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NIA continues P29 per kilo-rice program in Laguna

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) – The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) Calabarzon resumed selling affordable rice to the region's vulnerable sector under the Bagong Bayaning Magsasaka (BBM) rice program which
(Turn to p. 2)



Marcos to Filipinos: Overcome challenges with faith, grace

MANILA – As Filipinos once again gather to mark the annual Feast of Jesus Nazareno on Thursday, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. called on the public to find strength in unity and compassion and hurdle challenges with faith and grace.

In his message for the traditional Catholic gathering, Marcos said the Feast of Jesus

Nazareno “puts into our mind the strength that allows us to find harmony in our faith as a people.”

Jesus Nazareno is a life-sized image of Jesus Christ carrying the cross. It has been a symbol of strength and devotion for Filipino Catholics for over 400 years.

The feast, one of the largest religious gatherings in the world,

sees millions of devotees participating in the Traslacion (procession), often barefoot, as they make their way through the streets of Manila in an expression of unwavering faith.

Marcos reflected on the significance of the image itself, saying that the act of carrying Jesus Nazareno and His cross serves as a poignant reminder of

the immense sacrifices made by Jesus Christ.

“It also speaks of the immense power and compassion of God who walks with us and hears our prayers, especially in our time of need,” he said.

The President encouraged Filipinos to extend the spirit of compassion, urging devotees to “reach out to those around us who
(Turn to p. 2)



TRASLACION 2025. The “andas” or carriage of the image of Jesus Nazareno moves through a crowd of devotees starting 4:40 a.m. Thursday (Jan. 9, 2025) at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila on the way to Quiapo Church. The annual procession attracts massive crowds showing a display of grand devotion, turning the streets of the Philippine capital into a sea of maroon and yellow. (PNA photo by Avito Dalan)

RDRRMC Calabarzon, nakaalerto sa aktibidad ng Bulkang Taal

LUNGSOD NG BATANGAS — Nananatiling nakaalerto at handa ang Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (RDRRMC) Calabarzon kasunod ng minor phreatomagmatic eruption ng Bulkang Taal noong Lunes ng gabi, Enero 6, 2025.

Sa mensahe ni RDRRMC Chairperson at Office of Civil Defense (OCD) IV-A Regional Director Carlos Eduardo Alvarez III, pinaalalahanan niya ang mga lokal na pamahalaan sa palig-

id ng Bulkang Taal na paigtingin ang kanilang kahandaan kaugnay ng patuloy na aktibidad ng bulkan.

Ayon kay Alvarez, dapat maging alerto ang mga komunidad sa paligid nito at isaayos ang mga kaukulang contingency plans bilang paghahanda na rin sa ibang panganib na dulot ng aktibidad ng Bulkang Taal.

Isang minor phreatomagmatic eruption ang naganap sa main crater ng Bulkang Taal bandang 7:34 ng gabi noong Enero 6, 2025. Nagdulot ito ng

600-metrong taas ng plume na may kasamang volcanic tremor na tumagal nang tatlong minuto, ayon sa Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

Bago ang naturang pagputok, iniulat ng Phivolcs ang pagtaas ng real-time seismic energy measurement (RSAM) ng Bulkang Taal simula noong Enero 4, 2025. Labindalawang volcanic earthquakes, kabilang ang anim na tremors, ang naitala rin ng ahensiya mula Enero 1, 2025.

Naobserbahan din



ang kawalan ng degassing at plume kasabay ng pagtaas ng RSAM, indikasyon ng pagbarrang ng mga daanan ng volcanic gas sa loob

ng bulkan na maaaring mag-trigger ng phreato- magmatic eruption. Ayon sa Phivolcs, bagama't nagkaroon

ng minor eruption, walang indikasyon upang itaas ang alert status ng Bulkang Taal, na nananatili pa
(Turn to p. 2)

MARCOS...FR. P. 1

need our kindness and empathy.”

He also called on the faithful to not only focus on their spiritual journeys but to actively work towards serving their communities, echoing the example set by the Nazarene.

“This colossal gathering of Filipinos in the streets of Manila is a testament to our people’s solidarity and camaraderie,” Marcos said.

“Let us remember that we are all called to hurdle the challenges that test our resolve with faith and grace as well as to reach out to those around us who need our kindness and empathy.”

His hope is for every devotee in the procession — whether in person or in spirit — to have a deeper bond with the Almighty and a higher purpose in serving others.

“I am confident that we are able to epitomize the example of the Nazarene in our daily walks in this world as hope bearers, peacemakers, and builders of society who will change their respective communities

with one good deed at a time,” he said.

The ‘andas’ or the carriage of the image of Jesus Nazareno started its way through the crowd of devotees and the streets of Manila around 4:40 a.m.

From the Quirino Grandstand, it will make its way to Quiapo Church in a procession expected to last for hours.

Red Cross gives medical aid to 100 devotees

Meanwhile, a total of 119 devotees in the Feast of Jesus Nazareno sought medical help as of 7:30 a.m. on Thursday.

The Philippine Red Cross (PRC) said some experienced difficulty in breathing, chest pain, hyperventilation, headache, elevated blood pressure and dizziness.

About 10 were brought to their emergency field hospitals, two of which were transported to the nearest hospitals for medical treatment.

The PRC also attended to other patients and took their vital signs. (With Ma. Teresa Montemayor/PNA)

DOH:...FR. P. 4

Noming from the north (Malabon-Navotas and Port Area), take Anda Circle then take Soriano Avenue (Intramuros), Magallanes Drive towards Chinatown

Trucks

Going to North Harbor from SLEX, straight ahead to Osmeña Hiway then right turn to Quirino Avenue, straight to Nagnahan Street, going to Lacson Avenue, left to Yuseco Street, and straight ahead to Capulong Street. Right turn or turn left to R-10

Road to destination.

Trucks coming from Parañaque area, right to Quirino Avenue to Mabini Bridge, then Lacson Avenue to destination. Same route may be utilized by going to south.

‘Ready’

Meanwhile, the Office of Civil Defense-National Capital Region (OCD-NCR) is ready for the annual religious festival, establishing a virtual emergency operations center for real-time communication among response clusters and local gov-

NIA...FR. P. 5

sells rice at P29 per kilo.

The BBM rice was produced and harvested by local farmers from Santa Maria, Laguna as part of the Farming Support Services Program (FSSP), also known as the NIA Rice Contract Farming Program.

Division Manager Engr. Fidel Martinez of NIA Laguna-Rizal said the FSSP is a partnership between NIA and irrigation association members where farmers’ harvests are sold directly to NIA.

“The rice harvested are supported by the program and is part of the goals of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to enrich the agricultural sector and meet the food security goals of the country,” Martinez said.

Some 2,000 sacks of rice or 10 kilograms per pack were made available for senior citizens, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), solo parents, and beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) during the Murang Bigas sa NIA program in Pila, Laguna on January 9.

A kilo of BBM rice at P29 per kilo is lower

ernment units.

In a statement Tuesday night, the OCD said NCR Director George Keyser visited the Manila Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office Emergency Operations Center, the Kartilya ng Katipunan Regional Incident Management Team Incident Command Post, the Quiapo Multi-Agency Command Center, and the Quirino Grandstand to ensure that the facilities were prepared.

“OCD-NCR outlined extensive plans es-

than the P50 per kilo of commercial rice in the market.

At present, the program covers 87 hectares of farmland in Sta. Maria, Laguna and supports 46 farmers from the Santamasi Irrigators Association Inc.

In September 2024, farmers were given farm inputs for the planting season up to the harvest stage in December 2024 where they are guaranteed of income as NIA purchases their harvests.

“The SANTAMASI is thankful for NIA that they have a program like this. The cost of production are all free, but the farmers still earn,” Ciriaco Reyes, vice president of the SANTAMASI Irrigators Association said.

NIA Regional Manager Engr. Roberto Dela Cruz said he was thankful to Sta. Maria farmers whose efforts made the supply of affordable rice possible.

He expressed the hope that more farmers would join the program so that rice continues to be within reach while driving up profits for farmers. (CH/PIA-Laguna)

established by Quiapo Parish Officials and the Manila local government unit, which include deployment strategies for the Incident Management Team, road closures, designated evacuation centers, and robust contingency plans in case of emergencies,” the OCD said. (With Priam F. Nepomuceno/PNA)

**SUPPORT
YOUR
LOCAL
POLICE**

RDRRMC...FR. P. 1

rin sa Alert Level 1.

Bilang bahagi ng kagandaan, ibinahagi ng Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) IV-A na may nakaantabay itong 180,000 relief items.

Samantala, nasa ilalim ng ‘code white’ ang Department of Health (DOH) Calabarzon at nakahanda ang kanilang ahensya para sa anumang health-related incidents kaugnay ng aktibidad ng Bulakang Taal.

Nakahanda rin ang Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) IV-A na mag-deploy ng mga interconnectivity support at communications box kung kinakailangan.

Sa sektor ng edukasyon, ipinaalala ng

Department of Education (DepEd) ang DepEd Order No. 22 na naglalaman ng direktiba ukol sa pagkakansela ng klase at trabaho sa mga paaralan sa panahon ng kalamidad at emergencies. Ayon dito, nasa desisyon ng mga local chief executives, sa pakikipag-ugnayan sa kanilang Schools Division Supervisors, ang pagsuspende ng face-to-face classes.

Samantala, ipinahayag ng Batangas Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO) na may anim na mobile kitchen ang lalawigan, pati na rin isang mobile clinic na maaaring gamitin sakaling magkaroon ng kalamidad. (BPDC, PIA BATANGAS)

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PGCs Medical and Dental Mission Brings Free Services to Residents of Brgy. San Mateo, Dasmariñas City

In the opening salvo of the Provincial Government of Cavite's medical outreach on January 7, 2025, the residents of Brgy. San Mateo in the City of Dasmariñas were given access to free medical and dental services in a highly successful medical mission. A total of 393 residents benefited from the initiative, with 343 individuals receiving medical consultations and 50 undergoing dental extractions.

The mission was made possible through the collaborative efforts of the Office of the Provincial Governor, in partnership with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer. Medical and dental practitioners from the General Emilio Aguinaldo Memorial Hospital (GEAMH) provided their expertise, ensuring the delivery of quality healthcare services.

Brgy. Chairman Isaias C. Villanueva expressed his gratitude to the provincial government for extending much-needed services to his constituents. Barangay Health Workers (BHWs) played a crucial role in facilitating the event and assisting residents.

The mission demonstrates the commitment of bringing healthcare closer to the people, especially in communities that need it most. It underscores the provincial government's dedication to improving public health and enhancing the well-being of Caviteños.--- OPIO

DOH reports 284 HMPV cases in 2024; monitors respiratory virus trends

MANILA – The Department of Health (DOH) on Wednesday reported 284 cases of human metapneumovirus (HMPV) in 2024, comprising 5.8 percent of the 4,921 positive samples tested for respiratory viruses.

Despite the low incidence, the DOH assures the public that HMPV infections are being monitored as part of the country's respiratory illness surveillance.

The data, from Jan. 1 to Dec. 21, 2024, in-



cludes 10 HMPV-positive cases out of 339 samples tested in December.

The DOH highlighted that HMPV is detected sporadically throughout the year, with no unusual patterns or clustering observed.

Stressing that it is not a new virus, DOH explained that HMPV, a respiratory virus discovered in 2001, typically causes mild upper respiratory symptoms such as cough, fever, and nasal congestion.



“Takbo para sa Kababaihan, Karahasan ay Wakasan!” Advocacy Run Champions Gender Equality and Women's Rights

The advocacy run “Takbo para sa Kababaihan, Karahasan ay Wakasan!” brought together hundreds of participants last December 6, 2024, at the Provincial Capitol Grounds, emphasizing a powerful stand against violence toward women and children.

Spearheaded by the Office of the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer (OPSWDO) in partnership with the Provincial Committee Against Trafficking and Violence Against Women and their Children (PCAT-VAWC), the event featured both 3-kilometer and 5-kilometer categories, with male and female runners competing for the top spots and championing the advocacy.

In the 3-kilometer category, Ricardo del Rosario Jr. emerged victorious in the male division, while Natalie Boysen claimed first place in the female division. For the 5-kilometer run, Hanz Teo Ramirez secured the top spot in the male category, and Salt Balasan triumphed in the female category.

Adding to the excitement, the top 20 finishers in both categories received advocacy-themed shirts, symbolizing their commitment to promoting gender equality and combating violence.

The activity underscored the Provincial Government's unwavering commitment to protecting the rights and welfare of women and children.

The success of the run not only raised awareness about violence prevention but also fostered a sense of unity and empowerment among participants, proving that collective action can spark meaningful change.--- OPIO

Severe cases, though rare, may lead to bronchitis or pneumonia, particularly among infants, the elderly, and immunocompromised individuals.

Meanwhile, the agency also reported a decline in overall Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) cases, recording 179,227 in 2024—a 17 percent drop compared to 216,786 cases in 2023.

Other top causative agents of ILI include Rhinovirus, Enterovi-

rus, and Influenza A.

The decline is attributed to improved health-seeking behaviors and better preparations by the health-care sector.

ILI is often characterized by symptoms such as cough, colds, and fever, and can be caused by various re-

spiratory viruses.

Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa emphasized the importance of preventive measures like proper nutrition, exercise, and hygiene to combat respiratory illnesses, especially during the cooler Northeast Monsoon season. (PNA)

The one walking with the wise will become wise, But the one who has dealings with the stupid will fare badly.

Proverbs 13:20

DOH: NCR, nearby regions in code white alert for Traslacion

MANILA – The Department of Health (DOH) on Tuesday said a code white alert is in effect until Jan. 10 for the celebration of the Feast of Jesus Nazareno.

“Ang alertong ito ay nagsisiguro na ang lahat ng itinalagang medical personnel, kagamitan, at pasilidad sa NCR (National Capital Region) at mga karatig rehiyon gaya ng Central Luzon at Calabarzon ay nakaantabay upang mabilis na tumugon sa mga emerhensiya o insidenteng may kaugnayan sa kalusugan sa panahon ng malaking pagtitipong panrelihiyon (This alert would ensure that designated medical personnel, equipment, and facilities in the NCR and neighboring regions like Central Luzon and Calabarzon are on standby to quickly respond to health-related emergencies during the religious procession),” according to a news release on Tuesday.

The DOH would deploy medical teams and health stations along key areas of the Traslacion procession route on Jan. 9, including Quirino Grandstand, Rizal Park, SM Manila, Ayala Bridge, P. Casal Street and Quinta Market, on Jan. 9.

It added that 201 personnel from the Health Emergency Response Team of 20 DOH hospitals in Metro Manila, including Jose R. Reyes Memorial Medical Center, Tondo Medical Center

and Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital in Manila and East Avenue Medical Center in Quezon City, will be assigned to provide medical support.

Partner agencies such as the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, National Capital Region Police Office, Bureau of Fire Protection, Philippine Coast Guard and Metro Manila Center for Health Development will play key roles in ensuring coordinated and effective health responses.

Health stations installed along the Traslacion route will provide basic and advanced care, with ambulances on standby.

The DOH also encouraged devotees to refrain from attending the Traslacion if they are feeling unwell or showing symptoms such as cough and colds, to prevent worsening their conditions and spreading virus.

It also emphasized the importance of following health and safety precautions during the event, recommends frequent drinking of water to stay hydrated, wearing comfortable clothing, and limiting prolonged exposure to the heat to avoid heatstroke and other heat-related illnesses.

“Ang taunang Traslacion ay panata na ng milyun-milyong mga Pilipinong deboto. Kasama niyo ang DOH sa pagtitiyak ng maayos na kalusugan at kaligtasan ng lahat

(The yearly Traslacion is a sacred tradition for millions of Filipino devotees. The DOH is committed to ensuring the health and safety of everyone),” Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa said.

Quirino Grandstand inspection

MMDA officials, headed by Chair Don Artes, inspected Quirino Grandstand where the traditional “pahalik” (veneration by kissing or touching the image) began Tuesday.

The MMDA placed plastic barricades to ensure orderliness of the queue and tents to serve as shade for the devotees.

Emergency response is on standby for those who’ll be needing immediate medical attention.

Security cameras are also installed around the areas where the procession will pass to monitor traffic situations and ensure peace and order, in cooperation with the police.

“We have deployed 1,200 personnel for the procession alone, including those who are tasked to maintain the cleanliness of the road right after the procession passes through a certain route,” Artes said.

Artes assured that clearing and cleaning operations are being undertaken to eliminate not just illegally parked vehicles but also trash and other obstructions in the road.

“We appeal to our kababayans (countrymen) not to throw

DA optimistic on palay output recovery in 2025

MANILA – After experiencing a decline in local production due to the combined effects of the El Niño phenomenon, successive typhoons, and the eruption of Mt. Kanlaon in 2024, the Department of Agriculture (DA) on Wednesday expressed optimism on the recovery of local palay output this year.

“Ang (the) projection is we’ll go back to the 20 million metric tons (MMT) level ng (of) local rice production,” DA spokesperson Arnel De Mesa said in an interview.

A robust local production will also result in a lower volume of rice imports, he said.

“We’re still hoping na magiging magandang production natin. At kung maganda iyon (that our production will be good. And if it’s good), of course, that will correspondingly reduce the volume of imports later on,” De Mesa said.

As of Dec. 31, 2024, the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) logged a historic high of 4.68 MMT of rice import arrivals.

De Mesa, however, underscored the prioritization of boosting local production with the amended Rice

trash which can cause injury or harm fellow devotees who will join the procession on Thursday, especially since majority of them join the Traslacion barefoot,” he said in a news release.

The number coding scheme will be sus-



RICE PRODUCTION. A file photo of a farmer drying harvested palay (unhusked rice) in Baliuag, Bulacan. The Department of Agriculture on Wednesday (Jan. 8, 2025) expressed optimism on local palay production recovery this year considering the government’s efforts to help boost local palay output. (PNA file photo by Joan Bondoc)

Tariffication Law in place, alongside other support programs for local rice farmers.

“Ang pinaka-focus namin ay ang lokal na produksyon. Iyong importation kasi (Our main focus is the local production. Because the importation), that’s entirely out of the government’s hand. It’s a business decision ng ating mga importers at saka na traders (of our importers and traders),” he said.

Based on the amended RTL, which is extended until 2031, the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) has tripled to PHP30 billion from the previous PHP10 billion from duties collected on imported rice.

pended in Manila on the feast day, declared a special non-working holiday.

The MMDA also advised rerouting for affected motorists:

Light vehicles

Coming from the south (Roxas Boulevard and Taft Ave-

Of the said fund, PHP15 billion will be allocated for the extension and training programs, rice farmers financial assistance, credit, soil improvement, solar-powered irrigation systems, and water impounding projects; PHP9 billion for farm mechanization; and PHP6 billion for the provision of high-quality rice seeds.

Earlier, the DA announced the launch of a “full-blown” scale Agri-puhunan at Pangtawid program to benefit 100,000 farmers in February.

The said program will serve as a funding mechanism with insurance alongside contract farming for farmers. (PNA)

nues), take United Nations Avenue, straight to Nagtahan Street (Paz Guanzon Street (Otis), left to Mabini Bridge towards Mag-saysay Boulevard and Lacson Avenue to destination and vice versa.

(Turn to p. 2)

FDA warns against mercury-laced skin products

MANILA – The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued warnings to consumers about unauthorized skin-lightening products containing mercury, a highly toxic chemical that poses serious health risks.

In a statement on Wednesday, toxics watchdog EcoWaste Coalition commended the FDA's swift action following its report on cosmetics with mercury levels exceeding the allowable trace limit.

Mercury is prohibited in cosmetic formulations under the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive.

The FDA recently flagged five imported skin-lightening products sold online without the required certificates of product notification.

Among them are Q-nic Care Whitening Night Cream and Q-nic Care Whiten-



TOXIC WARNING. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warns the public against the purchase and use of the unauthorized cosmetic product “Lady Gold Super Gluta Brightening.” The FDA has also flagged four additional imported skin-lightening products sold online that contain high levels of mercury and lack the required certificates of product notification. (Photo from FDA website)

ing Underarm Cream, found to contain mercury levels of 4,113 ppm and 6,109 ppm, far exceeding the 1 ppm limit.

Two additional products, Meyyong Ra Seaweed Super Whitening Set and Lady Gold Super Gluta Brightening, containing 3,784 ppm and 44,450 ppm of mercury, respectively, were also banned based on

earlier reports.

Another product, Malaysia Erna Whitening Cream, tested negative for mercury but remains unauthorized.

The FDA has urged consumers to verify product registrations and report any unauthorized items.

Establishments have been warned against distributing these banned products. (PNA)

DA, DTI working on maximum SRP to tame rice prices

MANILA – The Department of Agriculture (DA) is now working with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to come up with the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) on imported rice to address spiking rice prices.

This came shortly after Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said a PHP60 per kilogram price level, monitored among “special” and “premium” rice labels in local markets, may be considered profiteering.

In a statement, the DA chief said the MSRP on imported rice would be the beginning of taming the price of agricultural commodities.

“We plan to cast the price net wider to include other imported food commodities like vegetables and meat, ultimately benefiting the Filipino consumer,” Tiu Laurel said.

Both agencies intend to provide rice importers and traders with a reasonable profit margin that will not subject Filipino consumers to “excessively

rising retail prices.

DTI Secretary Cristina Roque said these actions are meant to ease the burden of the public.

“We aim to strike a balance between business sustainability and consumer protection,” she said.

The DTI will also review its regulations on the sale and labeling of manufactured goods for possible adoption in rice.

As of Jan. 6, the price of imported regular milled rice in Metro Manila ranges from PHP40/kg. to PHP48/



The Provincial Government of Cavite, under the leadership of Governor Athena Bryana Tolentino, distributed incentives for Barangay Health Workers (BHWs) and Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) for the third and fourth quarters of 2024. The ceremonial turnover of cheques amounting to P24,480,000 for BHWs and P9,384,000 for BNSs was held last-December 4, 2024, at the Tagaytay International Convention Center in Tagaytay City.

Governor Tolentino together with Tagaytay Mayor Bambol Tolentino personally handed over the cheques to Dr. Nonie John Dalisay, Provincial Health Officer along with some BHW and BNS. The event was graced by some members of the Sangguniang Panlungsod, who expressed their full support for the health and nutrition initiatives of the province.

In her message, Governor Tolentino emphasized the vital role of BHWs and BNSs in ensuring the well-being of Caviteños, especially in grassroots communities

The distribution of incentives marks the provincial government's continued commitment to recognizing and supporting the invaluable contributions of community health and nutrition workers.---OPIO

kg., and PHP40/kg. to PHP54/kg. for imported well-milled rice, according to the DA Bantay-Presyo (price watch).

Meanwhile, local regular milled rice ranges from PHP38/kg. to PHP48/kg., and PHP40/kg. to PHP52/kg. for local well-milled rice.

However, the prices of premium and spe-

cial for both imported and local rice range from PHP48/kg. to PHP63/kg.

The DA earlier said it would consider the declaration of a na-

tional food security emergency to enable the release of rice stocks under the National Food Authority (NFA) at a cheaper price level. (PNA)

**PRIDE IS BEFORE A CRASH, AND
A HAUGHTY SPIRIT
BEFORE STUMBLING**

Prov. 16:18

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PH, Japan volleyball federations vow to strengthen partnership

MANILA – The Philippine National Volleyball Federation (PNVF) and Japan Volleyball Association (JVA) on Thursday vowed to continue strengthening their partnership to further promote the sport in the region.

The vow was made after Japan Minister and Consul General Takahiro Hanada led the turnover of volleyball supplies from the JVA at the new PNVF Office at The Bonifacio Prime in Taguig City.

“With the sport seeing record-breaking attendances and emerging talents, I believe our cooperation comes at an exciting time for volleyball’s culture,” Hanada said.

“We eagerly take this opportunity to support the Philippines’ emerging volleyball scene... We are proud to have this equipment in the hands of young and eager Filipinos. It is my hope that these volleyballs play a vital part in fueling the dreams and connections of the Philippines’ youth,” he added.

Hanada handed competition volleyballs during the turnover ceremony to Asian Volleyball Confeder-



SPORTS PARTNERSHIP. The Philippine National Volleyball Federation (PNVF) receive supplies from the Japan Volleyball Association at the PNVF office in The Bonifacio Prime in Taguig City on Thursday (Jan. 9, 2025). Present during the turnover ceremony were (from left) players Thea Gagate, Dawn Catindig, PNVF and Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) president Ramon “Tats” Suzara, Japan Minister and Consul General Takahiro Hanada, and players Vince Lorenzo and EJ Casaña. (Contributed photo)

ation (AVC) president and PNVF chief Ramon “Tats” Suzara, and Alas Pilipinas women’s and men’s team members Thea Gagate, Dawn Catindig, Vince Lorenzo and EJ Casaña.

“Through our program ‘Sport for Tomorrow,’ Japan realizes and harnesses the power of sports as a force for global prosperity and harmony.”

Sport for Tomorrow is an international exchange and cooperation program on sports based of the commitment of the Japanese government.

Suzara thanked Hanada and the JVA as the Philippines gets another big boost nine

months ahead of its hosting of the FIVB Men’s Volleyball World Championships.

He said the volleyball equipment is a big help to the PNVF’s efforts to discover talent and expand the viewership of the sport.

“The Philippines is a volleyball country. That’s our main slogan now,” he said.

Suzara said the volleyball supplies and equipment will “fuel the enthusiasm” of many young players in the provinces.

“We appreciate Japan’s continuing support of Asian volleyball and we hope to continue this relationship with Japan not

DPWH vows holistic approach to mitigate flooding

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. ordered a holistic approach in addressing flood problems in the country, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said Wednesday.

“Utos ni Presidente that we have to address actually ‘yung mga flood control projects natin,’” DPWH Secretary Manuel Bonoan said in an interview.

“That they (projects) should be resilient and implemented holistically kasi alam naman natin na engineering solution is just the one of the components to address ngayon itong mga flood mitigation problems because of the climate change phenomenon,” he added.

According to Bonoan, they are planning to create three dams



in the mountains of Sierra Madre to confine flood waters and regulate its flow to protect Metro Manila from flashfloods.

“Dito sa Metro Manila, dapat siguro tingnan kung pwede natin magawan ng mga infrastructure facilities that will impound water in the watershed,” Bonoan said.

Bonoan said they will continue pursuing the Pasig-Marikina Flood Control Program.

Further, Bonoan said they are currently rehabilitating about 37

regional pumping stations in the country, 15 of which have been completed, while the rest “may be completed within the year.”

“These pumping stations have been there long time ago and kailangan natin ma-increase ‘yung carrying capacity nila, ‘yung pumping capacity,” he said.

Aside from these, Bonoan also mentioned the need to address various environmental issues like proper waste management. [PND]

PhilHealth increases benefits rates by 50%

MANILA – The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) is set to increase by 50 percent the case rates of around 9,000 health benefit packages this year.

In a Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon interview on Monday, PhilHealth Senior Vice President for Health and Finance Policy Sector Israel Francis Pargas said the

only in terms of equipment but also coaching, national team training camps and even management.”

Suzara also showed Hanada around the new PNVF office, which will serve as headquarters of the 2025 Men’s Volleyball World Championship and additionally, houses the AVC president’s office. (PNA)

increase would be start with the Jan. 1, 2025 admissions.

“Kung matatandaan po ninyo, noong February of 2024, nag-increase na po tayo ng (If you remember, last February 2024, we had an increase of) 30 percent,” he said.

“And ngayon po, bago natapos ang taon, ay nag-increase po tayo ng another round, this time, 50 percent naman po (Before the year [2024] ended, we increased another round, this time it’s 50 percent),” he added.

The state insurer will not include in the increase those diseases with health benefit packages that are still under rationalization. Additionally, diseases which had separate increases for their health benefit packages will not be included.

Pargas noted the ex-

amples of these are the kidney transplantation package which increased to PHP800,000 to PHP2 million from PHP600,000, and the acute myocardial infarction package which increased to PHP530,000 from PHP30,000.

He added that members rushed to the hospital for urgent care or treatment but not confined will be covered by the emergency care package.

For the primary health care, members can get free consultations and 15 laboratory tests through the Konsulta Package.

The expanded Konsulta Package now includes dental health care -- oral examination, oral prophylaxis, application of fluoride and streaming, and emergency tooth extraction. (PNA)