

## 2 Cavite cities get ambulances under DOH facilities program

GENERAL from the Department of Health (DOH)-Calabarzon during turn-over rites on August 7, brand-new Nissan Cavite Sixth District N350 ambulances Turn to page 2

# Cavite to join vaccine trials

The province of Cavite volunteered to participate in the clinical trial of two different new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines, neither of which comes from countries favored by President Rodrigo Duterte in the global race to develop the pandemic cure.

Gov. Jonvic Remulla said last Aug. 13 the vaccines—one developed in the United States and the other in the United Kingdom—would be tested on 10,000 people from Cavite, as part of the Phase 3 of the four-stage clinical research.

Phase 3, according to the World Health



Residents of Zapote, Bacoor, Cavite queue up to undergo swab tests for Covid-19 following findings that the area has one of the highest cases of virus infection last August 13.

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## Bello urges Cavite LGUs to help remind firms on health protocols

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III is urging local government unit (LGU) officials in the province of Cavite to help in the implementation of wearing face shields aside from face masks in workplaces as an added health safety measure.

"I hope all the

mayors will be the ones to explain to the employers, to the workers, to the businessmen to please follow this protocol," Bello said during the National Task Force (NTF) Against Covid-19 and the Coordinated Operations to Defeat Epidemic (CODE) team visit in

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## Perlas ng SILANGAN BALITA

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(CAVITE... from page 1)

Organization, investigates the efficacy and possible adverse effects of an experimental drug on large groups—“From several hundred to several thousand.”

Remulla said the vaccines would be given “free” to volunteers from Cavite. But he declined to disclose the brands, pending the formal signing of agreement with the pharmaceutical companies this week.

But Dr. Eduardo Janairo, Department of Health (DOH) regional director in Calabarron (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon) region, cautioned local governments on taking part in clinical trials, which, he said, needed prior clearances from agencies like the Department of Science and Technology, which is in charge of vaccines.

Remulla expressed his reservations about Russia's vaccine, which, according to local and foreign medical groups, has not yet completed the final trial stage.

“I have nothing against the Russians nor am I connected to any preferred country or

“It has a lot of requisites. [Cavite] has to coordinate with the DOH, for instances, in selecting which hospitals will administer [the test vaccine] to prevent [adverse] effects on humans,” Janairo said.

Remulla said of the 10,000 volunteers from Cavite, half of them would be given placebo injection, where a substance or treatment administered has no therapeutic value. Placebo-controlled trials follow the global protocols, he said.

Remulla expressed his reservations about Russia's vaccine, which, according to local and foreign medical groups, has not yet completed the final trial stage.

“I have nothing against the Russians nor am I connected to any preferred country or

## CebuPac sees brighter days ahead despite pandemic gloom

Budget airline this crisis.”

Cebu Pacific expects to weather the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic despite suffering a major financial loss in the first six months of 2020.

In a stock exchange filing last Aug. 12, listed operator Cebu Air Inc. said it has the means to raise cash to keep its business afloat “even if there were unprecedented losses incurred as a result of an expected slow recovery from

“The group believes that it remains a resilient airline despite the adverse impact of the COVID-19 outbreak,” Cebu Air said, citing a strong balance sheet and equity position during the first semester.

It comes as Cebu Air reported a P9.1 billion loss in the first half of 2020, which included those incurred during the almost three-month lockdown of major cities across the

Philippines.

The loss reverses a P7.14 billion profit in the January to June period of 2019.

“While some operable arrangements for sleeper flights to assist with stranded tourists did occur, for the most part, the group operations were virtually nil until April,” Cebu Air said, citing the start of cargo flights overseas.

“Commercial passenger operations restarted only last June 3 for domestic flights, but

in a limited capacity,” it added.

Cebu Air said passenger revenues during the period dropped 65.5 percent to P11.5 billion as passenger traffic fell from 11.2 million last year to 4.5 million in the first semester of 2020.

Average fares also dropped by 13.6 percent as demand vanished.

Cebu Air said cargo and ancillary revenues fell 21.7 percent and 57.7 percent due to the lockdown.

(2... from page 1)

District Rep. Luis Ferrer 4th formally turned over one of the ambulances to the local government unit (LGU) led by Mayor Ouy Ferrer for the use of the General Trias City Health Office, providing ambulances to hospitals in line with the Health department's Health Facilities Enhancement Program (HFEPP) aimed at strengthening delivery of health services by LGUs, especially during

emergencies such as the coronavirus pandemic. Other beneficiaries under the HFEPP are Rosario and Bataan, both in Batangas; San Pablo City, Laguna; Antipolo City; and Tanay, Rizal.

(BELLO... from page 1)

General Trias City.

He also acknowledged the Department of Health (DOH) for introducing the additional health safety protocol which aims to protect all workers.

“This health protocol that was created by Secretary Francisco Duque will give protection to our workers especially here in

Cavite where there are many businesses. The economic zones are here,” he added.

Bello earlier announced that starting Aug. 15, all workers are required to wear both face masks and face shields at work.

He added that the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infec-

tious Diseases has proposed that employees will be the ones to shoulder the expenses in acquiring the face shields.

The Department of Transportation would also require commuters to wear face masks and face shields while inside public transportation.

According to the DOH, the CODE in “a

protocol that will begin active case finding through close coordination between DOH representatives and communities across the country.”

The team is composed of national government officials, local health officials, local government partners and barangay health emergency response teams.

right, then let us ensure that the curative portion is done correctly,” he said.

Remulla also asked the DOH to “exercise caution” and safeguard the review, approval, and

appropriation of COVID-19 vaccines. “If we did not get the [virus] containment strategy

# **AFFIDAVIT OF SELF-ADJUDICATION OF THE ESTATE OF THE DECEASED DOMINADOR DIOSOMITO**

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the late **DOMINADOR DIOSOMITO**, married to **Pacita F. Diosomito**, who both died intestate on September 16, 1976 and July 11, 1983, both at U.S.T. Hospital, Manila, respectively, consisting of his one-fifth (1/5) portion over a parcel of agricultural land situated in the Bn. of Muzon, Mun. of Naic, Prov. of Cavite, covered by Transfer Certificate of Title No. T-269306, containing an area of THIRTY FIVE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED SIXTY SEVEN (35,167) SQUARE METERS, more or less, has been self-adjudicated by his sole surviving heir **EMELITA DIOSOMITO-PADERNA** on July 22, 2020 at Naic, Cavite, Philippines before Notary Public Atty. **Mamuelito C. Diosomito** and entered in his Notarial Register as Doc. No. 419; Page No. 85; Book No. CXX (120); Series of 2020.

(Sgd.) Adjudicating Sole Heir

Publication : PERLAS NG SILANGAN BALITA  
Dates : August 3, 10 & 17, 2020

## **BSP chief warns Congress vs 1-yr loan payment moratorium**

The central bank has put its foot down against lawmakers' proposals to grant loan borrowers a blanket one-year halt to debt payments as part of a broader relief package being deliberated by Congress in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a strong statement delivered last Aug. 13, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Benjamin Diokno said adopting the 365-day moratorium on loan servicing proposed in the "Bayan-against-lawmakers-nihan 2" bill — while well intentioned — will worsen the country's economic problems.

"The said policy, while having the best interest of the public in mind, may result in unintended consequences that will severely affect the banking industry, the financial system, and the economy," the central bank chief said. "It will significantly strain the liquidity and capital position of

banks," he added. He said any resulting "inability of a bank to service withdrawal may trigger a bank run and will undermine the confidence of the public in the banking system."

Diokno's statement is the latest in a string of adverse reactions from the business and banking communities against the proposed loan payment moratorium.

Other prominent personalities who have come out to oppose the Congress proposal included Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, several private sector economists and the Bankers Association of the Philippines, all of whom cited the

# **DEED OF EXTRAJUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF ESTATE**

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the late **MA. CRISTINA COLUMNAS JARCIA** who died intestate in Kawit, Cavite on July 1, 2020, consisting of the following property, specifically described as follows:

Make/Type	MITSUBISHI	Plate No.	
Motor No.	4D56AAQ1377	File No.	1301-0000926171
Serial/Class No.	PAEL6SMYHHB026590	Body Type	FB
C.R. No.	281747723	Model	2017

has been self-adjudicated by her sole surviving legal heir on July 23, 2020, in the City of Imus, Cavite before Notary Public Atty. **Angelina P. Ramos** and entered in her Notarial Register as Doc. No. 261; Page No. 54; Book No. XIII; Series of 2020.

(Sgd.) Sole Surviving Legal Heir

Publication : PERLAS NG SILANGAN BALITA  
Dates : August 3, 10 & 17, 2020

# **EXTRA JUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF ESTATE WITH WAIVER OF RIGHTS**

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the late **ROBERTO MATCHINO** who died intestate on March 12, 1983 in Dasmariñas, Cavite, consisting of a certain real property situated in Blk. D-10, Lot 18, San Andres II, City of Dasmariñas, Cavite, containing an area of One Hundred (100 sq. m.) square meters, more or less, has been adjudicated and extra-judicially settled by and among his heirs with waiver of rights, interest, and participation in the said land including the improvements existing thereon to **MARVIN M. MATCHINO, MARLON M. MATCHINO and MARSON M. MATCHINO** on August 4, 2020 at Dasmariñas City, Cavite before Notary Public Atty. **Karen T. Hermosa** and entered in her Notarial Register as Doc. No. 318; Page No. 64; Book No. 128; Series of 2020.

(Sgd.) Affiants/Heirs

Publication : PERLAS NG SILANGAN BALITA  
Dates : August 10, 17 & 24, 2020

that, while the Philippine banking industry is sound, "some banks might adversely affect."

"A sound banking system is one of the aces in our sleeve," he said. "It is one of the reasons why the Philippines has received affirmation from credit rating agencies amid 82 sovereign downgrades and 104 outlook revisions from January 1 to June 30 this year."

More importantly, Diokno explained that lessons from previous crises have shown that financial instability can have a serious impact on the real economy.

"A banking crisis, in particular will disrupt the flow of funds between savers and borrowers, impede efficient allocation of financial resources which ultimately affects economic growth and development," he said.

"As you know, while monetary policy has done heavy lifting amid this public health crisis, it is not the only game in town," he added.

## **Gov't to revise cell tower rules to lure more firms**

The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) plans to revise its common tower rules after big contractors complained about its feasibility and indicated they would "back away," DICT Undersecretary **Ramon Jacinto** said last Aug. 12.

Two months since the rules were issued, Jacinto said some independent tower companies worried about the viability of the Philippine market and a requirement to build more expensive towers that could accommodate all three telecommunications players apart from the government.

"I have feedback from some tower companies that they are

not going to come in because of these concerns," Jacinto said during an online forum organized by Kapihan sa Manila Bay.

"We have to improve the guidelines right away," Jacinto said, adding that he was open to the government offering support such as subsidies or incentives.

So far, South Af-

rica's IHS Towers signaled its intention to exit the Philippines, he said.

Jacinto noted that other companies had written Communications and Technology Secretary **Gregorio Honasan II** asking the government to address their concerns.

IHS is among dozens of towers builders

that earlier sought to participate in the government's common tower program, which aims to spur the construction of 50,000 new sites to improve mobile communications, internet speed and coverage across the country.

Globe and PLDT presently have more than 20,000 towers combined. The figure

was deemed insufficient to meet the fast-growing demand for internet that has accelerated amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The common tower guidelines were issued on May 29 to formalize the entry of independent tower companies, which would be allowed to build cell sites and lease these to the telcos.



## AUCTION SALE

**LAI JARO PAWNSHOP INC.-Head Office**  
Soil No.5, Pasillo G, Imus Public Market Tuzang Luma, Imus  
City, Cavite (4103) on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for  
unredeemed pawned of March 2020.

- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Three Maritima City Branch**  
213 San Augustin St., Three Maritima City (4109) on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Gen. Trias Branch**  
Block 43-A, Lot 4C, Brookside Lane, San Francisco Gen. Trias, Cavite (4107) on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Salangang Branch**  
Salangang, Dasmariñas City, Cavite (4114) on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Bayan Luna Branch**  
L2, B2 Dona Dionisia Subd., Bayan Luna II, Imus City, Cavite (4103) on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Imus Public Market Branch**  
Stall #14 & #16 Biskery Section, Imus Public Market Imus City, Cavite (4103) on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Toll Bridge Branch**  
Tangaz Luna II, Imus City, Cavite (4103) on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Palico IV Branch**  
Palico IV, Imus City, Cavite (4103) on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Silang Branch**  
#007 Madinglaoay Street, Silang Cavite on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Golden City Branch**  
In Front of Golden City 3, 4, & 5 gate, Imus City, Cavite (4103) on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Area G Branch**  
B61 L3, Area G-2, Brgy. San Juan, Dasmariñas City, Cavite (4114) on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Alapang Branch**  
Unit D, Lot 1-E, Alapang 1-A, Imus City, Cavite on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Maryena Branch**  
Ph. 1 B37 Lot 7, Maryena Complex, Gen. Trias Cavite (4107) on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Bahay na Tubig Branch**  
#08 Bahay na Tubig, Imus City, Cavite (4103) August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Bacoar Branch**  
Unit D, Navarrete Compound Aguinaldo Hi-way 17 Paranaque, Bacoar City, Cavite on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Bayamon Branch**  
578 Terminal Express Stall #4 Bldg. D, Molino, Blvd. cor. Brgy. Mambog IV Rd. Bayamon, Bacoar City, Cavite on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Mingnang Branch**  
#43 Crisanto St. Mangnang, Gen. Trias, Cavite on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Shopwise Branch**  
#72, Shopwise Aguinaldo Hiway, Atsuba Coastal, Imus City, Cavite on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Dumlalina Branch**  
Brgy. Buzandali, Imus City, Cavite on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- LAJ JARO PAWNSHOP INC. - Ilaflam cor GMA Branch**  
General Mariano Alvarez, Cavite on August 25-27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for unredeemed pawned of March 2020.
- Jello R. Paka - Auctioneer**

## Security Bank profit up 14% despite larger bad loan buffer

Security Bank for loan losses such Corp. remained profitable through the first semester, despite the unfolding health crisis and significantly higher provisioning for potential business losses. "As we expect the

Security Bank said in a stock exchange filing last Aug. 13 that net income from January to June hit P5.7 billion, up 14 percent from the same period last year. It added total revenues went up 68 percent to 25.9 billion.

This was due to a balance sheet re-combination of net interest income growth and more opportunistic trading gains. Security Bank noted that even without trading gains, revenues were still up 30 percent.

Amid the economic slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Security Bank said it set aside P11.5 billion as provisions, which would cover P511 billion. Low-cost savings and demand deposits grew 27 percent and increased to 48 percent of total deposits, up from 43 percent a year ago.

## Shell permanently shuts down Batangas refinery

Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. is permanently shutting down its refinery in Batangas and turning it into an importation hub amid continually low refining margins, no thanks to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

manage and adapt to disruptive conditions," Pilpinas Shell president and chief executive Cesar Romero said in a statement.

"Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global, regional and local economies, and the oil

# Razon Jr's Bloomberry proceeds with Solaire expansion in QC

Billionaire Enrique Razon Jr's Bloomberry Resorts Corp. is proceeding with its casino expansion in Quezon City.

Banking on a recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in a few years,

The health crisis has already caused the operator of the Solaire Resort & Casino along Manila Bay to report billions of pesos in losses with the closure of regular gaming operations since March. Solaire North will be

Even then, Razon said in stock exchange filing last Aug. 13 the company will push forward

with the Solaire North, which is rising on a 1.5 hectare property in the Vertis North complex.

"We believe that its opening will coincide with a meaningful upcycle that is typical after a period of economic weakness," Razon said.

"We look to emerge from this crisis as a much stronger company," he added.

The company had previously indicated Solaire North will be finished by early 2023.

Bloomberry has posted losses so far this year with its main busi-

ness shuttered amid government efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19.

In the first six months of 2020, it posted a net loss of P3.3 billion, reversing a profit of P4.7 billion during the same period last year. For the second quarter alone, losses hit P4.7 billion versus a P2.5 billion profit in 2019.

"Bloomberry is not exempt from the seismic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global tourism and the gaming entertainment industry," Razon said.

He said the company has since prioritized "the health and safety of our team members and guests."

During the first half period, gross gaming revenues hit P13 billion, down 55 percent.

Solaire's hotel operations, restaurants and retail businesses continued to cater to long-stay guests and "select invitees." Non-gaming revenues during the six-month period hit P2.3 billion, a 41 percent decline versus the same period in 2019.

While Solaire's ca-

sino has been closed to the public when strict lockdown measures were implemented last March 16, the company was allowed to resume "dry run gaming" for the remaining two weeks in the second quarter starting June 15.

"Such dry run operations, which involve only in-house and select invited guests, are a means for Solaire to fine-tune its services in accordance with new normal health and safety protocols," the company explained in its stock exchange filing.

This allowed it to post P686.6 million in gross gaming revenues in the second quarter. The figure was still down by 95 percent year-on-year.

Of those gaming revenues, 50 percent were from mass table, 3 percent for VIP tables and 8.2 percent for slots.

Apart from Solaire, Bloomberry operates the Jeju Sun Hotel & Casino in South Korea. The unit also reported gaming revenues of P93.1 million—a drop of 76 percent in the first semester of 2020.

## PH growth prospects get dimmer with lockdown

Another bank and a multilateral institution have further downgraded their 2020 economic outlook for the Philippines after the government reverted 50 percent of the economy to a stricter lockdown this month despite improving conditions when quarantine restrictions were eased.

In a note to clients, Metrobank Research said it now expected gross domestic product (GDP) to shrink by 6.8

percent for the entire year, a deeper recession than the government's updated projection of 4.4-6.6 percent, or an average of 5.5-percent full-year decline after first-half GDP fell by an average of 9 percent.

"While the second-quarter GDP contraction was deeper than expected, the worst could

have been over for the domestic economy as the contractions likely bottomed out in the second quarter," Metro-

bank research analyst Pauline Revillas said, referring to the record 16.5-percent year-on-year GDP drop during the April-to-June period—at the height of the longest and most stringent COVID-19 lockdown in the region that put a halt to 75 percent of economic activities.

"Some developments—such as pickup in external trade numbers and manufacturing production—point to a start in economic activi-

ties, albeit likely small, amid the gradual re-opening of the economy towards the end of the second quarter," Revillas said, referring to the less-restrictive general community quarantine imposed in most parts of the country since June, which resumed three-fourths of the economy.

"A sustained robust government spending should continue supporting the economy as household spending

and investment spending are still expected to remain sluggish. The surge-and-clampdown cycle is seen to continue this year, thus, it is essential during this time of economic hardship that the government resumes its 'Build, Build, Build' projects [to also help support consumption spending] and that a sector-targeted fiscal stimulus program be approved to help restore consumer and business confidence. The revived

consumer confidence would help get the Philippines out of the doldrums as the economy is mainly consumption-led," Revillas said.

In an Aug. 11 report, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Unes-cap) said it expected the Philippines' GDP to slide by 7 percent this year, based on forecasts as of July 31, before rebounding with 7-percent growth next year.

# Southeast Asia 'fertile land' for online payments, e-wallets

HANOI — The obvious effects of the COVID-19 pandemic include the rapid increase in online payment services and digital banking across Southeast Asia.

Due to social distancing restrictions, people across the region now avoid brick-and-mortar bank branches and prefer the physically safer option of e-wallets and mobile payment applications, Yeo Siang Tiong, cybersecurity company Kaspersky's general manager for Southeast Asia, said.

"It is, however, far beyond surprising. As early as late 2019, before COVID-19's massive effects across SEA, I read an article which said online financial trans-

actions in the region will be worth US\$1 trillion by 2025 and the digital wallet segment will jump fivefold to \$114 billion.

"I believe these two key sectors will go far beyond these predicted numbers as we try to minimize human contact for the sake of our physical health."

A recent study by Mastercard found 40 per cent of consumers in the region saying they were using e-wallets more than ever, with Malaysia leading the way, he said.

On the other hand, cash is slowly being dethroned as king as fewer people use banknotes to buy or trade goods and services, he said.

"What makes the

region a fertile land for digital banking and online payment is the fact that it has countries with a young population — millennials and Gen Zs who are not used to physically visiting financial buildings or queuing for a long time to fill up forms with pen and paper like the generations before them did.

"Another important factor is that there is still a significant per cent of individuals who are unbanked or underbanked. This is particularly true in still emerging countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Viet Nam."

At the centre of this digital revolution is trust. Customers are using e-wallets, mobile

banking, and web applications driven by necessity, he said.

Now, more than ever, they need to trust financial institutions to secure their money, he said.

"Digital transformation, in any sector, always presents new challenges, but especially for banks and for financial services. To put it simply, revolutionizing banks' way of doing transactions means overhauling their legacy systems including people, process and technology."

Humans remain the weakest link since, especially those who are not digitally native, lack proper awareness about the simplest risks like phishing and

spam, while employees require new training and third-party services should be assessed comprehensively, he pointed out.

"When it comes to security, endpoint should be the foundation and banks should have known this by now. Financial services ... should be looking at an adaptive approach in security which should be proactive rather than reactive — ready before an attack happens."

The future may be foggy as different technologies continue to be developed, like AI, 5G, the Internet of Things, and cryptocurrency, but the past offers concrete lessons the financial sector could learn from, he said.

"Given the evolving nature of cyber-threats that are expected to become more sophisticated, it is also important that financial institutions have the necessary tools that help track threats that can evade regular endpoint solutions even before they hit you."

"We are in the middle of a digital revolution, and the use of online payment gateways and e-wallets are certainly here to stay and even increase. While it is a huge responsibility for banks and financial service providers to secure their virtual systems, I am certain they can pilot their way to the future as long as they build their cyber defenses intelligently."

## PH gets \$400-M ADB loan for poverty reduction in farm sector

The Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB) has extended to the Philippines a \$400-million loan to be spent on programs and projects that will lift more agriculture workers from poverty by improving the sector's competitiveness and productivity.

The policy loan for the competitive and inclusive agriculture

Aug. 12.

"The Philippines has made tremendous strides in reducing the national poverty rate, but rural poverty remains high because of low productivity and limited crop diversification.

This loan will support the government's comprehensive suite of policy and regulatory reforms, resolving institutional weaknesses

in land and water management, expanding agricultural financing to boost productivity and extending the social safety net to unserved and underserved rural families," ADB vice president Ahmed M. Saeed said.

The ADB said this loan was supportive of the rice tariffication law, which liberalized rice trade and slashed prices

while providing a yearly fund from the collection of import duties on rice to modernize the farm sector.

"The government is also initiating additional reforms in land and water resources ... Other reforms support-

ed by the loan include additional assistance to farmers making the transition toward higher value crops and those af-

ected by the COVID-19 pandemic. These include unconditional cash grants and the expanded survival and recovery assistance program for rice farmers to provide zero-interest loans to more than 160,000 small farmers. The program also expands the government's preschool feeding programs to families to reduce malnutrition and stunting."



# PH foreign debts manageable despite gov't borrowing spree, says BSP

The country's external debt level is expected to remain manageable amid increased foreign borrowings to support the national government's efforts to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

In a statement, BSP Governor Benjamin Diokno said the Philippine economy continues to have the capability to pay off its loans as they come due, despite the fresh round of borrowings done in recent months.

"This is in view of

the country's markedly improved external debt manageability achieved through 20 years of critical structural reforms," he said.

"Along with sound economic management, reforms involving industry and foreign exchange liberalization, tax and debt management, and the financial sector have helped strengthen the regulatory environment and the economy's capacity to absorb shocks," Diokno added.

According to the central bank chief, the Philippines entered the

period of health quar-

antines with a "robust" external debt position.

BSP data showed that the country's external debt stood at \$81.4 billion at end-March 2020, down by \$2.2 billion from the \$83.6 billion recorded in December 2019.

The external debt figure at the end of the first quarter of 2020 represented 21.4 percent of the country's gross domestic product — substantially lower than the 57.3 percent recorded 15 years earlier.

The latest ratio indicates the country's sustained strong posi-

tion to service foreign borrowings, the central bank chief said.

Aside from this, 83.6 percent of the country's external debt as of March this year was in the form of medium to long term loans, which means that foreign exchange requirements for debt payments are spread out and more manageable.

Moreover, 57.8 percent of these longer-term borrowings have fixed interest rates which minimize risks from possible interest rate increases.

"Amid a strong external debt profile, the

BSP remains steadfast in supporting government efforts to ease the impact of the pandemic," Diokno said, explaining that this was behind the rationale for the Monetary Board's approval for \$5.6 billion in foreign borrowings as of July this year, in addition to monetary policy easing and liquidity measures.

The borrowings were sourced from the Asian Development Bank (\$2.6 billion), the World Bank (\$1.5 billion), the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (\$750 million), the Japan In-

ternational Cooperation Agency (50 billion yen or around \$477 million), and from Agence Francaise de Developpement (250 million euros or around \$295 million).

"The BSP appreciates the immediate response of development partners to extend concessional financing to meet the urgent needs of the government in containing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and providing assistance to families most affected by this global health and economic crisis," Diokno said.

## Small banks now lending more to SMEs thanks to BSP's reserve cuts

The country's rural and cooperative banks remain stable and are in a strong position to support the financing needs of micro, small, and medium enterprises as well as large firms in rural communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the central bank.

In a press briefing, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Benjamin

Diokno said preliminary data indicated that these financial institutions showed an increase in new or refinanced loans to small entrepreneurs and critically impacted large enterprises as compliance with the recent cut in the sector's statutory reserve requirements.

"With the industry's strong geographical presence, rural and cooperative banks are

expected to continue fostering financial inclusion as well as countryside development," he said.

At the end of the July 23, 2020 reserve week, the central bank said that 66 rural and cooperative banks lent P1.5 billion to small and medium firms compared to P1 billion by only 39 from the same sector at the end of April.

Also, 10 rural

and cooperative banks used new loans to fund critically impacted large enterprises worth P100 million as compliance with their reserve requirements.

"These highlight their role in rebuilding local economies by providing needed financial services," Diokno said.

The results of a BSP baseline survey — conducted to assess the overall performance

of the financial sector during the coronavirus pandemic — also revealed that rural and cooperative banks were able to adopt their operations to community quarantine restrictions and eventually able to return to normal operations. In addition, they used technology to continue serving their client base amid social distancing measures and movement restrictions.

Latest data showed that these small lenders continued to show positive balance sheet performance. At end-March 2020, the combined resources of rural and cooperative banks rose by 5.9 percent to P265.7 billion. Resources were mostly directed to banks' lending business that were mainly fueled by deposits, which increased by 6.1 percent to P188.2 billion.

# Local makers of PPEs seek tax breaks

A group of companies that repurposed their plants to make personal protective equipment (PPE) for health care workers is now asking the government for help, as they struggle against the influx of imported PPEs.

The newly formed Confederation of Philippine Manufacturers of PPE (CPMP) wants certain measures to be included in the Bayanhan 2 bill, such as the exemption of locally made PPEs from taxes and fees.

"We request our legislators to improve fiscal policy reforms that would allow the local PPE industry to grow and be sustainable. We need to

level the playing field in view of the influx of substandard PPEs," CPMP said in a statement.

The Bayanhan 2 bill, or Bayanhan to Recover As One, was recently passed in both chambers of Congress but their respective versions had different stimulus packages.

The Senate version provides a stimulus package of about P140 billion while that of the House of Representatives earmarks P162 billion.

The group said it now makes 57 million pieces of face masks and 3 million coveralls and isolation gowns for health care workers.



## Q & A on Consumer Rights

**Q:**

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**A:**

**DAPAT**

For more details on consumer rights, visit DTI offices in your area or call DTI-Online 800-3380 or 0917-837-8880.

## NLEx sees completion of SFEx expansion by end of 2020

The P1.6-billion (NLEx) Corporation infrastructure project last Aug. 10, adding that the conversion of the road into a four-lane highway would ease travel to and from this free port.

This was announced by the North Luzon Expressway free port to the 94-kilometer Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway, which in turn links with the Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union Expressway.

In a statement, NLEx said part of the road's expansion is adding two expressway lanes, two new spans at the Jaldad and Argonaut bridges, and a new tunnel adjacent to the existing one to improve traffic flow and road safety.

"By increasing the road capacity of SFEx, which traverses the

said NLEx Corporation President and General Manager J. Luigi Bautista.

Bautista said new expressway-standard LED lights will also be installed to make night driving equally enjoyable and safe.