



PCC launches courses on competition law

THE Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) said courses and certificate programs on competition law that it is offering to lawyers and other professionals will help them deal with complex competition cases.

In a social media post on Thursday, the PCC said it launched the specialized academic track and post-graduate certificate program in partnership with the Legal Education Board (LEB) and The University of the Philippines Competition Law and Policy Program on March 14.

PCC Commissioner Lolieth Ramit-Medrano said more practitioners will help promote fair market competition.

"With globalization of trade, investments, and services, competition law is a powerful tool to provide safeguards designed to protect consumer welfare at the same time as fostering a balanced, competitive, and dynamic business environment," she added.

LEB Chairperson Jason R. Barlis said that the board commits to enhancing legal education by integrating competition law into academic curricula.

He added that the launch "aligns with LEB's broader efforts to equip future lawyers

with specialized knowledge in emerging legal fields."

According to the PCC, the two academic programs are aligned with the Philippine Competition Act and international best practices on competition law.

"The specialized academic track under the Juris Doctor program consists of a 12-unit curriculum focused on core competencies in competition law," the PCC said.

"It covers essential topics such as anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominance, merger control, and the impact of emerging technologies on competition," it added.

Meanwhile, it said that the post-graduate certificate program covers a 64-hour intensive course designed for lawyers, economists, policymakers, and other professionals seeking specialized training in competition law.

"It delves into key areas such as anti-competitive practices, market monopolization, mergers and acquisitions, consumer protection, and regulatory enforcement," PCC said.

"The program also follows a stackable credential system, allowing participants to credit completed courses toward a Master of Laws degree," it added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabilo**

Demand driving pineapple output growth

PINEAPPLE OUTPUT is expected to grow this year, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA), in response to increasing demand from China and Europe.

The Philippines is expected to produce more than 3.12 million metric tons (MMT) of pineapples this year, against 2.9 MMT in 2024, Assistant Secretary Arnel V. de Mesa told reporters.

He said pineapple yields are expected to hit 44 MT per hectare this year.

Exports of pineapple and pineapple products rose 7.5% to \$787.12 million in 2024.

Mr. De Mesa noted "growing demand" from China, the top destination of Philippine pineapple exports, as well as Europe.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization reported that demand is increasing for premium pineapples, especially the Philippine MD2 variety, from Chinese consumers.

It said the Philippines has been the second-biggest exporter of pine-

apples — next to Costa Rica — over the past 15 years.

Mr. De Mesa said the government continues to assist the industry through research and development efforts.

The government is also focusing on the production of organic pineapples, for which there is a "niche market," he added.

Currently, there are about 24,000 pineapple farmers in the Philippines, many in Mindanao. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**



FREEPIK

PhilHealth seeks budget hike to support expanded benefits

THE Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) said it will seek a higher budget allocation next year to help fund a 30% across-the-board increase in benefit packages.

"Yes, I think so," PhilHealth President and Chief Executive Officer Edwin M. Mercado said when asked if the health insurer will request more government subsidies next year.

"With the impact of the across-the-board 30% increase in benefits and compounded 50%, that's basically 95% from 2024 levels. So this year the full impact of the 95% will be felt. That's a significant increase from 2024. Now moving forward to 2025, we're expecting the same benefit level, but we will be adding more benefit payouts for new programs," Mr. Mercado told reporters.

PhilHealth received zero subsidies for 2025 after being asked to remit its reserve funds from the previous year to the government, which totaled P89.9 billion.

Mr. Mercado added that the subsidy for premiums for indirect members will be restored.

"I think we're showing that the absorptive capacity of PhilHealth is improving. So we're rolling out more benefit packages. We're showing that our utilization is going up," he said.

Mr. Mercado said the state health insurer is enhancing its IT programs to address the P10 million in denied claims last year.

"The most common reason for denied claims is late filing. So we're looking at that. It's precisely why we retroactively ruled that we will pay the denied claims. But that's retroactive. Moving forward... we're ready to work with different hospitals to train their filing clerks or their billing clerks," Mr. Mercado said.

However, he noted that PhilHealth's current surplus is sufficient to cover the denied claims.

Mr. Mercado said PhilHealth's full digitalization could take two to three years.

PhilHealth is also working with the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) on how to expand its coverage by identifying the next set of diseases needing coverage.

"That's why we're working with PIDS to identify what are the next set of diseases that we will cover based on different factors like what are the most prevalent, what have the most out-of-pocket expenditure, or what have the most effective treatment technology already available," he said.

PhilHealth and PIDS are looking to identify the next 10 to 20 most cost-effective health benefit packages.

"We are shifting field health's direction towards a more value-based approach where we will prioritize high-burden and high-cost diseases," he said.

PhilHealth also said it has lifted the 45-day benefit limit to accommodate conditions that require longer coverage.

"The 45-day benefit limit is an outdated cost-containment strategy. We understand why this was mandated before, but with our new payment mechanism. We cannot always predict or schedule our medical needs. We also have a lot of services that need more than 45 days of coverage," PhilHealth Acting President and Chief Executive Officer Edwin M. Mercado said in a statement.

As such, PhilHealth is extending the sessions allowable for hemodialysis packages.

"We wish for Filipinos with critical illnesses, chronic conditions or those needing long hospitalizations to continue to receive health services without having to worry that they will be buried in debt," Mr. Mercado said.

PhilHealth's net profit declined 41.66% to P46.43 billion in the first nine months of 2024. — **Aaron Michael C. Sy**

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Quantum Residences along Taft Avenue (Artist's Perspective)



Palm Beach West at Met Park, Bay Area (Actual Photo)

intersection of Taft Avenue and Gil Puyat Avenue (Buendia), making it a practical address due to its proximity to transport hubs, the central business districts of Makati and Bay Area, as well as top schools and universities.

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In Marikina, Horizon Land's Siena

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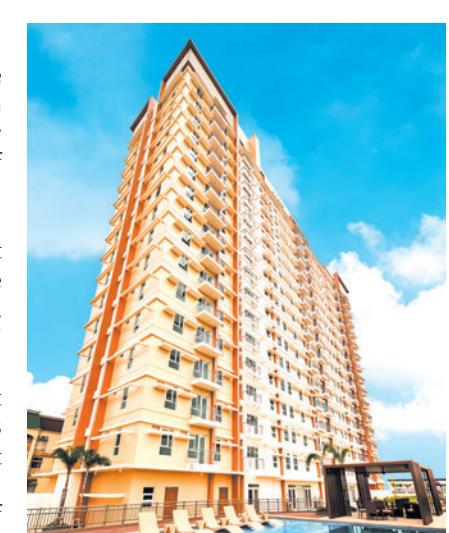
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Don't miss this opportunity to invest smartly. Join Horizon Land's exclusive preview at "Warmth and Wonder, A Horizon Land Grand Open House" on March 23, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Le Pavillon Event Hall in Met Park, Pasay City. Take this opportunity to discover the perfect home for you and your family.

The event will highlight a selection of quality Horizon Land projects in key areas, including Palm Beach West in the Bay Area; Quantum Residences along Taft Avenue; Siena Towers in Marikina; Peninsula Garden Midtown Homes in Paco, Manila; and Florida Sun Estates in Cavite.

For more information on Horizon Land's condos and exclusive promos,



Siena Towers in Marikina (Actual Photo)

visit www.horizonland.ph or call the hotline at 0917-857-4908 to book a private viewing at its showroom located on-site in Pasay City.