



THE WORD VANGUARD originates from the Old French “avant-garde,” meaning “advance guard”—the troops who lead the way into new territory and protect the main army from surprise attacks. Our logo symbolizes our dual pledge: to be both the Vanguard that leads the way and the Guardians who protect the truth.

Eastern Visayas (Region 8), aims to become protectors of integrity, justice, and public trust. It is our defense against falsehood and corruption. Our Vanguard spirit serves as an illuminating power of truth against darkness on Filipino society.

Our logo is our covenant to our readers. It declares that The Vanguard will always be the spearhead of truth

and the shield of justice. We are the Guardians on the front lines, ensuring that what is right is defended, and what is true is revealed.

This Green color symbolizes the enduring vitality of truth and the moral courage to do what is right. It reflects our commitment to nurturing an informed society and safeguarding the principles we hold dear—For what is True, Just and Right.

NEW TACLOBAN AIRPORT TERMINAL ON TRACK FOR PARTIAL OPENING IN 2026



The design for the new Daniel Z. Romualdez Airport terminal in Tacloban City. As construction continues on the main building, officials are preparing a PHP1.5-billion project to add essential facilities like waiting areas and fuel stations. (Photo courtesy of Department of Transportation)

THE NEW Tacloban Airport terminal is scheduled for a partial opening in 2026, marking a significant step in a flagship government project to transform it into an international gateway.

Officials attributed the progress to intensified monitoring and fast-tracked construction. The project, a key initiative of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., aims to bring the airport up to international standards by

2028.

Divided into three phases, the project’s first phase, costing P761.91 million, is nearly complete.

The second phase, budgeted at

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

LGUs urged to create crisis plans to ensure uninterrupted services during disasters



The Archdiocesan Shrine of Santa Rosa de Lima in Daanbantayan, Cebu lies in ruins after the magnitude 6.9 earthquake on September 30. (Photo courtesy of Archdiocesan Shrine of Santa Rosa de Lima Facebook page)

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OCD E. Visayas sends over 24K water bottles to quake-hit northern Cebu



Aid for Cebu: Government volunteers load bottles of drinking water onto a C-130 at Tacloban Airport for airlift to northern Cebu affected by the September 30 earthquake. The shipment on Oct. 10, 2025, totaled 24,290 bottles. (Photo courtesy of OCD-E. Visayas)

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NEW TACLOBAN AIRPORT ... FROM PAGE 1

P1.05 billion, is on track for early 2026 and is currently focused on roofing and architectural work.

The final P1.5-billion third phase will fund interior finishes and critical systems, including air conditioning, elevators, passenger boarding bridges and amenities, guardhouses, and maintenance buildings.

“We are progressing ahead of schedule with actual accomplishments significantly exceeding planned targets,” said DPWH Regional Director Edgar Tabacon, who is overseeing the fast-tracking of Phase 3.

The airport, officially named the Daniel Z. Romualdez Airport, is a critical transportation link for Eastern Visayas. It is one of the country’s busiest regional airports, handling 1.69 million passengers in 2024 with 24 daily flights to and from Manila and Cebu.

The Vanguard
For what is True,
Just and Right
vanguard.com.ph

Published weekly by
Vanguard Communications and Publishing Inc.

with business address at
Maharlika Highway, Brgy. 95
(Brgy. Caibaan cor.
Brgy. Picas Sagkahan),
Tacloban City 6500

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7 LGUs lauded for completing local transport route plans



LTFRB Region VIII recognized seven LGUs for completing their Local Public Transport Route Plans.

By Ronnie Yanuario

THE LAND TRANSPORTATION Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) Region VIII has recognized seven Local Government Units for completing their Local Public Transport Route Plans (LPTRP).

A recent ceremony at the LTFRB VIII Regional Office highlighted unity and intergovernmental cooperation. By consolidating the event, officials emphasized a regional commitment to efficient and sustainable transport planning.

“This ceremony signifies not only recognition, but also a dedication to coordinated, efficient governance,” said LTFRB VIII Regional Director Gualberto N. Gualberto, commending the LGUs for their commitment to transport modernization and excellence in public service.

The LPTRPs, which are crucial for local transport modernization

under the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP), were praised as tangible examples of good governance at the local level.

These plans align with President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.’s national agenda to enhance mobility, connectivity and inclusive development throughout the country.

In addition, the seven LGUs recognized for completing the LPTRP process are Inopacan, Hindang, Jaro, Hinundayan, Libagon, Arteche, and the LGU of San Jose de Buan, Samar—which received Special Notices of Compliance.

LTFRB Chairperson Teofilo E. Guadiz III and DOTr Acting Secretary Giovanni Lopez led the successful regional initiative, ensuring it met the Department of Transportation’s strategic mobility goals.

At the regional level, OIC CTDO Veronica Cecilia Reposar and TDO II

Charmaine Mae de Paz supervised the LPTRP process, ensuring the plans were compliant, accurate, and sustainable.

The ceremony united key local stakeholders, including Municipal Planning and Development Coordinators (MPDCs) and local chief executives. Among the officials recognized were LGU Arteche Vice Mayor Roland Boie Evardone and LGU Hindang Sangguniang Bayan Member Sean Ryan Mark Cabal.

The LTFRB VIII congratulated all awardees, stating their collective efforts have laid the foundation for a more inclusive, efficient, and sustainable public transport system in Eastern Visayas.

The successful LPTRPs will now serve as models for other local governments in the region, encouraging wider adoption of modern, people-centered transportation planning.

LGUs urged to create crisis plans... FROM PAGE 1

In the wake of recent powerful earthquakes, the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (RDRRMC) in Eastern Visayas, on October 9, has called on all local government units (LGUs) to create and implement a Public Service Continuity Plan (PSCP) to ensure uninterrupted essential public services during disasters.

The directive builds on a 2018 national policy (NDRRMC Memorandum No. 33) that mandated all government bodies to create

Public Service Continuity Plans.

RDRRMC-8 passed a resolution in its quarterly meeting in September directing LGUs to develop their PCSP to ensure that critical services like healthcare, water, power, and communications continue to function even during severe emergencies.

“This plan is about saving lives and keeping the government running when it matters most,” said OCD-8 Regional Director Lord Byron Torrecarion. He emphasized that disaster preparedness goes beyond immediate response and must include ensuring the continuity of governance.

The PSCP is a strategic blueprint that outlines how a local government will maintain its most vital operations during a disruptive event like a typhoon, earthquake, or pandemic.

PSCP components include identifying and prioritizing essential services, ensuring leadership succession, and securing resources and strategies to minimize service disruption.

The RDRRMC has assured LGUs of technical assistance in developing PSCP, aligning with national law and international disaster risk reduction frameworks.

Gov't extends free RoRo service as San Juanico Bridge weight limits persist



(Photo courtesy of PIA Eastern Visayas)

THE GOVERNMENT'S "Libreng Sakay" (Free Ride) program will continue providing free roll-on, roll-off (RoRo) ferry services for another three to five months to mitigate the ongoing transport disruption caused by weight restrictions on the San Juanico Bridge, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) said on Friday.

The program, which operates between the Tacloban port in Leyte and the Amandayehan port in Basey, Samar, has already ferried over 6,167 vehicles since its launch on June 18.

The service is funded by a P54.3-million allocation from the national disaster council.

The program is designed to keep essential goods and services moving.

Eligible vehicles include cargo trucks carrying food, medicine, water, animal feed, and fuel; government

and humanitarian vehicles on official disaster duty; and private suppliers of essential goods endorsed by local governments.

"This will run for about three to five months, depending on the frequency of the trip," said OCD Region 8 Director Lord Byron Torrecarion, explaining that the contract covers 630 trips.

The initiative has been widely praised by drivers. Erwin Timtim, a truck driver from Marikina, expressed his gratitude, saying the service helps them avoid being stranded and ensures the delivery of vital products.

Officials describe the program as a critical "lifeline" for the regional economy, ensuring the continuous flow of goods while the San Juanico Bridge restrictions remain in effect.

"This mission reflects the compassion and solidarity of the people of Eastern Visayas toward our brothers and sisters in Cebu," said OCD Eastern Visayas Director Lord Byron Torrecarion.

"It's a powerful reminder that our commitment to serve transcends regional boundaries," he said.

The delivery is part of a broader relief effort.

Earlier this week, a separate team was deployed to northern Cebu with additional supplies, including mobile water filtration units, a water tanker, and emergency telecommunications equipment.

OCD Eastern Visayas sends over 24K ...

FROM PAGE 1

The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) in Eastern Visayas delivered 24,290 bottles of drinking water to northern Cebu on Friday, addressing a critical shortage in the area following the recent magnitude 6.9 earthquake.

The supplies were airlifted via a C-130 aircraft in a joint operation involving the Philippine Air Force and the Japan Air Self-Defense Force.

The aid is intended for families in Bogo City and surrounding towns.

Tacloban logs 64 HFMD cases Amid surge of over 39,000 nationwide

By Fred Padernos

A TOTAL OF 64 confirmed cases of Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) have been recorded in Tacloban City from January to October 9, 2025, affecting primarily elementary school students, according to data from the Tacloban City Health Office (CHO).

Among the affected schools, Sto. Niño SPED Center reported

the highest number of infections, while the Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU) was the latest to record cases, with five confirmed infections among students.

Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Officer Keena Mate said the city government has coordinated with all 138 barangays, school officials, and parents to intensify preventive actions against the spread of HFMD. She emphasized that maintaining good hygiene and proper sanitation remains the most effective defense, urging schools to regularly disinfect classrooms, restrooms, and shared spaces.

Mate also commended EVSU's prompt response in conducting disinfection and containment measures immediately after confirming the cases, helping prevent further transmission within the campus.

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease is a highly contagious viral infection commonly caused by Coxsackievirus A16 or Enterovirus 71. It typically affects children under 10 years old, but it can also spread to adults. The disease is transmitted through direct contact with saliva, nasal secretions, fluid from blisters, or feces of an infected person.

Symptoms include fever, sore throat, painful mouth sores, and rashes on the hands, feet, and buttocks. The illness usually lasts 7 to 10 days, and while generally mild, it can spread rapidly in schools and daycare centers due to close contact among children.



Keena Mate, a city health officer, details the LGU's campaign across 138 barangays and schools to intensify HFMD prevention. (Phot by Fred Padernos/The Vanguard)

Nationwide Cases

The Department of Health (DOH) has recorded a total of 39,893 Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) cases nationwide as of August 16, 2025, marking a significant rise compared to the 5,081 cases reported during the same period in 2024. From January to February 22, the DOH logged 7,598 cases, nearly three times higher than last year's 2,665.

More than half, or 56 percent, of these early cases involved children four years old and below, while 2,069 were aged five to nine years. The highest concentration of cases came from Central Luzon, MIMAROPA, Metro Manila, and the Cordillera region, which together accounted for 52 percent of total infections. By August 9, the national tally had reached 37,368, climbing by 2,525 new cases within a week.

Despite the surge, the DOH clarified that much of the increase is attributed to enhanced surveillance and reporting, noting that around 94 percent of the cases remain suspect and the fatality rate is below 0.1 percent, with most patients recovering fully.

This prompted health authorities to reinforce public reminders on hygiene, sanitation, and early medical consultation.

EDITORIAL STOPPING THE FLOOD OF TRUTH

The Senate's sudden suspension of hearings on the alleged anomalies in flood control projects is more than a procedural pause — it's a blow to transparency and public trust. At a time when billions of pesos are poured into flood mitigation programs and countless communities remain submerged every rainy season, halting the inquiry sends the wrong message: that accountability can wait.

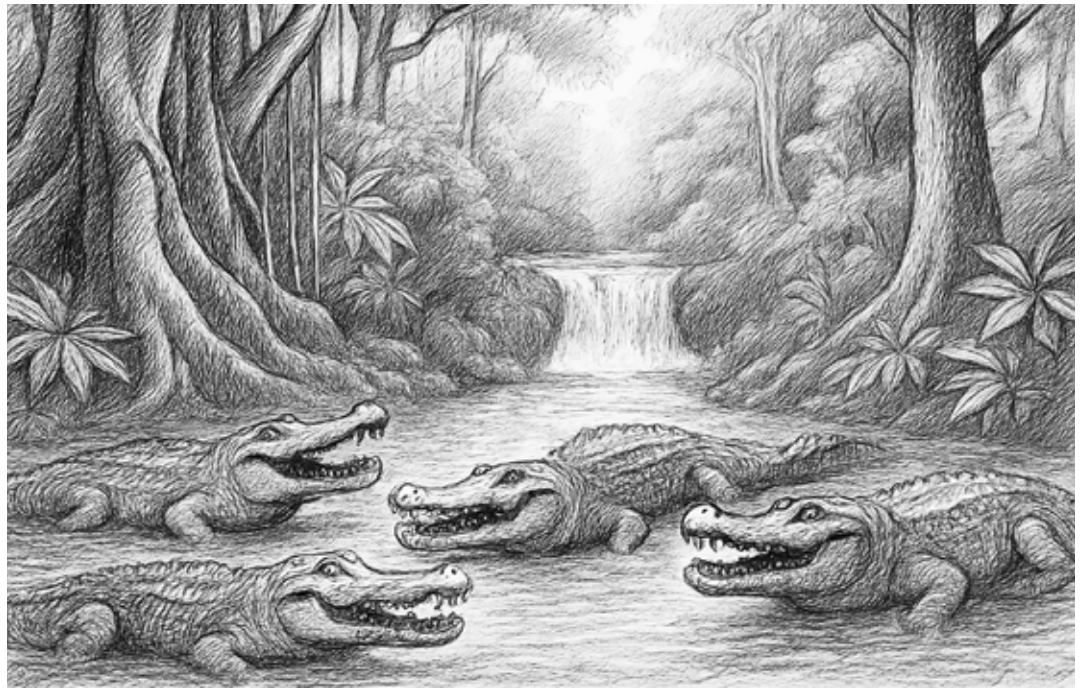
Flood control projects are supposed to protect lives and livelihoods, not serve as cash streams for political patrons and favored contractors. For years, questions have lingered about overpricing, ghost projects, and substandard works that crumble with the next typhoon. The creation of the Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI) was meant to be a step toward restoring integrity.

But how can the public believe in a clean process when the Senate itself—an institution tasked with oversight—chooses to press pause just as the investigation gains traction?

Every suspension of a hearing is an invitation for suspicion. What exactly are we protecting—the integrity of the investigation or the interests of the powerful? The public

deserves to know whether funds meant to keep them safe from floods were instead used to line pockets.

If our lawmakers truly stand for good governance, they must prove



it not through words but through action: resume the hearings, compel the agencies to submit documents, and allow the ICI and media to do their jobs without

interference. Transparency cannot be seasonal. Accountability cannot be postponed.

The floodwaters of corruption rise fastest when truth is dammed.

UNSILENCED EASTERN

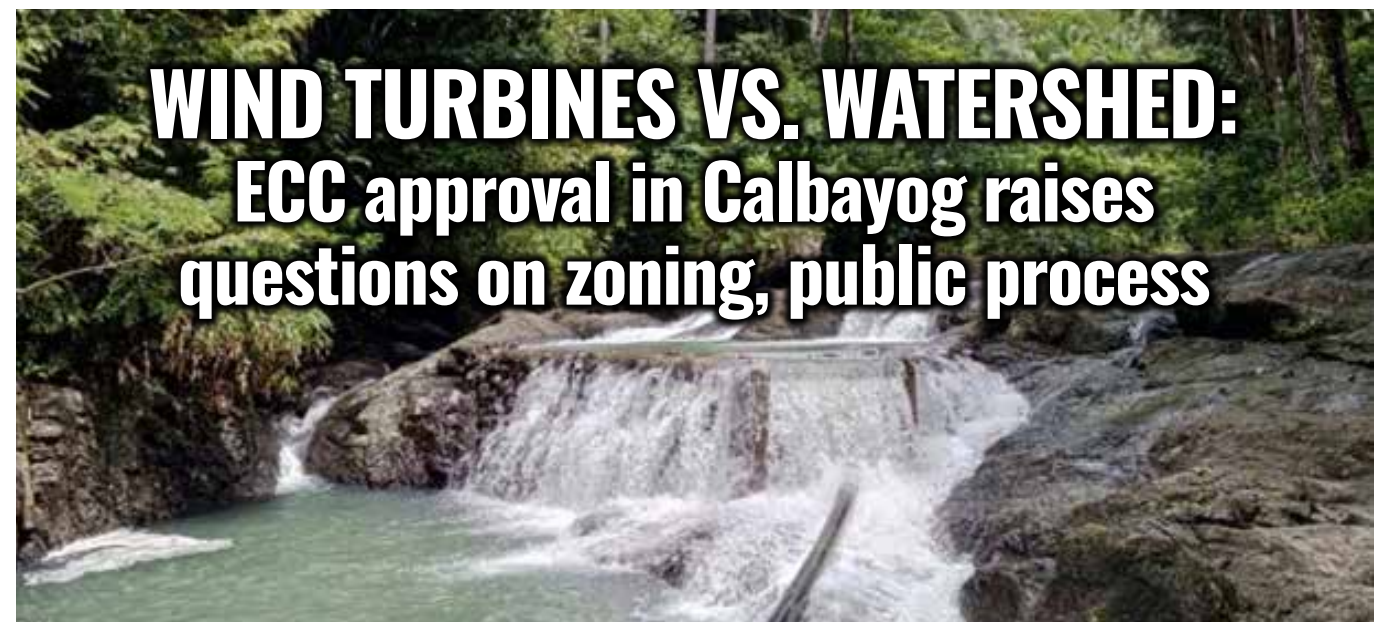
By Gina Dean



'How can a resolution be revoked when an ECC was already issued?'

That question echoed across the Northwest Samar State University Socio-Cultural Center on October 2, as the public gathered in hopes of stopping a wind energy project within the Calbayog Pan-as Hayiban Protected Landscape (CPHPL)—only to be met with silence.

What was intended as a public hearing on the city's endorsement of Gemini Wind Energy Corporation's (GWEC) 37-turbine project turned into a tightly controlled event. Officials confirmed that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Environmental Management Bureau Region 8 (DENR-EMB RO8) had already granted an Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) on September 12, 2025, effectively fast-tracking the project despite mounting environmental and legal concerns.



The event, convened by the Sangguniang Panlungsod at the request of Calbayog Mayor Raymund Uy, was expected to address public appeals for the revocation of Resolution No. 2023-16-139. The resolution, dated May 24, 2023, endorsed Gemini's wind studies and preliminary activities in the city.

Instead, participants were shocked when Councilor Eduardo Tibo declared that no public comments would be allowed, and questions were only to be submitted in writing.

"We came here to participate in a democratic process," said one environmental volunteer. "But we

were silenced. The decision feels predetermined."

Critical Gaps in Environmental Review

Among the strongest objections came from Prof. Harold Mercurio of Samar Island Heritage Center Inc., who revealed that the road network for the 24 wind turbines has no clear Environmental Impact Assessment as the EIA/EIS (Environment Impact Statement) focused only on the immediate footprints of the wind turbine towers. The road network connecting the turbines obviously lacks details as to its EIA/EIS based on Gemini's own submission to DENR-EMB RO8.

Worse, Mercurio said that 7 turbines previously fall within a Strict Protection Zone, a designation that prohibits large-scale development to safeguard biodiversity and water resources.

"These areas were reclassified in the 2024 CPHPL zoning to expand the multiple-use zone," said Mercurio. "The adjustment appears to favor GWEC's entry and SAPA (Special Use Agreement in Protected Areas) application—without genuine public consultation or proper information campaigns."

Earlier this year, a dialogue was held between Samar Governor

NEXT PAGE ►

KWENTONG PEYUPS

By Atty. Dennis Gorecho



“Red-tagging” as a threat to people’s life, liberty, and security is the focus of “Bloom Where

You Are Planted” by Nonilon Abao, which is one of the ten competing full-length films in the 21st Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival.

The synopsis of the film states: “The Cagayan Valley Region in the Philippines serves as the dedicated workplace of Agnes Tadeo Mesina (a development worker), the chosen home of Amanda Echanis (a jailed mother-artist-activist), and the birthplace of Randy Malayao (a slain peace consultant). Yet, they find themselves unable to return home: one is relentlessly pursued by the government, another is imprisoned, and the third is killed on his journey home.

The paths taken by these three activists will be explored, including the pit stops, obstacles, detours, and the long road ahead in the journey towards rebuilding a home with the people of Cagayan - a place that they work together to shape, and also shape who they are. Amid all these, the film explores their disrupted

Wind turbines vs. watershed...

Sharee Ann Tan, Calbayog City Water District, and local environmental groups regarding the location of 13 turbines inside the watershed.

Governor Tan had appealed for collaboration to relocate the turbines outside the protection zone:

“Pwedebaliwatkami manghangyo ha iyo... kun hain an other alternative location nga pwede butangan hiton? We will ask Vena [GWEC] to come down here and engage with you to assure that Calbayog’s water supply is not threatened.”

This discussion, however, was not mentioned during the October 2 public hearing, raising further concerns over transparency and the intent of the proponents.

ECC vs. Public Will

The issuance of the ECC has intensified questions: Can a city revoke its endorsement once national

agencies have already approved the project? Legal experts say the ECC grants significant authority, but local endorsements—especially those clouded by procedural concerns—can still be contested.

Community members worry that the project could lead to the cutting of over 5,000 trees and threaten the city’s water source. The approval of the project now hinges on the Certificate of No Objection from barangay officials within the vicinity.

“We are not against wind energy,” said a local science teacher. “We support clean energy—but not if it risks our watershed, biodiversity, and our right to be heard.”

As the turbines loom over the horizon, the people of Calbayog remain watchful. Their plea is not to stop progress—but to ensure it does not come at the irreversible cost of their environment.

connections to home and celebrates their enduring resilience in the face of adversity.”

I first met Malayao when we were both campus journalists as members of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP), where he was elected in 1991 vice president for Visayas. He was from UP Visayas, who took to his tasks like fish in the water, recruiting the most number of member publications in the entire history of the Guild in the Visayas during his term. He continued his activism through grassroots organizing.

In 2008, he was imprisoned for over four years under the Arroyo administration on murder charges for the death of former congressman and governor Rodolfo Aquinaldo.

After his release in 2012, Malayao championed human rights in

Cagayan Valley and helped farmers. He also took an active role in peace talks between the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

Malayao was brutally murdered in the early morning of January 30, 2019, on his way home to Isabela. The bus had stopped over in Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya, when two unidentified men boarded and shot Randy while he was asleep.

Makabayan-Cagayan Valley Coordinator Mesina was arrested in February 2022 in Aparri, Cagayan, allegedly for murder charges, which were already dismissed. Along with four other activists, she was earlier slapped with other bogus charges of accusing them of providing supplies to the New People’s Army in 2018.

It was in the early 1990s when I worked with Mesina as a volunteer for their group Katribu which is the national alliance of Indigenous Peoples organizations in the Philippines.

36-year-old Echanis is a peasant woman organizer under AMIHAN Cagayan provincial chapter. She was illegally arrested on December 2, 2020, along with her month-old baby in a government raid bannered under a counter-insurgency campaign.

Despite her detention at the Cagayan Provincial Jail, she is running for honors in UP Diliman and topped the recent council elections.

The film exemplified the pronouncement of the Supreme Court in *Deduro v. Maj. Gen. Vinoya* (G.R. No. 254753, July 4, 2023) that “red-tagging is a threat to people’s life, liberty, and security.”

Labelling a person “red” often comes with frequent surveillance, direct harassment, and in some instances, eventual death.

The Court stressed that being associated with communists makes

a red-tagged person a target of vigilantes, paramilitary groups, or even state agents. It also noted that red-tagging uses threats and intimidation to discourage “subversive activities.”

In his concurring opinion, my UP Law professor and SC Senior Associate Justice Marvic Leonen said that red tagging is used by the military and paramilitary units to silence or cause untold human rights abuses on vocal dissenters.

Aside from government agents’ resort to stereotyping or caricaturing individuals, Leonen noted that this is accomplished by providing witnesses who, under coercive and intimidating conditions, identify the leaders of organizations critical of the administration as masterminds of ordinary criminal acts.

Not only does this make these leaders’ lives and liberties vulnerable, but Justice Leonen stressed that a chilling effect on dissent is also generated among similar-minded individuals.

“Belief in communism has historically been used as a bogey to create non-existent exigencies for purposes of national security. History records the many human rights violations that may have been caused by this unsophisticated view of some in the echelons of military power. History, too, teaches that toleration and the creation of wider deliberative spaces are the more lasting and peaceful ways to debunk worn-out ideologies,” Leonen said.

Cinemalaya will run from October 3 to 12, 2025, at Shangrila Edsa.

(Peyups is the moniker of the University of the Philippines. Atty. Dennis R. Gorecho heads the Seafarers’ Division of the Sapalo Velez Bundang Bulilan Law Offices. For comments, e-mail info@sapalovelez.com, or call 09175025808)



UGB distributes relief supplies to 500 households in Tabogon, Cebu

THE UNIVERSAL GUARDIANS BROTHERHOOD (UGB), a service-oriented organization, conducted “Guardians Damayan sa Sugbo” relief operation in Barangay Piyo, Tabogon, Cebu on October 12.

A response to community needs, UGB provided essential aid to 500 households at the Barangay Piyo Gym, which served both members and non-members of the organization, extending support to a wide cross-section of the community.

Each beneficiary received a relief pack containing essential food items to support a family containing 5 kilograms of rice, 1 case of bottled water, 1 can of sardines, 2 packs of noodles, 1 pack of coffee, 1/4 kilogram of brown sugar, and 1 can of corned beef.

The “UGB Relief Distribution: Guardians Damayan sa Sugbo” initiative highlights the ongoing efforts of UGB civic group to provide support to local communities affected by recent natural calamities.

The activity promoted a spirit of

cooperation and solidarity, bringing much-needed assistance to hundreds of families in need.

“Guardians Damayan sa Sugbo has established itself as a proactive force in community service, with this latest event reinforcing its commitment to providing “damay” (aid) in times of need,” said UGB President Bong “UGMF Isaac” Contapay.

“As Guardians, our mission is to be there for our community in their time of need. This relief effort is more than just distributing goods; it is an act of solidarity, the true spirit of ‘damayan’ in action,” Contapay added.

UGB’s mission is built on principles of unity, protection, and humanitarian aid. While the specific founding and structure may vary by chapter, the name itself defines its core mission.

Universal: Signifying a broad, inclusive scope that transcends local boundaries. Its mission and compassion are intended for all, regardless of background, aiming to address needs within communities and potentially on a wider, even global, scale.

Guardians: Denoting a primary role of protection, watchfulness, and service. Members see themselves as guardians of community welfare, social justice, vulnerable populations, or certain ethical values. This translates into activities like disaster response, security assistance, or youth mentorship.

Brotherhood: Emphasizing a strong bond of fellowship, loyalty, and mutual support among its members. It is built on a foundation of camaraderie, shared purpose, and a familial commitment to helping one another and the community at large.

“In essence, the Universal Guardians Brotherhood is an organization dedicated to safeguarding and improving the well-being of people through organized service, disaster relief, community patrols, or charitable programs, united by a powerful sense of fraternal duty and a universal sense of responsibility,” Contapay said.





Eastern Visayas LGUs bag 8 honors at national tourism awards

THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM (DOT) Region 8, on October 13, lauded the provincial governments of Samar and Northern Samar and the city government of Ormoc in Leyte for winning a combined eight awards at the recent 2025 Association of Tourism Officers of the Philippines (ATOP) Pearl Awards.



DOT Regional Director Karina Rosa Tiopes said the recognitions, presented during a ceremony on October 2, demonstrate that the region has many commendable, local government-led tourism programs.

Samar province was a grand winner for its tourism promotion video and for its “Lara” brand of non-food souvenirs. It was also first runner-up for the Sustainable Tourism Award.

Tiopes said the awards should serve as an inspiration for all local government units.

Northern Samar province was also named grand winner for its Lalaguna Mangrove Eco Park Association under the Best Practices in Community-Based Tourism category.

The ATOP Pearl Award is an annual program honoring exceptional practices and innovations by LGUs in the tourism sector. Established in 2005 by ATOP in collaboration with the DOT, it aims to recognize exemplary contributions, publicize creative endeavors, and encourage excellence to inspire other LGUs to adopt successful strategies.

Ormoc City secured three awards, earning first runner-up for best international event hosting, first runner-up for community-based tourism, and second runner-up for its non-food souvenirs.

Three barangays in Catbalogan officially declared drug-cleared



By Ronnie Yanuario

IN A SIGNIFICANT victory in the fight against illegal drugs, three barangays in Catbalogan City were officially declared drug-cleared last week. These barangays are Barangay 6, Barangay 8 and Barangay Bunu-anan, marking a milestone in the city’s ongoing campaign to build safer and healthier communities.

The success was further strengthened by the close cooperation of Local Government Units (LGUs) and law enforcement agencies working hand in hand with the community.

The Provincial Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Office of Samar, led by Provincial Officer Maria Felina Bacha, formally recognized the three barangays as free from illegal drug influence in an awarding ceremony held at Barangay 4.

The event also highlighted the crucial role of community participation, emphasizing that every resident’s vigilance and cooperation are vital components in sustaining a drug-free environment.

This achievement is largely credited to the dedicated leadership of the Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Councils (BADACs). Their proactive programs and initiatives have been crucial in eradicating drug presence at the grassroots level.

City officials emphasized that this recognition not only celebrates past efforts but also sends a clear message of unity and determination. It reinforces Catbalogan’s vision of establishing drug-resilient, self-policing barangays that can effectively prevent the resurgence of illegal drugs.

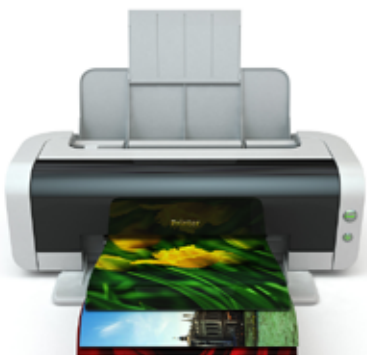
As Catbalogan City continues to progress, this milestone serves as an inspiring example of what can be achieved when leadership, government, and citizens unite for a common cause.

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Tacloban buy-bust nabs repeat offender, P136K in illegal drugs

By Ronnie Yanuario

A KNOWN DRUG offender was arrested in a buy-bust operation conducted by local authorities in Barangay 101, New Kawayan, on October 9, leading to the seizure of an estimated P136,000 worth of suspected shabu.

The joint operation was carried out by the Tacloban City Police Office Station 3 – Station Drug Enforcement Team (SDET), in coordination with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Regional Office.

The sting took place at around 7:51 PM and targeted Miquel Paulo Barrantes, 35, also known by the alias “Migs,” a male helper and resident of the same barangay.

Police said an undercover operative posed as a buyer and was able to purchase one sachet of suspected shabu for P500, marking the culmination of the operation.

Upon arrest, officers conducted a body search and recovered four more sachets of the illegal substance from the suspect.

The total confiscated volume amounted to 20 grams of suspected shabu, with an estimated street value of P136,000.

Police also retrieved the P500 buy-bust money, along with a cigarette case allegedly used to conceal the drugs.

Further investigation revealed that Barrantes is a repeat offender, previously arrested for drug-related offenses in 2021, but later released on temporary liberty.

“This arrest sends a strong message to those who continue to peddle illegal drugs despite prior convictions,” Tacloban Police said. “We remain committed to curbing the drug menace in our communities.”

Barrantes now faces charges for violating Section 5 (Sale of Dangerous Drugs) and Section 11 (Possession of Dangerous Drugs) of Republic Act 9165, also known as the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

He is currently detained at the lock-up facility of Tacloban City Police Station 3, while awaiting formal charges and legal proceedings.

Tacloban empowers farmers, youth with drive for modern agriculture

By Fred Padernos

TACLOBAN CITY government continues to intensify its campaign to promote modern and sustainable farming among the youth while supporting existing farmers’ groups in the northern part of the city, where farmland remains limited.

According to Ruth Ramirez, in charge of the North City Hall Extension Office, the initiative seeks to teach and encourage residents, particularly the younger generation with knowledge in innovative and space-efficient farming methods to maximize the use of available land in the North Tacloban area.

Mayor Alfred Romualdez has been steadfast in advancing local agriculture through the City Agriculture Office, which provides technical assistance, training, and livelihood support to both farmers and youth organizations.

The program not only helps Super Typhoon Yolanda survivors relocated to northern Tacloban in attaining food security and stable livelihoods,



Ruth Ramirez, in-charge, North City Hall Extension Office.

but also aims to complement the city’s food supply, supporting the Tacloban Supermarket—regarded as the city’s main food basket.

Through initiatives such as urban gardening, vertical farming, and community-based cultivation projects, the city aims to strengthen local food production and market resilience, Ramirez said.

Ramirez added that these efforts are being realized through the active participation of groups like Gulayamanan and the GHUB Women’s Farmers’ Group, with continuous guidance from the City Agriculture Office.

Poor creek maintenance raises flooding fears among residents



By Fred Padernos

THE PHOTO shows a grass-covered flood control creek that separates Barangay 51-Picas and Barangay 95-Caibaan in Tacloban City.

On the Picas side, thick, overgrown grass and garbage have accumulated in the middle of the channel, indicating neglect in maintenance.

In contrast, the Caibaan side is visibly cleared and well-maintained.

Residents expressed concern that the uneven upkeep undermines the purpose of the flood control projects, which were designed to reduce flooding in low-lying areas, especially during the rainy season.

Authorities emphasize that it is the responsibility of barangay officials in the area to ensure regular cleaning and clearing of such structures so that water can flow freely and prevent flooding during heavy downpours.

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JTG Tacloban empowers future leaders at Youth camp

By Ronnie Yanuario

IN A CONTINUED EFFORT to empower future leaders and strengthen community ties, Joint Task Group (JTG) Tacloban, under the leadership of Colonel Ronald Illana actively participated in the Youth for Human and Ecological Security (YHES) Leadership Camp 2025 held on October 4, at Greendale Integrated School.

Representing the unit was 1st Lieutenant Jerrycho David, Civil-Military Operations officer, who delivered an inspiring session on teamwork, discipline, and leadership—beginning with the core theme, “Know Yourself.”

His talk emphasized the importance of self-awareness as the foundation of effective leadership, highlighting that genuine service to others begins with understanding one’s strengths, values, and purpose.

“Leadership starts with knowing yourself. When you are self-aware, you can lead with integrity, inspire unity, and serve your community with purpose,” 1Lt. David shared.

The camp brought together 45 youth participants, comprising 19 members from the YHES Barangay 106 Chapter, 12 student leaders from Barangay 105 Greendale Residences Integrated School, and 14 members from the YHES Federation.

Throughout the program, participants engaged in interactive lectures, team-building activities, and values formation sessions designed to cultivate their leadership potential and sense of civic responsibility. The camp aimed to enhance youth discipline, encourage teamwork, and build a stronger awareness of their role in community development.

This initiative reflects JTG Tacloban’s strong commitment to youth empowerment and inclusive peacebuilding, recognizing that investing in young leaders today helps ensure a resilient, united, and progressive society tomorrow.

By fostering leadership rooted in self-knowledge, service, and cooperation, the YHES Leadership Camp 2025 serves as a beacon of hope and transformation for the next generation.

Eastern Visayas LGUs highlight best practices at “PAGSANYOG” governance forum



By Ronnie Yanuario

IN CELEBRATION of Local Government Month and the 34th anniversary of the Local Government Code of 1991, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Region 8 officially launched this year’s festivities with “PAGSANYOG: Voices of Good Governance”, held at the DILG Regional Training Center on Kanhuraw Hill, Tacloban City, on October 7.

The milestone event served as a platform for showcasing best practices and innovative solutions from Local Government Units (LGUs) across Eastern Visayas that earned the 2024 Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) — the highest recognition for LGU performance in the Philippines.

In his welcome address, DILG Region 8 Regional Director Arnel M. Agabe underscored the significance of knowledge-sharing as a driver of governance excellence.

“The core purpose of this event is to make knowledge-sharing the engine of improved local governance,” said RD Agabe. “If Baybay City can do it, you can also do it. Today, you are hearing the real voices of good governance.”

He emphasized the value of replicability, encouraging other LGUs to learn from their peers’ proven strategies. Agabe also stressed the urgency of resilience planning, highlighting the region’s vulnerability to natural disasters.

A total of twelve LGUs were featured during the forum, each presenting successful initiatives in key areas of local governance. These included:

- Financial Administration and Sustainability: Silago, Southern Leyte
- Business Friendliness and Competitiveness: Tacloban City
- Social Protection and Sensitivity: Baybay City, Leyte
- Disaster Preparedness: Catarman, Northern Samar
- Peace and Order: Palapag, Northern Samar
- Environmental Management: Paranas, Samar
- Tourism, Culture, and Heritage: Pintuyan, Southern Leyte
- Health Compliance and Responsiveness: Saint Bernard, Southern Leyte
- Sustainable Education: San Miguel, Leyte
- Youth Development: Arteche, Eastern Samar
- Innovation: Naval, Biliran
- Innovation in Tertiary

Education: Burauen, Leyte

These LGUs provided real-world insights into the implementation of effective programs, highlighting the role of community engagement, discipline, and transparency as key ingredients for success.

The open forum featured dynamic discussions among local chief executives, program implementers, and civil society representatives. Across all presentations, a common theme emerged: active citizen participation and inclusive governance are essential to effective local leadership.

“PAGSANYOG” — a Visayan term meaning progress or development — aptly encapsulates the goal of the event: to advance the frontiers of good governance by amplifying the voices and successes of LGUs and encouraging peer-to-peer learning.

Through initiatives like “PAGSANYOG,” DILG Region 8 reaffirms its commitment to building resilient, inclusive, and empowered communities across Eastern Visayas. The event not only honors the accomplishments of high-performing LGUs but also inspires others to pursue governance excellence through innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

EASTERN VISAYAS AT RISK: Experts warn of major quake, tsunami threat

By Jazmin Bonficao

EASTERN VISAYAS is facing a significant geological threat, situated precariously at the dangerous intersection of the Pacific Ring of Fire, the deep Philippine Trench, and a network of active seismic faults.

A Looming Inevitability

Experts warn that for the coastal communities of the region, the next major offshore earthquake is not a distant possibility but an imminent inevitability.

Eastern Visayas, a region known for its rich coastlines and close-knit communities, remains highly vulnerable to geological hazards.

Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) Science research analyst Myra Dolina in Eastern Visayas confirmed to THE VANGUARD that the region is not only seismically active, but it's also one of the most at-risk areas in the country.

Eastern Visayas lies at the intersection of the Philippine Trench and multiple fault systems. These geological features, according to Dolina, are part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, a belt of volcanoes and fault lines that circles the Pacific Ocean and produces most of the world's largest earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Coastal Communities on the Frontline

Numerous coastal towns and islands across the region face imminent danger. In Eastern Samar, towns such as Guiuan, Borongan, Salcedo, Hernani, Lawaan, Mercedes, Balangiga, Taft, Dolores, and Can-avid lie just a few kilometers from the Philippine Trench.

Likewise, towns in Leyte and Southern Leyte—such as Abuyog, Mac Arthur, San Ricardo, Hinunangan, Silago, St. Bernard and Liloan, are similarly exposed, not only to powerful tremors but also to the destructive threat of tsunamis.

“If a major earthquake strikes offshore, we may have less than 10 minutes before the first wave arrives,” Dolina warns residents in these coastal zones.

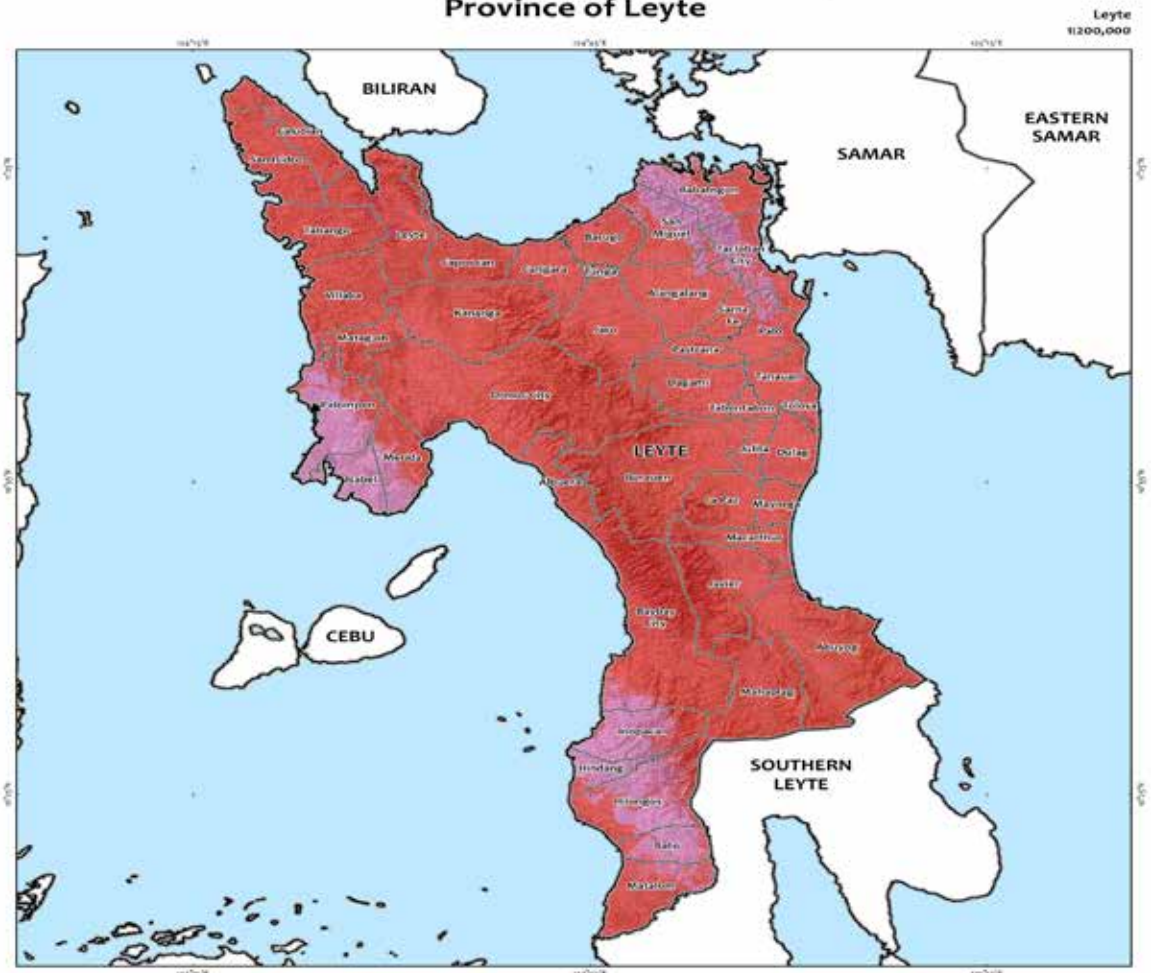
“There is no time to hesitate. Every second counts,” she said.

The Danger Beneath the Ground

The danger isn't limited to the sea. Beneath the ground, the Philippine fault line cuts across many inland towns such as Ormoc, Kananga, Burauen, Jaro and Mahaplag in Leyte, as well as Sogod, St. Bernard and San Ricardo in Southern Leyte.

Phivolcs data indicate that these faults remain active and have the potential to trigger powerful earthquakes.

Ground Shaking Hazard Map
Province of Leyte



Several of these towns have already endured devastating quakes, resulting in cracked roads, damaged bridges and tragic loss of life.

In response to the threat, local government units (LGUs) have been taking action, though challenges remain.

Leyte Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (PDRRMO) officer Engr. Arvin Monge has introduced monitoring systems in high-risk towns, and regular earthquake and tsunami drills have become routine in many communities.

Schools regularly conduct simulation exercises, evacuation routes and signage have been improved, and barangay officials are undergoing training on rapid response and early warning protocols.

“We can't predict when earthquakes will happen, but we can anticipate how people will react. That's why preparation is crucial,” Monge explains.

Island Vulnerabilities and Communication Gaps

Smaller islands like Homonhon and Suluan in Eastern Samar face vulnerabilities.

Limited infrastructure, slower communications, and the physical challenge of evacuation by sea all make response efforts more difficult.

“Our communication depends entirely on network signals,” said Carmi Macapagao, president of Homonhon Environmental Advocates and Rights Defenders (HEARD).

“Without a signal, we have no way to connect.” She added that the radio system set up by an NGO is no longer operational.

Emergency protocols in Homonhon Island are also lacking or non-functional. Community drills are scarce, mostly limited to schools. Evacuation centers are primarily schools, barangay halls and a few concrete homes.

In times of crisis, residents largely depend on advisories posted on the NDRRMC's Facebook page.

A Call for Readiness

For experts and residents, the pressing question is no longer if a major earthquake will strike, but when. With tectonic pressure building beneath the region, the call for readiness grows louder.

According to Macapagao, awareness and preparedness are the only defenses against nature's uncertainties. “We hope our Quick Response Teams become fully operational and that emergency communication protocols are established,” she said.

Brgy officials raise alarm over delayed P70M DPWH project



By Ronnie Yanuario

AFTER MONTHS of delayed progress and unanswered appeals, officials from Barangay 77 Fatima Village have succeeded in pressing the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Tacloban City Engineering District to take long-overdue action on a critically delayed PHP 70 million infrastructure project.

The road and drainage improvement project, funded under the 2025 General Appropriations Act, began in July 2024 and was originally slated for completion by April 2025.

However, more than a year since its start, major portions remain incomplete — particularly the largest PHP 50 million segment, which currently stands at only 60% completion.

The project is divided among three contractors with separate allocations including P5 million portion, 99% complete; P15 million portion, 90% complete; and P50 million portion, 60% complete.

Barangay chairman Alvin Surpia and Infrastructure Committee chairman Rolando Chua led the push for accountability, citing multiple unacknowledged requests for official inspection, project work plans, and financial transparency

from the DPWH.

“Our community cannot afford this kind of delay,” chairman Surpia said. “We are in the middle of the rainy season, and poor drainage puts lives and homes at risk. This isn’t just about unfinished work — it’s about public safety.”

The barangay council took the unusual step of monitoring the project independently after repeated attempts to secure DPWH oversight failed. Their persistence ultimately paid off when DPWH officials visited the site and issued instructions for faster implementation.

Chua welcomed the development but urged continued vigilance. “This is a step in the right direction, but we cannot stop here. All contractors must deliver what they promised. Our residents deserve quality infrastructure delivered on time,” he said.

With DPWH now involved, barangay officials remain hopeful the project will be completed to standard — and soon.

“This is public money and a public trust,” Chairman Surpia added. “Delays without consequences set a dangerous precedent. We’ll keep pushing until the work is done — properly.”

DPWH Samar mobilizes rapid assessment teams after Visayas, Mindanao quakes



By Ronnie Yanuario

FOLLOWING the 6.9 magnitude earthquake that shook parts of the Visayas region, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Samar 2nd District Engineering Office (DEO) has mobilized rapid assessment teams to evaluate the structural integrity of bridges and roads following the recent earthquakes in Visayas and Mindanao.

Leading the response is district engineer Herminio Gulmatico, who issued a memorandum directing all engineering teams to conduct a “rapid structural integrity assessment.”

The order prioritizes school buildings and other critical infrastructure, such as bridges, flood control systems, and government facilities under the jurisdiction of the DPWH 2nd DEO.

“As a precautionary measure, we are prioritizing the inspection of school buildings before classes resume,” said Engr. Gulmatico. “We must ensure the safety of our students, teachers, and school personnel before allowing re-entry.”

The DPWH 2nd DEO is working closely with the Philippine Institute of Civil Engineers (PICE) Samar Chapter to carry out these inspections efficiently and

accurately.

The joint assessment teams are evaluating both vertical (buildings and schools) and horizontal structures (bridges and roads), especially those that may have been compromised by the earthquake.

Gulmatico reiterated the agency’s commitment to public safety, emphasizing that no school or facility will be cleared for use until it passes structural safety checks.

He added that this is part of the department’s proactive disaster response efforts aimed at minimizing risks and preventing further harm in the event of aftershocks.

“The safety of the public—especially our children and frontline workers—is our top priority,” he said.

The DPWH 2nd DEO and PICE Samar Chapter have assured the public that updates will be provided as soon as assessment reports are finalized.

Restoration and repair efforts will follow, if necessary, to ensure all affected infrastructure is brought back to safe and usable condition.

This rapid response highlights the DPWH’s ongoing commitment to disaster resilience and public safety, particularly in the face of natural disasters affecting vulnerable communities.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.
— Proverbs 3:5-6 KJV