



COVID-19 surge slowing down in Cavite, Rizal, Bulacan

LRT Cavite Extension hits progress rate of 61%

The Department of Transportation said Thursday the Light Rail Transit Line-1 Cavite Extension Project is near completion after almost 20 years.

Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade said the overall progress rate of the project reached 61.60 percent as of November 2021.

It said the LRT-1 Cavite Extension was first approved by the National Economic

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The surge of COVID-19 cases could be slowing down in Cavite, Rizal, and Bulacan but is still in its early stages in several provinces, independent analytics group OCTA Research said Saturday.

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"The surge may be slowing down in Cavite, Rizal and Bulacan. It is still maturing in Laguna, Pampanga and Benguet," OCTA Research fellow Guido David said over Twitter.

SM denies ownership of property in violent Maragondon, demolition

Sy-led conglomerate SM Investments Corp. (SMIC) on Friday denied it is the owner of the property which was a subject of a court-ordered demolition that turned into a violent dispersal of residents in a fishing village in Maragondon, Cavite.

In a statement, SMIC said "it has never had any ownership of nor is it in any acquisition talks with the

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CHIZ URGES DOTR TO RECALL 'NO VAXX, NO RIDE' POLICY

Senatorial candidate and incumbent Sorsogon Gov. Chiz Escudero is urging the Department of Transportation (DOTr) to recall its policy banning unvaccinated individuals from riding public transport, calling the "no vaxx, no ride" directive discriminatory and without legal basis.

Beginning January 17, commuters who are not inoculated with COVID-19 vaccines are prohibited from taking the public buses, taxis, jeepneys, boats and commercial planes to, from and within Metro Manila based on the DOTr directive, in a new attempt by the government to curb the spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant. "This is simply wrong and discriminatory," Escudero said. "Public transport is a

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Cavite toy vendor says hard work, not round fruits, brings luck in sales

CAVITE – A toy vendor is proving that hard work attracts wealth more than any new year tradition or good luck charm.

Mendez resident Leonel Orendain, 34, has gone viral after sharing on Facebook that he was able to earn P150,000 from selling plastic horns and other toys in his streetside kiosk in Tagaytay from Dec. 22 to Dec. 31.

According to Orendain, making a six-figure income

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OCTA: Virus growth rate 'accelerating' in cities outside 'NCR Plus'

The growth rate of COVID-19 cases slowed down in Metro Manila and surrounding provinces, but the spread of virus continued to accelerate in other highly urbanized cities, OCTA Research said.

"While growth rates have slowed in NCR Plus, they are still accelerating in many highly urbanized cities outside NCR Plus," OCTA Research fellow David said, referring to Metro Manila and neighboring provinces of Bulacan, Cavite, Rizal and Cavite.

According to David, the capital region recorded a 10% growth rate of cases from January 12 to 18. Metro Manila's reproduction



Members of the InterAgency Council for Traffic check vaccination cards of commuters at the EDSA Carousel Busway Monumento Station in Quezon City as they continue to strictly implement the "no vaccination, no ride" policy of the Department of Transportation on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022.

rate—or the number of people an individual positive for COVID-19 can infect—was at 2.07. Based on OCTA Research's data, the cities with

the highest growth rates from January 12 to 18 were Tacloban City (469%), Cebu City

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VP Leni, isinusulong ang mga stimulus programs para sa MSMEs

Nanindigan si presidential aspirant Vice President Leni Robredo, Martes, ika-18 ng Enero na kaakibat ng paggawa ng mga programa para makapagsimulang muli ang mga micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) ang pang-matagalang solusyon na pagkakaroon ng gobyernong tapat para maengganyo ang mga investor at matugunan ang pagkawala ng trabaho ng milyon-milyong manggagawang Pilipino dahil sa pandemya.

Sa isang online meet and greet kasama ang "Laguna for Leni", na dinaluhan ng

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Remulla: 'I will not apologize for saying BBM will win in Cavite'



CAVITE – Gov. Jonvic Remulla on Tuesday, Jan. 18, said he will not apologize for saying that presidential aspirant and former senator Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. will win in Cavite in the May national elections.

"Let me make one thing clear: I am owning up to my words. I will never apologize to anyone for what I wrote or what I believe is the most likely outcome," Remulla wrote in a Facebook post on Tuesday (Jan.

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Mga maka-Diyos at makatao ang dapat iluklok sa Comelec



**Kakampi
mo ang
BATAS**
ni Atty. Batas Mauricio

INSPIRASYON SA BUHAY: "... Pumili ka ng mga taong may kakayahan, may takot sa Diyos, mapagkakatiwalaan at di masusuhulan..." (si Jethro, habang pinapayuhan niya ang kaniyang manugang na si Moises, sa Exodo 18:21, Ang Tang-ing Daan Bibliya).

"MGA TAO NA KILALA SA PAGIGING MAKA-DIYOS AT MAKATAO ANG DAPAT GAWING BAGONG APAT NA COMMISSIONERS SA COMELEC": Isinusulong ngayon ng mga grupong mananampalataya ang pagluluklok ng mga tao na kilala sa pagiging maka-Diyos at maka-tao, may kakayahang maglingkod, at tumatanggi sa tiwaling pera, bilang mga bagong commissioners sa Commission on Elections, upang matiyak ang malinis na Halalan 2022.

Ayon sa mga hosts ng 21 Minutos Mas o Menos radio-online morning show sa kanilang Tuesday edition ngayong Enero 18, 2022, apat kasi ang mababakanteng commissioner-positions sa Comelec ngayong Pebrero 2022.

Ito ay bunga ng pagre-retiro ni Chairman Sheriff Abas, Commissioner Rowena Guanzon, at Commissioner Antonio Kho. Sa kasalukuyan, iniulat na may isang bakante pang posisyon sa pagiging commissioner na hindi pa nilalagyan ng appointee ng Pangulong Duterte.

Kaya naman apat lahat ang kailangang mailuluklok na mga bagong commissioners, na siyang mangangasiwa sa eleksiyon ngayong Mayo 09, 2022. Pito lahat ang kabuuan ng Comelec—isang chairman at anim na commissioners.

Sa ilalim ng Saligang Batas ng 1987, may mga kuwalipikasyong dapat makita sa mga mapipiling Comelec chairman at commissioners. Una dito ay ang pagiging natural born Filipino citizen. Ikalawa ay ang pagkakaroon ng edad na di baba-ba sa 35 taon sa araw mismo ng kaniyang pagkakanombra.

APAT ANG BAKANTENG PUWESTO SA SEVEN-MAN POLL BODY SA NGAYON: Ikatlo, kailangang mayroon silang college degree. Pang-apat, hindi pupuwedeng naging kandidato siya sa halalan bago siya itinalaga sa tungkulin. Apat sa mga commissioners na ito, kasama na ang chairman, ay kailangang mga abogadong kasapi ng Integrated Bar of the Philippines na nagtrabaho bilang abogado sa loob ng sampung taon bago siya ninombrahan.

Ang pangulo ang may karapatang magtalaga ng chairman at mga commissioners ng Comelec, bagamat kailangang katigan ito ng Commission on Appointment. Lahat ng nailuluklok bilang commissioners ay mayroong pitong taon na ipaglilingkod sa kanilang puwesto.

Ayon kina United Methodist Bishop Rudy Juan, Pastor Jojo Gonzales, Atty. Noy Macatangay, Ginoong Rod Cornejo, at Atty. Batas Mauricio, ang mga hosts ng 21 Minutos na mapapakinggan sa ilang piling himpilan ng radyo at sa Facebook

(facebook.com/attybatas) alas 7:30 ng umaga, Lunes hanggang Biyernes, mahalagang makita ng sambayanan ang mga iluluklok na mga commissioners ay may takot at pag-ibig sa Diyos.

Lagi na lamang kasing naglalabas ng duda ang marami sa resulta ng mga nakaraang halalan dahil sa mga kuwestiyon sa integridad ng mga commissioners. Ang mga bagong iluluklok na commissioners na ito ang siyang hahawak ng Halalan 2022 kung saan ihahalal ang bagong pangulo ng bansa.

DUDA NG MAMAMAYAN SA MGA RESULTA NG HALALAN MA-A-ALIS KUNG MATUWID ANG MGA COMMISSIONERS NA MAMAMAHALA SA ELEKSIYON: Dapat kakitaan sila ng pagiging matuwid o, ibig sabihin, pagkakaroon ng pananampalatayang may Diyos na nakatingin sa kanilang mga iniisip, ginagawa, at sinasabi, at puwedeng magparusa sa anumang katiwalian o kasalanan, dagdag pa ng mga 21 Minutos hosts.

Sa ngayon, sa isang grupong kinabibilangan ng mga hosts ng 21 Minutos Mas o Menos at ni retired Sandiganbayan

Justice Raoul Victorino ng United Christian Party, o UCP, pinag-uusapan na ang mga posibleng mairekomenda nila upang masuri ng Pangulong Duterte.

Ang grupong ito ay tinatawag, pansamantala, na Convenors Group for Philippine Righteous Leadership, bagamat marami ang gustong tawagin din itong Kilusan ng Mama-mayan Para sa Matuwid na Bayan.

Ipinapanukala ng mga kasapi ng Convenors' Group na magsagawa sila ng mga prayer meetings sa Comelec kasama ang chairman at mga commissioners nito, at maging sa Malacanang, kasama ang Pangulong Duterte.

Layon nitong ipaalala sa lahat na ang paghahalal ng mga mamumuno sa bansa ay isang gawaing ang Diyos ang nagtatakda, kaya't dapat na ituring ng lahat, mula sa Pangulo patungo sa pinaka-mababang opisyal at kawani ng pamahalaan na pangasiwaan ang botohan ng ayon sa mga kautusan ng Diyos.

Resbakuna sa Botika, inilunsad ng Pamahalaan

Nakatakdang magsimula ang pilot testing ng Resbakuna sa Botika ngayong darating na Huwebes at Biyernes (Enero 20-21, 2022) sa 7 botika at klinika sa buong Metro Manila.

Ayon kay National Task Force (NTF) Against COVID-19 Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., ang nasabing programa ay inilunsad upang maibsan ang kakulangan sa mga vaccinators at mas mapabilis ang pagbabakuna sa mga mamamayan.

Ani testing czar Vince Dizon, nakipag-ugnayan na sila sa Mercury Drug, Watsons, Rose Pharmacy, Southstar Drug, Generika, at iba pang mga klinika kaugnay ng pilot implementation ng Resbakuna sa Botika.

Kapag natapos na umano ang isang linggong pilot test sa Metro Manila, ilulunsad na rin ito sa iba pang mga lalawigan sa buong bansa.

Sinigurado naman ni Dr. Beaver Tamesis, pangulo ng Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines, na ang mga pharmacy staff ay handa at 'well trained' sa pagtuturok ng mga bakuna.

"They are prepared and they've been waiting for this opportunity to help the national effort in curbing the spread of COVID-19," ani Tamesis. Samantala, bago magtungo sa mga participating drugstores ay kailangan pa rin umang magparehistro sa kani-kanilang mga LGUs ng mga mamamayan na gustong magpabakuna. Source: Inquirer

Remulla: I will not apologize << P1

18), in an apparent response to his critics. According to Remulla, he welcomes all sides in political discourse "even with the extreme emotions and expletives." "It only proves one thing: We all care about our country," the governor added. "To everyone,

thank you very much for the feedback. It gives me a great sense of hope that our love for the country remains steadfast and the virtues we want in our leaders are precise and clear. Let the final arbiter be the people. Meanwhile, everyone is free to

choose sides." Remulla was under fire due to a now-deleted "informal" online presidential survey he posted on Twitter on Jan. 11. Screenshots of the poll showed that Vice President Leni Robredo led with 81 percent. Remulla told media outfits that post-

ing the Twitter poll was an unintended mistake. On Jan. 13, Remulla said he believes Marcos will win in Cavite, citing an internal survey conducted in the province in December 2021, where Marcos was the top choice, scoring 62 percent.

OCTA: Virus growth rate << P1

(378%), Davao City (305%), Iloilo City (281%) and Baguio City (269%).

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said Tuesday that the Philippines remained at critical risk from COVID-19 even if the increase in cases was slowing down.

OCTA's David also reported that the downward trend in the City of Manila is "now clear."

The seven-day average of new cases in the capital city decreased by 23% from 2,152 to 1,658, and the reproduction number also went down to 1.5.

"Apart from Manila, San Juan and Malabon also had negative one week growth rates. NCR residents must continue to remain vigilant in following public health guidelines to sustain the trends," David said.

Daily cases in the Philippines have reached re-

cord highs in January as an Omicron-driven surge in infections rips through Metro Manila and surrounding provinces.

The Department of Health reported Tuesday 28,471 additional infections. There are currently 284,458 active cases.

Covid-19 surge slowing down << P1

"It is still accelerating in Batangas and Isabela. In Cebu, Pangasinan, Quezon, Iloilo, Camarines Sur, Davao del Sur and Negros Occidental, the surge is still in its early stages, but likely to be accelerating soon," he added.

David, however, pointed out that there is still uncertainty in the projections due to possible backlog and an overwhelmed testing system.

Based on data shared by David, Cavite registered a 258 percent one-week growth rate, while Rizal had 254 percent, and Bulacan posted 295 percent.

Cavite had an average of 2,399 new COVID-19 cases from January 8 to 14, while Rizal had 1,903, and Bulacan had 1,733. Health Secretary Francisco Duque III earlier said the Department

of Health has noted a spike in COVID-19 cases in other Luzon regions outside Metro Manila, such as Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), Central Luzon, Ilocos region, and Cagayan Valley.

Meanwhile, David noted that the daily growth rate of COVID-19 cases in Metro Manila is "steadily declining." The country currently

has 265,509 active cases of COVID-19, including 37,207 cases recorded on Friday.

However, the Department of Health earlier said that the actual number of individuals with COVID-19 could be higher than what is being reported, since the daily tally does not include those who test positive in antigen tests.

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Cavite Toy vendor says << P1

during the holiday season was no child's play. He had to show up for work every day of the week and even on Christ-

mas day and New Year's Eve. "Ang pananaw ko po, 'yung mga supermarket, malalaking business nga, bilyonaryo,

nagtitinda pag holiday, pag linggo, pasko, bagong taon. Ako pa kaya na mahirap lang ako (My mindset is, the su-

permarkets and big businesses owned by billionaires are open on holidays, Sundays, Christmas, New Year. Why

shouldn't a poor man like me do the same)," Orendain told the Manila Bulletin. Orendain says he has come a long way from when he first went to Cavite from the Bicol Region in 2006. He started his business by peddling various products, from walis tambo (whisk broom) to rat poison. He also endured many trials, including being driven away from public markets because he didn't have a business permit.

A husband and a father of two, Orendain says their lifestyle changed when he decided to be serious about his business. "Naranasan ko po na kapag pasko at bagong taon, talagang nakikipag-sabayan ako na maghanda nang marami, ng bilog na prutas, minsan nangungutang pa ako sa 5-6 (During Christmas and New Year, I used to prepare a lot of food and round fruits. I sometimes even borrowed mon-

ey)," Orendain shared.

"Pero ramdam ko po na ang buong taon po sa amin ay hindi maluwag. Mabigat dahil namomroblema ako sa ibabayad ko (But the rest of the year wasn't smooth. I felt burdened because I was worried about how to pay for the loan)." "Nitong natuto po kami, wala talaga kaming handa. Wala rin kaming bilog na prutas. Kasi sobra po kaming busy, no time po kami para mag-prepare (Now that we've learned our lesson, we didn't prepare a lot of food. We also don't have round fruits.

Because we were so busy, we had no time to prepare)." Orendain said he used a part of his holiday earnings to pay for his previous loans while some were spent for home improvement. He also shared his blessings with his relatives and allotted a part to help homeless people in their community.

Chiz urges DOTR to recall << P1

necessity and the vaccination status of any individual cannot and should not be used to deprive him or her of access to public transportation."

"The equal protection and due process clause of our Constitution dictates nothing less," according to Escudero, who is a lawyer.

Public transportation, just like other public utilities such as water, telecoms or power, "must offer its services to the public without any discrimination or classification because it goes against the very nature of what it is—a public transportation," he added.

"Walang matibay na basehan ng polisiyang ito ng DOTR. Mas magandang pagtibayin ay kung paano pa natin kukumbinsihin at hihikayatayin ang mga mamamayang ayaw o takot magpabakuna at kung paano aabutin ang mahigit 30 porsyento pa ng target population na mabakunan pa," said Escudero, who has been fully vaccinated and boosted.

The National Task Force against COVID-19 said that as January 13, over 54 million Filipinos have been fully vaccinated so far, representing 70 percent of the country's target population. It is eyeing to inoculate 77 million by the end of first quarter and 90 million by the end of second quarter. Individuals who have received their booster shots are still below

the 5 million mark. "Buo ang tiwala at ako ay naniniwala sa bisa at proteksyon ng bakuna kaya dapat maabot pa natin ang milyon-milyong hindi pa bakunado. Hindi naman kasi parang candy sa convenience store ang vaccine at pwedeng ma-avail any day 24/7 para sa gustong magpabakuna at nag-iisip pa kung magpapapabuka. Ilapit natin ang vaccine sa mga gustong magpa-vaccine, kumbinsihin ang ayaw magpabakuna at huwag na tayong magpilitan at magtakutan pa," Escudero said.

In 2020, Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board Chair Martin Delgra told a Senate public hearing of the Committee on Public Services that the agency expected at least 2 million commuters to use public transportation in Metro Manila alone with the lifting of the strict quarantine classification at the time, down 30 percent from the usual number of public transport users.

"Wala namang batas na tinatayuan ang 'no vaxx, no ride' policy ng DOTR. Dapat agad na ito ay bawiin dahil hadlang ito sa malayang paggalaw ng publiko, bakunado man o hindi. Ang pampublikong sasakyan ay para sa lahat, para sa mga papasok sa trabaho, para sa mga may kailangang pumunta sa hospital, para sa mga may bibilhin sa botika o grocery," the Sorsogon governor point-

ed out. Unless recalled, the DOTR may find itself facing legal trouble before the Supreme Court, similar to the vaccine mandate imposed on federal employees and workers of big companies in the United States which is now being challenged in courts.

"Hindi ako magtataka kung minsan ay may maghain ng petisyon sa Korte Suprema upang pigilan ang polisiya ng DOTR. Ang Pilipinas lang ata ang nag-iisa at bukod tangi sa buong mundo na nagbabawal ng mga hindi bakunado sa mga pampublikong sasakyan," ac-

ording to the senatorial candidate. "Sana ay pag-aralang muli ng DOTR ang polisiyang ito. Dapat ibalanse ang karapatan ng mga mamamayan ng makabiyaha at pagbibigay importansiya sa kalusugan ng bawat isa. Ang mahalaga ay walang karapatan at pangangilangang natatapanan," Escudero said, who once chaired the Senate Committee on Human Rights.

On the first day of its implementation, more than 100 unvaccinated commuters have been barred from taking the public transportation, according to news reports.

VP Leni, isinusulong ang << P1

libo-libong taga-suporta ni Robredo, sinabi ng Bise Presidente na dapat gumawa ang gobyerno ng mga programa para sa muling pagbangon ng MSMEs.

Isa rito ang conditional stimulus grant, na hindi utang, kundi tulong na ibibigay sa kondisyon na hindi magtatanggal ng tauhan ang employer, o kaya'y kukunin nilang muli ang mga tinanggal dahil sa pandemya para muling makapaghanapbuhay.

"Dapat tulong natin 'yung mga MSMEs dahil karamihan sa mga negosyo natin ay ... pinamumunuan ng mga maliliit na mga negosyante, at 'yung MSMEs natin 'yung nagbibigay ng

napakaraming employment opportunities," sabi ni Robredo.

Dapat din tulong sa kapital ang mga MSMEs. "Meron namang may capability pero kulang lang ng capacity na magbayad ngayon, so ang dapat gawin ay bigyan silang access sa mga low interest loans para makapag-umpisa na ulit ng kanilang hanapbuhay," paliwanag ni VP Leni.

Para tulong ang mga nawalan ng trabaho, lalo na kung ang pagkawala nito ay hindi kasalanan ng manggagawa, iminungkahi ni Robredo ang pagsisimula ng programa ng gobyerno tulad ng wage subsidy at unemployment insurance, tulad

ng ginagawa sa ibang bansa para maprotektahan ang manggagawa sa panahong naghahanap ito ng bagong mapapasukan.

Binigyang diin din ni Robredo ang papel ng gobyerno sa pagkonekta sa mga wala o nawalan ng hanapbuhay sa mga available na trabaho, at paggawa ng mga hakbang para maitugma ang mga kinakailangang skills at kaalaman ng mga manggagawa para mapunan ang mga job vacancies.

Halimbawa, sa job listings platform na Sikap.ph na inilunsad ng Office of the Vice President (OVP) katuwang ang tech company na Elevatech Solutions noong 2020, sinabi ni Robredo na mula sa hindi bababa sa 28,000 na bakanteng trabaho, nasa 16,000 lang ang napunan.

"Bakit ganon? Ang daming trabahong available pero walang nagka-qualify. Gusto ko sabihin, dapat ang pamahalaan, siya 'yung nagsisiguro na meron tayong retraining, meron tayong up-scaling para 'yung mga skills na kinakailangan nung mga trabahong available, natutulongan 'yung mga kababayan natin na mag-qualify sila doon," paliwanag ni Robredo.

Kaugnay niyan, gumawa ang OVP ng programang Angat Buhay Workshop for Aspiring Women Entrepreneurs (AB WAWA) para turuan ang mga maliliit na negosyante hindi lamang ng teknikal na skills, kundi kung paano maging mahusay na negosyante.

Sa virtual forum, hindi mapigilan ni Luzminda Dela Cruz, taga-Cavinti Laguna at presidente ng grupong Hala Likha ng Lakas ng Kababaihan, na maiyak nang alalahanin ang hirap ng buhay nang mawalan ng kita ang kaniyang negosyong pandan bags dahil sa pandemya.

Binigyan siya ng OVP

ng kapital para gumawa ng mga bayong at produktong gawa sa pandan matapos sumailalim sa AB WAWA training.

"Pagkatapos po ng training, December 2020 po, isa po ako sa napili ng OVP na mag-supply po ng mga bayong na para gawin pong souvenir ng OVP. So, naging malaking tulong po talaga dahil marami po ang inorder nila. Kailangan ko pong maghanap ng ibang gagawa pa at makatulong po sa aming mga kababaihan dito sa amin. Dagdag kita rin po sa kanila," kuwento ni Dela Cruz.

Ngayon, kasama na ang negosyo ni Dela Cruz sa Iskaparate.com, isang online platform kung saan tampok ang Bayanihan Mart para maibenta ng mga maliliit na negosyante ang kanilang mga produkto sa pamamagitan ng website at maabot ng mas maraming mamimili sa kabilang pandemya.

"Ngayon po, nag-oonline po kami kaya meron na po kaming kinikita kahit papaano. 'Yung isa naming product, 'yung tampipi, 'yun pong mas marami talagang nag-oorder sa amin. Meron na rin po kaming konting naipon at paikot-ikot po 'yung puhunan na naitulong sa amin," sabi ni Dela Cruz.

Para kay Robredo, kasabay ng mga programang ito ang pagkakaroon ng gobyernong tapat, maengganyo ang mga investor na mamuhunan at magnegosyo sa bansa.

"Kailangan talaga 'yung gobyerno maging tapat kasi pag tapat ang gobyerno, 'yung investors papasok. 'Yung investors, kung marami tayong mga na-lose na mga investors, lumipat sa Vietnam, lumipat sa kung saan-saan pa, kasi 'yung uncertainty ang laki. 'Pag mas maraming investors 'yung pumasok sa'tin, mas marami din ang trabaho," ayon kay Robredo.

SM denies ownership of << P1

subject property in Barangay Patungan, Maragondon, Cavite." "The area of the demolition incident that happened last January 13, 2022 is not a property of SM," the company said.

Militant fishers' group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) described Brgy. Patungan as a coastal community situated along Mt. Palay-Palay, a mountain range known for its famous peak called "Pico de Loro."

Pamalakaya claimed that the fishing community in Maragondon town has

been reportedly sold by the Maria-Teresa Virata Realty Corp., a realty firm that first claimed the land, to the Manila Southcoast Development Corp. (MSDC), a subsidiary of SMIC. According to the Cavite Philippine National Police (PNP), the piece of land subject to Writ of Demolition ordered by the Naic Regional Trial Court is composed of four to five hectares in Brgy. Patungan with more or less 400 houses, 600 families and 2000 individuals, 289 cottages, 44 island Hopping Boats and 105 Fishing Boats. Cavite PNP said the land was

entitled to MTV Investment Properties Holding Corp. formerly known as MTV Realty Corp. Pamalakaya is calling on the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) to investigate the violent demolition that led to scores of injuries in Brgy. Patungan.

The Cavite PNP, meanwhile, said the "aggressive residents" fighting for their rights of land while having negotiation resulted in the injuries of five PNP personnel and three civilians who were part of the demolition team. Pamalakaya said that "human rights violations

committed by around 400 policemen accompanied by about 500 demolition crew during the attempted demolition of their houses."

The Cavite PNP, however, said that the deployment team for security assistance composed of 296 Cavite PNP personnel, eight PNP Maritime, two from the Highway Patrol Group, three crews from the PNP Provincial Health Service Unit; six from Coast Guard; 30 from Philippine Marine Corps; and seven from Bureau of Fire Protection.—LDE, GMA News

LRT Cavite extension << P1

and Development Authority on Aug. 25, 2000, and received a budget from Congress in 2007 for right-of-way acquisition.

It said after catching up on right-of-way acquisition and its free and clear certification, and addressing a number of unresolved issues and constraints, the department, along with the Light Rail Transit Authority

and Light Rail Manila Corp. started actual construction works. LRMCA earlier said it was expecting the LRT Line 1 Cavite Extension project to start operations by the middle of 2024.

LRMCA said Phase 1 of the 11.7-kilometer project was 60-percent complete, with girder now covering the entire stretch of Dr. Santos Station to Pacific Ave. near

Asiaworld Station. Phase 1 covers 7 kilometers including the Redemptorist Station, MIA Station, Asiaworld Station, Ninoy Aquino Station and Dr. Santos Station.

The remaining stations between Las Piñas and Niog are scheduled to become fully-operational by 2022.

Once completed, the extension is expected to reduce travel time between Baclaran

and Bacoor, Cavite to just 25 minutes, from 1 hour and 10 minutes and increase LRT-1's capacity from 500,000 to 800,000 passengers daily.

LRMCA won the bidding for the project and took over the operation of LRT Line 1 on Sept. 12, 2015. LRT Line 1 runs from Baclaran in Pasay City to Munoz in Quezon City.



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Too early to think of 2022 growth target revisions: NEDA exec

It is still early to think of any revisions in the 2022 growth target even with the Alert Level 3 implementation in several parts of the country, a National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) executive said Tuesday. While Alert Level 3 movement restriction has been raised until end-January 2022 in more than 80 areas around the country, including the National Capital Region (NCR), NEDA Undersecretary Rosamarie Edillon said the decision is partly made as a “balancing act” for health and economic aspects.

“With respect to the target for the year, it’s still early days to be revising whether upwards or downwards because it’s just January 18.

There are still a lot of developments that can happen, hopefully very positive developments on that,” she said during the virtual presser hosted by the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) for the Task Group on Economic Recovery and National Employment Recovery Strategy (TGER-NERS).

The inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee has set a 7 to 9 percent growth target for this year and 6 to 7 percent for 2023-2024.

Authorities said Alert Level 3 in the NCR Plus, which covers the NCR and neighboring provinces of Rizal, Laguna, Cavite, and Bulacan, costs the economy

around PHP3 billion every week. Edillon said latest figures on the impact of the Alert Level system on the economy are “tamer” compared to the effects of the enhanced community quarantine and the modified enhanced community quarantine. She said the improving vaccination rate in the country is a plus as it provides added protection of the population against the coronavirus disease 2019.

Edillon said the economy has experienced heightened movement restrictions in the past, thus, “we think we are now much better at managing these risks.”

“...There’s still enough time to catch up,” she added. (PNA)



SSS: COVID-hit members covered even if not hospitalized



One of the Social Security System branches in Manila. INQUIRER FILE PHOTO/GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

The Social Security System (SSS) on Thursday assured members infected with COVID-19, particularly those who just stayed at home instead of a medical facility, that they can avail themselves of sickness benefits.

The state-run pension fund issued the statement to correct any impression that only those confined in hospitals were eligible.

Citing its rules, the SSS said “members who cannot work due to sickness or injury and are confined either in a hospital or at home for at least four days could avail of the sickness benefit.” The benefit also covers overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), as well as self-employed and voluntary members of the SSS.

“COVID-19-infected members in home confinement can qualify if they have paid at least three monthly contributions within the last 12 months before the semester of sickness or injury and are confined either in a hospital or at home for at least four days,” the SSS said. “For employed members, they should have used all their current company sick leave with pay and notified their employer about their sickness. Self-employed, voluntary, and OFW-members and those separated from employment must notify the SSS directly by filing a sickness benefit application,” it added.

The SSS allows online filing of sickness benefit reimbursement applications via the My.SSS portal. Members can avail themselves of a maximum of 120 days’ worth of sickness benefit during one calendar year.

The daily cash allowance to be paid to beneficiaries will amount to 90 percent of the computed average daily salary credit. To apply, those infected with COVID-19 must present a positive reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test or rapid antigen test done in a Department of Health-accredited facility.

The SSS will also accept the result of a Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved rapid antigen test kit. For those with non-FDA-approved rapid antigen test results, the SSS also requires them to submit copies of certificates of completion of quarantine, which must be issued and signed by a medical officer from their local government units or their barangay’s health emergency response team. —Ben O. de Vera

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Legarda calls for mandatory free mass testing, urges for the enactment of Better Normal Bill

With the recent surge of COVID-19 cases in the Philippines, three-term Senator and Deputy Speaker Loren Legarda once again called for mandatory free testing to help prevent the transmission of the virus.

Citing the two Bayanihan laws that embody the national government’s pandemic response and recovery strategies, Legarda stated in a recent interview that there should already be sufficient and accessible COVID-19 testing centers in the country which shall be overseen by the Inter-agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases, in cooperation with the Department of Health (DOH), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). These testing centers should provide free tests for the Filipinos.

Legarda also shared that, in her home province of An-

tique, they were able to establish a molecular laboratory, utilizing the budget of the provincial government, that can process COVID-19 RT-PCR tests. “Antiqueños now need not go to neighboring provinces of Iloilo or Aklan to do their RT-PCR tests and this minimizes the need for people to travel, thus mitigating the risk of people being exposed to the virus or even being infected,” Legarda said.

As the author and sponsor of House Bill No. (HB) 6864, or the “Better Normal Bill”, which she sponsored at the start of the pandemic yet, Legarda said the bill aims to strengthen the country’s COVID-19 response by mandating local government units (LGUs) considered as “critical zones” for COVID-19 to put up testing centers and procure COVID-19 test kits and protective equipment necessary to conduct mass testing. The measure likewise provides for

the establishment of drive-thru testing centers, and other contactless modes of testing. Furthermore, the bill mandates the conduct of a nationwide testing drive in preparation for possible waves of infection surges in the coming months or years.

“Ang intensyon po ng probisyon na ito ay makapagbigay ng libreng testing sa ating mga mamamayan sa pamamagitan ng pagpapalawak ng ating testing centers at pag-procure ng test kits kaya tiniyak po nating maisama ito sa panukalang batas noong ipinasa natin ito sa Kongreso,” Legarda said.

“Kung ito po ay maisabatas na, magiging mandatory at readily available na po [ang free testing]. Legarda concluded.

House Bill 6864 was passed on 3rd reading by the House of Representatives on August 10, 2020 and is now pending in the Senate for approval.