practices within the industry. Chairperson Andres added that this proactive engagement is key to fostering transparency and building trust in the Com-

mission's activities and decisions.

As the sole energy regulatory body in the Philippines, the ERC's FY 2025 budget is essential for sustaining its capacity to safeguard consumer interests while ensuring industry fairness. Lawmakers present at the budget hearing highlighted the importance of empowering the ERC to deliver on its mandate, given the integral role of energy regulation in national development and everyday Filipino life.



# A VICTORY...

from page 2

The RAFT program, launched by the BIR, is a strategic initiative designed to combat these fraudulent practices by bringing the offenders to justice. By focusing on both users and sellers of ghost receipts, the BIR is addressing the root of the problem. Since its inception in December 2022, the RAFT program has taken aggressive measures, from raids on organized crime syndicates to the creation of high-tech solutions in collaboration with Ateneo de Manila University's Department of Mathematics. The program's data-driven approach to spotting suspicious transactions is innovative, equipping the BIR to track and dismantle these fraudulent networks with precision.

Yet, the question remains: Why is this issue so prevalent? The answer lies in a toxic culture of corporate entitlement where certain business leaders feel

untouchable, manipulating the system to protect their profits while disregarding their responsibility to society. The latest cases show that the BIR, under the RAFT program, is intent on ensuring that corporate privilege does not translate into immunity from the law. With 26 criminal cases filed against corporations and their officers, the program is sending a resounding message that tax evasion will not go unpunished.

This milestone victory should remind corporate players of their duty to act within the bounds of law and honor the social contract that demands their fair contribution to society. Our taxes fund essential services—from healthcare to education to infrastructure—that benefit every citizen. Corporate officers who exploit the tax system for personal gain disregard this shared responsibility, leaving others to carry the

weight of their dishonesty.

As we witness the progression of these cases, it's clear that the government is prepared to enforce a zero-tolerance policy toward tax fraud. This action from the BIR isn't just about pursuing individual cases but transforming the larger corporate mindset toward one of accountability and transparency. Let this serve as a wake-up call to all those tempted by similar schemes: the era of unregulated corporate exploitation is drawing to a close.

The fight against ghost receipts exemplifies a broader struggle for justice and integrity in governance. May the momentum generated by the RAFT program inspire continued vigilance and reforms to create a tax system that reflects fairness, transparency, and accountability. In a society where everyone shares in the responsibilities of progress, victories like this reaffirm that tax evasion, no matter how sophisticated, will face the law's full force.

# PUBLIKO NEWS...

from page 2

Publiko offers a uniquely streamlined process for government-mandated publications and legal documentation, ensuring clients' needs are met without the prohibitive costs. Legal publications can often be a daunting and expensive task, and Publiko has consistently worked to make these services as accessible as possible, removing barriers that previously may have discouraged businesses or individuals from navigating these processes.

Publiko's roots are intertwined with the remarkable journey of its founder, Mark Anthony B. Caiña, whose background in corporate sales and a remarkable tenure as a District Sales Manager at ABS-CBN have profoundly shaped Publiko's approach to publication and client management. His drive

and expertise combined with the editorial finesse of his wife, Michelle Villanueva-Caiña, a successor of veteran journalist Mr. Del Villanueva, bring a unique blend of business savvy and journalistic integrity to the company. Together, Mark and Michelle navigated the challenges brought on by the pandemic and took on the ambitious task of launching Publiko—a move grounded in their shared passion for accessible information.

With Publiko, the duo envisions a publication that delivers trustworthy information without compromising affordability. Mark's extensive network and experience have been instrumental in opening doors, while Michelle's journalistic background has ensured Publiko's editorial standards meet the industry's best. Together, they lead a team

dedicated to expanding Publiko's reach while preserving its mission of accessibility.

Publiko's journey is just beginning, and as we grow, we remain dedicated to our core values of transparency, accessibility, and affordability. Our vision to become the Philippines' leading publication and documentation provider is ambitious, but with our new image and a sharpened focus, we are equipped to meet the challenges ahead. As Publiko continues to expand, we aim to strengthen our role in the legal and publication sector, offering services that not only inform but empower.

Through the innovations we've put in place, the expertise we've accumulated, and the passion that drives us, Publiko News Publishing is determined to become a trusted name for Filipinos—one that bridges information with purpose and places a quality publication within everyone's reach.

## BIR AND NBI RAID ILLEGAL CIGARETTE FACTORY IN CABANATUAN, UNCOVERING P636 MILLION IN TAX LIABILITIES

**Cabanatuan City, Philippines – The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), in cooperation with the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), conducted a successful raid on an illicit cigarette factory in Cabanatuan City, uncovering tax liabilities amounting to Php 636,935,703.54.**

BIR Commissioner Romeo D. Lumagui emphasized the agency's commitment to combating illicit trade\*and ensuring fairness in the marketplace. "The BIR will continue to raid large-scale illicit cigarette warehouses, traders, and manufacturers. This P636-million raid shows our commitment to a fair and equal marketplace. Expect more raids," Lumagui said.

The clandestine operation was located on the ground floor of a building disguised as a

rest house, situated behind a gasoline station. The factory had multiple layers of security, with two gates leading to the facility, making it difficult to access.

During the raid, investigators discovered the factory's storage area hidden inside container trucks covered with camouflage tarps. The authorities also found a bunker and a firing range on the premises, underscoring the illegal operation's attempts to remain concealed.

Fifteen Chinese nationals were arrested during the raid and are currently under investigation.

The BIR and NBI teams found production machines, counterfeit revenue stamps, tobacco leaves, and other raw materials used for manufacturing the illicit cigarettes. The factory was in unsanitary conditions, with tobacco leaves scattered on the

floor, further highlighting the substandard practices employed by the operators.

The operators face multiple violations under the National Internal Revenue Code (NIRC), including: Section 263: Unlawful possession or removal of excise-taxed articles without payment of tax; Section 265-B: Violations by manufacturers, importers, and sellers of equipment for manufacturing excisable goods; Section 260: Possession of cigarette paper in bobbins or rolls without authorization; Section 255: Failure to file accurate tax returns and remit taxes; Section 254: Attempt to evade or defeat tax; Section 145: Violations related to cigars and cigarettes; Section 236: Non-compliance with registration requirements

Authorities are currently conducting investigations into the factory's operations and its business



@romeolumaguijr

owners. The BIR has vowed to pursue legal actions against those involved in this large-scale illicit trade.

This successful raid reinforces the government's stance against tax evasion and illegal trade

activities. The DOF and BIR have been actively cracking down on unregistered and non-compliant manufacturers, ensuring that those engaging in illicit activities are held accountable.

The BIR aims to intensify efforts against illegal cigarette manufacturers and maintain equal competition in the industry, safeguarding both government revenues and public welfare. (PRT)

## CPD STRENGTHENS COMMITMENT TO ERADICATE HUNGER AND POVERTY THROUGH EPAHP PROGRAM

**Manila, Philippines – The Commission on Population and Development (CPD), led by Executive Director Usec. Lisa Grace Bersales, has reaffirmed its full support for the government's Enhanced Partnership Against Hunger and Poverty (EPAHP) program by signing a Joint Memorandum Circular in Malacañang on October 28, 2024. This move reflects CPD's utmost commitment to ad-**

**ressing hunger, poverty, and reproductive health challenges in marginalized communities.**

CPD has pledged to implement community-based distribution (CBD) schemes to ensure family planning (FP) supplies reach vulnerable populations. These schemes will provide indigent communities with expanded FP options through one-stop shops for family planning services, improving access to

reproductive health resources.

The agency is also focused on the dissemination of social and behavior change communication (SBCC) materials, promoting greater awareness of reproductive health and family planning across communities. These initiatives align with CPD's goal to empower underserved families with the tools needed to improve their health and well-being.

An essential part of

CPD's participation in the EP-AHP program is the ProtecTEEN initiative, also known as the Pagkalinga sa Kabataang Magulang at Kanilang Pamilya. This program targets adolescent mothers, ensuring that young parents and their families receive the support they need to thrive.

Through educational sessions and outreach, ProtecTEEN aims to equip teenage mothers with life skills, parenting knowledge, and access to family planning services. This holistic approach helps young parents make informed decisions, supporting both their personal development and the well-being of their children.

CPD also plans to provide technical assistance to barangays and communities, facilitating people-centered development planning. By adopting a participatory approach, CPD ensures that development initiatives are responsive to the unique needs of local populations, fostering sustainable growth and community engagement.

With this renewed commitment, the CPD aims to contribute meaningfully to the national goal of ending hunger and poverty. The enhanced collaboration through the EPAHP program embodies the principle of "Lahat para sa masayang pamilya at maunlad na pamayanan" (Ev-

eryone for happy families and prosperous communities).

CPD's participation in EPAHP demonstrates the agency's recognition that family planning, reproductive health, and community development are vital components of poverty alleviation. By ensuring that resources and services are accessible to marginalized groups, the CPD reinforces the government's broader objective of inclusive and sustainable development.

This multi-sectoral approach aligns with the national agenda to uplift the lives of Filipinos, making it clear that every family deserves dignity, health, and opportunity. (PRT)



**AFFIDAVIT OF SELF ADJUDICATION BY A SOLE HEIR WITH DEED OF ABSOLUTE SALE**

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the late FRANCIS LOWREN ENCALLADO MUÑOZ, was extrajudicially self-adjudicated by a sole heir as per Doc. No. 340; Page No. 68; Book No. VIII; Series of 2024 before Atty. Ma. Cecilia T. Abayon, Notary Public.

*Publiko News Publishing: November 4, 11 and 18, 2024*

**EXTRAJUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF ESTATE OF VIRGILIO PINEDA AQUINO WITH DEED OF SALE**

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the late VIRGILIO PINEDA AQUINO, was extrajudicially settled among heirs as per Doc. No. 165; Page No. 34; Book No. XXVIII; Series of 2024 before Atty. Ricardo M. Perez, Notary Public.

*Publiko News Publishing: November 4, 11 and 18, 2024*

**EXTRAJUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF THE ESTATE OF THE DECEDENT JOSE M. ZALDARRIAGA**

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the late JOSE MAGALONA ZALDARRIAGA, was extrajudicially settled among heirs as per Doc. No. 488; Page No. 99; Book No. 54; Series of 2024 before Atty. Sherluck Jun C. Villegas, Notary Public.

*Publiko News Publishing: November 4, 11 and 18, 2024*

**EXTRAJUDICIAL SETTLEMENT WITH WAIVER OF RIGHTS AMONG THE HEIRS**

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the late MARIETTA NAVARRO NELSON, was extrajudicially settled among heirs as per Doc. No. 504; Page No. 102; Book No. XV; Series of 2024 before Atty. Phoebe Lynn S. Carreon, Notary Public.

*Publiko News Publishing: November 4, 11 and 18, 2024*

**DEED OF EXTRAJUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF THE ESTATE OF THE LATE PEDRO J. TAN OF MOTORIZED VEHICLE WITH SIMULTANEOUS DEED OF SALE**

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the late PEDRO J. TAN, was extrajudicially settled among heirs as per Doc. No. 424; Page No. 86; Book No. XV; Series of 2024 before Atty. Al Whilan A. Baljon, Notary Public.

*Publiko News Publishing: November 4, 11 and 18, 2024*

**PRESIDENT MARCOS JR. HONORS 2024 METROBANK FOUNDATION OUTSTANDING FILIPINOS**

**Manila, Philippines— President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. awarded the prestigious Metrobank Foundation Outstanding Filipinos medallion of excellence to 10 exceptional individuals during a ceremony held at the President's Hall in Malacañan Palace on October 28, 2024.**

This year's honorees include four teachers, three soldiers, and three police officers, all recognized for their remarkable dedication, competence, and integrity in public service. Guided by the Foundation's motto, "A Heart That Serves," the awardees demonstrated unwavering commitment and resilience, even in the most challenging circumstances.

Now celebrating its 39th year, the Metrobank Foundation Outstanding Filipinos Program continues to honor individuals whose contributions serve as a beacon of patriotism, social responsibility, and service. Since its inception in 1985, the program has recognized a total of 715 Outstanding Filipinos, composed of 384 teachers, 172 soldiers, and 159 police officers.

In his speech, Presi-

dent Marcos emphasized the significance of recognizing public servants who embody the highest standards of professionalism and integrity, inspiring others to pursue excellence.

"These exceptional individuals reflect the best of what the Filipino spirit stands for – courage, dedication, and a heart that serves. Their commitment uplifts not only their institutions but also our nation," the President said during the ceremony.

The Metrobank Foundation implements the program in partnership with key government agencies and civic organizations, including the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and the Philippine National Police (PNP). Support from the Philippine Savings Bank (PS-Bank) and Rotary Clubs such as Makati Metro and New Manila East also reinforces the award's impact in highlighting positive role models across the nation.

Aside from the golden medallion of excellence, each awardee received a trophy and a cash prize of PhP1 million,

underscoring the foundation's commitment to acknowledging meaningful public service.

The four award-winning teachers were recognized for transformative teaching methods and their ability to cultivate curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking in students, even in resource-challenged environments.

Meanwhile, the three soldiers demonstrated heroism and leadership in safeguarding communities, contributing to peace-building efforts, and upholding the dignity of the uniformed service.

The three police officers earned their recognition by promoting peace, public safety, and human rights through innovative community policing programs and integrity-driven leadership in their respective jurisdictions.

Metrobank Foundation President Aniceto Sobrepeña remarked on the importance of honoring these individuals as living exemplars of public service:

"Through their dedication, our awardees remind us that greatness lies not only in extraordinary moments but

also in everyday acts of service that positively shape the lives of those around us."

As the country moves forward, the Metrobank Foundation Outstanding Filipinos Program continues to serve as a testament to the value of public service and a call to action for all citizens to embrace the ideals of patriotism, integrity, and excellence in their own fields.

This year's awardees now join an illustrious roster of past recipients, becoming part of a legacy of leaders whose lives are a source of inspiration for generations to come.

With these honors, the government and private sector reaffirm the importance of recognizing individuals who not only perform their duties but also go above and beyond—shaping a brighter and more hopeful future for the nation.

"These men and women are not just professionals; they are heroes in their own right," President Marcos concluded. "They represent the Filipino spirit at its best, reminding us that, even amid challenges, there is always room for excellence, honor, and service to others." (PRT)

**"MAKE IT HAPPEN...**

from page 8

This narrative of optimism isn't new to the Philippine government, but what makes this delegation different is the sheer scale and potential impact of the companies involved. Actis, which has already committed a whopping USD 600 million into Meralco's Terra Solar project, is set to develop the world's largest renewable energy project in the Philippines, a first-of-its-kind initiative for a nation heavily reliant on coal and traditional energy sources. This pioneering investment brings hope not only for energy reform but also for thousands of new jobs in green technology, an area where the Philippines has tremendous potential to lead in Southeast Asia.

Likewise, BP Plc, already familiar with the Philippine market through Castrol, represents a massive opportunity to leverage renewable energy innovations. And with infrastructure investment fund Global Infrastructure Partners, managing USD 170 billion in assets worldwide, engaging in dialogue about Philippine prospects, it's clear the delegation's impact could go far beyond mere public relations. These meetings could translate into the kind of tangible, infrastructural development the country urgently needs

to sustain its economic growth and foster resilience.

However, the true test will be in the Philippines' ability to provide the support and structure needed for these investors to truly flourish. In the past, bureaucracy, regulatory hurdles, and an inconsistent investment climate have challenged foreign entities. But as Philippine leaders continue to adopt policy reforms aimed at streamlining investments, these talks offer a window of optimism. With organizations like PEZA and the BCDA standing behind Secretary Recto's pitch, the delegation seems well-positioned to ensure that promises of stability and opportunity aren't just words but actionable, implementable assurances.

For British companies like Revolut, which revolutionized digital banking in the UK and Europe, the Philippines could represent an ideal launchpad to expand its foothold in Asia. This kind of investment in fintech could fundamentally reshape financial inclusion in the Philippines, empowering millions of Filipinos who remain unbanked and underserved. Imagine the transformative potential if digital banking and financial services became as accessible and universal as mobile phones in the country.

The delegation's presence was more than an attempt to court investments; it was a bold move to position the Philippines as a reliable, modernized, and strategic business destination in Southeast Asia. While the rhetoric of foreign investment has long been a staple in the country's economic ambitions, Secretary Recto and his team appear to be building a framework that backs their words with concrete plans. A clear-cut path for these deals to materialize and evolve into sustainable partnerships will require follow-through and commitment from every level of government.

Moving forward, if these discussions translate into sustained investment inflows, we may finally see the Philippines rising as a major hub for clean energy, technology, and global finance. It's a monumental undertaking, but by securing meaningful collaborations with global powerhouses like those engaged in London, the Philippines may well be on the brink of economic transformation. Here's hoping that the confidence and optimism expressed in London are not just promises but seeds planted in fertile ground—ones that will flourish and secure a future where Filipinos reap the benefits of sustainable progress.

Indeed, the path has been laid out; now, it's up to the Philippines to make it happen.

**PNR INSPECTS...**

from page 8

During the site visit, GM Miranda was joined by key personnel involved in the project, including: Abdul Aziz M. Pangandaman, Head Executive Assistant and Officer-in-Charge of Corporate Planning; Edgar John P. Bilayon; Officer-in-Charge of the Civil Security Office; Engr. Edwin Q. Balong-Angey; Manager of the Engineering Manila Division; Engr. Warren L. Zipangan; Consultant Rina M. Garcia and Mohammad G. Basher; Planning Officers from the Corporate Planning Division.

Also present were representatives from the Department of Transportation (DOTr) SC Project Management Office (PMO) and the Greater Capital Railway (GCR) Consortium, the group responsible for construction and engineering oversight.

The team evaluated the status of ongoing civil works, utility relocation efforts, and challenges in securing right-of-way (ROW) access—one of the most pressing issues for infrastructure projects of this scale. GM Miranda stressed the importance of close coordination between the DOTr and PNR to address bottlenecks and expedite the project's completion.

The NSCR Calamba Extension aims to extend rail services from Manila to Southern Tagalog, reducing travel time and easing congestion along major highways. Meanwhile, the Clark Extension will enhance connectivity between Manila and Central Luzon, including the Clark International Airport, boosting the region's economic potential and improving accessibility for commuters.

The railway extension is expected to reduce travel time between Metro Manila and Calamba City from over two hours to just under one hour. It will also feature modernized train stations, improved safety protocols, and energy-efficient trains, making public transport more reliable and eco-friendly.

The DOTr and PNR reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the seamless execution of the project, which is seen as essential to enhancing the country's mass transit network and reducing road congestion. The North-South Commuter Railway is also poised to generate employment during construction and, upon completion, improve the daily commute of thousands of passengers.

"We are focused on resolving right-of-way

issues and accelerating construction works to deliver this project on time. This infrastructure development will not only improve public transport but also contribute to economic growth by connecting major urban and regional centers," GM Miranda stated during the inspection.

The NSCR-EX is part of the government's broader initiative to modernize public transportation and meet the increasing demand for reliable commuter services across Luzon. Once completed, the project will become a vital component of the country's integrated railway system, providing seamless travel from Southern Luzon to Central Luzon, including key business hubs and transport gateways.

With the combined efforts of PNR, DOTr, and the GCR Consortium, the government aims to ensure that this transformative project benefits the commuting public and contributes to the sustainable development of the region.

The next phases of the inspection and monitoring efforts will focus on resolving pending ROW issues, completing utility relocations, and streamlining civil works to meet the projected timeline for partial operations by 2026. (PRT)



# PUBLIKO

News Publishing

## INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION

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## Wise Words to Ponder

**There are five non-negotiable characteristics that every effective leader must have: a sense of calling, an ability to communicate, creativity in problem solving, generosity and consistency.**

**- John C. Maxwell**



## “MAKE IT HAPPEN IN THE PHILIPPINES”: A BOLD PITCH WITH AMBITIOUS POTENTIAL

The Philippine government's recent efforts to lure British investors with the slogan, “Make It Happen in the Philippines,” could be the beginning of a dynamic new phase for Philippine growth—if those bold claims can indeed be realized. Led by Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto, a powerhouse Philippine delegation met with some of the United Kingdom's most formidable financial giants. British companies, from Actis to BP Plc, and even digital banking leader

Revolut, were briefed on the Philippines' economic potential and the stability of investing in a country ripe for development, innovation, and partnership. For the Philippines, a country in dire need of reducing poverty and increasing sustainable job opportunities, this British investor engagement represents more than potential deals—it signals a promising turning point in the country's economic landscape. Secretary Recto confidently emphasized

the predictability and profitability of doing business in the Philippines, spotlighting the robust returns and long-term benefits for foreign investments. This declaration is especially important as the nation aims to tackle deeply rooted poverty issues, something Recto hinted at in his appeal to investors to help achieve the government's goal of reducing poverty to single digits. **(turn to page 7)**

# PNR INSPECTS PROGRESS OF NORTH-SOUTH COMMUTER RAILWAY EXTENSION IN CALAMBA



Philippine National Railways | officialpnr | PNR\_GovPH

Calamba City, Philippines – The Philippine National Railways (PNR) General Manager Deovanni S. Miranda led a site inspection of the North-South Commuter Railway Extension (NSCR-EX) Project in Calamba City on Tuesday, October 29. The visit is part of ongoing efforts to ensure timely progress in the construction of this crucial infrastructure initiative, which aims to improve transportation across Luzon.

The NSCR-EX project, which includes the SCR Calamba Extension and the Clark Extension (also known as the Malolos-Clark Railway Project), is part of the larger North-South Railway Project - South Line Commuter (NSRP-SC). These projects will enhance connectivity between Metro Manila, Central Luzon, and Southern Tagalog, providing a faster, more efficient alternative to road travel. **(turn to page 7)**

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