



INFOCUS

IN-DEPTH NEWS, FACTUAL AND RIGHT ON TARGET

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF ISABELA

EXPANDING ISABELA'S HORIZON

President Marcos Visits Rice Processing Complex in Isabela

Isabela Hosts Familiarization Tour of Diplomats from 24 Nations







INFOCUS

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IN-DEPTH NEWS, FACTUAL AND RIGHT ON TARGET

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Expanding Isabela's Horizons

The year 2025 marks another milestone for the province of Isabela as it strengthens its presence in both national and international arenas. The visit of His Excellency President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. and key department secretaries to Isabela, the familiarization tour of 24 foreign diplomats, the province's increasing engagement in trade and tourism, and continuing interventions to achieve excellence in governance reflect Isabela's steady progress. This special issue of INFOCUS highlights these achievements.

Good governance remains a priority, as shown by Isabela's 8th Seal of Good Local Governance, ISO certification, and the "Beyond Compliant" Seal for Disaster Resilience in 2024. These distinctions reflect the provincial government's unending commitment to efficient public service and disaster preparedness.

Agriculture continues to drive the province's economy, with new emerging opportunities. President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s visit to the Rice Processing Complex in Echague highlights national recognition of Isabela's role in modernizing rice production. The launch of the Isabela Cacao Festival is a step toward strengthening the local cacao industry.

Programs supporting small businesses and cooperatives, such as Isabela Recovery Initiatives to Support Enterprises (I-RISE), are helping more entrepreneurs grow, while the Bojie-Rodito Opportunities for Education (BRO-Ed) Program continues to provide financial aid to thousands of students, ensuring access to education for all.

The province is also broadening its economic horizons. Through participation in Foodex Japan 2025, local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are gaining access to global markets. Isabela's involvement in the Japan-Philippines Nexus Program on Water Security in Kyoto further emphasizes its proactive approach to addressing agricultural and environmental challenges.

More than just a celebration, the Bambanti Festival 2025 became an avenue for forging diplomatic and economic ties, giving foreign dignitaries a firsthand look at Isabela's industries, local products, and investment opportunities.

The crowning of Queen Isabela 2025, Jarina K. Sandhu, highlights the province's growing prominence on the national stage as she prepares to represent Isabela in the Miss Universe Philippines 2025 pageant.

Under the leadership of Governor Rodolfo "Rodito" T. Albano III and Vice Governor Faustino "Bojie" G. Dy III, Isabela continues to push forward with initiatives that bring real benefits to its people. With a clear direction, the province is creating more opportunities and ensuring that every Isabeleño is part of its progress.

ATTY. ELIZABETH P. CUREG-BINAG
Editor-in-Chief

President Marcos Visits Rice Processing Complex in Isabela

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. inspected the Rice Processing System II (RPS II) in Brgy. Ipil, Echague, Isabela on March 6, 2025.

Accompanying him on this visit were Governor Rodito T. Albano, Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., and other agency heads and local officials.

The system aims to lower production costs by P2-3 per kilogram, reduce post-harvest losses by 3-5%, and increase value addition by 30%.

During the visit, small farmers brought their freshly harvested palay to the facility, which the Provincial Government of Isabela used as a buying station. Trucks, which were distributed to barangays, were used to haul the farmers' palay to the complex.

STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITY

Governor Albano led the inauguration of the state-of-the-art rice processing system (RPS) worth ₱67 million in Ipil, Echague on November 28, 2024.

He said the facility significantly boosts the province's rice milling capabilities, enhancing efficiency and productivity for local farmers.

Albano explained that the Provincial Government of Isabela is the proud recipient of the RPS II, provided through the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) Mechanization Program by the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech).



The rice processing system features a multi-stage rice mill capable of processing 2-3 tons of palay per hour, which includes a pre-cleaner, de-stoner, huller, mist polisher, length grader, color sorter, blending tank, and an automatic packing machine for milled rice.

The system also incorporates a rice hull bin, a dust collection system, and an air-conditioned control room to ensure smooth and efficient operations. It also includes five recirculating dryers, each with a 12-ton per batch drying capacity.

Albano boasted that the dryers, made of stainless steel and featuring dual heating

systems, provide durability and consistent drying performance.

The system also includes a generator set, tools, and other essential accessories to support continuous operations.

Primarily focused on rice cultivation, the province is home to 70,556 farmers under the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA), who will directly benefit from the project. These farmers cultivate a total of 66,303 hectares of rice fields within the province.

MECHANIZING ISABELA'S FARMS



“Kung ano pa ang pangangailangan, kung ano pa ang kulang, ay gagawan ng paraan.”

MR. JOEL V. DATOR

PhilMech Director for Operations and Program Management Office

PHilMech turns over P123-M farm machinery, equipment to Isabela farmers' co-ops, associations

The Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) turned over the P123 million worth of agricultural machinery and equipment to 68 farmers' cooperatives and associations (FCAs) at the Isabela Rice Processing Complex in Ipil, Echague, November 28, 2024.

PhilMech distributed a total of 131 units of agricultural equipment, which includes five four-wheel tractors (T3), 45 hand tractors, 18 PTO-driven disc plows, four levee makers, four rice precision seeders, 12 walk-behind transplanters, eight riding-type transplanters, three rice threshers, and two rice reapers.

Included in the distribution are eight rice combine harvesters (T2), seven 6-ton recirculating dryers, three 12-ton recirculating dryers, a single-pass rice mill, and a 1.5 tph MSRM.



PhilMech Director for Operations and Program Management Office, Mr. Joel V. Dator, assured Isabela that they will continue to provide support and resources to the province.

“Kung ano pa ang pangangailangan, kung ano pa ang kulang, ay gagawan ng paraan,” he said.

He encouraged local government units (LGUs) and farmers' cooperatives and associations to coordinate with PHilMech to include their requests in the 2025 fund.

'HANDOG NG PANGULO' EVENT AT ISABELA PROVINCIAL CAPITOL A MAJOR SUCCESS

The Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI) celebrated President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.'s 67th birthday by delivering essential services to the province's most vulnerable sectors through the successful conduct of the "Handog ng Pangulo: Serbisyong Sapat Para sa Lahat" Caravan, September 13, 2024.



Vice Governor Faustino "Bojie" Dy III led the celebration, extending heartfelt birthday greetings to the President and praising his efforts to improve the lives of Filipinos.

"Yung may birthday po ang nagreregalo sa atin," Dy remarked, referring to the services and aid

distributed as the President's gift to the people.

Dy also drew parallels between the caravan and Isabela's BRO Program, both of which aim to improve access to essential government services.

"Ang Handog ng Pangulo ay katulad ng BRO Program ng Isabela na may layuning ilapit ang mga makabuluhang programa at tapat na serbisyo sa ating mga kababayan," he said.



Secretary Ernesto V. Perez, Director General of the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA), was also present at the event.

He reaffirmed President Marcos' dedication to public service, stating, **“Kasabay ng pagbuhos ng malakas na ulan kanina, mararamdaman natin ang pagbuhos ng tulong sa pamamagitan ng tapat na serbisyo para sa ating mga kababayan dito sa Isabela,”** likening the the outpouring of government support to the heavy rain.

Perez further emphasized the administration's focus on streamlining government services to improve efficiency.

“Isa lang ang layunin ng ating Pangulo – ipadama ang serbisyong tapat, serbisyong mabilis, at walang sagabal para sa lahat tungo sa bagong Pilipinas,” he said.



Various government agencies collaborated on the event, including the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Agriculture - Cagayan Valley Research Center (DA-CVRC), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), NIA-Magat River Integrated Irrigation System (MARIIS), and the Department of Health (DOH).

The Kadiwa ng Pangulo stores, which offered affordable agricultural products to the public, were also featured.

PGI also provided services such as BRO-Ed and I-RISE assistance distributions, medical and dental check-ups through mobile clinics, and outpatient care.



PBBM distributes land titles, erases debts of 21K farmers in Isabela

A TOTAL OF 346 FARMERS WILL NOW HAVE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR LAND, WHILE THE LAND DEBTS OF 21,496 OTHERS IN ISABELA WILL BE ERASED AFTER PRESIDENT FERDINAND "BONGBONG" R. MARCOS JR. DISTRIBUTED CERTIFICATES OF LAND OWNERSHIP AWARDS (CLOAS) AND CERTIFICATES OF CONDONATION WITH RELEASE OF MORTGAGE (COCROM) ON NOVEMBER 22, 2024.



The 346 farmers received 456 CLOAs and electronic titles under the Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling (SPLIT) Project, covering 500 hectares of land.

Meanwhile, 21,496 farmers received 25,773 Certificates of Condonation and Release of Mortgage (CoCRoMs), covering over 21,796 hectares of land, equivalent to more than 1.152 billion pesos in forgiven debts.

According to the President, the government will continue to support farmers and boost the country's agricultural sector.

"Ang CoCRoM at CLOA na inyong matatanggap ay biyayang may kalakip na responsibilidad – responsibilidad na pangalagaan at pagyamanin ang lupang ito para sa inyong pamilya at pamayanan. Hindi rito nagtatapos ang ating mga hakbang upang mapalago ang agrikultura at mapaginhwa ang buhay ng mga magsasaka sa bawat sulok ng Pilipinas," he said.

He further emphasized that the cancellation of farmers' debts, including

interests, penalties, and surcharges on their agricultural lands, aims to safeguard their welfare, in line with Republic Act 11953, or the New Agrarian Emancipation Act.

Isabela Governor Rodito T. Albano expressed his gratitude to President Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos Jr. for the assistance extended to Isabela.

"Maraming salamat po, Mr. President. Sa ngalan po ng Isabela, sa ngalan po ng mga liderato rito, kami po ay nagpapasalamat sa iyo at dumating kayo pagkatapos ng bagyo," he said.

Governor Rodito also highlighted the programs of the Provincial Government of Isabela, such as the distribution of rice to barangay frontline workers, farmers, fisherfolk, persons with disabilities (PWDs), members of TODA, and others.

"Alam mo, Mr. President, dito sa Isabela, ang bigas po namin hindi pinabababa ng P20. Binigay na po namin ng libre," he said.

He explained that the province utilizes its funds to purchase palay from local farmers at a higher price.

"Ang CoCRoM at CLOA na inyong matatanggap ay biyayang may kalakip na responsibilidad – responsibilidad na pangalagaan at pagyamanin ang lupang ito para sa inyong pamilya at pamayanan. Hindi rito nagtatapos ang ating mga hakbang upang mapalago ang agrikultura at mapaginhwa ang buhay ng mga magsasaka sa bawat sulok ng Pilipinas."

HIS EXCELLENCY FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
President of the Republic of the Philippines





PBBM PROVIDES FINANCIAL AID TO REGION 02'S VICTIMS OF 6 CYCLONES

PRESIDENT FERDINAND "BONGBONG" R. MARCOS JR. DISTRIBUTED FINANCIAL AID TO FARMERS, FISHERFOLK, AND FAMILIES IN THE CAGAYAN VALLEY WHO WERE SEVERELY AFFECTED BY SIX TROPICAL CYCLONES.

The President on November 22, 2024 awarded P50 million each to the Provincial Government of Isabela and the Provincial Government of Quirino at the City of Ilagan Community Center.

Financial assistance was also extended to 21 local government units in the province of Cagayan that suffered significant devastation from the cyclones.

The President acknowledged the hardships faced by the people and the challenges of rebuilding after the disasters.

“Matapos dumaan ang anim na bagyo simula noong katapusan ng Oktubre, batid po ng pamahalaan ang matinding dusa na naranasan ninyo at ang hirap ng pagbangon mula sa mga nasira – hindi lamang ang mga imprastruktura kundi pati na rin ang hanapbuhay po ng ating mga magsasaka at mangingisda,” he said.

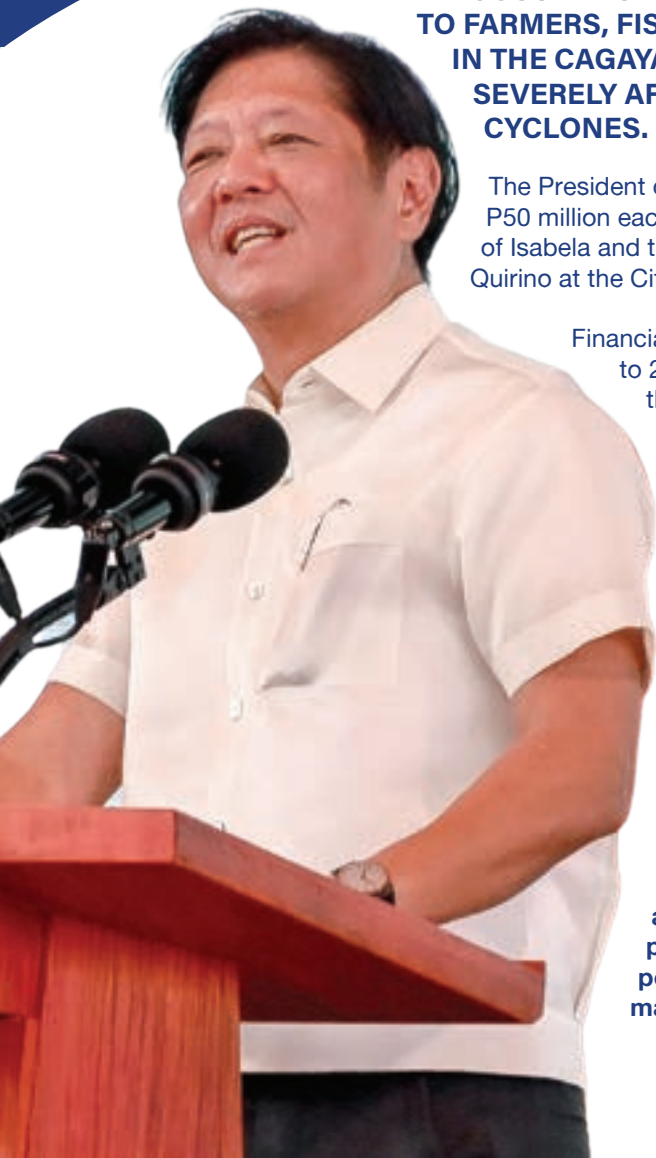
He assured the public that the government remains ready to provide assistance to those affected by calamities brought about by climate change.

“Ang inyong pamahalaan ay laging handang tumulong at samahan kayong makabangon. Bago pa man dumating ang bagyo at sa mga araw at linggo pagkaalis nito, nakaalalay na ang inyong mga lokal na pamahalaan at iba’t ibang ahensiya ng gobyerno upang mailigtas kayo sa kapahamakan at agarang manumbalik ang inyong pamumuhay,” he said.

The President also expressed his gratitude to first responders, local governments, and the Provincial Government of Isabela for their efforts in responding to the tropical cyclones.

“Saludo ako sa inyong lakas, tibay, at tapang. Kaya muli, tanggapin ninyo ang aking taos-pusong pasasalamat,” the President said.

Recognizing the impact of successive cyclones, he announced that the government is currently studying a master plan for major river basins, such as the Cagayan River Basin, along with the rehabilitation of the Magat Dam, which plays a crucial role in Philippine agriculture.





SOARING SUPPORT

I-RISE Program Achieves Record-High Beneficiaries in 2024

The Isabela Recovery Initiatives to Support Enterprises (I-RISE) Program recorded its highest number of beneficiaries in 2024, with 23,646 micro and small entrepreneurs supported, marking a 58% increase from 2023.

The program aims to strengthen micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by providing financial and livelihood assistance to reduce poverty and empower marginalized communities.

Through the program, cooperatives and associations received a total of P1.62

leveraging the Sagip Saka Act, which allows small cooperatives and associations to participate in government procurement.

As a result, six cooperatives and three associations supplied a total of P7.5 million worth of products for government programs. This initiative included the Ditarum Lady

To enhance entrepreneurial skills, PGI partnered with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to conduct training on cold brew coffee making, milky bun processing, product packaging, and cacao farming.

Recognizing the role of the youth in economic development, the program also provided P300,000 in financial support to students from Isabela State University for their research on Voltswagon, a coin-operated electric vehicle designed to promote sustainable and accessible transportation.

With continued government support, I-RISE aims to strengthen MSMEs, generate more livelihood opportunities, and drive inclusive economic growth in Isabela.



million in livelihood financial assistance and equipment.

Among the beneficiaries were two pottery-making associations in Santa Maria, Isabela, which were given resources to preserve their craft and develop sustainable livelihoods.

The program further integrated MSMEs into the provincial economy by

Farmers Association, which supplied rice for the provincial Rice Assistance Program, reducing transportation costs and directly benefiting local farmers.

Additionally, the San Pablo Isabela Farmers Dairy Cooperative provided pasteurized milk for 2,009 preschoolers and 2,461 pregnant and lactating mothers, contributing to efforts to combat malnutrition.





BRO for Education: The Lasting Legacy of Bojie-Rodito Administration

At least one graduate per small farm family—this is the core mission of one of the country’s largest scholarship programs, breaking the cycle of poverty in Isabela through education.

The Bojie-Rodito Opportunities for Education (BRO-Ed) program, the brainchild of Governor Rodito T. Albano and Vice Governor Faustino “Bojie” G. Dy III, continues to provide financial assistance to students, ensuring access to education for aspiring scholars.

For the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024, a total of 30,364 students have benefited from the program.

Of these scholars, 22,143 are recipients of the Non-Academic Scholarship, which supports children of small farmers and indigent families.

The program also includes 7,247 students under the Academic Scholarship and 886 under the Expanded Scholarship, which covers master’s degree, doctoral, medicine, law, and theology students.

For the academic year 2023-2024, 4,191 scholars have successfully graduated, marking another milestone for the initiative.

The provincial government has allocated a total budget of P96,339,000 to support the program and ensure its continuous implementation.

Governor Rodito Albano reaffirmed the province’s commitment to education, stating, **“Layunin ng probinsiya na walang kabataang Isabeleño ang huminto sa pag-aaral dahil sa kakulangan ng pera. Ayaw kong makakakita at makakarinig na may hindi nakakapag-aral nang dahil sa kakulangan ng pera. Andito kaming lahat, lapitan ninyo kami, dumaing kayo at sigurado malambot ang puso ng bawat isang naririto, at naka-antabay ang lahat ng kawani ng probinsya nandiyan silang lahat para tumulong sa inyo.”**

The program has supported students in their academic journey, many of whom have gone on to become professionals.

One of them is Jonas A. Hapinat, a BRO for Education scholar who graduated Magna Cum Laude from Isabela State University Cabagan in 2024.

He now works at the Provincial Government of Isabela and shared his journey, saying, **“Malaki ang tulong ng BRO sa aking pag-aaral, lalo na sa aking pamasaha papasok sa eskwela. Ngayon, isa na akong lingkod-bayan sa probinsiya at patuloy kong ginagamit ang aking natutuhan upang makatulong sa iba.”**

Meanwhile, Laurence U. Aldea, a graduating scholar for the School Year 2024-2025, shared, **“Sa programang ito, natutuhan kong i-prioritize ang aking pag-aaral. Alam kong may mga tao at institusyon na handang tumulong sa akin, at ipinapangako kong magiging matagumpay ako balang araw.”**

The BRO for Education program, a lasting legacy of the Bojie-Rodito Administration, continues to assist students across Isabela, providing financial support to ensure that education remains accessible to all.

Gov. Rodito Rows Resources to Isabela Fishers

“Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream...”—this familiar nursery rhyme reminds us that steady effort, teamwork, and perseverance lead to progress. Inspired by this spirit, the Provincial Government of Isabela is steering the province’s fishing industry toward a brighter future, helping local fisherfolk sail toward sustainable growth and prosperity.

True to his commitment to investing in people, Governor Rodito T. Albano led the distribution of wooden bangkas (fishing boats) and other essential fishing gear to small-scale fishermen from Cabagan, Delfin Albano, City of Ilagan, Naguilian, Quirino, Reina Mercedes, Sta. Maria, Sto. Tomas, San Pablo, and Tumauini.

A total of 125 groups, comprising 676 marginalized fishermen, received bangkas as part of the province’s efforts to support the livelihoods of Isabeleños dependent on fishing and to enhance fish production.

Funded under the Isabela Recovery Initiatives to Support Enterprises Program, the P2,785,600.00 worth of

boats and fishing gear aims to integrate often-overlooked fishermen into community development programs. This initiative ensures they can actively participate in both nation-building and economic empowerment.

ISABELA’S FISHING INDUSTRY

The fishing industry in Isabela remains a thriving sector, covering a total of 1,289.89 hectares of production area and generating 9,615.34 tons of output in 2023. This includes production from aquaculture, inland fishing, and marine resources.

Agriculture and fisheries remain the primary sources of livelihood in Isabela, with many poor households depending on these sectors.

Under Governor Albano’s leadership, the provincial government emphasizes that community development is a dynamic process that must include all sectors—especially marginalized fishermen.

The sustainability of the fishing industry is supported by the Magat Dam, a major site for fish cage operations, and the Cagayan River, the longest river system in the country, which provides abundant marine resources.

With these vast resources, Isabela’s fishing industry has immense potential to generate jobs and improve the quality of life for local fishermen.

In 2023 alone, the province contributed 49.11% of the P119.89 million total value of agriculture in the Cagayan Valley Region, which includes fisheries.

By continuing to invest in the fishing sector, Isabela is uplifting the lives of its hardworking fisherfolk, ensuring that they are not merely staying afloat but rowing toward a more inclusive and prosperous future.



Every Drop Counts

PGI STRENGTHENS WATER QUALITY MONITORING WITH CUTTING-EDGE TECH

Isabela's water monitoring just got a major upgrade!

The Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI), through its Environment and Natural Resources Office (ENRO), has taken a leap forward in water resource management by acquiring a cutting-edge Multi-Parameter Water Quality Checker—a powerful tool designed to measure and analyze water quality in real time.

This newly purchased equipment measures key physical water quality parameters, including pH levels, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, conductivity, and temperature.

By providing vital data, it enables a more accurate understanding of the condition of water bodies across the province, supporting informed decision-making for conservation and resource management.

HANDS-ON DEMONSTRATION FOR EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION

To ensure the proper use of this technology, ENRO conducted a demonstration session on February 11, 2025 at the Provincial Ecology Center, Capitol Compound. Led by Engr. Ian Espejo, the session equipped ENRO personnel with the necessary skills to operate the device efficiently.

"The Multi-Parameter Water Quality Checker is an important tool for assessing our water bodies. With this technology, we can better monitor water quality, protect our natural resources, and safeguard public and ecological health," Engr. Espejo said.

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION EFFORTS

The new equipment is expected to benefit various stakeholders and constituents by providing reliable water quality assessments essential for environmental protection and compliance monitoring.

By integrating modern technology into its environmental initiatives, PGI-ENRO continues to strengthen its role as a leader in

"The Multi-Parameter Water Quality Checker is an important tool for assessing our water bodies. With this technology, we can better monitor water quality, protect our natural resources, and safeguard public and ecological health."

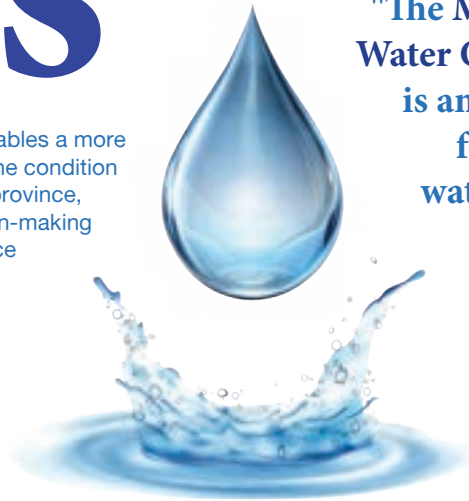
- Engr. Ian Espejo

water resource management and conservation at the LGU level.

While the Multi-Parameter Water Quality Checker is a valuable tool for physical water quality analysis, a more in-depth assessment—including biological and chemical analyses—requires the establishment of a Water Quality Laboratory Facility.

The provincial government recognizes this need and remains committed to exploring avenues for its realization, ensuring a comprehensive and accurate evaluation of the province's water resources.

Through continuous capacity-building and investments in advanced tools, the provincial government is paving the way for a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future for the province and its people.



Gov. Rodito Albano Pledges to Tackle Water Security Challenges at Japan-PH Forum

Isabela Governor Rodito T. Albano reaffirmed his commitment to addressing water security challenges in the Cagayan Valley region during the Japan-Philippines Nexus Program on Water Security at Kyoto University on March 13, 2025.



Represented by Her Excellency Mylene J. Garcia-Albano, Philippine Ambassador to Japan, the governor emphasized that tackling water supply issues and water-related disasters is vital for the future and the well-being of the people.

“We believe that addressing these challenges is a fight for our future, a fight for the safety, and well-being of our constituents,” Ambassador Garcia-Albano said, quoting the governor.

Governor Albano highlighted the Cagayan River Basin (CRB) as both a vital water source and a recurring flood risk.

“The challenge before us is how to maximize the use of our water resources while simultaneously addressing, or at least mitigating, the severe impacts of floods,” the governor stated in his speech.

The governor cited several key initiatives implemented over the years, including the Integrated Cagayan River Basin Management and Development Master Plan (2012), which introduced inter-regional strategies for sustainable water management.

He also referenced the Flood Risk Management Project (2016), funded by JICA with a budget of PHP 1.92 billion,

as a major step toward reducing flood risks.

Albano further acknowledged the 2023 approval of the Climate-Responsive Integrated Management and Development Master Plan, which incorporates climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction into the region’s water security framework.

He also highlighted the 2024 efforts of the Regional Development Council (RDC) Region 02, which he chairs. These include pushing for the construction of Sabo Dams along the tributaries of the Cagayan River, riverbank protection and flood control projects, river channel realignment and widening, and small water impounding projects.

The governor underscored ongoing collaborations with Isabela State University (ISU) and Kyoto University, particularly in developing long-term water resource security action plans.

Albano also expressed strong support for the national government’s push to establish a Department of Water Resources, aiming to streamline fragmented water-related agencies and enhance the country’s water governance.



“The Japan-Philippines Nexus Program on Water Security exemplifies the Japanese government’s commitment to deepen collaboration between our two nations.

We believe that addressing [issues of water supply and water-related disasters] is a fight for our future—a fight for the safety and well-being of our constituents.”

Hon. Rodito T. Albano
ISABELA GOVERNOR

during the Japan-Philippine Nexus Program on Water Security Inception Workshop at Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan, represented by Her Excellency Mylene J. Garcia-Albano, the Philippine Ambassador to Japan, on March 13, 2025.

ISU, PGI Sign MOU for Disaster Prevention Center

The Isabela State University (ISU) and the Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish a Disaster Prevention Center, strengthening their partnership in enhancing disaster preparedness and water security in the province.

The signing took place during the Japan-Philippines NEXUS Program on Water Security at Kyoto University on March 13, 2025, with ISU President Dr. Ricmar P. Aquino and Provincial Planning and Development Coordinator Atty. Eduardo R. Cabantac representing their respective institutions.

The Disaster Prevention Center aims to develop science-based solutions and technologies to mitigate the impacts of water-related disasters, such as floods and droughts, which frequently affect the Cagayan Valley region.



PGI, PhilRice Hold Policy Session to Boost Farmers' Climate Resilience

The Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI) and the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) held a policy brokering session at the Isabela Emergency Operations Center on February 5, 2025 to help farmers adapt to the changing climate.

The session, attended by PGI department heads and employees, as well as representatives from PhilRice, NIA-MARIIS, and DOST-PAGASA, reviewed climate risk maps developed in previous workshops under the PhilRice Climate-Smart Maps (CS Map) Project.

Discussions focused on transforming these findings into concrete policies to support farmers in the long term.

The maps, presented by PhilRice, are vital tools that will help identify areas in the province that are prone to floods, droughts, and other climate threats.



REVOLUTIONIZING SWINE BREEDING

Region's First 'Swine Artificial Insemination sa Barangay' Building Inaugurated

The region's first Swine Artificial Insemination sa Barangay (SWAIB) building worth P5.7 million was inaugurated on November 23, 2024 at the Cabagan Breeding Station.

The project, under the Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion (INSPIRE), was funded by the Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI) and the Department of Agriculture-National Livestock Program (NLP) through the Agricultural Training Institute-International Training Center on Pig Husbandry.

The project includes a fully equipped and modern laboratory, biosecure facilities, and a climate control system, where eight boars will be housed.

The project is designed to produce high-quality, genetically superior processed semen, revolutionizing swine breeding practices in the province. It will also eliminate the traditional "boar-for-hire" system in barangays, according to the Provincial Veterinary Office.

Through artificial insemination, swine raisers can improve their herds by introducing superior genetics to gilts and sows, resulting in hogs with significantly higher weight and better meat production.

REVIVING ISABELA'S SWINE INDUSTRY

Provincial Veterinarian Dr. Belina N. Barboza said the project marks the beginning of the recovery of the swine

industry in the province, with the introduction of superior, high-quality pig breeds.

"My prayer is for the project to be fully maximized. Lahat tayo magsama-sama para makatulong tayo sa ating mga pig raisers. Now I can say, sa wakas, natapos na ang Phase 1 ng kauna-unahang SWAIB project sa Isabela. Sa wakas, magkaroon na tayo ng superior at high-quality breed o lahi ng baboy. Ito na ang pagbangon ng swine industry sa Isabela," she said.

"Sa wakas, magkaroon na tayo ng superior at high-quality breed o lahi ng baboy. Ito na ang pagbangon ng swine industry sa Isabela."

DR. BELINA N. BARBOZA
PROVINCIAL VETERINARIAN



The SWAIB project, according to DA-R02 Director Rose Mary G. Aquino, helps the government and Isabeleño swine raisers recover from the significant decline in the swine population caused by the African Swine Fever (ASF) outbreak and may reduce costs for the repopulation program.



FIRST IN THE REGION. The P5.7-million Swine Artificial Insemination sa Barangay (SWAIB) facility at the Cabagan Breeding Station in Cansan, Cabagan, Isabela features a modern laboratory, bio-secure facilities, and a climate control system, boosting swine breeding efficiency in the region.

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Director Aquino said the youth are increasingly drawn to agriculture, and she noted that starting in 2025, the focus will be on capacity building and skills training, particularly for unemployed youth.

Meanwhile, ATI-RTC R02 OIC Center Director Claris M. Alaska said that her office, along with other agencies, will discuss strategies for involving the youth in training programs, focusing on equipping them with the necessary skills to provide insemination services.

The building was blessed by Rev. Fr. Gregorio Marivic C. Uanan. City and municipal agriculturists, swine raisers, and agricultural extension workers were present to witness the occasion.



Wow, Cacao!

Region's First-Ever Cacao Festival Launched in Isabela

The Isabela Cacao Festival, the first of its kind in the region, was successfully launched on December 4-5, 2024 at the Isabela Provincial Capitol in the City of Ilagan.

The event was spearheaded by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Region 2 - Isabela, in collaboration with the

Provincial Government of Isabela, the Department of Agriculture - Cagayan Valley Research Center, the Isabela Cacao Industry Development Council, and Isabela State University.

The festival aimed to showcase Isabela's thriving cacao industry through various activities, such as the recognition of farmers producing the finest cacao beans, product showcases highlighting innovative cacao-based creations, and a chocolate-making workshop.

Discussions on market opportunities were held to address the growing demand for high-quality cacao both locally and internationally.

Sangguniang Panlalawigan
Member Emmanuel

Joselito B. Añes expressed hope for the global recognition of Isabela's cacao industry.

“Ating bigyang pugay ang mga magsasakang nagsisilbing pundasyon ng industriya nito. Sa inyong patuloy na dedikasyon, naniniwala akong balang araw makikilala rin ang Isabela bilang isang sustainable at efficient producer ng cacao hindi lamang sa ating bansa, kundi sa buong mundo,” Añes said.

The Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPA) presented the provincial government's initiatives supporting the cacao industry, including seedling distribution under the Isabela Recovery Initiatives to Support Enterprises (I-RISE) program and the creation of the Isabela Cacao Industry Development Council.

With the theme “Cultivating Abundant Cacao Opportunities,” the festival underscores Isabela's commitment to advancing its cacao industry and becoming one of the leaders in sustainable cacao production in the Philippines.



FROM ISABELA TO JAPAN PGI Leads MSMEs, Cooperatives to Foodex Japan 2025 for Global Product Promotion



The Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI) on March 11-14 led a delegation to Foodex Japan 2025, Asia's largest food and beverage trade show, to support local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and cooperatives from the province in promoting their products on the international stage.

The PGI delegation included Head Executive Assistant Atty. Elizabeth C. Binag, Provincial Economic Development and Investment Promotions Officer Atty. Paul Angelo Uy, Isabela Tourism Officer Joanne Dy Maranan, Provincial Treasurer Ma. Theresa Araneta Flores, Public Employment Service Office Manager Cecilia Claire N. Reyes, and Assistant Provincial General Services Officer Dr. Derrick M. Vizcarra.

Meanwhile, the delegation from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Region 2 was led by Regional Director Ma. Sofia G. Narag and Provincial



Director Atty. Cyrus I. Restauro, along with other senior officials of DTI Isabela.

International buyers were in for a treat as the Isabela delegation showcased an exceptional lineup of locally produced, world-class food products, including Big Brothers Cornick by 3 Shers Food Products, Calamansi Juice and Okra Chips by JBM Food Products, Gin-C by Jones Producers Cooperative, Chili Sauce and Adlai Rice by EJ Contreras Food House, and Gourmet Tuyo by KMK Food Products.

Philippine Ambassador to Japan, Her Excellency Mylene J. Garcia-Albano, expressed excitement about Foodex Japan 2025, emphasizing its role in creating global opportunities for Isabela's food industry.

"We are thrilled to be here at Foodex Japan 2025, strengthening market linkages and exploring new opportunities for our MSMEs. This event opens doors for Isabela's food industry to expand globally," she said.

She stated that the Philippine Embassy in Japan could be tapped to assist exhibitors at the trade show. The ambassador noted that while the Philippines had participated in the expo in previous years, its presence was larger this time.

The trade show included high-impact business matchmaking sessions, exclusive product samplings, and strategic networking opportunities.



A Smile in Every Stitch

Eleven-year-old Roy Maramag should be in Grade 6 by now, but he left school in Grade 2. Born with a cleft lip and palate, Roy was no stranger to ridicule. In Daragutan West, San Mariano, his classmates often mocked the way he spoke and laughed at his appearance. The bullying grew worse each day until he could no longer bear it. Unable to face the relentless cruelty, he left school and retreated into silence at home.

His mother, heartbroken and unable to afford surgery, would gently reassure him, "**Balang araw, maaayos din ito, anak.**" She clung to hope, praying for the day her son could walk outside without fear of ridicule.



the hope of saving P70,000-P80,000 per confinement—or even over P100,000, depending on the complexity of their case.

Roy sat quietly in the waiting area, clutching his mother’s hand. Around him, other children wiped away tears, nervous about the surgery ahead. One little girl whispered, “Masakit ba, Mama?” her voice barely audible. Parents comforted their children, whispering words of encouragement despite their own worries.

Roy’s mother knelt beside him, brushing his hair gently.



“Huwag kang matakot, anak.”

According to Dr. Arlene M. Lazaro, preparations for the mission began as early as 2024 when Smile Asia and GFNDMH coordinated with local health offices to identify children in need of surgery.

The Smile Asia surgical team worked tirelessly to ensure every procedure was a success. One by one, children were wheeled into the operating room. By the end of the mission, 43 patients had undergone surgery, each leaving the hospital with a new reason to smile.

To support their recovery, Smile Asia scheduled follow-up check-up. On March 25, 2025, Roy and the other children returned for post-surgery assessments led by Dr. Victoria Samantha Soller Diokno, a Smile Asia volunteer from Isabela.

Dr. Benny Herbosa, Smile Asia’s field medical director and plastic surgery team leader, expressed his gratitude to Governor Albano and Vice Governor Dy for their support.

“Hindi madali mag-mount ng ganitong surgery. Hindi ito normal na mission lang. Ito ay surgery na maraming kaakibat na supplies at logistics. Maraming salamat kay Gov. Rodito at Vice Gov. Bojie sa pagsuporta sa Smile Asia,” he said.

Reflecting on the mission’s impact, he shared, **“We are happy because this is not just a one-time service; this is a continuous commitment to the people.”**

For Roy, life will never be the same. No longer will he hide his smile—he will wear it with pride, knowing that kindness and compassion stitched it into place. And soon, he will finally return to school, not as the boy who was bullied, but as a child ready to embrace the world with confidence, carrying a smile in every stitch of his newfound courage.

That hope turned into reality when Roy’s family learned about Smile Asia’s free operation for children with cleft conditions. In partnership with the Provincial Government of Isabela, Smile Asia brought a team of world-class medical professionals to the Governor Faustino N. Dy Sr. Memorial Hospital in City of Ilagan on March 16-21, 2025 to provide life-changing surgeries at no cost.

This initiative, backed by Governor Rodito T. Albano and Vice Governor Faustino “Bojie” G. Dy, ensured that children like Roy could regain their confidence and lead normal lives.

The hospital was filled with families from across Isabela and neighboring provinces, all seeking the same life-changing opportunity for their children. Some traveled for hours, cradling their little ones in their arms, driven by



NO MORE 4TH OR 5TH CLASS

Isabela LGUs Advance to Higher Income Classifications

SEVERAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS (LGUS) IN ISABELA ADVANCED TO HIGHER INCOME CLASSIFICATIONS ON JANUARY 1, 2025, HIGHLIGHTING THE PROVINCE'S PROGRESS IN FISCAL MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT.

This advancement was made official through the Department of Finance (DOF) Department Order No. 074-2024, which established the income classification of provinces, cities, and municipalities under Republic Act No. 11964.

The classification is determined based on their income ranges and the average annual regular income for the three fiscal years preceding a general income reclassification.

ISABELA REMAINS CLASSIFIED AS A FIRST-CLASS PROVINCE, REFLECTING ITS SUSTAINED ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND LEADERSHIP, WITH AN AVERAGE ANNUAL REGULAR INCOME EXCEEDING P1.5 BILLION.

The City of Ilagan and Santiago City hold first-class city status, cementing their roles as regional economic leaders. Meanwhile, Cauayan City has

been elevated to second-class city status.

Cities with an average annual regular income of P1.3 billion or more are classified as first-class, while those with an average annual regular income of P1 billion or more, but less than P1.3 billion, are classified as second-class.

Twenty-four municipalities in Isabela are now classified as first-class LGUs. These include Alicia, Cabagan, Dinapigue, Echague, Jones, Palanan, Roxas, San Mariano, San Mateo, and Tumauini, which were already recognized as first-class municipalities prior to the issuance of the No. 074-2024.

Newly joining this rank are Luna, advancing from fifth to first class; Delfin Albano, Mallig, Naguilian, Quezon, Quirino, and Reina Mercedes, rising from fourth to first class; Angadanan, Aurora, Cabatuan, and Cordon, moving from third to first class; and

Divilacan, Ramon, and San Pablo, transitioning from second to first class.

These 24 first-class municipalities have an average annual regular income of P200 million or more.

Meanwhile, four municipalities were upgraded from fourth to second class: Benito Soliven, Gamu, San Guillermo, and San Manuel. Additionally, Maconacon and San Agustin advanced from third to second class.

The second-class municipalities have an average annual regular income of P160 million or more but less than P200 million.

Four municipalities are now classified as third-class LGUs: San Isidro, which advanced from fifth class, and Burgos, Santa Maria, and Santo Tomas, which progressed from fourth to third class.

The third-class municipalities have an average annual regular income of P130 million or more but less than P160 million.





GAWAD KALASAG 2024

Isabela's Winning Streak Continues with **'Beyond Compliant'** Seal

There's no stopping Isabela's winning streak!

The province's dedication to disaster resilience was once again recognized, earning the "Beyond Compliant" Seal for 2024 after an impressive performance in the 24th KALASAG (Kalamidad at Sakuna Labanan, Sariling Galing ang Kaligtasan) assessment.

This achievement surpasses the national standards established by the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 (RA 10121).

The award was presented to Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Officer Atty. Constante A. Foronda Jr. on December 13, 2024 at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City.

During the awarding ceremony, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. emphasized the importance of unity in building disaster resilience.

"As long as we are united to help uplift each other, I am very certain, and knowing the Filipino culture and the Filipino spirit, I know that we can turn challenges into opportunities, paving the way for a safer, stronger, and more secure Bagong Pilipinas."

The province previously received the Best PDRRM Hall of Fame award (2015–2017) and achieved a 2.52 rating in the Local Disaster Risk Management Councils and Offices (LDRMCOs) assessment for 2024.

BENCHMARK FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Under the leadership of Governor Rodito T. Albano and Vice Governor Faustino "Bojie" G. Dy III, Isabela continues to set the benchmark for disaster management, serving as a model for other provinces in disaster risk reduction and management.

On November 28, 2024, a Department of the Interior and Local Government

(DILG) delegation from the Ilocos Region visited Isabela for a benchmarking activity, underscoring the province's reputation for effective disaster management.

Likewise, on June 11, 2019, delegates from Oriental Mindoro studied Isabela's DRRM best practices during a Success-Case Replication Tour.

Other LGUs, including those from Davao del Norte, Ilocos Sur, Apayao, and Pangasinan, have also sought to learn from Isabela's successful strategies.

The Gawad KALASAG was established in 1998 by the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) to recognize local government units demonstrating excellence in disaster preparedness and response.

PROVINCE OF ISABELA CLINCHES 8TH SGLG AWARD

The Provincial Government of Isabela achieved a remarkable milestone as an 8th-time recipient of the prestigious Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) award.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Juanito Victor C. Remulla conferred the prestigious Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) Award to the Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI) on December 9, 2024 at The Manila Hotel.

The award was received by Vice Governor Faustino "Bojie" G. Dy III.

This achievement reaffirms Isabela's reputation for excellence in local governance, having previously received the SGLG in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022, and 2023.



Further emphasizing Isabela's governance prowess, all three of its cities—Cauayan City, City of Ilagan, and Santiago City—along with 27 out of its 34 municipalities, were also awarded the SGLG.

These municipalities include Angadanan, Aurora, Benito Soliven, Burgos, Cabagan, Cordon, Delfin Albano, Dinapigue, Echague, Gamu, Jones, Luna, Mallig, Naguilian, Quezon, Quirino, Reina Mercedes, Roxas, San Guillermo, San Isidro, San Manuel, San Mariano, San Mateo, San Pablo, Santa Maria, Santo Tomas, and Tumauni.

The municipality of San Mateo was also honored with the SGLG award for the eighth time.

Meanwhile, the municipalities of Dinapigue, Maconacon, San Agustin and San Pablo are first-time recipients of the award.

SGLG passers will receive the CY 2024 Seal of Good Local Governance Incentive

Fund (SGLGIF) amounting to P3 million for provincial governments, P2 million for city governments and P1.15 million for municipal governments.

On a national scale, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) recognized 714 Local Government Units (LGUs) in 2024 — the highest number of awardees in the history of the SGLG. From the 1,715 LGUs assessed, the 2024 awardees comprised 41 provinces, 96 cities, and 577 municipalities.

The criteria that Isabela and other LGUs hurdled include excellence in financial administration and sustainability; disaster preparedness; social protection and sensitivity; health compliance and responsiveness; sustainable education; business-friendliness and competitiveness; safety, peace and order; environmental management; tourism, heritage development, culture and arts; and youth development.

The awarding ceremony, themed “**Isang Dekada ng Pagkilala sa Tapat at Mahusay na Pamamahala**” (A Decade of Recognizing Honest and Effective Governance), highlights a decade-long commitment to promoting transparency, accountability and excellence in local governance.

REGIONAL VALIDATION

During the regional validation at the Isabela Provincial Capitol, DILG Regional Director Agnes A. De Leon noted that the dedication to service is evident in the province of Isabela, where the needs of the citizens are recognized.

“**The government exists because of the people. We exist to serve the people. And that is what I have seen in the province of Isabela. Nakikita po ninyo kung ano ang kailangan ng mga mamamayan,**” she said.

The SGLG is the highest recognition and most prestigious award given by DILG to outstanding LGUs that excel in public service through adherence to national laws and guidelines.

GOLD AWARDS FOR ISABELA

PGI Wins Big in Gawad Kalusugan 2024



The Integrated Provincial Health Office (IPHO) of the Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI) emerged victorious at the Gawad Kalusugan 2024, winning five prestigious awards during the ceremony held on December 6, 2024 in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan.

In the provincial category, Isabela received the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Purple Banner Award (Gold), LGU Health Scorecard Implementer Award (Gold), Non-Communicable Disease Innovator Award (Gold), and Provincial Health Office Immunization Excellence Recognition Award.

The PGI's IPHO also received the prestigious Universal Healthcare Milestone Achievement Award for its outstanding contributions to integrating local health systems, addressing gaps in healthcare services for underprivileged sectors, and enhancing resource efficiency in alignment with the goals of Universal Health Care.

The awards were conferred by Department of Health (DOH) Undersecretary Glenn Matthew Baggao and Cagayan Valley Center for Health Development (CVHD) Director Amelita M. Pangilinan to Provincial Health

Officer Dr. Nelson O. Paguirigan and the IPHO staff.

The provincial government was awarded a total cash incentive of P800,000, which will be used to further support and enhance its health programs and initiatives.

The provinces that participated alongside Isabela included Cagayan, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, and Batanes.

PGI Recognized as 'Exemplar' in SubayBAYANI Awards

The Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI) was honored as an "Exemplar" at the SubayBAYANI Awards held in Parañaque City on December 3, 2024 in recognition of its outstanding performance in promoting excellence in infrastructure governance.

PGI's road project entry earned praise for timely implementation, accuracy, quality, supervision, administration, and overall governance, highlighting the province's commitment to delivering high-quality infrastructure that benefits its citizens.

The plaque of recognition was received by Provincial Engineer Virgilio S.

Lorenzo and Ms. Maria Elena J. Sumisim from the Provincial Planning and Development Office on behalf of Governor Rodito T. Albano.

On November 25, 2024, PGI was hailed as a regional winner during the Regional SubayBAYANI Awards ceremony held at the Isabela Convention Center.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) also commended DILG Region 02, recognizing it as the regional overall top performer for its **"untiring dedication in monitoring the infrastructure projects enrolled in SubayBAYAN under its jurisdiction."**

The SubayBAYANI Awards, initiated by the DILG, honor local government units for their excellence in implementing locally funded projects and promoting transparency and good governance.



PGI GRANTS INCENTIVES TO ISABELEÑO WINNERS IN CAVRAA, PALARONG PAMBANSA

The winning Isabela sports representatives that competed in 2024 Cagayan Valley Regional Athletic Association (CAVRAA) and Palarong Pambansa reaped the rewards of their hard work as the Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI) awarded them incentives on March 3, 2025 at the Provincial Capitol.

PGI distributed P3.9 million in cash incentives to athletes, coaches, and training staff, along with sacks of rice.

Provincial Legal Officer Atty. John Ryan P. Torio, representing Governor Rodito T. Albano and Vice Governor Faustino “Bojie” G. Dy III, emphasized PGI’s strong commitment to supporting the athletes.



“Ngayon, ino-honor kayo bilang athletes sa inyong kahusayan. Ang Provincial Government of Isabela ay kasama ninyo upang suportahan kayo sa inyong ambisyong maging isang mahusay na atleta. Mayroon

po tayong igagawad na incentives para sa inyo. Sana ay inyong linangin pa ang inyong mga kakayahan,” he said.

The Schools Division of Isabela clinched the overall championship title in the Cagayan Valley Regional Athletic Association (CAVRAA) 2024 after more than a decade, securing 114 gold, 101 silver, and 112 bronze medals.



The division also won two gold, three silver, and seven bronze medals in Palarong Pambansa 2024.

Schools Division Superintendent Rachel R. Llana thanked the provincial government for pouring resources into DepEd-Isabela, recognizing its continuous support for the athletes.



THE MAKING OF STARS



In Isabela, talent is abundant, but only those who dare to dream, who push beyond their limits, and who give their all under the spotlight earn the right to be called stars.

To find the next generation of stars, the Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI) successfully launched and concluded the highly anticipated Isabela's Got Talent (IGT). Initiated by Governor Rodito T. Albano, the program ran from July 5 to December 13, 2024, spanning 19 exciting weeks, with an additional week dedicated to the Kids Edition.

The competition brought together some of the province's most gifted performers, providing them a platform to shine and showcase their remarkable talents.

From the first auditions to the grand finale, every performer carries a story of struggle, hope, and determination. With every note sung, every dance step perfected, and every performance delivered with heart, contenders proved that greatness is within reach.

Santiago City's Singing Sensation Claims IGT Grand Champion Title

With his spine-chilling renditions of **"Binibini"** by Zack Tabudlo and

"Chandelier" by Sia, Ralph Angelo Babaran of Santiago City captivated the audience and judges alike, earning him the prestigious IGT Grand Champion title.

Babaran's spine-tingling vocals and heartfelt performance earned him the coveted P100,000 cash prize, a trophy, a smartphone from Globe Telecom, and a 55-inch Smart TV from Megasaver.

A former **"resbaker,"** Babaran received a golden buzzer from the head judge during the final weekly episode, granting him an automatic spot in the grand finals. He shared that performing on stage had always been his dream, something he had manifested when Ben&Ben held a concert in Isabela.

"Pinangarap ko talaga ito, ang makapag-perform, at ni-manifest ko noong nag-concert ang Ben&Ben sa Isabela. Sabi ko that time: one day, makakanta ako sa stage na 'yan, and heto na. Masaya ako, sobra," he said.

Delivering emotional and powerful performances of **"Lipad ng Pangarap"** by Dessa and **"My Heart Will Go On"** by Celine Dion, Jovielyn Bacani of Delfin Albano secured the 1st runner-up spot. She received P50,000 cash, a trophy, and a smartphone from Globe Telecom.

With jaw-dropping performances of **"Hanggang"** by Wency Cornejo and **"All I Ask"** by Adele, Ayson Bauit of City of Ilagan claimed the 2nd runner-up title. He was awarded P30,000 cash, a trophy, and a smartphone from Globe Telecom.

IGT Kids Edition: Young Talents Take the Spotlight

As part of a special week on November 29, 2024, IGT Kids Edition showcased the extraordinary talents of young Isabeleños.

Claiming the Grand Winner title was Jarvish Mhiro Imperial from Santiago City, a former Tawag ng Tanghalan Kids Daily Winner. In a heartwarming twist, Jarvish revealed that he would spend his P50,000 cash prize not on toys or gadgets, but on cement to help build their house.

Runners-up Elize Conde from Luna and Meerah Jane Respicio from City of Ilagan also delivered exceptional performances and received consolation prizes.

Stars are not just born; they are made—through passion, perseverance, and the drive to shine. Isabela's Got Talent (IGT) became the ultimate stage where raw talent transformed into greatness, where dreams that once seemed distant turned into reality.



JOVIELYN BACANI

RALPH BABARAN

AYSON BAUIT

JARVISH IMPERIAL

The World Meets Isabela



Isabela's Gateway to Progress
through Global Linkages



Isabela Hosts Familiarization Tour of Diplomats from 24 Nations

The Province of Isabela hosted a distinguished delegation of diplomats from 24 nations for a familiarization tour on January 24-25, 2025.

Organized in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the visit underscored Isabela's strategic importance in global cooperation, cultural diplomacy, and sustainable economic development.

The delegation included ambassadors and senior diplomats, along with their spouses, representing key nations from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas, such as Japan, New Zealand, Germany, Brazil, and Thailand.

The group comprised 21 ambassadors, two Chargé d'Affaires, one Deputy Chief of Mission, and DFA officials, making this one of the most significant diplomatic gatherings in the province's history.



Upon arrival, the delegates were greeted with Isabela's signature warmth and hospitality.

The itinerary included an immersive culinary experience featuring the province's renowned local cuisine, along with lively cultural performances and exhibitions reflecting the province's rich traditions and artistry.

Delegates also witnessed Isabela's groundbreaking advancements in agriculture and industry, with a particular emphasis on its pioneering sustainable farming initiatives, innovative food production programs, and accelerating economic growth.

As part of their cultural immersion, the diplomats explored the province's historical landmarks, experienced the artistry of traditional pottery making, and appreciated the architectural splendor of churches that define Isabela's rich history.

The tour culminated in an exclusive diplomatic reception, aimed at strengthening international ties and opening doors for future collaborations across trade, tourism, and cultural exchanges.

The familiarization trip to Isabela followed similarly successful activities organized by the DFA for members of the diplomatic corps, starting with Dagupan City in 2023, followed by trips to Negros Occidental and Zamboanga City in 2024.



Diplomats Sign Guest Book to Commemorate Isabela Visit

The diplomats inscribed their messages of appreciation and optimism in a guest book on January 24, 2025, expressing hopes for future collaborations.

According to Governor Rodito T. Albano, the guest book will be preserved as a lasting reminder of the visit and the strengthened bonds between Isabela and the international community.





Gov. Rodito, Amb. Mylene Welcome Foreign Envoys to Isabela

Governor Rodito T. Albano, together with his spouse, Her Excellency Mylene J. Garcia-Albano, the Philippine Ambassador to Japan, received the ambassadors on January 24, 2025, at Balai, Provincial Capitol, during their familiarization visit to the province of Isabela.

Addressing the distinguished guests, Governor Albano said he was honored to welcome the ambassadors to the province.

“It is my profound gratitude and genuine appreciation that I stand before you today on behalf of the people of Isabela. I am honored to extend a warm welcome to the esteemed ambassadors who have taken the time to visit our province,” he said.

Albano acknowledged their dedication to strengthening international relations despite their busy schedules.

“Your willingness to visit Isabela despite your demanding schedules speaks volumes about your commitment to fostering collaboration and understanding,” he remarked.

He underscored the important role of ambassadors in diplomacy, emphasizing their contribution to building bridges among nations.

“As ambassadors, each of you carries the essential responsibility of fostering dialogue and understanding among nations. Your commitment to diplomacy and international relations is more crucial



DIPLOMATIC WELCOME.
Governor Rodito T. Albano, Philippine Ambassador to Japan Her Excellency Mylene Garcia Albano, welcome the diplomats at the Balai Guesthouse, January 24, 2025.

than ever in our rapidly changing world. We deeply appreciate your important work in bridging divides, facilitating partnerships, and promoting goodwill,” he emphasized.

The governor encouraged the ambassadors to share their experiences and insights, which could contribute to a better understanding of global narratives.

“Let us celebrate the richness of the diverse cultures represented in this gathering. Each of you carries the unique traditions and history of your homeland. In our limited time together, I encourage

you to share your stories, experiences, and perspectives with one another,” he urged.

Ending on a note of hospitality, Albano assured the ambassadors that Isabela would always be open to them.

“It is our utmost pleasure to host you again in the near future. Isabela has so much to offer, and we look forward to welcoming you back with open arms. We sincerely hope to see you again soon. Again, welcome to Isabela,” he said.

PGI Presents 'Isabela Tourism and Investment Plan'



Atty. Paul Angelo Uy, Provincial Economic Development and Investment Promotions Officer of the Provincial Government of Isabela, presented the Isabela Tourism and Investment Plan during a high-profile visit to the province, January 24, 2025.

Uy emphasized that Isabela boasts the largest economy in Cagayan Valley Region and ranks second in rice production while leading in rice surplus nationwide.

He described Isabela as an emerging tourism destination that accounts for nearly half of Region 2's tourist arrivals, primarily from domestic travelers.

Among the major tourist destinations presented were Dicotcotan Beach and the Sabutan products of Palanan, Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park, San Pablo Church in San Pablo, the Giant Banga in Santa Maria, and Saint Matthias Church in Tumauini.

He also mentioned Abuan River Adventure & Eco Park in the City of Ilagan, Mabuwaya Farm in San Mariano, Ilagan Sanctuary in the City of Ilagan, and the coastal waters of Divilacan.

He outlined the province's goal to harness and sustain Isabela's tourism potential by developing new tourism

circuits, enhancing existing sites, and strengthening promotions, marketing, and infrastructure.

He also detailed key programs, projects, and activities aimed at boosting tourism and investment, including the rehabilitation of airports and airstrips to increase flight availability, improvement of roads within coastal municipalities, modernization of seaports in coastal areas, and adoption of tourism transportation routes.



Vice Gov. Dy shares Bambanti Festival's Significance to Diplomats

Vice Governor Faustino "Bojie" G. Dy III unveiled the deeper meaning of the Bambanti Festival as he welcomed 24 visiting diplomats, January 24, 2025.

Speaking at the Balai, Isabela Provincial Capitol, Dy highlighted the festival as a symbol of the resilience, ingenuity, and unity of the people of Isabela.

"The Bambanti Festival is more than just a celebration—it is a tribute to the strength of our people, our rich agricultural heritage, and the traditions that bind us together," Dy said.

Dy expressed appreciation for their presence, recognizing it as a symbol of friendship and global partnership.

"To our honored guests, your presence amplifies the significance of this festival. It marks the strong bond of friendship and cooperation between our nations," he said.

As the festival continued, Dy encouraged everyone to cherish the cultural exchanges and lasting connections forged during the event.

"Let us celebrate together and create memories that will endure long after the festival concludes," he urged.



Coconut Trees Planted in Honor of **Envoys**

Four diplomats were honored with coconut trees planted under their names during the familiarization tour on January 24, 2025 at Balai, Isabela Provincial Capitol, as part of an initiative by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to promote environmental sustainability.

The diplomats recognized were HE Răduța Dana Matache, Ambassador of Romania to the Philippines; HE Tull Traisorat, Ambassador of Thailand to the

Philippines; HE Abdul Malik Melvin Castelino, Ambassador of Malaysia to the Philippines; and San Yu Kyaw, Chargé d'Affaires of Myanmar to the Philippines.

They were awarded in recognition of their active and consistent support for the public diplomacy initiatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs, as well as their participation in familiarization tours in Dagupan, Negros Occidental, Zamboanga City, and most recently, Isabela Province.

Assistant Secretary Arvin R. de Leon also presented a certificate and a copy of the DFA book **"Colors of Diplomacy"** as a token of appreciation to Governor Rodito T. Albano, who was recognized for his contributions to international goodwill and foreign relations.

The DFA noted that this visit to Isabela had the largest delegation among its familiarization tours.



Argentine Ambassador: Bambanti among PH's Largest Festivals

Argentina's Ambassador to the Philippines, H.E. Ricardo Luis Bocalandro, expressed amazement at the Bambanti 2025, calling it one of the country's largest and most impressive festivals.

"The Bambanti Festival was one of the largest I've seen in the Philippines, with an enormous number of dancers, all very talented," he said.

He was among those captivated by the agri-ecotourism booths at Bambanti Village on January 24, 2025.

The diplomats engaged with Isabeleños, exploring the village where cities and municipalities showcased local products, including commodities, drinks, and delicacies, alongside creatively designed giant Bambanti displays.



BOUNTIFUL BOOTH.

Ms. Anna Krzak-Danel, Chargé d'Affaires of the Polish Embassy in the Philippines, takes photos of the agri-eco tourism booths at Bambanti Village on January 24, 2025.

Envoys Try Famous Pancit Cabagan, Balut

The visiting diplomats indulged in a unique culinary experience, sampling the famous Pancit Cabagan, balut, and a variety of Filipino delicacies at Balai, Isabela Provincial Capitol, on January 24, 2025.

The diplomats witnessed the preparation of Pancit Cabagan, a beloved Isabela noodle dish renowned for its rich, savory sauce and generous toppings, and had the chance to taste it for the first time.

Japan's Ambassador to the Philippines, Endo Kazuya, was among those who tried balut, a fertilized duck egg with a partially developed embryo, often enjoyed with a pinch of salt or vinegar, for the first time. After taking a bite, he remarked, "It's good."

Other versions of the noodle dish incorporated asisi, a local clam from Isabela's rivers, along with lobster, pork, and chicken, giving it a unique regional twist.



A FEAST OF FILIPINO FLAVORS

For a more adventurous bite, they sampled Filipino street food favorites, including kikiyam, fish balls, squid balls, shawarma, siomai, barbecue, and chicken empanada.

They also enjoyed a variety of traditional rice cakes, including puto bumbong, binallay (a sticky rice delicacy wrapped in banana leaves), biko (a sweet sticky rice cake), and tupig (grilled rice cake wrapped in banana leaves).

They indulged in cornbetes (corn-based snacks) and ice cream, adding a sweet touch to their culinary experience, and tried an assortment of Filipino noodle dishes, such as Pancit Malabon, Pancit Bihon, Pancit Palabok, Pancit Habhab, Pancit Canton, and Pancit Chami—each offering a unique flavor and preparation style.

They also refreshed themselves with fresh buko juice, a popular coconut drink in the Philippines.



Rice Mill of Isabela's Super Coop Visited

THE DIPLOMATS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT THE RICE MILL OF THE NAGKAISANG MAGSASAKA NG ISABELA AGRICULTURE COOPERATIVE (NMIAC), THE PROVINCE'S SUPER COOPERATIVE, ON JANUARY 25, 2025 AS PART OF THEIR FAMILIARIZATION TOUR.



Among the distinguished guests were His Excellency Lai Thai Binh, Ambassador of Vietnam, and His Excellency Agus Widjojo, Ambassador of Indonesia, both representing major rice-producing nations.

Ambassador Lai Thai Binh of Vietnam, a country renowned for its rice production, shared his admiration for the NMIAC's operations, drawing similarities between the cooperative's work and the rice mills back in Vietnam.

"I'm amazed at the production here – the machines and the people working in this rice mill," Ambassador Lai remarked.

The ambassador stressed the potential for mutual cooperation, underscoring Vietnam's ability to support Isabela through joint efforts in rice cultivation, the supply of machinery, and the establishment of a more integrated rice market.

"With your abundant land, affordable labor, and highly skilled workforce, Isabela has significant potential for improved cooperation in the agricultural sector," he said.

Ambassador Lai also praised the initiatives of the provincial government of Isabela, particularly the practice of buying rice from

local farmers. He believed this approach would not only stabilize the supply and demand of rice but also foster a stronger market economy in the region.

Ambassador Agus Widjojo of Indonesia also expressed his approval of the NMIAC rice mill's operations, commending the Filipino government for its commitment to ensuring sufficient rice supply and improving production capacity.

He shared that Indonesia faces similar challenges in increasing rice production and welcomed the opportunity for collaboration.

"The chances for cooperation are wide open. By exchanging best practices and collaborating on capacity building, both our countries can improve the methods and sustainability of rice production," he said.

He also emphasized the importance of cooperative-based economies, which balance agricultural productivity with the welfare of farmers.

Ambassador Widjojo was particularly supportive of the provincial government's rice-buying program, which he viewed as a step toward eliminating intermediaries and ensuring fair prices for farmers.

"This program is a good example of how government intervention can help ensure that farmers receive fair prices for their rice," he said.

Both ambassadors from Vietnam and Indonesia expressed their enthusiasm for continued collaboration with the Philippines, particularly in the area of rice production.



"We are very close to the Philippines. We are an agro-business country. We have a very good trade relationship with the Philippines. Maybe we could also include tobacco within our framework of cooperation," he stated.

He also mentioned the recent establishment of an Agriculture Attaché at the Brazilian Embassy in Manila, underscoring the importance of the Philippine market for Brazilian agricultural products and the potential for expanding trade opportunities.

Brazilian Ambassador Lauds Tobacco Factory Operations in Isabela

Brazilian Ambassador to the Philippines, His Excellency Gilberto Fonseca Guimarães de Moura, lauded the Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. factory in Reina Mercedes, Isabela on January 25, 2025 for its advanced processes, meticulous quality control, and commitment to excellence.

"I am very well impressed. Very well-organized. Here, I had a chance to see the whole procedure from the very beginning to the end," Guimarães de Moura remarked.

He noted the factory workers' meticulous care given at each stage of production.

"I could see how advanced and how much care is given in the different phases of the procedure. I could see how accurately people here are working to offer good quality and create a Filipino brand, and I do hope that you could go on—I wish you success," he said.



Representing Brazil, one of the world's top tobacco producers, he emphasized the Philippines' potential to expand its footprint in the international tobacco industry.

Citing the strong agricultural ties between Brazil and the Philippines, the ambassador expressed openness to expanding trade relations, particularly in agricultural research and tobacco industry collaboration.

With opportunities for increased cooperation in agricultural research and industry innovations, Isabela's tobacco sector stands to benefit from stronger international partnerships.



Japanese Ambassador Commends Isabela's Crocodile Conservation Efforts

Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines, His Excellency Kazuya Endo, lauded the long-term conservation efforts of the Philippine Crocodile Conservation Center in San Mariano, Isabela, on January 25, 2025, emphasizing the importance of protecting the critically endangered Philippine crocodile.

Ambassador Endo expressed his deep appreciation for the center's dedication to preserving the species during his visit.

"I would like to pay my respects to the long-term efforts of the Crocodile Center to conserve this very precious species—the Philippine crocodile. It is very important for the community to work together for the preservation of this species," he said.

A long-time crocodile enthusiast, the ambassador was particularly fascinated by his experience at the conservation center, where he had his first opportunity to touch one.

"I've been very interested in crocodiles for many years. This is my first time to touch one, and it was a very nice experience for me," he shared.

Ambassador Endo also highlighted the importance of environmental protection and Japan's history of collaboration with the Philippines in conservation efforts.

The Philippine Crocodile Conservation Center has successfully safeguarded the endangered Philippine Crocodile, increasing its population from just 20 to 120 over the past two decades, a remarkable achievement in wildlife conservation.



Booming Dairy Industry in Isabela Showcased

The second day of the Familiarization Tour brought the diplomats to the province's growing dairy industry with a visit to Mr. Moo's Dairy Farm in the City of Ilagan, a leading name in local dairy production, known for its advanced technology and premium products.

Among the distinguished guests was Her Excellency Catherine McIntosh, New Zealand's Ambassador to the Philippines, who expressed admiration for Isabela's dairy innovations.

"Napakaganda. Napakasaya ang karanasan na ito! It was so wonderful to visit Mr. Moo's. I felt like it's a home away from home," McIntosh said.

As a representative of a country globally recognized for its dairy industry, McIntosh was pleased to see Holstein cows and modernized dairy production at Jeaox Farm, an affiliate of Mr. Moo's.

"New Zealand has so many cows, and dairy production is part of our economy. So, I was delighted to see Jeaox Farm's operations and the Holstein cows that felt very familiar to me," she said.

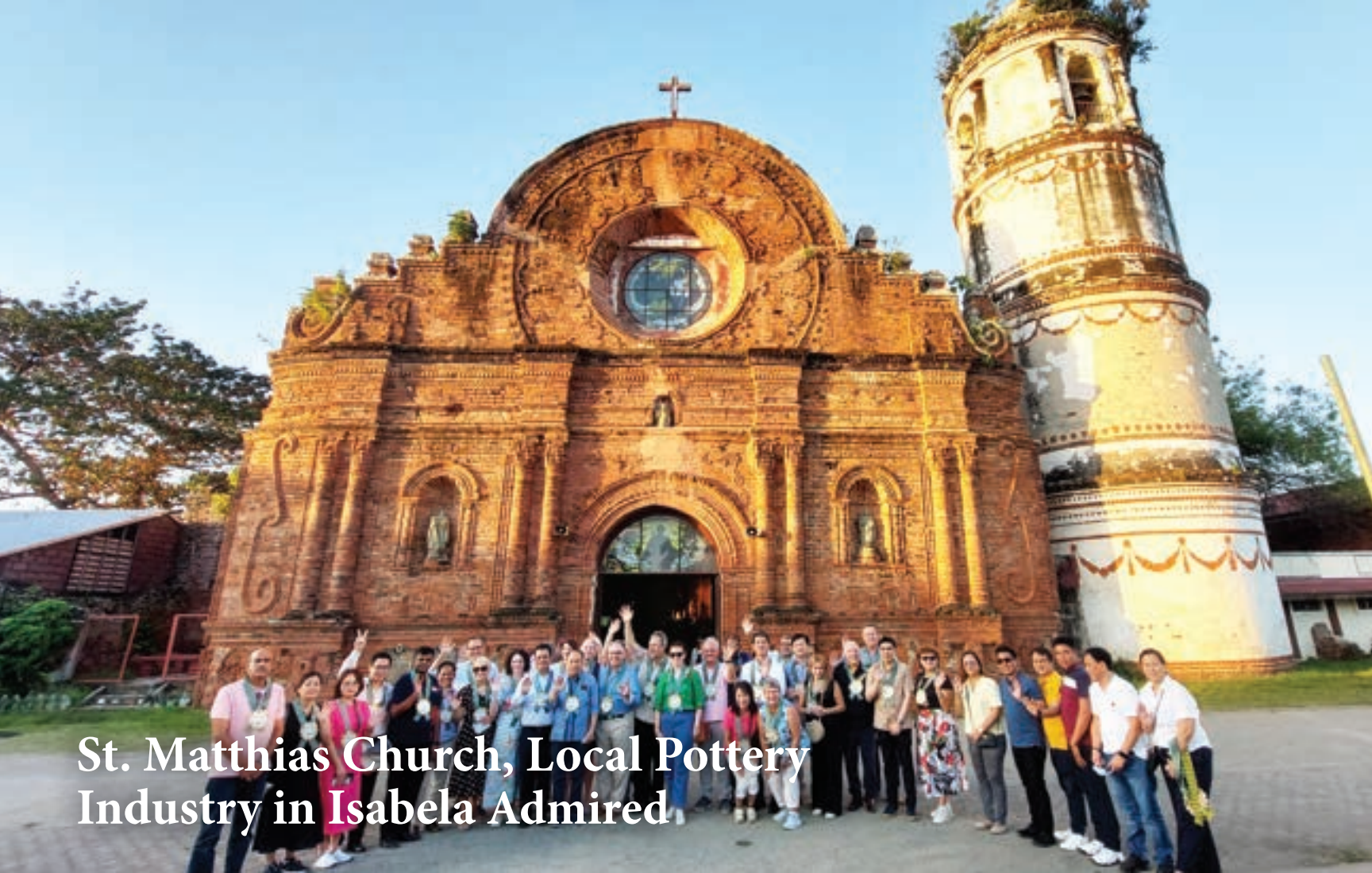


McIntosh also emphasized ongoing partnerships between New Zealand and the Philippines in climate-smart agriculture, particularly research on reducing methane emissions from livestock in collaboration with the University of the Philippines - Los Baños and the Philippine Carabao Center.

A highlight of the visit was the ambassadors' tasting session, where they sampled fresh milk, cheese, and Isabela's unique corn ice cream.

"I have tried Manila ice cream in Los Baños, I have tried ice cream in Davao, and now I tried corn ice cream here in Isabela. And it's so delicious - napakasarap!" McIntosh shared.

Other ambassadors also took interest in Isabela's dairy sector, while expressing interest in technological collaborations for farm automation and milk processing.



St. Matthias Church, Local Pottery Industry in Isabela Admired

Foreign ambassadors on a Familiarization Tour in Isabela marveled at St. Matthias Church in Tumauini and the local pottery industry in municipality of Sta. Maria.

Austrian Ambassador to the Philippines and Palau, His Excellency Johann Brieger, praised the architectural beauty of St. Matthias Church, a national cultural treasure known for its red brick façade and rare cylindrical belfry.

"Our fifth stop was at St. Matthias Church, a historic site beautifully reconstructed after World War II. Its exquisite red brick

architecture and unique cylindrical belfry make it truly remarkable," Ambassador Brieger shared.

Belgium's Ambassador to the Philippines, His Excellency Michel Parys, reflected on the deep historical ties between Belgium and Isabela, recalling the contributions of Belgian missionary priests from the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM) who have served in the region since the 20th century.

New Zealand's Ambassador to the Philippines, Her Excellency Catherine McIntosh, was equally

impressed by the local artistry at the Santa Maria Pottery Studio.

As a gesture of gratitude for the warm hospitality she and her fellow diplomats received, the diplomatic corps donated rice to residents of Barangay Poblacion 3, Sta. Maria, Isabela, particularly those engaged in the province's pottery-making industry.

"The festival was incredibly vibrant. I was so impressed with the stalls representing many municipalities of Isabela province. There were products like dairy, honey, and cacao that showcased the province's agricultural richness.

I sincerely thank the DFA and the Provincial Government of Isabela for their warm hospitality and for making this experience truly unforgettable!"

**HER EXCELLENCY
CATHERINE MCINTOSH**
New Zealand Ambassador to the Philippines

during the Open Forum with Governor Rodito T. Albano, Philippine Ambassador to Japan Mylene Garcia Albano, Vice Governor Faustino "Bojie" G. Dy III, alongside mayors, local officials, and PGI department heads at the Balai, Isabela Provincial Capitol.



A TOAST TO STRONGER TIES

Diplomats Wrap Up Isabela Visit with Dinner



Bocalandro, was particularly impressed with Isabela's thriving agricultural sector, which he compared to the northern regions of Argentina.

"I am very impressed with Isabela's agricultural sector. It reminds me of the northern parts of my country. The province is a strong player in agri-business, and I'm looking forward to exploring the possibilities of cooperation between Argentinian and Isabela companies," he remarked.

The familiarization tour concluded with a dinner hosted on January 25, 2025 at the residence of Congressman Antonio "Tony" T. Albano in Ballacayu, San Pablo, Isabela.

The event, sponsored by Governor Rodito T. Albano and spouse, Ambassador to Japan, Her Excellency Mylene Garcia Albano, provided a warm and hospitable setting to the diplomats.

INTEREST IN LOCAL ARTISTRY

The diplomats were especially captivated by the craftsmanship of the handwoven textiles, particularly the Enabel products from Quezon, which were displayed at the dinner venue.

Many of the ambassadors expressed great interest in the intricate designs and sustainable production techniques, which were showcased through live weaving demonstration by local artisans.



STRENGTHENING GLOBAL TIES

Belgian Ambassador His Excellency Michel Parys shared the growing academic partnership between Isabela and Belgium.

He also emphasized the province's potential for international partnerships.

"Isabela offers so much to recommend. You have a beautiful landscape with a cool climate at night and warm days—ideal for both agriculture and tourism. I'm excited to continue fostering cooperation between our two countries, especially in the agri-business sector," he said.

He praised the student exchange program between Isabela State University (ISU) and two Belgian universities, emphasizing its role in fostering cross-cultural collaboration.

"I am happy to visit Isabela because two universities in Belgium are partners with ISU. Every two years, Filipino students go to Belgium, and Belgian students come to the Philippines," he shared.

Argentina's Ambassador, His Excellency Ricardo Luis

The diplomats expressed gratitude for the warm reception and the chance to deepen their understanding of Isabela's rich cultural heritage.





Prancing to Bambanti 2025 Beat

Thousands of spectators felt the Isabeleño pride on January 24, 2025, as they witnessed 13 contingents, dressed as scarecrows, prancing to the beat of Bambanti 2025.

Beyond the competition, the street dance serves as a tribute to the tens of thousands of farmers in Isabela, whose hard work and dedication form the backbone of the province's economy.

Every color and movement has a story to tell about the contingents' identity.

BACK-TO-BACK CHAMPIONS

The Municipality of Jones will continue to sit on their street dance throne as they clinched

back-to-back championship titles in the competition under Category A.

Their clean execution, impressive formations, flawless synchronization, and dynamic costume changes earned them the top spot on the podium.

The City of Ilagan secured second place in Category B, followed by Municipality of Echague, Municipality of Alicia, and Cauayan City.

LUNA, NANGUNGUNA

Team Luna embraced the moment, thoroughly enjoying their performance—despite the intense competition in Category B.

The crowd was captivated by their infectious energy, and their dynamic moves evolved throughout the routine. Perhaps their hats and cute ties brought them luck, leading them to victory.

Municipality of Santa Maria secured second place in Category B, followed by Municipalities of Santo Tomas, San Manuel, and San Isidro.

A Dance Showdown to Remember

The 13 contingents for Festival Dance Showdown rocked the Isabela Sports Complex on January 24, 2025 with their jaw-dropping performances.

City of Ilagan's Tribu Mammangi made a stunning comeback in Category A after their non-placement in 2024. In just three minutes, they told the story of how they rose from a simple town to a glorious city through powerful, emotion-filled dance moves that secured their victory.

Luna never failed to maintain the momentum with their cultural dance performance under Category B. Their lively dancing spirits, paired with a superb choice of music, helped them rise above the other contingents.

In Category A, the Municipality of Echague secured second place, followed by the Municipality of Alicia, Cauayan City, and the Municipality of Roxas.

In Category B, the Municipality of Santa Maria clinched second place, followed by the Municipalities of San Isidro, San Pablo, and Santo Tomas.

With solid choreography and compelling storytelling amid fierce competition, the Bambanti Festival once again proved why it rightfully holds its Hall of Fame status in the Aliw Awards.



Isabela's Artisans and Their Unmatched Craftsmanship

The Bambanti Village at the Isabela Provincial Capitol Compound transported spectators into a multiverse of wonders.

Featuring symbolic booths and towering scarecrows meticulously crafted by Isabela's skilled artisans, the village became a breathtaking spectacle of heritage and agricultural excellence.

Bambanti Festival 2025 Director General, Vice Governor Faustino "Bojie" G. Dy III, formally opened the Bambanti Village on January 20, 2025, with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting, marking the official start of the showcase of Isabela's cultural and agricultural wealth.

The event was graced by Tourism Regional Director Troy Alexander G. Miano, members of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan, and department heads of the Provincial Government of Isabela (PGI).

This year's competitions saw impressive participation from 32 municipalities and two cities, divided into two categories.

Category A featured 11 participants, consisting of nine first-class municipalities and two cities, while Category B included 23 second- and third-class municipalities.

A distinguished panel of judges meticulously evaluated the entries, ensuring that only the most artistic, sustainable, and culturally relevant installations and booths received accolades.

Adding to the excitement, the competition featured two rounds of judging—one during the day, where craftsmanship and thematic representation were carefully scrutinized, and another at night, where the installations and booths illuminated the Bambanti Village.

AGRI-ECOTOURISM BOOTHS

The Agri-Ecotourism Booth Competition was highly competitive, with participants presenting their municipalities' finest agricultural products, distinctive tourism attractions, and exceptional creativity.

The City of Ilagan once again demonstrated its dominance in Category A, securing the first-place title. Cauayan City, Alicia, Tumauini, and Palanan also earned recognition for their outstanding booths.

In Category B, the Municipality of Cordon stood out, earning the championship title for its exceptional presentation of local produce and eco-tourism initiatives. San Pablo, Quezon, Divilacan, and Maconacon completed the roster of top placers.

GIANT BAMBANTI INSTALLATION

The artistry and craftsmanship behind each giant scarecrow captivated both judges and spectators.

Emerging victorious in Category A was the City of Ilagan, with its imposing and intricately detailed scarecrow masterpiece, symbolizing resilience and agricultural abundance.

In Category B, Gamu secured the top distinction with a striking and innovative design that paid homage to local folklore and farming traditions.

Runners-up in Category A included Alicia, Tumauini, Cauayan City, and Jones, while Category B's second- to fifth-place winners were Cordon, Luna, San Agustin, and Quezon, respectively.

The triumph of this year's Agri-Ecotourism Booth and Giant Bambanti Installation competitions set a new standard for creativity and craftsmanship.

Through their dedication and ingenuity, Isabela's artisans have redefined excellence, ensuring that future celebrations continue to be a breathtaking fusion of culture, artistry, and innovation.



Weaving Timeless Masterpieces

The Festival King and Queen competition celebrated the province's deep-rooted cultural heritage by weaving timeless masterpieces through stunning costumes.

In Category A, the Best Festival King title was awarded to the City of Ilagan, followed by Cauayan City, Jones, Alicia, and Echague. Meanwhile, in Category B, Luna claimed the Best Festival King title, with Santa Maria, San Pablo, San Manuel, and Santo Tomas securing the runner-up positions.

For the Best Festival Queen in Category A, the City of Ilagan once again emerged victorious, followed by Cauayan City, Jones, Alicia, and Echague. In Category B, Luna secured the top spot, followed by Santa Maria, San Pablo, San Manuel, and Santo Tomas.

The Best Festival King Costume award for Category A went to Palanan, followed by Echague, the City of Ilagan, Alicia, and Jones. In Category B, San Manuel took first place, with San Pablo, Luna, San Isidro, and Santo Tomas rounding out the top five.

For the Best Festival Queen Costume, Palanan claimed the Category A title, followed by the City of Ilagan, Echague, Alicia, and Jones. In Category B, San Manuel was named the winner, with Luna, San Pablo, San Isidro, and Santo Tomas earning the remaining top spots.

Fresh from the Farm: Isabela's Finest Ingredients in the Spotlight

The Bambanti Festival 2025's Makan ken Mainum competition reached new heights by highlighting local products from Isabela, which were used as the main ingredients in the contestants' recipes.

Vice Governor and Bambanti Festival 2025 Director General, Hon. Faustino "Bojie" G. Dy III, revealed the two secret ingredients for the Makan—Pinilisa rice from Jones and Isabela squash—through a secret box.

For the Mainum category, participants prepared a non-alcoholic, cacao-based beverage, showcasing the province's growing cacao industry.

Isabela squash is a variety of squash commonly grown in the province, prized for its sweet flavor, vibrant orange flesh, and versatility in Filipino dishes.

Pinilisa Rice is a unique organic plum-colored rice cultivated in Jones, Isabela celebrated for its distinctive fragrance and flavor.

Cacao in Isabela, Philippines is a flourishing crop known for its high-quality beans, supporting local chocolate production and contributing to the region's growing agribusiness sector.

A total of 22 municipalities and cities participated in the event, each sending five contestants to showcase the culinary skills of Isabeleños.

This year's Makan ken Mainum also promoted inclusivity, requiring each municipality or city to include at least one member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) community as part of their team.



From First Note to Final Firework

The 6-day Music Festival and Bambanti Festival 2025 Musical created unforgettable core memories for Isabeleños.

At Queen Isabela Park, the multi-day Music Festival kept the energy alive with DJs, local bands, and artists delivering diverse sounds that united the crowd. The festival became a vibrant melting pot of rhythm and excitement.

Each night built upon the last, peaking in electrifying performances that filled the air

with high-energy beats and unrestrained passion.

Meanwhile, the Bambanti Musical and Grand Concert Party at Isabela Sports Complex showcased breathtaking performances from talented singers and electrifying dance acts, leaving the audience in awe.

The event reached its peak with a spectacular fireworks display that illuminated the night sky, marking the grand finale of the province's biggest festival.

Endless Fun at Bambanti Fun Run



The Bambanti Festival 2025 was in full swing on January 19, 2025 as 12,625 runners laced up for the 3K Color Fun Run.

As participants raced through the 3K route, clouds of colorful powder filled the air.



The celebration didn't stop at the finish line—runners were welcomed with an epic Bubble Party and Dance Party, where groovy beats and lively music kept the energy soaring.

With bubbles floating, colors flying, and music pumping, it was an all-out party that perfectly captured the joy and energy of Isabela.

Bambanti's Hottest Wheels



46 | Isabela INFOCUS

Car and motor enthusiasts gathered at the Isabela Sports Complex on January 20, 2025, for the Bambanti Car and Motor Meet, an adrenaline-pumping showcase of high-performance vehicles.

Sponsored by AutoAid Philippines, the event featured sleek supercars, roaring motorcycles, and custom builds that turned heads on the streets.

As engines roared and chrome gleamed under the moonlight, attendees witnessed the ultimate fusion of power and style.

Filipino-Indian Beauty from Cauayan City is Queen Isabela 2025

Ms. Jarina K. Sandhu, a Filipino-Indian from Cauayan City, was crowned Queen Isabela 2025 during a grand coronation held at the Capital Arena in the City of Ilagan on January 22, 2025.

She will represent the province of Isabela in Miss Universe Philippines 2025.

"I'm excited to bring the whole Isabela to the Miss Universe [Philippines] stage," she said.

She added that she will advocate for no poverty and zero hunger, two of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Mhira Angelene P. Valenciano from Cordon clinched the title of Queen Isabela Tourism, while Johnlene E. Ariola from the City of Ilagan claimed the title of Queen Isabela Culture and the Arts.

The first runner-up was Jhudiel Eunisse M. Taguinod, representing Echague, and the second runner-up was Criselle Anne Gregorio from Ramon.

Other delegates who secured a spot in the Top 10 included Richmie A. Malsi from Santo Tomas, Ashlee B. Infante

from Alicia, Hariette Joy M. Baquiran from Tumauni, Princess Daine S. Antolin from San Mateo, and Angel M. Gutierrez from Naguilian.

Among the judges during the Grand Coronation Night, hosted by Rayver Cruz and Emma Tiglaog, were world-renowned designer Albert Andrada, actress Angel Aquino, and Miss Universe 2013 3rd Runner-Up Ariella Arida.



CRISELLE ANNE GREGORIO
2ND RUNNER-UP

RAMON

JOHNLENE E. ARIOLA
QUEEN ISABELA TOURISM

CITY OF ILAGAN

JARINA K. SANDHU
QUEEN ISABELA 2025
MISS UNIVERSE PH ISABELA 2025

CAUAYAN CITY

JHUDIEL EUNISSE TAGUINOD
QUEEN ISABELA TOURISM

ECHAGUE

MHIRA ANGELENE VALENCIANO
QUEEN ISABELA CULTURE AND
THE ARTS

CORDON

Reaping Awards

Miss Cauayan City dominated the stage, winning Best in Evening Gown, Best in Swimwear, Miss Pua Aesthetics Ambassador, Miss Multicuisine and Multimedia Muse.

Among the standout queens, Miss City of Ilagan took home multiple titles, including Miss Kape Ilokano

Ambassador, Miss Skinovations, Best in Casual Wear, and Best in Creative Attire.

Miss Santiago City also shone brightly as she earned the title of Miss Smile by Dentista Nina Juan.

Special awards were also given to Ms. Naguilian, who was named Miss Congeniality, and Aira Joy B. Mariano from Dinapigue, who was crowned Miss Photogenic.

"Sa pamamagitan ng mga bangkang ito, nawa'y mas mapalawak ninyo ang inyong hanapbuhay para sa inyong pamilya."

HON. RODITO T. ALBANO

