

Duterte urged to make SEA Games entrance-free

MANILA -- A labor group on Thursday urged President Rodrigo Duterte to waive entrance fees for events of the 30th Southeast Asian Games in several venues in Luzon including Metro Manila, particularly for ordinary workers and their families who cannot afford the entire cost of watching the games.

Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP) spokesperson Allan Tanjusz said allowing Filipinos to watch the games would also boost the Filipino athletes' confidence to perform well because of the support from their countrymen.

"Mr. President, maraming mga manggagawa at kanilang mga pamilya ang gustong makapanood ng mga laro at magpahayag ng kanilang (there are many workers and their families who want to watch the games and show their) homegrown support to Filipino athletes and help build that homegrown advantage they needed but they

cannot afford the entire cost of watching the games. Baka ho pwedeng ilibre na lang ninang (You might want to waive the) entrance fee," Tanjusz said in a statement.

Aside from the venues in the National Capital Region, other games will also be held in Subic, Clark and in other locations in the region.

Initial news reports said tickets to the games are pegged at PHP300, PHP200 and PHP100. Prices of tickets to the opening ceremonies on Saturday range from PHP1,000 to PHP12,000 per person.

"Aside from the cost of tickets, expenses for food, water and round-trip transportation will cost ordinary workers a lot. The rank-and-file workers cannot afford this luxury," Tanjusz said.

"But as soon as the President declares free tickets, marami pong manonood (there will be more viewers)," he added.

The ALU-TUCP said the SEA Games is also an opportunity as a rallying point for all

Filipinos to re-unite amid the controversies and misunderstandings in preparations for the games to be participated in by 10 other nations from Southeast Asia.

"The SEA Games is a rare opportunity to national healing, foster renewed patriotism and re-ignite unity among Filipinos behind all Filipino athletes. The essence of the games is to unite all citizens in Asean and all Filipinos together," he said.

"We cannot win as one nation if tickets and cost of watching games are affordable only to the privileged. The best way to make this happen is through free and accessible venues," Tanjusz added.

Samahang Weightlifting ng Pilipinas president and former Philippine Olympic Committee head Monico Puentevela also called on Duterte to declare free entrance to the games.

The regional biennial sporting event will officially start on November 30 and will run until December 11. (PNA)

Gov't nurses' pay hike may be granted by January

MANILA -- Government nurses could get their much-needed salary hike as early as January next year once the 2020 General Appropriations Act (GAA) is enacted into law, Senator Panfilo Lacson said on Thursday.

"They don't have to wait six months or another year. By January, once we enact the GAA for 2020, ang salary upgrade nila (their salary upgrade) is taken care of," Lacson said in a statement.

This after the Senate adopted one of Lacson's amendments in the Senate version of the national expenditure program.

Under the adopted special provision, "Increasing the Salary Grade of Government Nurses," the base pay of government nurses shall be Salary Grade (SG) 15 (PHP30,531 a month) from the existing Salary Grade 11 (PHP20,754 a month), in compliance with a recent Supreme Court (SC) ruling.

Lacson specified that the PHP3.173 billion needed to fund the salary adjustments will be sourced from the appropriations for staffing modifications and upgrading of salaries, or the Miscellaneous Personnel Benefit Fund (MPBF).

"As the funds are already there under MPBF, government nurses need not wait for the passage of legislation or the availability of funds to be provided by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM)," Lacson said.

The senator is one of the vice-chairpersons of the 15-man Senate contingent to the bicameral conference committee set to meet Friday (Nov. 29) at the Manila Polo Club in Makati City to reconcile the Senate and

House versions of the budget bill.

The Senate contingent will be led by Senator Juan Edgardo Angara, the chair of the Senate Committee on Finance.

Besides Lacson, the other members of the panel are Senate President Pro-Tempore Ralph Recto, Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon, as well as Senators Cynthia Villar, Pia Cayetano, Sherwin Gatchalian, Christopher "Bong" Go, Richard Gordon, Imee Marcos, Joel Villanueva, Risa Hontiveros, Nancy Binay, Grace Poe and Francis Pangilinan.

In October, the SC upheld the validity of a provision of Republic (RA) Act 9173 or the Philippine Nursing Act of 2002 which sets the minimum pay for gov-

ernment nurses to SG 15.

The court ruled in favor of the petition of Ang Nars Party-list, challenging the validity of a congressional resolution and Executive Order 811, which effectively reduced the legislated minimum pay of government nurses from SG 15 to SG 11.

The SC said Joint Resolution 4, passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate in June 2009 being a mere resolution, cannot amend or repeal a full-fledged law such as Republic Act (RA) 9173 or the Philippine Nursing Act of 2002.

It said similarly, EO 811, which implements Joint Resolution 4, is also not a law but an executive directive and cannot prevail over RA 9173. (PNA)

AMLC, IACAT working on leads in Aussie bank's child porn links

MANILA -- Local government agencies are working with their foreign counterparts amid reports that Australian bank Westpac is being investigated by Australian authorities

for failure to spot customers using its international money transfer service for transactions with child pornographers, Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra said on Thursday.

"The Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) is coordinating with the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) and has been coordinating with its Australian counterpart AUSTRAC (Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre) to investigate further," Guevarra said in a statement.

He added that the case will be referred to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) once sufficient evidence is gathered. "AMLC has been coordinating directly with its counterpart Austrac (Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre). It seems that in an entrapment operation last October, it was found out that an Australian national was involved in online sexual exploitation of Filipino children. In the ensuing coordination between

the Philippine and Australian police, it was discovered that Westpac was also involved. I've been informed that it was Austrac who actually uncovered Westpac's involvement."

Guevarra said. In October, authorities apprehended a 45-year-old woman in Rizal for livestreaming her 12-year old daughter in compromising poses in exchange for cash she received through money transfer.

Earlier this month, Westpac chief executive officer (CEO) Brian Hartzler stepped down after Australian regulators said the company failed to report more than millions of transnational fund transactions and failed to conduct due diligence on transactions in Southeast Asian countries that have known financial indicators relating to potential child exploitation.

Some of the transactions, reports said, concerned the bank's digital payments service LitePay which allowed customers to move small amounts to payees outside Australia.

6 winning LGUs in Digital Governance Awards 2019 get China trip

MANILA -- The six winning local government units in the Digital Governance Awards (DGA) 2019 were awarded an all-expenses-paid trip to Huawei's headquarters in China for an international learning program on digital governance.

"This year, Huawei Philippines is proud to give six top-winning LGUs the international learning program for digital governance, or the i-LEAP for digital governance award," said Karrie Buenafe, head of Huawei Philippines corporate communications, during the event held on Tuesday.

Buenafe named five LGUs that were given the award -- the province of Aklan for winning the "Best in eGOV Digital Finance Empowerment" (G2P) category, the City of Makati for winning the "Best in eGOV Customer

Empowerment" (G2C) category, the City of Cauayan, Isabela for winning the "Best in eGOV Government Inter-Operability Empowerment" (G2G) award, the City of Baguio for winning the "Best in eGOV Systems for Global Competitiveness" (G2W) category, and the Municipality of Mina, Iloilo for winning the "Best in eGOV Business Empowerment" (G2B) award.

Aside from the LGUs which won the educational trip to China, several LGUs in the municipal, city, and provincial levels were also given awards for achievements in the digitalization and modernization of their governments.

For the "Best in eGOV Data-Driven Governance" (D2G) category, the Municipality of Dulag, Leyte won for its Digitize Dulag (DigiDu) project, the City of Parañaque for its Integrat-

ed Occupational Permit System, and the Province of Batangas for its Geographical Information Systems for Electronic Real Property Taxation and Assessment.

In the G2P category, the municipality of Cavinti, Laguna won for its Cavinti Tourism and Event Management System, the City of Legazpi won for its Online Payment Portal for Real Property and Business Taxes, and the province of Aklan for its integration of ETRACS and Access Gate System in Caticlan and the Cagban Passenger Terminals and Jetty Ports.

In the G2C category, the municipality of Boac, Marinduque won for its BOAC TELERAD, the City of Makati for its "Makatizen Card" project, and the province of Laguna for its Queuing Management System.

In the G2G category,

the municipality of Baliwag, Bulacan won for its Baliwag Emergency and Assistance Management System, the city of Cauayan, Isabela for its Barangay Centralized Wireless Network, and the province of Compostela Valley for its Document Management System.

In the G2W category, the municipality of Baliwag, Bulacan won for its Baliwag Integrated Profiling System, the city of Baguio for its Electronic Budget Operations and Monitoring System, and the province of Bataan for its Automated Performance Management System.

And in the G2B category, the municipality of Mina, Iloilo won for its Mina Municipal Agriculture Information System -- Farmers Agriculture Resource Management System, the City of Calapan for its Business Registration Informa-