

# CAVITE NEWS PUBLISHING

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## PhilHealth, IBP partner to boost legal aid, strengthen patient rights

MANILA – The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) has partnered with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) to expand its legal support for members and strengthen patient rights.

Based on a Wednesday news release, Philippine Health Insurance Corporation signed on Tuesday a two-year Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Inte-

grated Bar of the Philippines to strengthen support systems for its members, particularly to address concerns involving healthcare benefits, patient rights, and access to information.

The agreement was formalized between PhilHealth President and Chief Executive Officer Edwin Mercado and IBP National President and Chairperson of the 27th Board of Governors Allan Panolong at the

IBP Building in Pasig City.

“A key feature of the agreement is the provision of free legal aid activities for qualified PhilHealth members, particularly those who are indigent or marginalized, on matters related to healthcare benefits and claims,” the news release said.

“PhilHealth will support these initiatives by providing the necessary information and documentation to facilitate legal assis-

tance,” it said.

PhilHealth and IBP will also conduct information and education campaigns to help Filipinos better understand their rights and entitlements under the Universal Health Care (UHC) Act.

Meanwhile, PhilHealth said the partnership also covers cooperation on health law and policy development, capacity-building programs, continuing legal education for PhilHealth lawyers, and fraud pre-

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nership are program development, updating of training content, sharing of equipment, and deployment of experts who can help improve the competencies of Filipino trainees.

Dillera noted that some international partners are also willing to share existing certification programs that TESDA may adopt to help Filipini-

*(Turn to p.2)*

## DepEd activates Oplan Balik Eskwela for safe, smooth school opening

MANILA – The Department of Education (DepEd) on Thursday activated the 2026 National Oplan Balik Eskwela (OBE) to ensure a safe and smooth school opening on June 8.

The multi-sectoral mobilization under the 2026 OBE from June 1

– 11 is in line with the directives of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to ensure readiness to advance quality education and protect the welfare of learners and teachers.

In a statement, DepEd Secretary Sonny Angara said the preparations for the OBE

demonstrate the administration’s prioritization of the education sector.

“Sinisiguro natin, kasama ang iba’t ibang ahensya ng pamahalaan, na magiging ligtas, maayos, at walang aberya ang pagbabalik-aral ng *(Turn to p. 2)*

## More than 31K jobs created through DOTr’s railway, subway projects



**RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION.** The launching gantry dubbed “Luid” used in the construction of the North-South Commuter Railway (NSCR) Malolos-Clark segment in this undated photo. Acting Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez said Thursday (May 28, 2026) that more than 31,000 jobs for Filipinos have been generated by the NSCR and the Metro Manila Subway Project. (Photo courtesy of DOTr)

MANILA – More than 31,000 jobs in the Philippines have so far been created by two of the Department of Transportation’s (DOTr) big-ticket projects – the North-South Commuter Railway (NSCR) and the Metro Manila Subway Project (MMSP).

In a statement on Thursday, acting DOTr Secretary Giovanni Lopez said foreign project contractors of these big-ticket projects are encouraged to hire Filipinos in line with President Ferdi-

nand R. Marcos Jr.’s order to provide more local job opportunities.

In particular, many project management offices and consultant companies of these projects hire Filipino engineers, architects, and employees, while contractors and subcontractors employ locals to work in construction sites.

“Sa DOTr kapag tayo’y nagtayo ng ganitong proyekto kailangan nila ng mga trabahador at sinasabi natin *(Turn to p.2)*

## TESDA strengthens global partnerships for Filipino skilled workers

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) continues to strengthen its international partnerships and cooperations to enhance technical-vocational education and create more global opportunities for skilled Filipino workers.

During the WorldSkills Phil-

ippines Calabarzon opening ceremony in Calamba City, Laguna, on May 25, TESDA Deputy Director General for TVET Partnership and Linkages Nelly Nita Dillera emphasized that the agency’s partnerships extend beyond local enterprises and academic institutions, reaching organizations and training institutions worldwide.

“We have many partners not only among enterprises and academic institutions in the Philippines, but even worldwide. Regular visitors come to the Philippines and benchmark what we do. They see our TESDA Women’s Center and the strengths of our regional centers,” she said.

Among the areas being explored for part-

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ating mga mag-aaral (We are making sure, together with various government agencies, that our learners will have a safe, orderly, and hassle-free return to classes)," he said.

The OBE seeks to streamline the enrollment process, address public concerns, and ensure coordination between the DepEd and other government and private agencies.

At least 16 government agencies and critical utility partners are collaborating with the DepEd to boost logistics support and secure all schools.

Notable safety guidelines, community health assistance, and regional traffic management plans will be actively deployed by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Philippine National Police (PNP), Department of Health (DOH), and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

In terms of structural stability, the Department of Energy (DOE) will coordinate steady grid distribution, while the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) expands consumer protection.

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) will closely monitor air, land, and maritime commuter streams.

The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) and the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) will reinforce connectivity pathways.

For its part, the Na-

tional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) will be on 24/7 standby for early weather hazards, while communication efforts will be amplified by the Presidential Communications Office (PCO).

Meanwhile, the Manila Electric Company (MERALCO) and Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) will impose a stringent oversight measure to ensure uninterrupted power and water services to all school clusters.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) will also secure infrastructure maintenance and enhanced social protection tracking for vulnerable learners, when needed.

To process public feedback efficiently, the OBE Public Assistance Command Center (OBE-PACC) will leverage public hotlines, emails, and social media channels to handle public grievances in real time.

The public may contact the OBE-PACC via the PACC Hotlines: 8636-1663; 8633-1942; 8638-7529; 8638-7530; 8638-7531; 8635-9817; 8634-0222; 8638-8641; Text/Call (SMS): 0919-456-0027 (Smart); 0995-921-8461 (Globe); or email at [depedaction-center@deped.gov.ph](mailto:depedaction-center@deped.gov.ph). (PNA)

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nos acquire globally recognized credentials more efficiently.

"These partnerships start with exploratory talks where we see what they have, and they also check what we have. Then we begin discussing areas where we can partner," Dillera said.

She then added, "Some partners are willing to share their

**PHILHEALTH . . . FR. P. 1**

vention measures to strengthen safeguards within the system.

"These initiatives are expected to strengthen PhilHealth's ability to deliver responsive ser-

**MORE THAN 31K . FR. P. 1**

sa kanila na i-prioritize ninyo not only the Filipino workers pero 'yung mga trabahador, 'yung mga empleyado doon sa lugar (At the DOTr, when we're building a project, we require them to prioritize Filipino workers, especially local laborers)," Lopez said.

He noted that local workers are competent, talented, and skilled, and should be hired by foreign project contractors.

To date, DOTr-foreign project contractor partnerships have resulted in 10,122 Filipinos working to build the MMSP, while 21,031 Filipino workers are employed at the NSCR.

"Magagaling talaga ang mga Pinoy. Ganoon naman talaga ang job generation and job employment na dapat naidudulot ng ganitong malalak-ing proyekto (Filipinos are great workers. That's what big projects should bring

programs, their equipment, and even experts because they are looking for skilled Filipinos who can eventually become part of their workforce."

Under the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and TESDA Secretary Francisco Kiko Benitez, promoting TVET as a viable pathway for

vices and ensure that members receive the benefits and protections they are entitled to under the law," it said. (PNA)

– job generation and employment)," Lopez said.

Once operational, the 35-station, 147-km. NSCR will cut travel time from Clark, Pangasinana to Calamba, Laguna and vice versa by two hours from the current four hours and will serve an estimated 800,000 passengers daily.

On the other hand, the 17-station, 33-km. MMSP will traverse Valenzuela City to Parañaque City and vice versa, ending at the Bicutan Station in Taguig City with a spur line at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 3 in Pasay City.

The subway is expected to reduce travel time to just 45 minutes from the usual one hour and 38 minutes, with a projected ridership of approximately 519,000 passengers daily once it becomes fully operational in 2032. (PNA)

progress, and a vital part of this is TESDA's coordination and engagement with industries to employ individuals with National Certifications.

Through global partnerships, it improves the competitiveness of Filipino workers as industries worldwide continue to demand highly skilled and internationally certified professionals. TESDA is optimistic that Filipino trainees' access to updated technologies, modern training systems, and globally aligned standards leads to an increase in their chances of securing quality employment both in the country and overseas.

The partnerships are formalized through Memoranda of Agreement (MOA), Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), and

transnational education and training programs that allow certifications earned in the Philippines to be recognized abroad.

"One example would be the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Agreement. Workers can bring their Philippine certificates and have them recognized by schools and institutions in other countries," Dillera explained.

She added that these partnerships also help ensure that Philippine technical-vocational education remains responsive to global industry needs, particularly in sectors such as tourism, healthcare, construction, manufacturing, and information technology where Filipino workers are highly recognized. (AM/PIA CAL-ABARZON)

## CAVITE NEWS PUBLISHING WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

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**A joyful heart is good  
medicine, But a crushed  
spirit saps one's strength**

*Proverbs 17:22*



### 2026 Pre-Employment Orientation Seminar and Career Fair at CvSU Trece Martires City Campus

The Provincial Government of Cavite through the Office of the Provincial Public Employment Service Manager in partnership with the Cavite State University (CvSU) successfully conducted its 2026 Pre-Employment Orientation Seminar and Career Fair at the CvSU-Trece Martires City Campus, bringing together students, graduates, industry partners, and employment agencies in a meaningful initiative aimed at strengthening career readiness and employment opportunities for aspiring professionals.

The whole-day event, served as a platform for 988 students and job seekers to gain valuable insights into employment preparation, labor market trends, workplace standards, and financial literacy, while also connecting directly with participating employers and industry representatives.

The program formally opened with a message from Prof. Noel A. Sedigo, Campus Administrator and a welcome message delivered by Mr. Meynard John G. Panganiban, Job Placement Coordinator, emphasizing the university's commitment to producing competent and industry-ready graduates.

The seminar proper featured informative discussions designed to prepare participants for the professional world. Ms. Rizalie Pinpin-Enero, Provincial PESO Manager, discussed resume writing, interview skills, job readiness, and career preparation, while Mr. Demetrio C. Villanueva, Labor and Employment Officer I, presented valuable insights on labor market information. Discussions on labor standards were facilitated by Mr. Francis Tiu Atang, and financial literacy for new employees was tackled by Mr. Gideon Luke Ty, Financial Advisor, equipping attendees with practical knowledge essential for workplace success.

The afternoon session featured the much-anticipated Career Fair, where 17 participating employers offered approximately 2,870 job vacancies across various industries, providing attendees with a wide range of employment opportunities and reinforcing the event's commitment to supporting career growth and workforce development.--- OPIO



### Public consultation on proposed Schedule of Market Values conducted in compliance with RPVARA

The Office of the Provincial Assessor, in cooperation with the Municipal Assessors of Cavite, successfully conducted the Public Consultation on the Proposed Schedule of Market Values (SMV) on April 29 and May 6, at the New E-Registration Building, New Provincial Government Center Compound, Trece Martires City.

The activity was conducted in compliance with the Real Property Valuation and Assessment Reform Act (RPVARA) or Republic Act No. 12001, which aims to promote a more transparent, equitable, and standardized real property valuation system in the country. The consultation was attended by real property owners, local government officials, and various stakeholders from across the province.



### DOSMDH celebrates founding anniversary

In celebration of its 68th founding anniversary this month of May, the Dra. Olivia Salamanca Memorial District Hospital in Cavite City has lined up a series of meaningful activities and health programs aimed at promoting wellness and delivering quality healthcare services to the community.

The anniversary celebration officially kicked off with a Thanksgiving Mass held on May 5, bringing together hospital personnel, partners, and stakeholders in gratitude for the institution's nearly seven decades of dedicated public health service. Likewise, present during the occasion were Mayor Denver Chua, Vice Mayor Raleigh Rusit, and 1st District Board Members Jygs Gandia and Romel Enriquez, who expressed their continued support for the hospital and its programs. The gathering served as a moment of reflection on the hospital's accomplishments and sustained commitment to compassionate and accessible healthcare for Caviteños.

As part of the month-long celebration, various medical outreach and wellness activities will be conducted for the benefit of the public. On May 15, the hospital will provide OB wellness services focusing on women's health and early disease detection. Services include breast cancer screening, cervical cancer screening, and Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid (VIA), a preventive procedure used for the early detection of cervical abnormalities. The initiative aims to raise awareness on the importance of regular health check-ups and preventive care among women.

Meanwhile, on May 22, a broader range of health services will be offered to community beneficiaries. These include medical consultation, pediatric consultation, Operation Tuli, and dental services, all geared toward improving access to essential healthcare and promoting overall community wellness.

Through these initiatives, the hospital continues to uphold its mission of delivering quality healthcare services while strengthening its connection with the community it has faithfully served for 68 years. The anniversary celebration not only highlights the institution's legacy of public service but also reaffirms its dedication to advancing healthcare programs that respond to the needs of every Caviteño.--- OPIO

During the first day of the consultation on April 29, the program formally opened with a welcome message from Provincial Administrator Engr. Gilbert V. Gandia, who emphasized the importance of stakeholder participation in the valuation process. This was followed by a message from Provincial Assessor Raymundo D. Salazar, REA, who highlighted the significance of updating the Schedule of Market Values in accordance with national policies and current market conditions.

Resource speakers Mr. Archie C. Larracas, LAOO IV of the Bureau of Local Government Finance (BLGF) Region IV-A, and Ms. Elmine C. De La Cruz, LAOO II, discussed the overview and salient provisions of RA No. 12001. Their discussion provided participants with a clearer understanding of the law's objectives, implementation, and its impact on local government units and property owners.

Also present during the consultation was Board Member Aidel Paul Belamide, Sangguniang Panlalawigan Chair of the Committee on Finance, Budget and Appropriations, who expressed support for the initiative and underscored the importance of collaboration between the provincial government, municipal assessors, and stakeholders.

Meanwhile, the second day of the consultation held on May 6, commenced with a welcome message from Mr. Carroll B. Bedua, REA, Municipal Assessor of General Mariano Alvarez (GMA). Board Member Belamide once again graced the activity and delivered his message of support, alongside Magallanes Vice Mayor Aina S. Maligalig, who also conveyed her appreciation for the conduct of the consultation and the opportunity for stakeholders to voice their concerns and recommendations.

The public consultation served as an avenue for open discussion, allowing stakeholders to raise concerns, seek clarifications, and provide inputs regarding the proposed Schedule of Market Values. Through the initiative, the Provincial Government of Cavite continues to uphold transparency, accountability, and participatory governance in implementing reforms that contribute to effective and responsive public service.--- OPIO

## SSS commits to faster, streamlined services as ARTA marks 8th year

QUEZON CITY, 22 May 2026 – The Social Security System (SSS) reaffirmed its commitment to faster and more responsive public service as it joins the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) in celebrating its 8th anniversary on Friday, May 22.

SSS President and Chief Executive Officer Robert Joseph M. de Claro said the agency continues to strengthen frontline services, simplify processes, and modernize systems to better respond to member concerns, in line with the shared goal of improving government service delivery for Filipinos.

“As one of the country’s largest public service institutions, SSS recognizes that every transaction affects the daily lives of our members. We continue to improve our systems, processes, and frontline services because faster and more responsive government service is not only an operational goal, but a public responsibility,” de Claro said.

“The agency’s strong financial performance in 2025 has strengthened its capacity to expand member assistance programs and accelerate reforms aimed at improving service delivery”, de Claro added.

In 2025, SSS posted a net income of P142.97 Billion while its Reserve Fund surpassed the P1 Trillion mark for the first time in the institution’s history, a major milestone that further strengthens



the long-term stability of the pension fund for current and future members.

“Our strong financial position allows us to invest directly in better services, new technologies, infrastructure upgrades, and programs that will improve the experience of our members,” de Claro said.

He also highlighted the agency’s expanded relief programs designed to help Filipino workers and families cope with the continuing impact of the national energy emergency.

As part of these efforts, de Claro said SSS is also preparing to roll out an Energy Sustainability Loan Program in September.

The program allows qualified SSS members with a Mandatory Provident Fund account to avail themselves of financing to install residential solar panel systems, payable for up to seven years. The Mandatory Provi-

dent Fund Program is a compulsory retirement savings scheme that automatically enrolls SSS members who are contributing to the regular SSS program with a Monthly Salary Credit (MSC) above ₱20,000.

SSS aims to support at least 100,000 homes by 2028 through the program, which seeks to help families manage rising electricity costs while promoting long-term energy sustainability.

According to de Claro, the initiative reflects the evolving role of SSS in responding not only to traditional social security concerns, but also to emerging economic pressures affecting Filipino households.

“As ARTA continues to push for reforms in government service delivery, SSS remains committed to developing programs that are more responsive, practical, and relevant to the everyday realities of the Filipino people,” de Claro said. #

**Better is a piece of dry bread where there is peace Than a house full of feasting along with quarreling.**

*Proverbs 17: 1*

## NFA intensifies emergency rice milling to support palay farmers

MANILA – The National Food Authority (NFA) on Tuesday said its rice milling activities have been intensified to support local palay (unhusked rice) farmers in Soccsksargen.

The grains agency collaborated with rice millers for the intensified milling initiative under the emergency procurement program.

In a statement, NFA administrator Larry Lacson said at least 1,100 palay farmers in Central Mindanao are expected to be supported under the emergency procurement milling initiative.

“This is more than just a procurement exercise. Every bag of palay we move out of our warehouses means another farmer we can help and another family assured that their harvest has value,” he said.

He said the initiative also helps free up spaces in NFA warehouses in the region.

“We are clearing space not simply to store rice, but to keep buying from farmers who rely on us during difficult market conditions. That support can spell the difference between profit and loss for many small grow-



*National Food Authority Administrator Larry Lacson (PNA file photo)*

ers,” Lacson said.

The NFA has tapped 15 rice mills for the emergency procurement milling services initiative.

It covers PHP48.5 million worth of contracts or more than 215,000 50-kilo bags of palay harvested across Soccsksargen.

The bulk of the milling contracts, covering around 161,841 bags of palay, was awarded to six millers in North Cotabato, which collectively have a 12-hour milling capacity of 4,526 bags.

The other six millers in Sultan Kudarat will process 45,357 bags, while three millers in South Cotabato will handle the remaining 7,965 bags.

About 133,251 bags of rice are expected to be produced from the milling services program for the gov-

ernment’s rice buffer stock.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the NFA milling program seeks to sustain palay procurement for farmers at favorable prices.

“When the government steps in to buy their harvest at fair prices, we protect livelihoods, strengthen food security, and ensure that Filipino families will continue to have rice on their tables,” he said.

Tiu Laurel vowed to replicate the milling contract in other areas in the country to further boost support for palay farmers.

The DA chief said the emergency procurement milling initiative also backs the administration’s flagship Benteng Bigas Meron (BBM) Na program. (PNA)

### CODE BLUE:.. FR. P. 5

Post-Residency Placement Program binds recent graduates to a one-year service in remote and underserved government hospitals as a return service. This model has been vital in Quezon province where a delicate healthcare system must constantly adapt to isolated communities and a parade of calamities.

Quezon Governor Helen Tan said the provincial government is sponsoring 33 scholars

who are taking medicine courses. As part of their return service program, these doctors will serve Quezon’s remote communities without access to healthcare services.

“May 33 na pinag-aaral ng pagdu-doktor ang kapitolyo, libre po iyon. Para ‘yung mga lugar na walang doktor ay magkadoktor dahil may return of service po iyon.”

More than simply ‘giving back’ to the community, the return service program seeks to aug-

ment its health services with specialized doctors, such as occupational and speech therapists.

Health officials openly acknowledge that mandated service is a short term fix in the gaps in the healthcare system. But as long as local offerings pale in comparison to lucrative overseas compensation, the Philippine public health sector will remain a revolving door for trained professionals. (PB-PIA CALABARZON)

## Pag-IBIG Fund raises housing loan limit to P10 million

MANILA – Pag-IBIG Fund has raised its maximum housing loan amount per borrower to PHP10 million, providing middle-income and higher-earning Filipino workers access to affordable long-term home financing, particularly in Metro Manila and other highly urbanized areas, top officials announced on Monday.

Pag-IBIG Fund said the move was made to further widen the reach of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s flagship Expanded Pambansang Pabahay para sa Pilipino, or Expanded 4PH Program, and help address the oversupply of available housing inventory.

The higher loan ceiling complements the program's ongoing subsidized 3 percent housing loan rate for qualified buyers of socialized housing, enabling Pag-IBIG Fund to serve more members seeking homes beyond the socialized housing segment through affordable long-term financing.

DHSUD Secretary Jose Ramon Aliling, who also chairs the Pag-IBIG Fund Board of Trustees, said the increase is part of the government's broader effort to make homeownership more accessible to Filipino workers across income segments.

"With the higher PHP10-million loan ceiling, Pag-IBIG Fund can now serve more members, especially Filipino workers who seek homes in higher price segments but still require long-term and affordable financing to own homes near their workplaces, schools, and sources of livelihood," Aliling said in a news release on Wednesday.

"This move allows Pag-IBIG Fund to widen access to home financing across more income segments, in line with the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.

to make decent and affordable housing more inclusive and accessible to more Filipino families," he added.

Aliling said the move also supports efforts to improve the take-up of available housing units, particularly in Metro Manila and other urban centers where there is an oversupply of ready-for-occupancy condominium units.

He said the higher loan ceiling, combined with the Pag-IBIG Fund's long-term home financing, can make purchasing these units more affordable for qualified members.

"This is also our call to developers: let us make the numbers meet. Pag-IBIG Fund is expanding the financing available to qualified borrowers. We urge our developer-partners to recalibrate their prices, offer reasonable packages, and help bring their available units within the reach of Pag-IBIG Fund members. When housing prices, borrower capacity, and affordable financing meet, more Filipino workers can finally own homes of their own," Aliling said.

Pag-IBIG Fund Chief Executive Officer Marilene Acosta said the increase in loan ceiling reflects Pag-IBIG Fund's mandate to serve Filipino workers from all income segments.

"At Pag-IBIG Fund, our mandate is to serve all Filipino workers. This means serving first-time homebuyers and members who need subsidized support, as well as middle-income and higher-earning members who also need affordable long-term financing to buy homes for their families," Acosta said.

"Because of our strong financial position, we are able to offer a higher loanable amount while keeping our housing loan rates not only affordable, but among the lowest in the market," he added.

With the higher loan ceiling, he said qualified borrowers now have even better access to home financing payable for up to 30 years, with interest rates that may go as low as 5.75 percent a year, depending on their chosen fixing period.

"More importantly, this allows us to widen the reach of the Expanded 4PH Program so that more members, across more income segments, can gain access to decent and affordable homes, while eligible socialized housing borrowers continue to benefit from the 3 percent subsidized rate," Acosta said.

Acosta said the broader Pag-IBIG Housing Loan Program is intended to make homeownership a practical alternative to renting for more Filipino workers, especially when available housing units are offered at prices that match members' income and borrowing capacity.

"For many families, rent is already one of their biggest monthly expenses. Through Pag-IBIG Fund's affordable housing loan terms, monthly amortizations for reasonably priced homes can be lower than rent in many urban areas. This is the value we want to give our members: instead of paying rent month after month, they can use their hard-earned income to pay for a home they can eventually call their own," Acosta added.

Pag-IBIG Fund emphasized that the higher maximum loan amount remains subject to credit evaluation, capacity-to-pay requirements, collateral appraisal and other housing loan guidelines to ensure that borrowing remains responsible and sustainable for members.

Officials said the higher loan ceiling strengthens the Pag-IBIG Fund's role in bridging the available housing supply

## Code blue: 'Doctors to the Barrios' return to service program keeps healthcare system alive amid worker shortage

A new generation of doctors is poised to revitalize the Philippine healthcare system following the March 2026 Physician Licensure Examination. With 1,954 exam passers as new physicians, the Professional Regulatory Commission (PRC) highlights an incoming workforce equipped to address gaps in public healthcare, especially in marginalized communities.

Yet, beneath the optimism lies a stark reality: a public health system in dire need of professionals to deliver life-saving services to the country's most remote and underserved communities.

Universally, a hospital "code blue" indicates a medical emergency where a patient is experiencing a life-threatening emergency. In these critical seconds, nearby medical personnel work together to revive a patient. Strict protocol, precise movement, and a heartbeat are what separate a patient from life and death.

Yet, despite life-saving abilities, the public health system remains understaffed. Very few hands are available to help care for millions of patients, especially in rural areas and island towns in need of medical care.

Dr. Brittany Mandalihan, Universal Healthcare Outcomes Manager for the Department of Health (DOH)-CALABARZON, paints a harrowing picture: a country facing a shortage of health workers, with those who remain being stretched dangerously thin.

to the actual homebuyer capacity, while encouraging developers to offer homes at prices that better match the income and financing capacity of Filipino workers. (PR)

"Medyo nakakalungkot man po at matagal na po nating problema ang usapin pagdating sa mga healthcare worker. Batay sa datos ng ating rehiyon, masasabi namin na hindi pa rin talaga sapat ang bilang ng ating healthcare workers hindi lang sa ating rehiyon pero pati na rin sa ating bansa lalo na sa mga primary care facility at rural health units."

Globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a ratio of 10 doctors for every 10,000 population—or one doctor for every 1,000 population. However, the DOH operates with fewer resources, targeting one (1) doctor for every 20,000 population. For nurses, the ratio is one for every 10,000 population; 1:5,000 for midwives, and 1:50,000 for dentists.

Despite being already below global standards, the health department records reveal massive significant shortages in healthcare personnel. Public health facilities such as Rural Health Units and Primary Care Facilities are short of at least 2,000 physicians, 4,400 nurses, and 3,900 midwives. Even public dental services were not spared with close to 140 shortages.

Catering to a fast-growing population, the Philippines is very well aware of its depleting supply of healthcare professionals. A study by the Ateneo de Manila University highlighted the country's perennial problem of shortages of nurses and physicians.

"Government primary care facilities and hospitals struggle to hire sufficient staff due to budget and policy barriers, while private hospitals struggle to keep their staff due to fiscal complaints."

Healthcare workers were not exempt in the country's "brain drain" phenomenon, which sees

skilled professionals migrate for better compensation and work conditions. Instead of expanding the workforce, fresh graduates have become a quick fix for the ongoing shortage. Without tenured and experienced professionals to mentor them, new graduates were ill-prepared for deployment.

The DOH admits that it cannot force healthcare workers to stay in the country, choosing instead to strengthen its human resource-centered programs. Initiatives such as the National Health Workers' Support System and the Doctors to the Barrios program aim to deploy specialists into public health facilities and last-mile communities.

"Tayo ay nagbibigay sa mga city at probinsya ng nurses, midwife, medtech, therapist, dentist, and nutritionists. Isa na rin sa mga programa natin ay 'yung Doctors to the Barrios program kung saan 'yung mga munisipyo na walang doktor ay binibigyan natin ng mga doktor. Usually ito 'yung scholars natin na pinag-aaral ng medisina at sila po ay nagre-return to service for three years after nila mag-aral."

Currently, 38 physicians under the Doctors to the Barrios program are catering to 236 barangays across 52 municipalities in the region that are considered Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA).

"Ang ating Department of Health ay mayroong post-residency placement program sa mga government hospital, at after nila makapasa sa kanilang exams ay kailangan nilang magbigay ng one year na return service sa mga lugar kung saan sila ide-deploy."

Additionally, the DOH *(Back to p.4)*

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## MPTC convenes multi-sectoral Flood Mitigation Forum to boost resilience in Southern Metro Manila and surrounding provinces

The Metro Pacific Tollways South (MPTS), the south arm of Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation, brought together stakeholders from national government agencies, local government units (LGUs), and host communities of CALAX and CAVITEX to strengthen collaboration in addressing perennial flooding concerns in Southern Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

This marks the first Flood Mitigation Forum conducted in the South, providing a platform for multi-sectoral dialogue, data sharing, and coordinated planning on flood mitigation efforts.

"This year's forum aims to solidify cooperation among government agencies and LGUs in addressing recurring flooding challenges across Metro Manila and nearby provinces," said MPTC Chief Tollways Development and Engineering Officer Gil F. Amilbangsa.

The MPTC Flood Mitigation Forum 2026 gathered key representatives from the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH),

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), and Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO). Participants from the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB), Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA), and PEA Tollway Corporation (PEATC) also took part in the discussions and the sharing of initiatives.

LGU representatives from Las Piñas, Parañaque, Pasay, Taguig, Cavite, and Laguna provided valuable insights during the forum, along with key leaders including Cavite Governor Francisco Gabriel "Abeng" Diaz Remulla, Office of Civil Defense Director Jose Harry M. Barber, Biñan City Councilor Titus Bautista, and Former Senator Cynthia Villar of Villar SIPAG Foundation.

Flood risk area data and assessments were provided by AMH Philippines, which was engaged by MPT South, to support evidence-based identification of critical flood-prone areas and inform mitigation planning.

Discussions highlighted the impact of improper waste disposal on flooding, particularly in low-lying communities. LGUs reiterated efforts to strengthen enforce-



ment of anti-littering and solid waste management ordinances, alongside regular de-clogging of drainage systems and monitoring of critical waterways.

"Effective flood mitigation depends heavily on good governance, which is a core prin-

PH SEAG team member pays courtesy call to Italy envoy

ROME – Dalph Panopio, a proud Filipino-Italian member of the Gilas Pilipinas team that won a gold medal at the 2025 Southeast Asian Games, paid a courtesy call on Philippine Ambassador on Italy Neal Imperial at the Philippine Embassy in Rome on May 25.

Imperial commended Panopio for his accomplishments, emphasizing the importance of Filipino athletes pursuing excellence abroad while staying true to their iden-



**COURTESY CALL.** Philippine Basketball Association's Blackwater rookie Dalph Panopio (center) poses with Ambassador Neal Imperial (left) and Consul General Randy Arquiza during a courtesy call at the Philippine Embassy in Rome on May 25, 2026. Imperial thanked Panopio for playing for his commitment to play for the Philippine team. (Photo by Alona Cochon)

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In response, Panopio thanked Imperial and Consul General Randy Arquiza for the embassy's support of Filipino athletes.

Panopio shared how his journey abroad has shaped him both academically and athletically, having graduated from California State University, Bakersfield in 2024.

He also discussed his new role as a Blackwater rookie in the Philippine Basketball Association, the Asia's first professional basketball league.

Panopio is currently spending time with his family in Rome while recovering from a hairline fracture in his right metacarpal, which he sustained in a game against TNT.

Fortunately, he said sur-

gery is not required, and the injury is expected to heal on its own.

"Ok naman po ako, (I'm okay right now). Happy to be with my family before another conference will start in July" Panopio said in an interview.

Dalph Panopio, a former Gilas Pilipinas youth player, is not only admired for his impressive athletic skills but also for his strong sense of national pride and commitment to inspiring the younger generation.

"You guys have a dream, a sacrifice for a dream. Your family is there to support, so go for that dream," Panopio told aspiring athletes.

He was accompanied by his parents and his brother, David, during the courtesy call. (Alona Cochon/PNA)

Harry M. Barber.

In partnership with barangays and volunteer groups, LGUs continue community-based environmental education campaigns in promoting proper waste segregation, infrastructure planning, and disaster risk reduction initiatives.

"We recognize that multi-sectoral collaboration creates a ripple of hope for communities in the South, especially during typhoon season. We, at MPT South, will continue to work closely with LGUs and national government agencies to translate discussions into action," said MPT

South President and General Manager Andrew B. Pangilinan.

The forum concluded with commitments from stakeholders to improve drainage systems, strengthen flood control management, enhance disaster resilience, and reinforce inter-agency coordination.

The Flood Mitigation Forum 2026 underscores the Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation Group's commitment to providing a platform for collaboration and sustained action to address flooding challenges in surrounding communities.