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Rice imports to help stabilize supply, prices amid looming El Niño

MANILA – The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Wednesday said rice import arrivals will help ensure a stable supply and prices of retail rice in the country amid the looming strong El Niño.

According to the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), as of May 28,

total arrivals of imported rice since January has reached 2.22 million metric tons (MT), higher than the 1.93 million MT logged for the same period in 2025.

In a press conference, Agriculture spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the volume of ar-

rivals will help support local production, considering its potential decline due to extreme weather conditions.

“Considering ‘yung inflation natin atsaka mas mura ‘yung (Considering the inflation and cheaper price of) imported rice, I guess that’s enough reason to justify bakit mataas

‘yung imports ngayon (why the volume of import is higher),” he said.

“Kailangan natin din in preparation for any problem din na magkaroon tayo ng malaking epekto ng El Niño (We also need this in preparation for any problem, in case there’s a huge effect due to El Niño).”

The DA estimates that a strong El Niño

will lower rice production by at least 700,000 metric tons (MT).

“Sa El Niño lang iyon. Kung ico-consider natin ‘yung mga bagyo (That’s just from El Niño. If we are to consider typhoons), that’s an additional 500,000 to 600,000 MT losses,” de Mesa added, citing the average annual production losses in palay (unhusked rice) harvest due to ty-

phoons.

Local rice SRP

The DA, meanwhile, assured continued support for local palay farmers through higher suggested retail prices for local rice.

The agency is eyeing to impose a PHP53 per kilogram SRP for local rice within the month, higher than the PHP50 per kilogram price cap for 5 percent broken rice) harvest due to ty-

(Turn to p.2)

Grand Ease of Doing Business Fair in Cavite delivers gov’t services to 1,700 clients

TAGAYTAY CITY, Cavite (PIA) — Featuring services from 26 national government agencies, including those from the city government of Tagaytay, the Grand Ease of Doing Business (EODB) Fair underscored the vital role of citizen participation in improving public services.

Led by the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA), the Grand EODB Fair last May 28 gathered various

national government agencies to provide essential services, including license renewals to registration, official registrations, and e-government services to over 1,780 clients.

Christhaly Castro travelled all the way from Isabela to renew her license from the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) for the very first time at the EODB Fair.

“Very efficient and convenient. Napabilis ng registration for

renewal. Napakasulit dahil galing pa kamagaling Isabela at pumunta kami dito para mag-renew ng aming ID.”

Josephine Basiño, a stay-at-home mom, also found the services carried by the EODB Fair incredibly convenient. Aside from bringing essential government services under one roof, Basiño also lauded for patiently answering her queries.

“Malinaw naman. Magaling silang

DepEd, CHED roll out P103-M teacher education scholarship

MANILA – The Department of Education (DepEd)-Teacher Education Council (TEC) on Wednesday partnered with the Commission on Higher Education’s Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education for the launching of the

PHP103.32-million Teacher Education Scholarship Program (TESP).

The two parties signed the memorandum of agreement at the Professional Regulation Commission-NCR Office in Quezon City shortly after the 2026 First Council Meeting.

In a statement, DepEd Secretary Sonny Angara said the financial assistance will support 720 aspiring teachers nationwide to complete their degrees, earn licenses and serve in classrooms where they are needed most.

“President Bong- (Turn to p. 2)



RICE SUPPLY. Department of Agriculture Assistant Secretary Genevieve Guevarra leads the inspection of rice retail stalls at Mega Q-Mart in Quezon City on May 22, 2026. The Department of Agriculture on Wednesday (June 3, 2026) said rice import arrivals will help ensure a stable supply and prices of retail rice in the country amid the looming strong El Niño. (PNA photo by Joan Bondoc)

As the primary cli- (Turn to p.2)

UNFPA-PhilHealth collab to boost maternal health, family planning



COLLABORATION. Officials from the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation and the United Nations Population Fund in the Philippines formalized their partnership to improve maternal health, family planning, and access for Filipino women and families on Monday (June 1, 2026) in Pasig City. The collaboration aligns with the full implementation of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act, Universal Health Care Act and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030. (Photo courtesy of UNFPA)

MANILA – The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) inked a partnership aimed at improving maternal health, family planning and healthcare access for millions of Filipino women and families.

In a news release on Tuesday, the UNFPA noted that the strategic agreement aligns with the full implementation of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health law, Universal Health Care Act and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

The collaboration focuses heavily on reducing maternal mortality and expanding access to vital sexual and reproductive health services through smart investments and innovative healthcare solutions.

It builds on PhilHealth's expansion of its maternity benefit packages, which nearly tripled its financial

coverage for both normal and cesarean deliveries.

Its expanded coverage also includes the standard recommended number of prenatal and postnatal check-ups.

UNFPA Country Representative Neus Bernabeu emphasized that PhilHealth remains an indispensable partner in making universal healthcare a tangible reality in the Philippines.

"This partnership is about expanding access to quality care, supporting healthier communities, and securing the lifelong well-being of every Filipino family," she said.

"It is more than just reducing out-of-pocket costs; it's for a life-saving cause."

Meanwhile, PhilHealth President and Chief Executive Officer Edwin Mercado said the state insurer's primary goal is to reduce financial barriers and make healthcare accessible for every Filipino.

RICE . . FR. P. 1

imported rice.

"Kailangan bigyan natin ng premium 'yung paghihirap ng mga magsasaka kasi kapag papapabain natin iyon, maapektuhan 'yung farmgate (We need to put a premium on the hardship of our farmers because if we further reduce the price, farmgate prices will be affected)," de Mesa said.

"We don't want to do that kasi again mahalaga 'yung planting intention ng ating magsasaka (because the planting intention of our farmers is important)."

GRAND EASE . . FR. P. 1

ents of government services, Racho urged the public to remain vigilant and report bureaucratic delays and excessive processes that prevent access to action.

"Kapag nakakita kayo ng hindi normal sa inyong pagpila sa mga tanggapan ng gobyerno, abisuhan ninyo ang inyong mayor at

"Through this partnership with UNFPA and our expanded maternity care benefits, we ensure that all pregnant persons can receive quality services without fear of incurring exorbitant medical costs," he added.

To ensure health policies effectively reach grassroots communities, the two agencies will collaborate on localized health investments, affordable maternal care, and capacity building.

UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Di-

rector Aleksandar Boudiroza, who witnessed the signing ceremony, lauded the Philippines for setting a powerful regional example of how multiagency cooperation can translate progressive policies into life-saving realities on the ground.

The PhilHealth noted that the joint initiative marks a critical step forward in safeguarding the health, dignity and rights of Filipino women while accelerating the country's transition toward a more equitable healthcare system. (PNA)

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As of Tuesday, premium imported rice in Metro Manila sells at PHP46 to PHP62 per kilo, while the price of imported well-milled rice ranges from PHP48 to PHP50 per kilo, and imported regular-milled rice at PHP42 to PHP43 per kilo, according to the DA Bantay Presyo (Price Watch).

DepEd . . FR. P. 1

bong Marcos has repeatedly emphasized that education is the foundation of national development. This scholarship program turns that vision into action by investing in the people who will shape the next generation of Filipinos," Angara said.

For her part, CHED Chairperson Shirley Agrupis said the partnership will help address gaps in the education sector.

"We cannot fix the gaps in our education system without supporting the people who hold it together — our teachers," she said in a separate statement.

"This is a deliberate effort to bring top talent into the teaching profession and ensure that our schools have the skilled educators

our students deserve." Under the pilot implementation, the program will provide financial support to students under three specialization degrees: Early Childhood Education, Values Education and Special Needs Education.

These areas were identified as requiring additional support to ensure that learners receive age-appropriate, values-centered and inclusive education.

The TESP is a flagship initiative of the TEC under Republic Act 11713, or the Excellence in Teacher Education Act of 2022.

The law aims to strengthen teacher preparation and raise standards across the profession. (PNA)

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Dr. Olivia Salamanca Memorial District Hospital Conducts OB Wellness Services for 68th Anniversary Celebration

As part of its 68th anniversary celebration Dra. Olivia Salamanca Memorial District Hospital, conducted an OB Wellness Services Program recently. The activity started with the registration and assessment of patients, followed by basic health checks such as blood pressure monitoring and pulse oximeter readings to ensure proper evaluation of all beneficiaries.

The program was graced by 1st District Board Member Hon. Romel R. Enriquez, who showed his support for the initiative.

This activity was made possible through the efforts of Dr. Nonie John L. Dalisay, Provincial Health Officer II, Dr. Dubhie Ram, Dr. Rhoda Perez, and Dr. Paul Comising.

Free services provided during the activity includes hemoglobin screening, bone density screening (Biofemme Bone Screening) sponsored by Unilab, family planning services, and Pap smear.

The program aims to promote women’s health by providing accessible and essential medical services to the community.



Cavite MSMEs begin product development journey through 2026 OTOP Next Gen Program

Twenty micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) from Cavite officially began their product enhancement journey as the Provincial Government of Cavite, through the Office of the Provincial Cooperatives Development Officer (OPCDO), in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)-Cavite, launched the first session of the 2026 OTOP Next Gen Program: Assessment, Consultation, and Triage (ACT) recently at the New Provincial Government Center in Trece Martires City.

The program serves as a five-month development initiative designed to assist local MSMEs in improving product quality, strengthening branding, and increasing market competitiveness through a series of training sessions, consultations, and technical assistance that will run until September 2026.

During the initial session, participants attended a lecture on emerging design trends and market-driven product development strategies. This was followed by one-on-one consultations with partner agencies and industry experts who provided technical guidance and recommendations based on the specific needs of each enterprise.

Key partner agencies present during the activity included the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOP), Office of the Provincial Agriculturist, and the OTOP designer.

The participating MSMEs received valuable insights on FDA licensing and product registration, technology transfer opportunities and funding support,



General Safety Awareness Training strengthens workplace preparedness among PGC employees

The Provincial Government of Cavite (PGC), through the Cavite Quality Management Office – Workplace Organization Committee, successfully conducted the General Safety Awareness Training recently at the New Provincial Government Center in Trece Martires City, reinforcing the importance of safety, preparedness, and emergency response in the workplace.

The training was attended by members and representatives of the Workplace Organization Committee (WOC) from various PGC offices who actively participated in the discussions and learning sessions aimed at promoting a safer and more prepared working environment.

Mr. Mark Joseph G. Bawalan, LDRRMO II, from the Office of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Officer (OPDRRMO) served as the resource speaker and shared valuable knowledge and practical insights on different aspects of workplace safety and emergency preparedness.

Topics discussed during the training included the introduction to workplace safety, hazard identification and risk analysis, office safety and good housekeeping, fire safety awareness, earthquake preparedness, basic first aid awareness, evacuation and emergency protocols, and psychological preparedness during emergencies and disasters.

The activity highlighted the significance of proactive safety measures and proper coordination in minimizing risks and ensuring the welfare of employees in the workplace.

Through initiatives like this, the Provincial Government of Cavite continuously promotes a culture of safety, preparedness, and resilience, ensuring that employees are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to respond effectively during emergencies and workplace incidents.--- OPIO

Pag-IBIG FUND. . . FR. P. 4

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 Pag-IBIG Fund’s role in bridging available housing supply to actual homebuyer capacity, while encouraging developers to offer homes at prices that better match the income and financing ability of Filipino workers. (PAGIBIG FUND)

trademark registration, sourcing of raw materials, as well as branding, packaging, and label design enhancement.

Through the collaborative initiative, the participating entrepreneurs were equipped with essential knowledge and practical support to help elevate their products and prepare them for wider market opportunities.

The 2026 OTOP Next Gen Program highlights the commitment of OPCDO and DTI-Cavite in supporting local enterprises and fostering innovation among Caviteño MSMEs, further contributing to the province’s economic growth and development.--- OPIO

DOE energy-saving drive yields P885-M savings since March launch

MANILA – About 73,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity, valued at around PHP885 million, have been saved since the Department of Energy (DOE) launched its O.N.E. (Oras Natin sa Efficiency) program on March 19, 2026.

“This is real, measurable impact. And it was built not through one grand event, but through consistent, collective action, week after week,” Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said during the ceremonial switching off of lights at BGC Park Triangle in Taguig City on Wednesday night.

Under the O.N.E. program, power consumers are encouraged to switch off and unplug unnecessary electrical appliances from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. every Saturday to conserve electricity and help reduce overall power demand.

Garin said the practice could eventually become a habit that would benefit the country.

She added around 212 malls nationwide are participating in the program, which aligns with the objectives of the annual Earth Hour campaign observed globally.

Ayala Land Chief Sustainability Officer Robert Lao, speaking at the same event, said the program enables the publicly listed conglomerate to extend its energy-efficiency efforts across its various business units.

“Ayala Land has long recognized that energy efficiency is funda-

mental to sustainable development. Through our partnership with the Department of Energy, we are proud to support the O.N.E Campaign and help drive a culture of responsible energy use across communities,” he said.

“Our commitment goes beyond compliance — we are systematically transforming how our estates, buildings, and operations consume energy, as part of our broader sustainability goals,” he added.

For her part, Ayala Land Corporate Sustainability Manager Mabel Reyes said the conglomerate consumes around 1 million megawatt-hours (MWh) of electricity annually, underscoring the importance of energy-efficiency initiatives in helping reduce power consumption nationwide.

She declined to provide projections on possible savings from the program but noted that even before the launch of the government’s energy-efficiency drive, the conglomerate had already begun implementing its own energy-conservation initiatives.

“But in support of the campaign specifically we will start on Saturday,” she said, noting that implementation for administrative offices would begin on Saturdays, while malls would observe the program on Tuesdays. (PNA)



EFFICIENT ENERGY USE. Energy Secretary Sharon Garin (second from left) and Ayala Land Chief Sustainability Officer Robert Lao (third from left) lead the ceremonial switching off of lights at BGC Park Triangle Mall in Taguig City on Wednesday (June 3, 2026). The event was part of the Department of Energy’s O.N.E. (Oras Natin sa Efficiency) program, launched on March 19, 2026, which has so far been joined by about 212 malls nationwide. (PNA photo by Valerie Escalera)

Pag-IBIG Fund raises housing loan limit to ₱10M to serve more Filipino workers

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, Pag-IBIG Fund has raised its maximum housing loan amount per borrower to ₱10 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 May 26.

The higher loan ceiling complements the program’s ongoing subsidized 3% 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 P. 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 ₱10-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. 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,” Aliling said.

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-occupan-

DOLE . FR. P. 5

cial Head Herbert M. Matre said the initiative demonstrates the strong collaboration among national government agencies, local government units, and school communities in promoting quality education and community development.

“The implementation of the TUPAD-Brigada Eskwela program highlights the strong collaboration between DOLE, DepEd, local government units, and school communities in ensuring that public schools are prepared and ready for the in-

coming school year,” Matre said.

“At the same time, the initiative provides immediate financial assistance and temporary employment to workers in need, especially those affected by economic challenges and displacement. Through programs such as TUPAD, the government continues to promote inclusive opportunities while empowering communities through meaningful and productive work,” he added. (PIA4A with reports from DOLE 4A)

cy condominium units. He said the higher loan ceiling, combined with Pag-IBIG Fund’s long-term home financing, can make the purchase of 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 C. 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. 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. With the higher loan ceiling, 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% 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% subsidized rate,” Acosta said.

Acosta said the broader (Back to p.3)

**SAY NO
TO DRUGS**

SSS rolls out nationwide Palengke Caravan to bring mobile services closer to grassroots communities



QUEZON CITY, 25 May 2026 – The Social Security System (SSS) has deployed its mobile e-Wheels to public markets and barangays across selected towns and cities nationwide as part of weeklong Palengke Caravan, aimed at reducing travel time, long queues, and transaction difficulties experienced by workers, pensioners, and beneficiaries.

The caravan supports the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to bring public services faster and closer to the people, particularly in underserved and hard-to-reach communities.

“For many pensioners, informal workers, and members in underserved communities, even a single branch visit can mean transportation expenses, lost income, and hours spent in line,” SSS President and Chief Executive Officer Robert Joseph M. De Claro said.

“Through the SSS e-Wheels / Palengke Caravan, we are bringing government services directly to communities so people can

access assistance and complete transactions closer to where they live and work,” he added.

He explained that the SSS is holding a caravan in public markets directly to market vendors and ambulant sellers who are unable to visit branch offices because they cannot leave their small businesses unattended.

The SSS e-Wheels will be deployed in Metro Manila starting on May 25, which targets to serve around 21,500 clients. It will be followed by caravan activities in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro; Legazpi, Albay; Silay City, Negros Occidental; and Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte on May 27. The nationwide caravan will conclude on May 28 in Virac, Catanduanes.

The mobile caravan will offer services including employer registration, inquiries and verification, Annual Confirmation of Pensioners or ACOP, updating of member data records, issuance of SSS numbers and forms, and online-re-

lated transactions such as My.SSS registration, password resetting, Payment Reference Number generation, pension loan applications, and benefit claim applications.

SSS will also deploy for the first time the newly launched facial authentication with liveness check for ACOP verification during mobile service operations, allowing eligible pensioners to complete verification faster and more conveniently without visiting branches.

From January to April 2026, the SSS conducted a total of 3,294 e-Wheels activities nationwide, serving 239,367 members and residents in last-mile communities. In 2024, the SSS e-Wheels Program received the ASEAN Social Security Association Recognition Award in the innovation category.

“By bringing services closer to the people, we are making SSS more accessible, more responsive and convenient for workers, pensioners, and their families,” De Claro said.

DOLE mobilizes TUPAD workers for Brigada Eskwela across Calabarzon



CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in Calabarzon is mobilizing beneficiaries of the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) program to assist in various Brigada Eskwela activities in preparation for the opening of classes on June 8.

This is in response to the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to simultaneously prepare learning facilities for the incoming school year and provide temporary employment opportunities to disadvantaged, displaced, and underemployed workers.

In Antipolo City, Rizal, a total of 20 TUPAD workers were deployed to each participating school to render 10 days of community work focused on improving school facilities and learning environments.

According to DOLE Rizal, beneficiaries will assist in repainting classrooms and school facilities, cleaning school grounds, clearing overgrown vegetation, repairing and

refurbishing school furniture, organizing learning spaces, beautifying school premises, and carrying out other maintenance activities identified by school administrators.

“The initiative forms part of Secretary (Francis) Tolentino’s effort to maximize the impact of TUPAD by providing temporary employment opportunities while supporting priority government programs. By integrating TUPAD into Brigada Eskwela, disadvantaged and displaced workers are able to earn income while contributing to the improvement of public schools before the start of classes,” DOLE Rizal Supervising Labor and Employment Officer Victoria B. Natanauan said in a statement.

School officials welcomed the deployment of TUPAD workers, noting that the additional manpower would help expedite school preparation activities and address maintenance needs ahead of the opening of classes.

Natanauan said that the partnership between DOLE and the Department of Educa-

tion (DepEd) reflects the government’s commitment to strengthening both education and employment initiatives.

“As schools across Rizal finalize preparations for the incoming school year, the partnership between DOLE and the Department of Education underscores the government’s commitment to both education and employment, ensuring that schools are ready to receive students while providing meaningful work opportunities to members of the community,” she added.

Meanwhile, in San Pedro City, Laguna, 684 TUPAD beneficiaries have been engaged to support Brigada Eskwela activities in 28 public schools across the city.

The beneficiaries will be deployed to a mix of elementary, integrated, and national high schools strategically located in various barangays, ensuring wider coverage of school maintenance and preparation efforts before students return to their classrooms.

DOLE Laguna Officer-in-Charge Provin-

(Back to p.4)

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TESDA elevates bartending courses to boost grads' employability

MANILA – The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) on Wednesday inked an agreement with beverage company, Diageo Philippines, seeking to boost the employability of TESDA bartending graduates.

“By collaborating with industry titans like Diageo, we are able to ensure that we stay up-to-date. When the government and the private sector work together, we make sure that training remains relevant, responsive, and aligned with the evolving needs of the labor market,” TESDA Secretary Jose Francisco Benitez said during the signing held at the agency’s central office in Bicutan, Taguig.

Under the agreement, the two parties will update and enhance the modules for the Bartending NC II course to ensure the training meets modern mixology trends and global industry standards.

Aspiring bartenders will pick up skills aligned with the evolving demands of high-end bars, luxury resorts, hotels, and premium hospitality establishments both locally and abroad.

The goal, Benitez



EMPOWERMENT. Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Secretary Jose Francisco Benitez with Bartending NCII graduate Kath, in this undated photo. TESDA has signed an agreement with beverage firm Diageo Philippines to level up the agency’s bartending courses and training. (Photo grabbed from Kiko Benitez Facebook)

said, is to help Filipinos find productive and decent employment or jump into entrepreneurship.

“As the workforce gets empowered, we then stir up the economy and more importantly, boost the spirits industry,” he added.

Benitez acknowledged that Diageo, which operates in over 100 countries, understands that people are at the heart of sustainable growth.

“Here at TESDA, teaching skills to people is our mandate,” Benitez said, while also sharing that he also attended bartending classes at TESDA.

It was not an easy class, he admitted, but emphasized that learning was essential because he can better

serve his role as Secretary if he knows how the training goes.

The partnership focuses on training and providing sustainable livelihood opportunities for women who want to enter the bartending and hospitality sectors.

According to TESDA, successful graduates will receive assistance and support from both parties in securing jobs and livelihood opportunities within the food and beverage industry.

Meanwhile, in a social media post on Wednesday, TESDA said Benitez also met with mixology expert Karel Demetrio to explore initiatives that will further raise the standards of bartending and beverage train-

Gilas Women U18 routs Vietnam to open SEABA qualifiers



(Photo courtesy of Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas)

MANILA – Gilas Pilipinas Women U18 overcame early jitters before unleashing a dominant performance to crush Vietnam, 93-42, and open its campaign on a high note in the FIBA U18 Women’s Asia Cup SEABA Qualifiers at the STI West Negros University Gym in Bacolod City on Tuesday.

The young Filipinas led by just five points, 19-14, after the opening quarter, then tightened the screws defensively and found their rhythm offensively to open the game up.

The dominant win gave newly appointed head coach Sandy Arspacochaga a successful debut in the women’s program.

UAAP Season 88 Girls’ Basketball Most Valuable Player Rhiane Perez led the Filipinas with 16 points, sev-

ing in the country. The discussion centered on importance of equipping Filipino learners with globally competitive skills while promoting innovation, sustainability, and the unique identity of local flavors through modern mixology training.

en rebounds and four steals while Tiffany Reyes added 14 points and five rebounds.

Zaydhen Rosano chipped in 15 points, while Lea Pinuela caught fire from beyond the arc late in the game and finished with 13 markers.

Gilas Women Program Director Bacon Austria said the opening-game nerves were evident but eventually gave way to a more composed performance.

“It was a good first game for us because everyone was able to contribute both offensively and defensively,” Austria said.

“Everyone was eager and excited to play in the first quarter. It should serve as a reminder for us heading into the next game,” he added.

Austria also down-

played concerns about the late arrival of Reyes and Dignadice, saying both veterans quickly settled into the system. “The late arrival of Sophia and Tiff was not a huge issue for us. They joined the team seamlessly because they are very coachable,” he said. The tournament serves as the regional qualifying event for the FIBA U18 Women’s Asia Cup, with teams battling for the lone ticket to the continental competition. Earlier, Indonesia launched its campaign with a 66-49 victory over Singapore behind a suffocating defensive effort that produced 21 steals. Ariqa Shafa Chayyara led the Indonesians with 14 points. The young Filipinas will next face Singapore in the same venue on Wednesday at 7 p.m. (PNA)

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The young Filipinas will next face Singapore in the same venue on Wednesday at 7 p.m. (PNA)

A TRUE FRIEND SHOWS LOVE AT ALL TIMES AND IS A BROTHER WHO IS BORN FOR TIMES OF DISTRESS

Prov. 17:17