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DepEd advances system reforms, work-ready pathways for learners

MANILA – The Department of Education (DepEd) pushed forward reforms that improved school environments and advanced system-level changes under Secretary Sonny Angara's leadership – strengthening senior high school tracks, aligning curriculum and assessment more closely, and expanding work-readiness initiatives for learners nationwide.

Alongside governance and infrastructure upgrades, these reforms reinforced the agency's direction toward producing graduates equipped with practical skills, clearer pathways to employment or higher education, and an education system designed to sustain these outcomes.

"Kasama sa paalala sa atin ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. ang pagkakaroon ng education system na tunay na makatutulong



sa mga kabataang Filipino, isang sistemang maghahanda sa kanila sa susunod na yugto ng kanilang buhay, ang pagpasok sa mundo ng trabaho (Part of the reminders of President Marcos to the DepEd is to have an education system that can really help Filipino youth, a system that will prepare them in the next stage of their lives, their entry into the world of work)," Angara said in a statement on Wednesday.

With the recent ratification of the General Appropriations Bill by Congress on Dec. 29, he said the DepEd will continue riding this

momentum to sustain the delivery of quality education in the coming year.

From learning to employment

DepEd launched the Strengthened Senior High School (SHS) Program to make the latter years of basic education more responsive, relevant, and attuned to the learners' transition from education to employment.

Part of the reform is the streamlining of the curriculum, which now offers two clear pathways – the Academic track and the Technical-Professional track.

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DSWD vows to further strengthen social protection for Pinoys in 2026

MANILA – As the year 2026 begins, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has reiterated its commitment in supporting the goal of the Marcos administration to improve the quality of life of Filipinos.

"We remain commit-

ted to strengthening social protection programs, expanding poverty alleviation services, and enhancing community resilience to ensure improved well-being for all Filipino families," Assistant Secretary Irene Dumla said in a statement on Wednesday.

The DSWD spokesperson made the statement in the wake of the latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey indicating that 29 percent of Filipino adults said their quality of life improved (gainers), 36 percent said it worsened (losers), and

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Pangilinan-led Luzon Tollways Steps Up Holiday Traffic Preparations, Offers Free Toll



Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation (MPTC), concessionaire of NLEX, SCTEX in cooperation with BCDA, NLEX Connector, Manila-Cavite Expressway (CAVITEX) in cooperation with PRA-PEATC, and Cavite-Laguna Expressway (CALAX), has intensified its holiday traffic and road safety preparations across its Luzon expressway network

to ensure a smooth and safe journey for motorists during the Christmas and New Year peak travel period.

Through early preparations, full manpower deployment, and initiatives such as counterflow, barrier-up operations, free towing services, and toll-free passage, MPTC aims to provide safer and more convenient travel experience to its

motorists. "Our goal this holiday season is to have motorists spend less time on the road and more time with their families," said MPIC and MPTC Chairman Manuel V Pangilinan.

"We've prepared early, deployed full manpower, and have initiated barrier-up operations, counterflow measures, free towing services, and toll-free

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DepEd also expanded the Work Immersion Program from 80 hours to 320 to 640 hours for technical-professional learners, ensuring more meaningful and hands-on workplace experience.

For next year, Angara said the DepEd, in coordination with regional directors and schools division superintendents, is exploring ways to further enhance the current curriculum and roll out the initiative on a broader scale.

In addition, DepEd aims to sustain the provision of free National Certification (NC) assessments in 2026, in partnership with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

In 2025, the two agencies supported more than 170,000 SHS-Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) learners.

Moving forward, Angara said DepEd will prioritize the effective implementation of the Philippine Qualifications Framework and the Philippine Skills Framework, working closely with education and other relevant government agencies to ensure smoother and more seamless transitions from education to employment for more Filipinos.

Efficiency in the education system

Angara also emphasized the need to enhance the efficiency of the education system, ensuring the smooth implementation of major programs that directly benefit both teachers and learners.

Under the special pro-

visions of next year's budget, the rollout of classroom programs will become more flexible, allowing local government units and private institutions to partner with the department in delivering resilient and modern school facilities.

Angara further ensured that more private partners – even individual donors – can participate in building classrooms through the newly enhanced Adopt-a-School platform.

These initiatives will be vital in achieving the department's targets: 24,547 classrooms to be constructed under the Basic Education Facilities Fund (BEFF), 1,700 classrooms to be leased, 11,886 classrooms to be repaired, and 105,000 new classrooms to be delivered under the PSIP initiative.

DepEd will also lean on its significant investments in technology and artificial intelligence, most notably through the launch of the Education Center for AI Research (ECAIR), which serves as the Department's hub for evidence-based policies and initiatives.

“Sa ilalim ng Bagong Pilipinas ng ating mahal na Pangulo, mas lalo nating pagtitibayin ang sistema ng edukasyon upang makalikha ng mas maraming oportunidad para sa ating mga Kabataan (Under the New Philippines of our beloved President, we will further strengthen the education system to create more opportunities for our youth),” Angara said. (PNA)

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passage. The toll-free initiative is our way of giving back to motorists. We hope it helps ease their travels during this holiday season,” Pangilinan added.

To manage increased traffic volume, all roadworks and lane closures will be suspended from 6:00 AM on December 19, 2025, until 12 noon on January 5, 2026, except for emergency safety repairs. Addi-

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34 percent said it remained the same (unchanged).

This yields a Net Gainers score of -7 (percentage of gainers minus losers), which the SWS classified as fair.

The November survey noted that the decline was driven by decreases in most areas of the country.

Mindanao recorded the highest Net Gainers score at +2 (high), while Balance Luzon registered -7 (fair). Metro Manila and the Visayas both fell to “mediocre” levels at -12 and -14, respectively.

Overall, 44 percent of adult Filipinos are looking forward to the improvement of their quality of life (“optimists”) in the next 12 months, according to the SWS.

In support of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.’s call for a more transparent and people-oriented budget, Dumla said the whole DSWD, under the leadership of Secretary Rex Gatchalian, will ensure the judicious and effective spending of public funds once the President signs the 2026 national budget.

tional traffic, toll, and emergency and medical response teams will be deployed, and all lanes in major toll plazas will remain open to accommodate peak traffic.

To further ease congestion along NLEX, Express Lane (counterflow lane) will be activated subject to traffic conditions. These lanes will be accessible to Class 1 RFID-only vehicles, with northbound oper-

ations on Fridays from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM (entry at Balintawak Expansion Plaza) and southbound operations on Sundays from 2:00 PM and early Mondays from 5:00 AM (entry at Bocaue Expansion Plaza).

Free passage in the MPTC Luzon expressways

Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation (MPTC) is pleased to announce a toll-free initiative for motorists during select hours over the Christmas and New Year celebrations.

Motorists can enjoy free toll passages on NLEX, SCTEX, NLEX Connector, CAVITEX, and CALAX during the festive hours:

- December 24, 10:00 PM to December 25 at 6:00 AM
- December 31,

10:00 PM to January 1 at 6:00 AM

Trip planning is made easier with the MPTC DriveHub app, which provides traffic updates, toll fee calculation, RFID reloading, and access to emergency roadside assistance.

Motorists are encouraged to ensure their RFID accounts are active and sufficiently loaded prior to their travels. Cash-paying customers are advised to shift to RFID for faster transactions. Visit Easytrip’s website www.easytrip.ph for more information.

For regular updates and road safety tips, motorists can check out MPTC expressways’ official Facebook accounts @NLEXexpressways and @OfficialCALAX, as well as its 24/7 hotline at 1-35000.

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PGC's Ugnayan sa Barangay goes to Barangay Samala-Marquez in Kawit, Cavite

The provincial government of Cavite through the Office of the Provincial Governor, under the leadership of Governor Abeng Remulla, continued its Ugnayan sa Barangay program in Barangay Samala-Marquez, Kawit on November 26, 2025. The activity served as a meaningful platform to bring the government closer to residents, strengthening the connection between local leaders and the community they serve.

Among the key figures who joined the event were First District Board Member Jgys Gandia, Board Member Junbie Samala, as well as other local leaders, who actively participated in the program's activities and helped ensure its smooth implementation.

Through Ugnayan sa Barangay, the Provincial Government of Cavite continues to strengthen its partnership with grassroots communities, ensuring that public service remains accessible, inclusive, and people-centered.---



PGC Brings Ugnayan sa Barangay to General Trias City

The Provincial Government of Cavite, under the leadership of Governor Francisco Gabriel "Abeng" Remulla, brought the Ugnayan sa Barangay program to the City of General Trias on December 2, 2025, further strengthening its efforts to keep Caviteños informed and connected with key provincial programs and ongoing developments.

Mayor Luis "Jon-Jon" Ferrer, Vice Mayor Jonas Glyn Labugen, members of the city council, 6th District Board Member Maurito C. Sison, and Board Member Kerby J. Salazar joined the event, demonstrating unified support for the initiative and the province's mission to continuously uplift communities across Cavite.

Ugnayan sa Barangay serves as a crucial communication bridge between the provincial government and residents at the grassroots level. Through this program, government services, updates, and assistance are delivered directly to barangays, ensuring that Caviteños remain engaged, informed, and able to access the support they need. The initiative highlights the administration's strong commitment to inclusive governance and meaningful community outreach throughout the province.--- OPIO



PGC Grants Educational Aid to 1,964 Students

The Provincial Government of Cavite, under Governor Francisco Gabriel "Abeng" Remulla, has awarded educational assistance to 1,964 students of Cavite State University – Gen. Trias and Tanza Campus as part of the Iskolar ng Lalawigan ng Cavite program. The distribution event took place recently, at the General Trias Convention/Cultural Center.

This initiative aims to ease the financial burden on Caviteño students, helping them pursue higher education. Governor Remulla emphasized the province's commitment to investing in education as a key driver of Cavite's growth and development.--- OPIO



Capacity Development Program Empowers CSOs for Strengthened Local School Boards

The Office of the Provincial Planning and Development Coordinator (OPPDC), headed by Engr. EnP. Lorna R. Leyran, successfully spearheaded the Capacity Development Program for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the Local School Boards recently, at the New Provincial Government Center in Trece Martires City. The initiative was conducted in close collaboration with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), bringing together CSO representatives to enhance their awareness and understanding of their role and function in the Local Development Council.

The learning session featured six comprehensive modules designed to deepen participants' understanding of the local education landscape and strengthen their roles within the Local School Board (LSB).

LGOO II Amiel D. dela Rosa opened the sessions with the topic "Education as an Empowerer: The State of Education in the Philippines," providing a nationwide overview of challenges and opportunities in the education sector. He also discussed "Learning from the Best: The Valenzuela City LScB," showcasing model practices and innovative strategies that have significantly improved local education outcomes.

LGOO III Beverly V. Villaruel presented "Local School Boards as Catalysts of Education in the Philippines," emphasizing how LSBs serve as vital platforms for collaboration and decision-making that directly impact learners and communities.

A deeper look into participatory governance was delivered by LGOO II Amiel D. dela Rosa through the module "The Role of CSOs in the LScB," highlighting the importance of CSO involvement in ensuring transparency, accountability, and shared leadership in education programs.

DSWD IV-A builds stronger pathways for 4Ps families through multi-sector partnerships

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna — The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Field Office IV-A continues to reinforce its commitment to empowering Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) households by widening access to education, employment, and healthcare services through strategic partnerships across the CALABARZON region.

On December 15, 2025, the regional office entered into new partnership agreements with five institutions from the education, training, and health sectors—National University (NU) Dasmariñas, University of Batangas, Dualtech Training Center Foundation, Inc., Technovative Training Center, Inc., and San Antonio Medical Center of Lipa, Inc.

Assistant Regional Director Mylah Gatchalian said the partnerships are aligned with the Department's thrust to

equip 4Ps beneficiaries with the necessary skills, knowledge, and health support needed to achieve self-reliance as they prepare for transition or graduation from the program.

“These collaborations strengthen our capacity to deliver more responsive and comprehensive services, particularly in education, skills development, and health, which are critical to improving the long-term outcomes of 4Ps households,” Gatchalian noted.

Through the partnership, NU Dasmariñas and the University of Batangas will extend scholarship opportunities, competency-building initiatives, and community-based programs that aim to enhance the academic performance and employability of 4Ps college students.

Meanwhile, Dualtech Training Center Foundation, Inc. and Technovative Training Center, Inc. will provide enterprise-based



training programs designed to link technical education with actual industry requirements, offering beneficiaries pathways toward certification and employment through partner companies.

Dualtech Training Center President Engr. Jerry Web Muhi emphasized the broader impact of the collaboration, stating that the initiative seeks to develop learners who can contribute meaningfully to their communities and to national development.

To further support the well-being of 4Ps families, San Antonio Medical Center of Lipa, Inc. will deliver medical assistance and preventive healthcare services, helping re-

duce health-related expenses that often hinder economic progress.

Currently, DSWD Field Office IV-A maintains active partnerships with 49 external stakeholders from civil society organizations, private institutions, and higher education sectors in the region.

The Department underscored that sustained collaboration with various sectors remains essential in advancing inclusive development, ensuring that 4Ps families are not only assisted but are fully equipped to build healthier, more productive, and self-sustaining lives. (CCM/PIA4A)

vides the “what” while the paper provides the “how.” Educators, meanwhile, should view the campus press not as a distraction, but as a vital extension of the curriculum.

The campus journalist is, first and foremost, a learner. We shouldn't have to choose between being informed citizens and successful graduates. When we balance both, we create holistic individuals capable of processing information and challenging the status quo. There is room on the desk for both the pen and the textbook.

EXTRAJUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF ESTATE

Notice is hereby given **TO THE PUBLIC** of the deceased **FELICISMO MORAL PRESA** who died on November 09, 2023, in Barangay Prinza, General Trias, Cavite and the deceased left three (3) real properties: 1) **TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE No. T-128957** with an area of **two hundred forty (240)** square meters at Barangay Prinza, General Trias, Cavite, Philippines, 2) **TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE No. T-98742** with an area of **one hundred ninety-three (193)** square meters at Barangay Prinza, General Trias, Cavite, Philippines, and 3) **TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE No. T-197481** with an area of **two hundred ten (210)** square meters at the Barangay San Juan II, General Trias, Cavite, Philippines, and has been extrajudicially settled among his heirs through the Extrajudicial Settlement of Estate of **FELICISMO MORAL PRESA** with Waiver of Rights executed on November 30, 2025 by Atty. Nathalie T. Almazan as per Doc. No. 511, Page No. 104, Book No. III, Series of 2025 in General Trias City, Cavite.

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AFFIDAVIT OF SELF-ADJUDICATION

Notice is hereby given **TO THE PUBLIC** of the deceased **REYNALDO MORAL PRESA** who died on March 21, 2007 at the Philippine General Hospital, Taft Avenue, Manila and **LUCITA PORCADILLA PRESA** who died on March 7, 2020 at 095 Barangay Prinza, General Trias, Cavite, Philippines, and both left one parcel of land described as **TCT No. T-190793** with an area of **two hundred ninety-two (292)** square meters located at General Trias, Cavite, and has been self-adjudicated by their sole heir, **ALEXANDER PORCADILLA PRESA**, through an Affidavit of Self-Adjudication executed on December 9, 2025 by Atty. Nathalie T. Almazan as per Doc. No. 34, Page No. 8, Book No. IV, Series of 2025 in General Trias City, Cavite.

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For stroke, the DOH urged Filipinos to always accessible.

In case of emergencies, the public may call 911 or the 1555 DOH Emergency Number for rapid medical assistance.

The DOH emphasized that prompt response and preventive habits remain crucial in reducing fatal complications from non-communicable diseases during the holiday season. (PNA)

The Deadline and the Degree

By Cynthia S. Ebuenga

It's 11:30 PM in a dimly lit student publication office. The air is thick with the scent of lukewarm coffee and the frantic rhythmic clicking of keyboards. On one corner of a cluttered desk lies a half-finished page layout; on the other, an open textbook with a highlighter dry from neglect. For too long, we have treated the newsroom and the classroom as rivals, forcing students to choose between being a scholar or a storyteller.

The classroom provides the theoretical scaffolding of knowledge, but the student publication is the laboratory where that knowledge is tested. While a lecture teaches ethics, the field demands their practice during a sensitive interview. Journalism builds a brand of “street smarts” that a syllabus cannot capture—from the high-stakes discipline of printing deadlines to the deep empathy required to tell a community's story.

However, we must be honest about the “burnt-out editor” trope. When the scales tip too far toward the newsroom, the student's foundation suffers. Neglecting academics does't just risk a diploma; it weakens the journalism itself. A reporter without a grasp of history, science, or math lacks the context needed to report deeply on the world's complexities.

The goal is a symbiotic middle ground. Students must recognize that a degree pro-

Santa Rosa credits youth contribution in building smart, sustainable communities

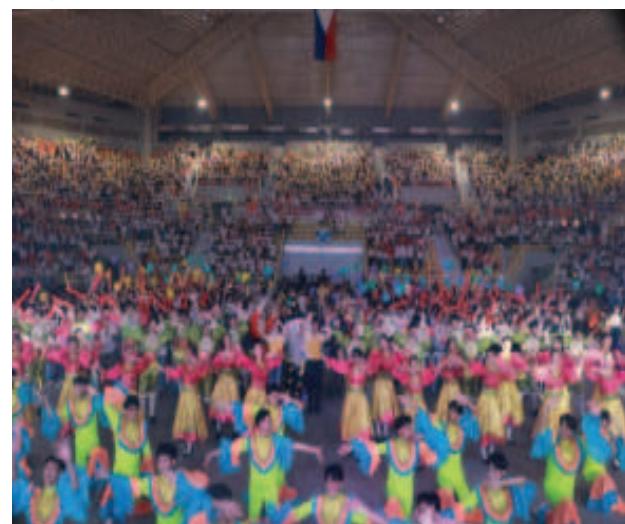
SANTA ROSA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The city government of Santa Rosa recognized the vital role of the youth in advancing its vision of becoming a smart and sustainable city during the launching of the Lion City Youth Summit on December 17.

The summit aims to inspire and empower the youth of Santa Rosa to recognize their potential, embrace their purpose, and lead with integrity and compassion.

Santa Rosa City Mayor Arlene Arcillas believes that the youth are not only beneficiaries of development programs but can also become active partners in shaping solutions, from digital transformation and climate action to community resilience and inclusive growth through initiatives such as the Lion City Youth Summit.

"More than anything, our youth through their schools, programs, and projects are at the core of what we need to build Santa Rosa as a smart city. That is why our smart city initiatives, including the Lion City Youth Summit, have already been incorporated into the curriculum; that's why students today gather in this event," Arcillas said.

She added that most of the city's smart and sustainable projects are designed for the youth, emphasizing that entrusting them with these initiatives will help further expand Santa Rosa's efforts toward becoming a smart and sustain-



able city.

Arcillas stated: "We believe that our youth are not just the future of Santa Rosa, but our partners today in building a smart and sustainable city. Their ideas, creativity, and passion help us move forward and innovate."

The Lion City Youth Summit also served as a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and capacity-building among young leaders, student organizations, and youth advocates.

Participants engaged in discussions on leadership development, digital innovation, environmental protection, and volunteerism, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Lion City Youth President Kian Joseph Hermosa welcomed the wide range of initiatives implemented to nurture the talents and skills of youth across various sectors, and expressed his appreciation for the city gov-

ernment's consistent support for youth development programs.

"In the City of Santa Rosa, we implement numerous programs for youth development. These include workshops in theater, singing, dancing, academics, and sports. We make sure that no sector of youth development is left behind," Hermosa said.

He added, "To the City Government of Santa Rosa, thank you for always showing your unwavering support and dedication to the youth. We truly feel your care and love for the young people of Santa Rosa."

As Santa Rosa continues its journey toward becoming a smart and sustainable city, the city government reaffirmed that the energy, creativity, and leadership of the youth will remain at the forefront of its development agenda, driving innovation and helping build a progressive Santa Rosa. (AM/PIA 4A)

**A TRUE FRIEND SHOWS LOVE
AT ALL TIMES AND IS A BROTHER
WHO IS BORN FOR TIMES OF
DISTRESS**
Prov. 17:17

Reclaiming Truth at the Speed of a Click

By Cynthia S. Ebuenga

In an era where a student can summon a world's worth of data in seconds, the traditional walls of the newsroom have dissolved. We no longer live in a world of information scarcity; we live in one of overwhelming abundance. But for learners today, this easy access is a double-edged sword. While the democratization of knowledge is triumph of the digital age, it has also turned the global information ecosystem into a minefield of misinformation and disinformation.

As we navigate 2025, the distinction between

these two terms has never been more critical. Misinformation is false or inaccurate information shared without the intent to deceive, often born from a simple mistake or a lack of verification. Disinformation, conversely, is false information deliberately created and spread to deceive or harm, designed specifically to manipulate public opinion or cause chaos.

Today's students are digital natives, yet research suggests they

are vulnerable than ever. This is the Learner's Paradox: the more comfortable a student is with digital tools, the more likely they are to trust the speed and deliver of information over its source. Generative AI has complicated this further. With "hallucinations" and deepfakes becoming indistinguishable from reality, the barrier to entry for creating convincing disinformation has dropped to zero. For a learner rushing to complete an assignment, an AI-summarized fact can look just as authoritative as a peer-reviewed study.

Journalism is no longer just about breaking the news-social media does that instantly. Today, the journalist's role must shift toward context, verification, and curation. Transparency has become the new objectivity. It is no longer enough to be right; journalists must show how they know they are right by linking to raw data and explaining their process. Furthermore, news organizations must engage in pre-bunking-teaching the audi-

ence to recognize the tactics of manipulation before they encounter them. In a sea of algorithmic content, human judgment and ethics are the only unique value proposition left for professional journalism.

For educators and learners, the solution is to build a skepticism muscle. We must move beyond basic digital literacy to AI and Intent Literacy. Learners should be taught to ask who created the content, what their motive was, and if the AI is providing a consensus or merely a simulation of one. They must also confront their own confirmation biases.

The fight against false information is not a war that will be won by a single algorithm or a new law. It is a continuous process of civic hygiene. As information become easier to acquire, the responsibility to verify it becomes heavier. We must ensure that our learners do not just become expert consumers of content, but disciplined seekers of truth.

5 holiday deaths linked to stroke, heart attacks reported

MANILA – The Department of Health (DOH) on Wednesday reported five deaths linked to acute medical emergencies recorded during the 2025 holiday season, highlighting the persistent threat of non-communicable diseases amid festive celebrations.

Citing surveillance data gathered from Dec. 21 to 31 across 10 pilot monitoring sites, the DOH said three of the fatalities were caused by acute stroke, while two re-

sulted from acute coronary syndrome.

Stroke emerged as the most common condition monitored during the period, accounting for 53 of the 180 recorded acute cases.

This was followed by acute coronary syndrome, which comprised 28 of the 77 cases tracked. Bronchial asthma was also noted, with eight cases recorded out of 31, mostly involving children aged zero to nine.

Most stroke and heart attack cases were re-

corded among adults aged 60 to 69.

The DOH said the recorded deaths highlight the importance of recognizing early warning signs and acting quickly when symptoms appear.

To prevent acute coronary syndrome, the agency advised the public to avoid overeating, smoking, alcohol consumption, and stress, and to seek immediate consultation for chest tightness or breathing difficulty.

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POC chief: Team PH's Olympic rise just getting started

MANILA – The Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) is ending 2025 on a high and heading into 2026 with even bigger ambitions.

POC president Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino said Filipino athletes delivered more than enough reason for optimism, pointing to a year defined not just by medals, but by wins in sports that truly matter on the global stage.

"There will be more competitions overseas and more historic achievements to come for Team Philippines in 2026," Tolentino said, fresh from a campaign that underscored the country's growing strength in Olympic disciplines.

Tolentino drew particular pride from Team Philippines' performance in the recently-concluded 33rd Southeast Asian Games in Thailand.

While the country finished sixth overall with 50 gold medals, he stressed that the medals came largely from Olympic sports, an indicator, he said, of long-term international competitiveness.

"Those are what mattered the most, the gold medals from Olympic sports," Tolentino said.

A Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) analysis, citing Vietnamese outlet vnexpress.net, showed that the Philippines tied Singapore for the



Philippine Olympic Committee president Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino (POC File Photo)

highest percentage of gold medals won in Olympic sports among the 11 participating nations.

Singapore placed fifth overall with 52 golds, 20 of them from aquatics, while the Philippines collected Olympic golds in athletics (five), swimming (three), gymnastics (three), triathlon (three), and modern pentathlon (three).

Filipino athletes also struck gold in women's football, men's baseball, tennis through Alex Eala, beach volleyball, basketball (two), judo (two), skateboarding (two), softball (two), taekwondo (two), rowing, sailing, short-track speed skating, weightlifting, and wrestling.

Thailand topped the medal table with 233 golds, but in Olympic events, it ranked fifth with a 64-percent share, behind Indonesia and Singapore at 65 percent.

"And that's where many of the points are—the Olympic goal," Tolentino said.

Behind the momentum, Tolentino credited improved coordination with government sports agencies.

"Now, we're working together with the PSC [Philippine Sports Commission] in a harmonious way," he said.

The upward trajectory, he added, extends beyond the SEA Games.

Team Philippines bagged seven gold medals at the Bahrain Asian Youth Games, two silvers and two bronzes at the Chengdu World Games and made history at the Ninth Asian Winter Games in Harbin with a men's curling gold.

"That made us," Tolentino said, referring to the Harbin triumph, "the first in an international winter sports competition not only by the Philippines but for Southeast Asia."

Looking ahead, Tolentino acknowledged a packed and demanding calendar: the Milano Cortina Winter Olympics from Feb. 6 to 22, Sanya Asian Beach Games from

DENR-EMB recognizes barangays for waterways cleanup through Gawad Taga-Ilog

LAUREL, Batangas (PIA) — In its continued effort to inspire local government-led initiatives, particularly among barangays to keep waterways and water bodies clean and trash-free, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources—Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) Region IV-A gave honors for cleanup efforts during the Gawad Taga-Ilog (GTI) Awarding Ceremony on December 19.

According to DENR-EMB Regional Director Robert Angelo Metin, the program aims to enhance water quality and maintain the cleanliness of rivers in the Province of Cavite, demonstrating that the Gawad Taga-Ilog (GTI) Program, which was successfully implemented in the National Capital Region, can also be adopted by nearby regions as part of collective efforts to protect the environment.

"This is anchored on the Clean Water Act and the Supreme Court Mandamus that calls for the cleaning and rehabilitation of Manila Bay. Here in the Province of Cavite, we can see a portion of Manila Bay, which is why the Gawad Taga-Ilog Program was initially launched here," Director Metin said.

Through the dedication of barangay officials and residents, these initiatives serve as inspiring models of sustainable environmental governance and shared responsibility for the preservation of natural

April 22 to 30 and Aichi-Nagoya 20th Asian Games in Japan from Sept. 19 to Oct. 4 next year.

"It will be challenging this time as we will be competing in three Asian multi-sports events and we have also the Milano Winter Games and then the Youth Olympic Games," he said.

"Our athletes and national sports asso-



resources for present and future generations.

Barangay Daine 1 in Indang, Cavite, led by Barangay Chairperson Arnold Pegollo, was hailed as the winner in the Upland Category, with the Gawad Taga-Ilog (GTI) Award serving as a testament to the community's collective efforts in promoting cleaner waterways and a sustainable environment.

"There were so many preparations from paperwork, weekly clean-up activities, and the maintenance of the river and the materials recovery facility (MRF), to Hapag ni PBBM, our community garden, vertical garden, and composting facility because everything required hard work and constant maintenance to ensure that all of these is in good condition for the Gawad Taga-Ilog," the chairperson explained.

Pegollo added that even before receiving recognition from the DENR-EMB, the barangay had already been working with partner agencies, organizations, and the community to protect the environment, especially their waterways, which he said is vital for sustainability and the well-being of future generations.

"We continuously

ciations are improving every year and I'm so happy to see that."

The schedule also includes the Dakar Youth Olympic Games from Oct. 31 to Nov. 13, the first Olympic Games to be staged in Africa, and the Asian

care for our rivers and conduct tree-planting activities along our easements, while maintaining our waterways to help increase water flow and preserve our water sources. With the prize money we received, we plan to upgrade our Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) into a more efficient, organized, and user-friendly facility that promotes proper waste segregation in the community," Pegollo said in an interview with the Philippine Information Agency Calabarzon.

As part of the first batch of the GTI Program in Cavite, Pegollo, along with other winners from the Upland and Lowland Categories, expressed their commitment to sustaining the program, particularly in maintaining, cleaning, and rehabilitating facilities to promote cleaner and sustainable waterways.

Following the success of the GTI Program 1.0, the DENR-EMB is preparing to launch GTI Program 2.0, which aims to include local government units within the jurisdiction of the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), such as General Mariano Alvarez, Silang, Carmona, and Tagaytay City. (CO, AM/PIA4A)

Indoor and Martial Arts Games in Riyadh. For Tolentino, the mission is clear and unwavering.

"All for the Filipino athlete, all for Philippine sports," he said. (PNA)