

Cavite LGU to organize free circumcision

The provincial Gov. Jonvic Remulla government will be said last April 26, carrying out a free Remulla said circumcision pro- many parents may gram this summer, Turn to page 2

CALAX completion delayed to Q1 2023 due to COVID-19

The completion guna Expressway first quarter of 2023 of the entire 45-kilometer (CALAX) has been pushed back to the



Community 'plantree' in Cavite City offers free plants to help relieve pandemic stress

CAVITE CITY that have sprouted all — A community over the country, plant "plantree" in Barangay store owners Carlos 42-A Pinagbuklod San Gonzales and Kenneth Antonio district here Santiago decided to offered free plants to offer what they can to anyone willing to adopt people to cope with the herbs or shrubs last pandemic.

April 28. According to Gon- Inspired by the sales, plants may not community pantries Turn to page 2

briefing with report- at 55.5%. Clearing. The remain- ers, MPCALA Hold- tree-cutting activi- ing Laguna subsec- tions president and ties, and earthworks tion, SS 4, linking general manager are currently in the planned Silang Roberto Bontia said progress for Cavite East to Silang inter- the Cavite segment subsections with changes, is eyed for will be completed by completed ROW. completion in 2022.

the first quarter of For the Laguna Once complet- 2023, if right-of-way segment, Subsection ed, CALAX would (ROW) acquisition (SS) 5 from the now- have 8 interchanges would be finalized by operational Santa and would stretch the end of June 2021. Rosa-Tagaytay Road from Kawit, Cavite,

ROW acquisi- Interchange to the to Mamlasan, Lagu- tion has been chal- planned Silang East na. It would traverse lenging. Bontia told Interchange is 93% Kawit, Imus City, Das- reporters, as some complete. It is slated marinas City, General courts had to be to open in the third Trias City, and Silang placed under lock- quarter of this year. in Cavite, and Santa down due to infec- SS 5 is the next Rosa City and Biñan tions. section in the al- City in Laguna.

Overall ROW ready open toll road It will be linked acquisition for the from Mamlasan to to the Cavite Ex- Cavite segment is Santa Rosa. pressway in Kawit.

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Perlas ng SILANGAN BALITA

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(COMMUNITY... from page 1)

be essential goods, ing the air quality," but they do provide he added.

benefits to the mind The "plantree" and body. stall has signages

"Isa po naming that read, "Kumuha dahilan bakit namin batay sa kayang alginawa ito ay da-agaan," and "No face hil sa psychological mask, no free plants,"

benefits ng halaman People who lined sa mga tao ngayong up were allowed to pandemic," Gonzales get three herbs or said. ornamental plants

"It improves of their choice. They mood and relieves were also offered ferstress and anxiety, tilizers and hanging It also has physical plant baskets to kick-benefits like boost- start their gardening.

ADB: Private landowners to benefit from more rail projects in PH

Building more its economists around railways in the Phil- MRT-3—the busiest pippines would benefit mass rapid transit line private landowners in Metro Manila— and spur economic showed that since the activity in the Nation- contract to build it al Capital Region and was finalized in 1995, its suburbs as shown land values in areas by the bustling Metro within one kilometer

Rail Transit (MRT) 3 of its train stations along Edsa, the Asian saw "larger increases" Development Bank compared to those far (ADB) said, from the stations.

In the ADB's "This divergence book "Creating Liv- continued through- able Asian Cities" out the construction published last April period and until and 29, the Manila-based after the operations multilateral lender had commenced," the said a recent study of ADB book said.

"Ang nakakaba- summer," the governor hala ay pangalawang wrote in a Facebook

It said, residential results of a study that lots far from MRT-3 showed the estimated "saw a substantial in- impact of MRT-3 on crease in value from land values declined P2,789 to P7,584 per to P3,743 per sqm for square meter." Lots that residential areas and are closer increased in P13,968 per sqm for value from P4,972 to commercial areas.

"Using these more conservative es- tates, the impact on tions, the ADB book aggregate land values said, "saw values in- within one kilometer crease by P6,268 per of MRT-3 stations is sqm more than those estimated to be close far from the station. to P180 billion," said

Commercial to P180 billion," said the ADB book. It was lots grew in value to the about five times the P22,140 per sqm, the cost of building MRT-

The book cited 3, it said.

(CAVITE... from page 1)

have decided to post- summer na sa Cavite post. pone their sons' cir- na walang chop-chop. cumcision since 2020 tabas-dulo o ang tina- due to strict commu- tawag na "tuli" (circum- nity quarantine proto- cision) na traditionally ay ginaganap during cils. drive," he added.

"Ang nakakaba- summer," the governor hala ay pangalawang wrote in a Facebook

abide by anti-COV- ID-19 guidelines such as social distancing and crowd control. They will also amend the protocol restricting those below 18 years old from going out.

Agriculture trade shrinks at faster 7.1% pace

The value of the (PSA). country's agricultural Agricultural im- trade declined at a ports accounted for faster pace of 7.1 per- the bulk or 67 percent cent to \$18.78 billion of total trade while in 2020 from \$20.21 the remaining 33 per- billion in 2019 amid cent was for exports. restrictions due to the The country's pandemic, accord- balance of trade in ing to the Philippines agricultural goods Statistics Authority stood at \$6.38 billion

in 2020. Agricultural ex- ports, which account- ed for 9.5 percent of total shipments in 2020, dipped by 7.1 percent to \$6.2 bil- lion.

Agricultural im- ports, on the other hand, also reflected

a decrease of 7.1 per- cent to \$12.58 billion compared to \$13.53 billion in 2019. Agricultural products accounted for 14 percent of the country's total pur- chases from abroad.

The country's top exports of agricultural

commodities include major export com- animals or vegetable modities were prep- oils, edible fruits and aration of cereals, nuts, preparation of flour, starch or milk; vegetables, fruits, pastry cooks' prod- nuts, meat, fish, and ucts, gums, resins and crustaceans, and to- other vegetable saps bacco and manufac- and extracts, miscella- tured tobacco substi- neous edible prepara- tutes. tions, and beverages.

Completing the spirits and vinegar.

EXTRA JUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF ESTATE

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the late **ROMEO ARANAS LOPEZ** who died intestate on August 23, 2020 at Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, consisting of a certain personal property in the form of Savings Account deposit with Union Bank, Dasmariñas Branch, City of Dasmariñas, Cavite covered by Savings Account No. 109560901633 has been adjudicated and extra-judicially settled by and among his heirs; the herein heirs have agreed and bound themselves, jointly and severally to indemnify and save harmless the said bank against any claim for damages, compensation or otherwise by any third person or persons claiming to be the heirs or creditors of said decedent, who may be deprived of their rights as lawful heirs thereof in the adjudication of said Savings Account Deposit on January 14, 2021 at Dasmariñas City, Cavite before Notary Public Atty. Karen T. Hermosa and entered in her Notarial Register as Doc. No. 37; Page No. 08; Book No. 133; Series of 2021.

(Sgd.) Affiants/Heirs

Publication: PERLAS NG SILANGAN BALITA
Dates: April 19, 26 and May 3, 2021

Agus-Pulangi hydro plant rehabilitation gets WB push

The long-planned rehabilitation of the decades-old Agus-Pulangi hydroelectric power plants in Mindanao came a step closer to reality after the World Bank approved a \$700,000 in financing to jumpstart project preparation.

The World Bank (WB) on April 27 approved the financing for the state-run National Power Corp. (Napocor) to start preparing the project's feasibility study and tender documents, according to WB.

Upon completion of preparations for the rehabilitation work, WB would lend the Philippines an initial \$100 million to cover part of the \$150-million cost of project one of the series of Agus-Pulangi hydropower rehab projects.

The entire project to be jointly implemented by Napocor and also state-run Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (Psalm) had been previously estimated to cost a total of \$300 million, which WB earlier committed to finance in its entirety.

WB said the rehabilitation of Agus-Pulangi hydropower complex was expected to "enhance the reliability of clean energy generation in Mindanao."

Last April 26, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III said the Philippines had a "unique opportunity in Mindanao to demonstrate our commitments" to slash greenhouse gas emissions by 70 percent before 2030 through the country's first and

DEED OF EXTRA JUDICIAL PARTITION WITH SALE

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the late **RODRIGO ALBIENTO MONZON** who died intestate on October 26, 2018, consisting of a parcel of land situated at Lot 11 Block 13 Bn. of Molino, Mun. of Bacor, Prov. of Cavite, Is. of Luzon, containing an area of ONE HUNDRED FIFTY (150) SQUARE METERS, which is covered by Transfer Certificate of Title No. T-437727 has been adjudicated and extra-judicially settled by and among his heirs in equal shares pro indiviso; and for in consideration of the sum of ONE MILLION PESOS (PHP 1,000,000.00) Philippine Currency, the heirs hereby SELL, CONVEY, CEDE and TRANSFER said parcel of land in favor of ELIZA MARIE CERDEÑA HERRERA and EDGARDO KRISTOFFER MANANSALA JUANANE III on April 22, 2021 in the City of Bacor, Cavite, Philippines before Notary Public Atty. Roger A. Lunar and entered in his Notarial Register as Doc. No. 157; Page No. 32; Book No. 1; Series of 2021.

(Sgd.) Heirs and Buyers

Publication: PERLAS NG SILANGAN BALITA
Dates: April 26, May 3 & 10, 2021

EXTRAJUDICIAL PARTITION WITH WAIVER OF RIGHTS

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the deceased **JOSE LORENZO R. REYNA** who died intestate on November 24, 2020 at Block 1 Lot 10 Platinum St., Melrose Park, Molino 3, Bacor City, Cavite, consisting of the amount of SEVENTY THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED PESOS (PHP 70,500.00) with RCBC Savings Bank under Savings Account No. 09017076960 has been adjudicated and extrajudicially settled by and among his heirs in pro indiviso partition and have hereunto agreed, together with their heirs, assignees and transferees to have the above-specified bank deposit assigned, waived, ceded and/or transferred in favor of VICTORIOSA M. REYNA on April 23, 2021 in the City of Bacor, Cavite, Philippines before Notary Public Atty. Roger A. Lunar and entered in his Notarial Register as Doc. No. 167; Page No. 39; Book No. 1; Series of 2021.

(Sgd.) All Heirs (Rodrigo Carl M. Reyna represented by Victoriosa M. Reyna)

Publication: PERLAS NG SILANGAN BALITA
Dates: April 26, May 3 & 10, 2021

ambitious nationally from companies determined contributing to expand their operations in Paris Agreement areas powered by

"We are exploring clean energy," the financing chief said.

Since 2017, Dominguez had wanted to rehabilitate the Agus-Pulangi hydroelectric hydropower plant power plants and acquire coal-build an integrated fired power plants liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility to boost reserves and offset the depletion of Malampaya's natural gas by 2024.

"This will shift the rehabilitation of Agus-Pulangi had been first pitched for possible financing to China. Eventually, it before the WB loan will spur investments took shape in 2019.

DepEd: Duterte still has final say on school year opening

President Duterte will still make the final decision about the opening of school, DepEd is mandated to open the school year not later than said last April 30. DepEd sent out the clarification after one of its officials said the school year starts on August 23.

Critics took issue since the date would mean students would have only 6 weeks of break, rather than the usual two months.

"We shall issue the official guidelines for School Year 2021-2022 calendar soon," DepEd said.

Under Republic Act No. 11480, the President has the final decision on the opening of the school year, in accordance with Republic Act 11480," the agency said in a statement.

"We will be proposing various options for the President's consideration, the school year.

BALANCE SHEET
(Head Office and Branches)
BANGKO MABUHAY (A RURAL BANK), INC.

A. Soriano Highway, Bgy. Daang Anya II, Tasea, Cavite
Telephone Nos. (046) 486 30 61 to 64, website: www.bangkomabuhay.com.ph
email address: info@bangkomabuhay.com.ph
as of March 31, 2021

ASSETS	Current Quarter	Previous Quarter
Cash and Cash Items	P 32,548,244.83	P 28,055,237.32
Due from Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	37,170,815.99	35,106,457.87
Due from Other Banks	444,301,728.80	491,401,956.34
Held-to-Maturity (HTM) Financial Assets - Net	872,574,752.14	836,702,971.18
Loans and Receivables - Net	342,953,324.58	356,041,280.43
Loans and Receivables - Others	345,912,083.48	350,880,029.31
General Loan Loss Provision	3,048,730.80	3,048,730.80
Other Financial Assets	23,040,288.89	31,115,374.53
Bank Premises, Furniture, Fixture and Equipment-Net	44,157,234.64	43,004,135.55
Real and Other Properties Acquired-Net	114,760,787.88	115,883,717.29
Other Assets-Net	84,902,976.19	83,163,249.16
TOTAL ASSETS	P 1,877,370,152.81	P 1,895,595,284.45
LIABILITIES		
Deposit Liabilities	P 1,614,002,024.06	P 1,629,092,236.55
Bills Payable		15,900,000.00
Other Financial Liabilities	5,522,778.88	4,795,847.33
Other Liabilities	34,835,412.80	21,753,576.35
TOTAL LIABILITIES	P 1,654,418,115.80	P 1,670,611,461.73
STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY		
Capital Stock	215,891,831.00	215,891,831.00
Other Capital Accounts	1,882,368.08	9,151,523.78
Retained Earnings	154,577,036.63	95,140,867.89
TOTAL STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY	P 372,351,235.71	P 320,184,222.67
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY	P 1,877,370,152.81	P 1,895,595,284.45
TOTAL CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS	P 4,902,007.80	P 6,328,852.58
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION		
Gross Total Loan Portfolio (TLP)	P 391,967,549.70	P 405,945,814.55
Specific allowance for credit losses on the TLP	48,055,586.34	48,055,586.34
Non-Performing Loans (NPLs)		
a. Gross NPLs	145,370,448.00	141,037,326.37
b. Ratio of gross NPLs to gross TLP	37.09%	34.74%
c. Net NPLs	119,120,748.39	67,857,342.17
d. Ratio of Net NPLs to gross TLP	30.39%	24.11%
e. Ratio of Total Allowance for credit losses to gross NPLs (%)	33.78%	34.82%
f. Ratio of specific allowance for credit losses to gross TLP to NPLs (%)	31.88%	32.65%
Classified Loans & Other Risk Assets	P 325,617,348.57	P 328,393,904.80
DOSRI loans and receivables, gross of allowance for credit losses	253,213.71	304,822.83
Ratio of DOSRI loans and receivables, gross of allowance for credit losses, to gross TLP	0.06%	0.07%
Gross non-performing DOSRI loans and receivables		
Ratio of gross non-performing DOSRI loans and receivables to TLP (%)	0%	0%
Percent Compliance with Magna Carta (%)		
a. 8% Small Enterprises	50.29%	42.52%
b. 2% for Medium Enterprises	22.14%	22.00%
Return on Equity (ROE)	4.17%	3.78%
Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) on Solo Basis, under BSP Circular 688		
a. Total CAR	24.54%	23.00%
b. Tier 1 CAR	24.30%	22.77%
Delivered Charges not yet Written Down		
Unbooked Allowance for Probable Losses on Financial Instruments Received		

Head Office of the Philippines:
Tasea, Cavite

We, IMELDA D. MONTENEGRO and BASIL A. PEREA of the above-mentioned bank do solemnly swear that all matters set forth in the above Balance Sheet are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

(Sgt.) IMELDA D. MONTENEGRO
Assistant General Manager/Comptroller
SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this: 26 Apr. 2021 at Tasea, Cavite, after exhibiting their valid identification documents as follows:
Imelda D. Montenegro UIC ID No. 03-804682-1
Basil A. Perea UIC ID No. 0003-7564349-3

(Sgt.) BASIL A. PEREA
Compliance Officer

(Sgt.) ATTY. CESARIO G. GONZALES, JR.
NOTARY PUBLIC
APPT. NO. TMNP-057-18
EXTENDED UNTIL JUNE 30, 2021
PTR NO. CAV 4107338
ROLL OF ATTORNEYS NO. 58078
BPL LICENSE NO. 110001
MOBILE NO. 09170328-1710
PROVINCE OF CAVITE

Bangko Mabuhay (A Rural Bank), Inc. is regulated by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas/ https://www.bsp.gov.ph
A Proud Member of BancNet. Member PDIC. Deposits are insured by PDIC up to P 500,000 per depositor.

PERLAS NG SILANGAN BALITA - May 3-9, 2021

Non-bank lending to private sector growing

The Philippine ng Pilipinas (BSP). P6.45 billion during the BSP said. financial system saw In a statement, the the same period in The survey of an increase in debt is- BSP cited preliminary 2019. other financial corpo- suances in the fourth data from its survey "This increase is rations presents the quarter of 2020, with showing the domes- mainly attributed to comprehensive mea- the private sector bor- tic claims of so-called the rise in the claims sure of the claims and rowing more from Other Financial Cor- on the private sector, liabilities of this sub- nonbank funders dur- porations grew by and depository corpo- group of institutional ing the coronavirus 7.9 percent in the last rations as well as the units providing finan- pandemic, according three months of 2020 sector's net claims on cial services other than to the Bangko Sentral to P6.95 trillion from central government," banks, non-banks with

quasi-banking func- be attributed to the in- tions, non-stock sav- crease in the sector's ings and loan associa- holdings of debt se- tions and the BSP. curities issued by the

These institutional central government units are: Moreover, claims on

• Trust entities depository corpora- tions expanded by 4.1

• Private and pub- percent from P1.65 lic insurance corpora- trillion in the fourth

tions quarter of 2019 to P1.72 trillion on ac-

• Holding compa- count of other financial nies corporations' higher

financial institutions, holdings of debt secu- specifically govern- rities issued by banks.

ment-owned or-con- The net foreign as- trolled corporations tets of other financial

engaged in financial corporations rose mar- intermediation ginally by 0.4 percent

• Non-money from P147.1 billion in market funds covering the fourth quarter of

unit investment trust 2019 to P147.8 billion funds and investment in the fourth quarter of

companies 2020. The growth was

intermediaries and brought about by the auxiliaries consisting increase in other fi-

of offshore banking nancial corporations' units and non-banks claims on nonresi-

without quasi-banking dents, which were functions. mostly in the form of

Claims on the investments in debt private sector grew by 8.9 percent in the

and equity securities, fourth quarter of 2020 and insurance techni-

to P3.57 trillion from cal reserves. P3.23 trillion in the

The other finan- same period of 2019 cial corporations' to-

mainly due to higher crease in assets was investments in eq- funded through the is-

quity and debt securi- suances of shares and ties issued by private other equity.

This increase in non-financial corpo- equity issuances, com-

rations. Likewise, net bined with the rise in

claims on the central insurance technical re- government rose by serves, led to a 7.7 per-

9.6 percent from the cent rise in the other previous year's level of liabilities amounting

P1.5 trillion billion to to P7.1 trillion in the

P1.65 trillion during fourth quarter of 2020

the fourth quarter of from the P6.59 trillion

2020. in the same period of

The upturn may 2019.

PH banks strong, ready to fund economic rebound, says Diokno

The Philippine economy is well positioned for a sharp rebound after the coronavirus pandemic, thanks to structural reforms implemented after previous crises, especially in the banking system, according to the country's chief financial regulator.

In particular, Philippine banks are strong enough to weather the downturn brought about by the COVID-19 crisis due to their sufficient equity and conservative balance sheets that make them resistant to soured assets.

"The regulatory reforms over the past 20 years have made

the Philippine banking system resilient to shocks," Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Benjamin Diokno said in an online speech delivered during a recent government forum.

"Banks are adequately capitalized and have low exposure to bad debts," he added. "They can support the economy, including micro, small, and medium enterprises, through credit and other financial services."

Despite the combined strength of the country's banks, the

central bank chief said the substantial adverse impact of the pandem-

ic—which caused the economy to contract by the largest margin in recorded Philippine history—had required the regulator to step in.

"The BSP needed to provide regulatory relief measures to help banks navigate the crisis," he said.

In particular, Diokno said the favorable inflation outlook and well anchored inflation expectations allowed the central bank to inject money into the economy without fear of causing unmanageable spike in consumer prices.

"There was enough room to ease monetary policy in

support of the economy, with the latest policy rate at 2 percent, even after a series of rate cuts last year," he said.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the BSP has infused over P2 trillion in liquidity to the financial system, equivalent to 11 percent of gross domestic product.

Among the BSP's long list of COVID-response measures were the series of policy rate cuts last year totaling 200 basis points. These moves were meant to influence banks to lower their lending rates as well, thereby encourage credit taking to

support economic activities.

The BSP also cut the reserve requirement for universal and commercial banks, as well as for smaller banks last year.

The economy contracted by 9.6 percent in 2020 as a result of the necessary quarantine measures, which restricted mobility.

Earlier, Diokno said the central bank would keep interest rates low for as long as possible to support the country's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, adding that the economy was already at the tail-end of the cri-

sis, with the rollout of vaccination program ongoing.

At the same time, he said the BSP recognized that economic recovery was still in its early stage and, as such, expansionary monetary support remained warranted.

"We recognize that the economy is still in its nascent recovery phase," he said. "The accommodative monetary policy settings provide significant stimulus to demand and should be allowed to continue to work their way through the economy to bolster recovery in private consumption and investment."

PAL eyes return of Manila-Tel Aviv flights by October

Philippine Airlines (PAL) seeks to launch nonstop flights between Manila and Tel Aviv by October 2021, betting on eased travel restrictions as COVID-19 vaccination in the Philippines ramps up.

PAL is seeking the revival of the route, which it operated until the 1950s, for tourism purposes and to serve the roughly

28,000 Filipinos based in Israel.

"The Philippine flag carrier hopes to serve growing demand for air linkages between the Philippines and the Holy Land to serve tourists and OFWs [overseas Filipino workers] alike," PAL said in a statement last April 30.

Crucial to the plan was the use of

Saudi Arabia's airspace, which would cut travel time and cost.

"Our countrymen have been longing for a direct flight to the Holy Land for spiritual pilgrimages or for a Mediterranean getaway when the travel climate allows," said the statement quoting Dexter Lee, PAL chief strategist and planning officer.

Recent "exploratory" discussions were led by PAL president Gilbert Santa Maria and Israel Ministry of Tourism Director General Amir Halevi, according to the statement.

Among the countries that have successfully controlled the COVID-19 pandemic through widespread vaccination, Israel is now gradu-

ally reopening to international visitors.

PAL said Israel may begin accepting individual tourists by July 2021.

"I am pleased to give this important first step to the tourism industry between Israel and the Philippines," Halevi was quoted as saying in the same statement. "Direct flights between our two capitals

will be a game-changer for tourism and business connectivity. This time Israel has unique advantage as a safe and healthy country," he said.

PAL said the planned Manila-Tel Aviv flights would operate twice per week using its Airbus A350. Philippine passport holders will be entitled to a 90-day visa-free stay in Israel.

Lower fuel prices saved the day from spike in pork costs, says BSP

Prices of goods and services likely rose by the same magnitude in April as it did in March as lower fuel prices helped prevent higher food costs from blowing inflation up, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), the Philippine central bank.

In a statement, BSP economists projected the April 2021 inflation rate to settle within the range of 4.2-5 percent—the same estimate range they made for March, which eventually saw consumer price index settle down

officially at 4.5 percent. "Lower prices of domestic petroleum products and key food items, such as fruits and vegetables due to improved supply conditions, are the main sources of downside price pressures during the month," said the BSP.

"However, these could be partly offset by upward adjustment in Meralco electricity rates, coupled with higher prices of pork, fish, and rice," it added. The Philippine Statistics Authority was scheduled to release the

inflation rate for April on May 5.

Markets are closely monitoring the country's inflation rate which spiked in recent months mainly due to a pork shortage caused by an African swine fever outbreak that nearly decimated the local hog industry.

So far, the BSP has refrained from tightening monetary policy in response to the inflation spike, saying rising prices are caused by tangled supply lines which cannot be untangled by raising interest rates.

Instead, the BSP has called on government to increase supply by raising the ceiling for pork imports. The Duterte administration did not only that but also lowered tariff for importation of pork.

"Moving forward, the BSP will continue to monitor evolving economic and financial conditions to ensure that the monetary policy stance remains consistent with the BSP's price stability mandate," the BSP said.

Earlier, BSP Governor Benjamin Diok-no said the latest infla-

tion rate reinforced the regulator's projection that the consumer price index will likely exceed the government's full-year forecast range, but will return to normal in 2022.

"Inflation is still seen to return to within-target band in 2022 as supply-side influences subside," he said, repeating his call for "timely and effective implementation of direct measures" by the national government that could contribute to price stability.

The latest BSP as-

essment of the inflation outlook indicated that the balance of risks remain broadly tilted around the baseline path in 2021, while leaning toward the downside in 2022.

The BSP chief also doused expectations that regulators would tighten liquidity in response to the inflation spike, saying the policy-making Monetary Board believes that the prevailing policy settings "remain appropriate" to support the government's broader efforts to revive the economy.

Property sector seen to stay in a slump in 2021

Metro Manila's office, residential and shopping mall landlords must brace for further rise in vacancy rates and declining rental rates this year as the prolonged coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to limit economic activities.

The office and residential sectors are seen to start improving only in 2022, to be supported by the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination program to the general population.

This is according

to property consulting firm Colliers Philippines, which projected that vacancy rate for the residential property sector in the metropolis would hit a record-high of 17.2 percent by the end of this year. This is higher than the 8.4 percent vacancy rate during the Asian currency crisis. In the first quarter of 2021, vacancy rate hit 16.3 percent.

Vacancy rate at shopping malls is seen to rise to 16 percent this year, close to the record high of 19 percent seen

in 2001. The rate last year stood at 12.5 percent and further rose to 14 percent in the first quarter of this year.

Office vacancy rate is projected to reach 12.5 percent this year from only 4.1 percent in the first quarter of 2020, when the pandemic was just unfolding, as existing tenants continue to rationalize office space by not renewing unused units and exercising pretermination option.

In the first quarter of this year, vacancy

rate was at 11 percent, weighed down by the slow down in take-up of the once high-flying Philippine online gaming operators.

"While we have seen quarter on quarter improvements, clearly we are not out of the woods yet so payment terms and rental will have to be flexible," Colliers managing director Richard Raymond said in a briefing last April 30.

Property prices are likewise softening, but not crashing as what

was seen during the Asian crisis, Raymundo noted, adding that the major difference this time around was that interest rates were at

record low across the globe, unlike during the Asian crisis when monetary policy was tightened to address sharp currency devaluations.

In the residential sector, Colliers associate director Joey Bondoc said the pandemic continued to hamper residential demand in both the presale and secondary markets, respectively.

Colliers projects take-up to be driven by mid-income-to-luxury projects over the next 12 to 24 months.

In the first quarter of 2021, residential prices and rents declined further by 2.5 percent and 1.6 percent, respectively. Colliers expects further correction this year, albeit at a slower rate, after the significant drop recorded in 2020, when prices and rents decreased by 13.2 percent and 7.8 percent, respectively.

Insurer profit down 8.6 percent in 2020 as pandemic hammers markets

The pandemic-induced recession that battered financial markets everywhere led to a drop in life insurers' investment incomes and pulled down the entire domestic insurance industry's bottom line by 8.6 percent to P41.2 billion in 2020.

The latest Insurance Commission (IC) data showed that the total net income of 126 life and non-life insurance firms, as well as mutual benefit associations (MBAs), in 2020 declined from P45.1 billion in 2019.

Separate IC data showed that life insurance companies' combined 2020 net income fell 16.4 percent to P30.2 billion from 2019's P36.1 billion.

Bucking the trend, non-life players, on the other hand, raised their total net income by 65.8 percent to P5.6 billion from P3.4 bil-

lion in 2019.

Just like the life sector, MBAs had a smaller total net surplus in 2020 of P5.4 billion, down 3.4 percent from 2019's P5.6 billion.

"The total insurance industry's net income decreased primarily due to the life insurance sector—it may have been a combination of factors that drove the decrease," Insurance

Commissioner Dennis Funa said.

"Total premiums of the life industry increased by P13.8 billion or 5.9 percent, and benefit payments decreased by P7.8 billion. Both these factors should have led to an increase in net income," Funa said.

"However, these were negated by the increase in reserves by P17 billion, decrease in income from VUL

(variable universal life) of P2 billion, and increase in other underwriting expenses by P6 billion, bringing an underwriting gain of just P644 million," Funa said.

"Net investment income decreased by P3.5 billion or 7.6 percent. Loss on sale on investments posted a remarkable decrease of 100.5 percent—from P1.8-billion gain in 2019 to P9.1-million

loss in 2020," he said.

"Add to that the increase in income tax of P1 billion, leading to a decrease in net income of about P6 billion," Funa added.

Funa said 22 out of the 31 life insurers posted net investment losses ranging from P238,000 to P1.5 billion in 2020, while 20 of these companies also saw their 2020 net income drop compared to 2019 levels.

PH foreign borrowings for virus fight hit P887B

The Philippines has more than enough funds to vaccinate 70 percent of its population with the \$18.4-billion (about P887 billion) loans for pandemic response measures it had obtained at concessional interest rates from foreign sources, according to the Department of Finance (DOF).

Finance Undersecretary Mark Dennis Joven told a press briefing last April 30 that as of April 28, the Philippines obtained \$16.26 billion in external borrowings for budgetary support, or money that had been injected into the budget to fund COVID-19 response.

These include funds to purchase medical equipment and to upgrade facilities, as well as for the dolouts to poor families whenever the country or parts of it reverts to the most stringent lockdowns aimed at containing the coronavirus.

Another \$2.14 billion in project loans had been secured by the Philippines since last year to finance specific projects, such as building quarantine and testing facilities, as well as granting financial aid to specific sectors.

According to es-

timates as of April 30 by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), \$30.32 billion (about P1.46 trillion), equivalent to 8.24 percent of the 2019 gross domestic product (GDP), had been allocated for policy measures which the government had put in place since the start of the pandemic to deal with the resulting health and socioeconomic crises.

If the government were to distribute this amount for pandemic support to all Filipinos, each one would receive \$280.47 or over P13,500.

Joven said "most" of the earlier borrow-

ings had already been disbursed in order to offset the weak tax collection resulting from the pandemic-induced recession, which shed millions of jobs and shuttered thousands of businesses.

The DOF official pointed out that debt had long been a part of budget financing across different administrations and even in other countries. "This forms part of efficient governance," he said.

Joven said that of the foreign funding for budgetary support, \$6.93 billion came from ADB, the World Bank, and Asian Infrastructure and In-

vestment Bank (AIIB) based in Beijing.

Out of the total borrowings to date, Joven said \$1.2 billion (about P58 billion) in loans from the three multilateral lenders would be used to procure COVID-19 vaccines as well as the nationwide mass inoculation rollout.

Joven said \$600 million to \$700 million out of these loans were already contracted or booked to pay for vaccines. While some supply contracts have yet to be signed, the government already locked in the doses, he said.

Some of the vac-

cines made by Sinovac, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Pfizer which would be arriving were being financed by these loans, he added.

But Joven said only \$100 million had been drawn or released for payments to signed contracts.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III last week said about 143 million vaccine doses were expected to arrive within the year—enough to vaccinate 70 million Filipinos, or the entire adult population, to achieve herd immunity by yearend and allow a safe reopening of the economy.

ADB slashes 2021 growth forecast for PH

With greater uncertainty brought about by the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has slashed its growth forecast for the Philippines to 4.5 percent in 2021.

From its previous gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast of 6.5 percent for this year, the Manila-based multilateral lender's updated projection for its host-country was now below the government's 6.5-7.5 percent target range, its flagship Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2021 report released last April 28 showed.

ADB country director for the Philip-

pines Kelly Bird told a press conference that their latest forecast was a "floor," which meant they expected the growth rate to be a minimum of 4.5 percent but it could be higher.

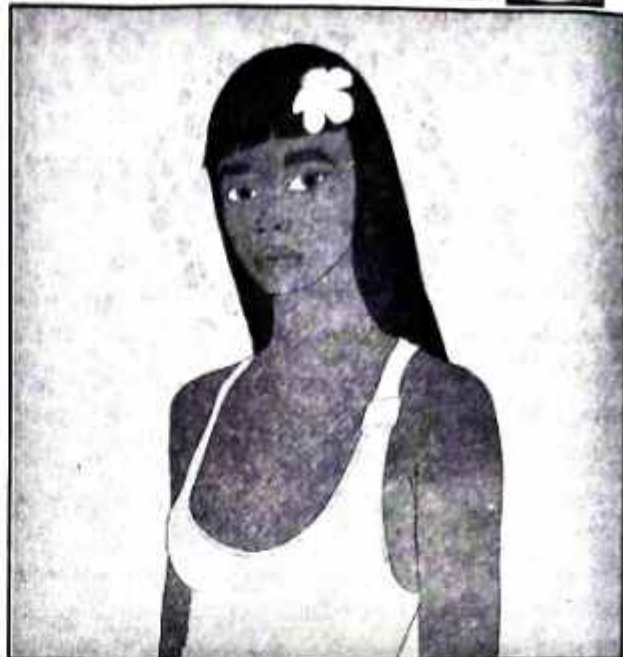
"The economy is on recovery [but] it's not as fast as we expected it would last year" when the ADB made its previous growth forecast, Bird said. It did not help that the emergence of new COVID-19 variants stalled some in-

roads in containing the spread of the deadly coronavirus, which heightened uncertainties on both the local and global outlooks," he added.

Bird said the up- dated growth estimate already took into consideration the reimposed tighter quarantine and the expected delayed momentum in reopening the economy in "National Capital Region (NCR) Plus," which accounted for half of the Philippines' GDP.

As such, he said the more stringent ongoing quarantine would likely impact on the first-half economic performance.

In a separate report, UK-based Panteon Macroeconomics projected the second quarter to end the three straight quarters of growth amid the gradual easing of lockdown restrictions back then.



China Bank Q1 profit up 61%

Sy family-led China Banking Corp. grew its first quarter net profit by 61 percent year-on-year to P3.6 billion on the back of higher fee-based earnings and trading gains, lower cost of funds and improved operational efficiency.

This translated to an improved return on equity of 13.4 percent and return on assets of 1.4 percent, compared to 9.2 percent and 0.9 percent in the same quarter last year.

Amid the economic downturn due to the pandemic, China Bank reported a strong growth in its core businesses even as it had to provide higher coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic-related buffers and absorb the one-time impact of the new tax law on deferred tax assets.

The bank's gross loan book declined by 3 percent year-on-year to P572 billion as loan demand remained weak due to

the lingering economic uncertainties. Nonetheless, net interest income improved by 16 percent year-on-year to P9.2 billion as lower cost of funds made up for the sluggish interest earnings. Net interest margin improved to 4.2 percent from 3.8 percent in the same period last year.

The bank reported a three-fold expansion in fee-based income to P3.6 billion, while trading and securities gains hit P2.2 billion.

Lopez: New IATF rules to bring 300K people back to work

If business establishments will decide to reopen despite the odds and limitations, about 300,000 workers will be able to return to work this month, following the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases

(IATF) decision to allow dine-in restaurants and other businesses to reopen on limited scale.

But Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said in a radio interview last April 30 there was still a chance that employers would

decide not to reopen at all because of the current market conditions. But in this case, he said they were given the option to make the call.

"In our calculation, maybe it would be around 300,000 [workers]," Lopez said in the

interview when asked how many of the workers that were dislocated due to the lockdown could get their jobs back with the said IATF decision.

COVID-19 infections surged in areas where more people go after certain quarantine

restrictions were eased in the first few months of the year.

The surge prompted the government to reimpose in late March to mid-April the stricter enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in Metro Manila and nearby provinces,

which was later eased to modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ).

The administration recently extended the MECQ in Metro Manila, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal, among other areas, until May 14.