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ADB to be tapped for study on protecting Manila Bay coastline

THE Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said it plans to tap the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to fund the feasibility of a project to protect the Manila Bay coastline.

“We will submit a request to ADB under IPIF (infrastructure preparation and innovation facility) for an in-depth feasibility study for this project,” Public Works and Highways Secretary Vivencio B. Dizon told the House Appropriations Committee.

Mr. Dizon was responding to a query about construction plans around the bay to minimize floods in Metro Manila and Central Luzon.

The Manila Bay shoreline touches Metro Manila, Bulacan, Pampanga, Bataan, and Cavite.

Coastal protection forms part of the around Manila Bay Integrated Development Plan.

“This will be a major feasibility study. I am quite confident that the ADB will accept this so that we can start this project,” Mr. Dizon said.

The project also called the Manila Bay Integrated Flood Control, Coastal Defense and Expressway Project, is designed to reduce the risk of flooding via a coastal dike which will also serve as a roadway to improve vehicle flow.

In August, the DPWH tapped the Japan International Cooperation Agency to expedite the updating of flood control master plans for the Pasig-Marikina and Cagayan River basins.

Last week, the DPWH trimmed P255 billion from its 2026 budget. It removed mostly local flood control projects.

The DPWH's proposed budget for 2026 is now been reduced to P625.78 billion, 28.9% lower than the original proposal.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. last week called for a “sweeping review” of the 2026 public works budget after the failure of many flood-control projects during the July rains. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

Israel, South Dakota removed from bird products import ban

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it lifted a ban on bird product imports from Israel and the US state of South Dakota, following the successful containment of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in those locations.

Veterinary authorities in Israel and South Dakota had reported zero new cases of bird flu since mid-July to the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), fulfilling a key condition for such bans to be lifted.

The import ban had included domestic and wild birds, poultry meat, day-old chicks, hatching eggs, and semen for artificial insemination.

It marked the latest instance of a ban being lifted since the recent removal of a ban on such products from Argentina. — **Andre Christopher H. Alampay**

Farm roads turned over to ARBs in Ilagan, Isabela

FARM-TO-MARKET roads have been opened in Ilagan, Isabela, targeted to benefit agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs), the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) said.

The package consists of three new roads constructed for P47 million and other items designed to improve the ARBs' market access and productivity, the DAR said.

DAR Cagayan Valley Regional Director Primo C. Lara said the roads also make travel faster and safer for farmers.

“(They) will also connect them to bigger markets, improve their incomes, and uplift the socio-economic conditions of entire

agrarian reform communities,” he said.

Efficiencies in the transport of produce are also expected to reduce post-harvest losses, particularly during the rainy season.

Ilagan Mayor Jose Marie L. Diaz said: “The dream of a Bagong Pilipinas begins with giving our farmers new hope and a better future.”

The package for Ilagan includes farm machinery and Certificates of Condonation with Release of Mortgage.

The New Agrarian Emancipation Act (RA 11953) authorizes the condonation of farmers' unpaid debt and estate taxes. — **Andre Christopher H. Alampay**



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Bicol-based diner chain BIGGS eyes expansion in Calabarzon

By Justine Irish D. Tabile
Reporter

BICOL's leading restaurant chain, BIGGS, Inc. is planning to open 90 branches in Calabarzon, citing promising demand in the region.

“The bigger picture is the 10-year plan for 120 stores. The six-year plan is 55 stores. Around 90 are earmarked for Calabarzon, and then 30 for Bicol,” Emil Capili, chief operating officer of BIGGS, told *BusinessWorld*.

“Calabarzon is around 2.5 times the economy of Bicol. It is a big region,” he added.

He said the market in Metro Manila is too competitive for the company's risk appetite.

“We saw that if we compete in Metro Manila, there are so many challenges and the risk exposure is very high. We saw that Calabarzon has unsatisfied demand (for) restaurants,” he said.

He said most restaurants in Calabarzon are quick-service, like Jollibee and McDonald's, presenting an opportunity for homegrown brands like BIGGS.

He added that the chain is set to open a branch in Lucena City within the month.



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“It will be our first branch in Calabarzon and Quezon Province and will be the biggest; it is 750 square meters,” he added.

After Lucena City, he said that the company is planning to open branches in the municipalities of Candelaria and Tiaong, also in Quezon Province.

He said that the company is hoping to triple its revenue after six years.

“Currently, our annual revenue is P1 billion. So the target for the next six years is to triple it to around P3 billion. That's our goal,” he said.

“We plan to achieve that through setting up more stores. Every store that we establish is around P6 million per month of sales; that is around P72 million in additional sales annually,” he added.

He said that fast-casual and casual dining are among the restaurant industry's growth segments.

“Normally, there are a lot of players here, like the Bistro Group and the Moment Group, because there are no barriers to entry,” he said.

He said that the casual dining segment is therefore “ripe for the picking” in the absence of a clear number one.

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