

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS (SONA) 2024**

Batasang Pambansa, Quezon City
July 22, 2024

[00:00:19]

Thank you.

Allow me to greet the former Presidents who are with us here today: President Joseph Ejercito Estrada and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo; Senate President Chiz Escudero and the honorable members of the Senate; House Speaker Martin Romualdez and the honorable members of the House of Representatives; Chief Justice Alexander Gesmundo and the honorable justices of the Supreme Court; His Excellency, the Most Reverend Charles John Brown and the esteemed members of the Diplomatic Corps; Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin and the members of the Cabinet; of course the First Lady, the First Lady Louise Araneta-Marcos; [applause] other distinguished guests; mga minamahal kong kababayan. Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat.

The hard lesson of this last year has made it very clear that whatever current data proudly banner our country as among the best-performing in Asia, means nothing to a Filipino, who is confronted by the price of rice at 45 to 65 pesos per kilo.

Bagama't maganda ang mga istatistikang ito, wala itong kabuluhan sa ating kababayan na hinaharap ang realidad na mataas ang presyo ng mga bilihin lalo na ang pagkain --- lalo't higit ng bigas.

Totoo, puwersa ng merkado --- sa ating bansa at maging sa buong daigdig -- ang siyang nagdidikta ng presyo. Bunsod ito, halimbawa, ng giyera, problema sa supply at puwersa ng kalikasan tulad ng El Niño na naranasan

din sa ibang bansa. Subalit hindi na ito mahalagang alalahanin ng ating mga kababayang nabibigatan sa presyo ng bigas.

[00:02:22]

Mahal kong mga kababayan, alam kong damang-dama ninyo ito. Hindi natin winawalang-bahala ang inyong mga hinaing at hrap na dinaranas.

Sa kabila ng mga hamon na ating kinakaharap, nasaksihan natin ang pinakamataas na ani ng palay sa bansa nitong nakalipas na taon. [applause] Pumalo ito sa lagpas dalawampung milyong tonelada --- ang pinakamataas na ani mula noong 1987. [applause]

Gayunpaman, ang ani na ito ay katumbas lamang ng labintatlong milyong tonelada ng bigas. Kulang pa rin ito para sa ating pangangailangan na labing anim na milyong tonelada ng bigas, kung kaya't napipilitan tayong mag-angkat.

Ngunit, lokal na produksyon pa rin ang ating mas bibigyan ng halaga. Kaya patuloy nating sinusupportahan ang sektor ng agrikultura upang mapabilis, mapadali at mapalakas ang produksyon --- mula sa pagpunla, pag-ani at paghuli, hanggang sa pagbiyahe at pagbenta --- upang maiwasan din ang pagkasira ng mga produkto.

Nitong nakalipas na taon, higit isandaang milyong kilo ng mga sari-saring binhi, suwi at pataba ang ipinamahagi sa mga magsasaka. Namigay rin ang pamahalaan ng mahigit tatlong daang libong inahin upang ito ay maparami.

Para naman sa mga mangingisda, mahigit limandaang milyong fingerlings at tatlong libong mga bangka ang naipamahagi. Nakakatulong din ang mga ginawa at inayos na mga fish port at cold storage upang masuportahan ang kanilang industriya.

Bukod pa sa mga ito, naroon din ang mga teknikal at pinansyal na tulong para sa dagdag na kaalaman sa mga makabagong pamamaraan at pagkukunan ng sapat na puhunan.

Handa na rin ang pamahalaan na ilabas ang mga bakuna laban sa Swine Fever na magpapalakas sa mga alagang hayop at magbibigay ng garantiya sa mga magsasaka laban sa pagkalugi. [applause]

Nagsasagawa rin tayo ng mga kaugnay na hakbang upang pababain ang presyo at madagdagan din ang ating supply ng pagkain.

[00:05:01]

Because of compelling emergency reasons, such as illegal price manipulations by hoarders and smuggling, we were constrained to temporarily implement mandated price ceilings on rice. We also extended the reduced tariff rates to facilitate the importation of rice, corn and pork until the end of this year.

Tinitiyak ko sa ating mga magsasaka at sa buong sektor ng agrikultura na ang mga ito ay pawang pang-gipitang solusyon lamang. Sa repormang sakahan naman, tuloy pa rin ang ating programa, at ang pamamahagi ng mga titulo sa ating mga magsasaka.

Sa nakalipas na dalawang taon, mahigit isangdaan at tatlung libong titulo na ang ating naigawad sa mga benepisyaryo. [applause]

Tuloy-tuloy din at pinabibilis pa natin ang pagkakahati-hati ng collective Certificates of Land Ownership Award o iyong CLOA para sa mga indibidwal na benepisyaryo nito.

Pinamamahagi na rin ang mga Certificates of Condonation kaugnay ng pagpapawalang-bisa sa mahigit limampu't pitong bilyong pisong utang ng may anim na raang libong benepisyaryo. [applause]

Bukod pa rito, naresolba rin ang mahigit pitumpung libong mga kaso patungkol sa repormang agraryo. Kasama rito ang mahigit dalawang libong kasong matagal nang nakabinbin bago pa man pumasok ang administrasyon.

Through modernized customs procedures and heightened enforcement efforts, more than 2.7 billion pesos worth of smuggled agri-fisheries products have been seized, preventing them from entering the market and negatively influencing prices. [applause]

Bilang leksyon, ang mga nasabat na kargamento ng bigas ay agad nating ipinamahagi sa ating mga mahihirap na kababayan. Ganoon din ang sasapitin ng lahat ng mga ipupuslit na mga bigas. Ang ibang mga produkto naman ay ating sisirain o susunugin bukod pa sa pagkakakulong sa mga mahuhuling mga salarin. [applause]

Soon, we will be implementing the pre-border technical verification and cross-border electronic invoicing of import commodities. This will send a strong message that we mean serious business.

To reduce unnecessary business costs, local government units no longer collect fees and charges from motorists transporting goods and merchandise while passing through national roads. [applause]

On the same principle, LGUs have been strongly urged to refrain from collecting similar fees for the use of local roads. [applause]

Nagsilbing kaagapay ng taumbayan ang KADIWA sa panahon na mataas ang presyo ng pagkain. Dahil naging epektibo ito, ang mga KADIWA Centers ay magpapatuloy pa.

Katuwang ang mga lokal na pamahalaan, dinagdagan pa natin ang mga KADIWA sa iba't ibang panig ng bansa. Higit sa lahat, layunin nating gawing permanente rin at mas madalas pa ang pagdaraos ng mga KADIWA. [applause]

Matapos ngayong taon ang isang libo at dalawang daang kilometro ng mga farm-to-market roads sa buong bansa. Mahigit siyam na libo't tatlong daang makinarya ang maipapamahagi at pasilidad na magagawa ngayong taon.

Patuloy tayong nagbubukas at nagkukumpuni ng mga irigasyon sa buong Pilipinas. Ngayong taon, bibigyan natin ng patubig ang halos apatnapu't limang libong ektarya ng bagong lupain. [applause] Bubuhayin din nating muli ang irigasyon sa halos tatlumpu't walong libong ektarya ng lupain sa buong bansa.

Isa sa mga natatapos na proyekto ay ang stage two ng Malitubog-Maridagao Irrigation Project. Halos sampung libong ektarya ng lupain sa North Cotabato at sa Maguindanao del Sur ang maseserbisyuhan ng irigasyon na ito. [applause]

[00:09:45]

Ang ilan sa mga ginagawa nating irigasyon ngayon ay solar --- ibig sabihin, pinapatakbo ang mga ito ng haring araw, hindi nauubos at hindi nangangailangan ng paggamit ng krudo. Isang halimbawa ay ang kakabukas lamang na Cabaruan Solar-Powered Pump Irrigation Project sa Quirino, Isabela. [applause]

Samantala, dahil sa Jalaur River Multipurpose Project sa Iloilo, halos tatlumpu't dalawang libong ektarya ng lupain ang mabibigyan ng patubig. [applause]

Patutunayan ng proyekto sa Jalaur River ang pinalalawig na potensyal ng irigasyon. Hindi na lamang patubig sa sakahan ang kaya nitong gawin. Ito na rin ay magagamit sa pagkontrol ng baha, paglikha ng kuryente at pati na rin para sa turismo.

Moving forward, irrigation dams will supplement all our other bulk water projects to ensure water security for our people, especially in the underserved areas.

Matindi ang naging epekto ng dumaang El Niño, lalo na sa mga sakahan. Sa tinamong pinsala mula sa pagkasira ng mga pananim, nagkaroon ng proteksyon ang ating mga magsasaka sa pamamagitan ng ating binigay na crop insurance.

Sa nakalipas na dalawang taon, mahigit siyam na libong pisong halaga ang naging bayad-pinsala para sa mga apektadong magsasaka at mangingisda. Ngunit mainam na rin na nailunsad ng maaga ang mga modernong paraan ng pagtanim, tulad ng low-water use farming technologies.

Sa ating nasimulan sa proyektong LAWA at BINHI, isinasagawa na ang mga modernong imbakan ng tubig, upang lalong maging handa at protektado ang ating mga magsasaka sa banta ng tagtuyot.

As we can see in all the world, weather events are, as has been predicted, getting more extreme, such as torrential rains that instantly shift to scorching heat waves or vice-versa. Our country's geographical location makes us highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

Precisely because of our inherent vulnerability, we are proactive advocates for heightened climate responsibility and justice on the global stage. To this end, we have secured a seat on the Board of the Loss and Damage Fund. And further, the Philippines has also been selected as host country to that fund. [applause]

[00:12:36]

This will require an enabling law from Congress to confer the legal personality and capacity to the Board. This welcome development shall complement all our other climate adaptation and mitigation measures and give us a strong voice to access the needed financial assistance for climate-related initiatives and impacts.

Gayunpaman, ang pinakamahalaga ay ang buong bansa ay matibay at laging handa sa nakakapinsalang mga sakuna. Nangunguna ang ating mga DRRM workers upang tiyakin ang ating malawakang paghahanda at ang ating pagiging mulat at listo sa anumang oras.

Bilang pangunahing paghahanda, nagtatayo tayo ng mga mahahalagang imprastraktura na magsisilbing proteksyon at sentro ng koordinasyon, lalo na sa aspeto ng paghahatid tulong.

Within the past two years, almost a hundred evacuation centers have already been built. While in January of this year, we started the operations of our Disaster Response Command Center, which shall serve as the central hub for the government's disaster response efforts.

Ngayon, sa pagpihit ng panahon, ang hagupit ng La Niña at mga matinding pag-ulan naman ang ating binabantayan at pinaghahandaan. Mahigit limang libo at limang daang flood control project ang natapos na at marami pang iba ang kasalukuyang ginagawa sa buong bansa. [applause]

Isa na rito ay ang Flood Risk Management Project sa Cagayan de Oro River, na magbibigay ng pangmatagalang proteksyon sa mahigit anim na raang ektarya ng lupa at animnapung libo nating mga kababayan. [applause] Isa pa ay ang proyekto sa Pampanga Bay na magsisilbing karagdagang lunas sa mga pagbabaha.

Noong Enero, inilunsad natin ang "KALINISAN sa Bagong Pilipinas," kung saan pinakilos natin ang ating mga barangay upang maglinis sa kani-kanilang komunidad. Sa limang buwan lamang, mahigit apatnapung libong tonelada ng basura ang nakolekta ng mahigit dalawampu't dalawang libong mga barangay sa buong bansa. Inaasahan ko ang tuloy-tuloy na suporta ng mga lokal na pamahalaan sa paglilinis ng ating pamayanan. [applause]

[00:15:14]

Bilang halimbawa rin dito sa Maynila, nagsimula na ang malawakang pagtutulungan upang Bigyang Buhay Muli ang Ilog Pasig. [applause]

As we enter the mid-term, our infrastructure development remains sustained, strategic and on schedule. Aside from agriculture and disaster risk, our other vital sectors and pillars --- such as education, health, energy, low-cost housing, transport, information technology --- they all stand to benefit from our aggressive infrastructure development as befitting our upper middle-income economic target.

With the results that we have seen two years into this administration, we can claim that despite challenges, we are steadily progressing towards our targets in the medium-term.

Our power and internet services are continuously being upgraded in both capacity and connectivity.

Sa ating Free Wi-Fi Program, halos sampung milyong unique user devices ang nakikinabang sa libreng internet sa mahigit labintatlong libong lugar sa

buong Pilipinas. [applause] Nasasagap ito sa marami nating mga paaralan at mga malalayo at liblib na mga pook. Patuloy pa ang ating pinaparami na mga libreng Wi-Fi sa buong bansa.

As part of our nationwide internet infrastructure development, phase 1 of the National Fiber Backbone has been completed and operationalized. Phases 2 and 3 have already begun early this year and shall be completed by 2026. This fiber backbone will give us sufficient capacity in terms of bandwidth.

As of 2022, only seventy-seven percent or 20.6 million households were connected to the internet. This is much too low.

Together with our private sector partners, we will efficiently harness the concept of common towers to provide connectivity to Filipinos who are at the far end of the last mile. Expect full government support to ensure the successful completion of this critical project, including policy reforms and streamlined processes. [applause]

Bigger and faster IT infrastructure requires stronger and more impervious cyber-defense. Our recently launched National Cybersecurity Plan lays down the blueprint for us to safeguard our systems against cyberattacks.

[00:18:03]

With these said, I have directed the agencies concerned to ensure that the speed and quality of our IT development always mirrors the pace and trajectory of our economic aspirations.

As energy projects get completed and new investments pour into the sector, we expect our nation's power supply to increase at a steady pace to meet our growing demand in the next few years. Nonetheless, we are continuously diagnosing and urgently addressing power shortages, as well as the systemic causes of blackouts in unserved and underserved areas.

Nireremedyuhan natin ang pangangailangan ng mga lugar na wala pang kuryente at madalas ma-brownout sa pamamagitan ng microgrid at off-grid systems at mga missionary small power utilities na sinusuportahan pa rin ng solar.

Running through Bataan, Pampanga and Bulacan, the newly inaugurated Mariveles-Hermosa-San Jose transmission line will further strengthen the reliability of the Luzon power grid. [applause]

In the Visayas, all stages of the Cebu-Negros-Panay backbone project have likewise been completed. This project shall serve to stabilize the power

situation in Western and Central Visayas and avert recurrences of power outages experienced in the past.

Dahil sa proyektong ito, naiwasan ang blackouts sa Panay Island noong Abril hanggang Hunyo, sa kabila ng yellow at red alerts sa region. [applause]

And just last week, the Dumanjug-Corella Line of the Cebu-Bohol Interconnection Project was energized, enabling the transfer of power between Cebu and Bohol.

With these systems currently operating at capacity, these major power lines shall contribute to the efficient power exchanges not only between Luzon and the Visayas, but also involving Mindanao. Energy sharing and transfers between, among and within the three island groups have now been made possible with the energization last January of the Mindanao-Visayas Interconnection. [applause]

The energization of the Mindanao-Visayas Interconnection is a defining moment not only for the power sector but for the entire country. Finally, we have connected the power grids of all three major island groups. [applause]

[00:20:50]

The “unified Philippine Grid” is a fulfillment of this dream, whose seeds were planted in the 80s, through a vision bolstered by R and D, which we accomplished by applying typical Filipino persistence and dedication.

Batid nating lahat na ang presyo ng kuryente dito sa ating bansa ay mataas. Kaya patuloy tayo sa pagdadagdag ng mga imprastraktura ng kuryente na magpapababa ng presyo ng kalaunan.

Sa kabilang banda, tinitiyak din nating makatarungan ang paniningil sa mga konsyumer. Ilan sa mga hakbang na pinatupad ng pamahalaan ay: una, ang mas maayos at patas na Lifeline Rate program para sa mga mahihirap, lalo na sa mga benepisyaryo ng 4Ps. [applause]

Pangalawa, ang naging pansamantalang pagsuspinde ng FIT-All Tariff sa ating electric bill.

Pangatlo, ang Anti-Bill Shock program.

At pang-apat, ang naging pagsuspinde ng Wholesale Electricity Spot Market noong panahon na nag-red alert sa Luzon at Visayas grid.

At ang pang-huli, mga refund at pagpapatanggal ng mga sobrang singil sa konsyumer tulad ng franchise fee. [applause]

Binabalikan at binubusisi nating muli ang EPIRA upang malaman kung angkop pa ba ito sa ating kasalukuyang sitwasyon o napapanahon na, na ito ay amyendahan. [applause]

Hinihiling ko sa Kongreso na pagtulungan na natin ito, alang-alang sa kapakanan ng mga Pilipino. Sa taas ng presyo ng kuryente sa bansa, nahihirapan hindi lamang ang mga negosyante --- kung hindi lalo na ang taong-bayan. [applause]

As of May this year, twelve thousand kilometers worth of roads and more than one thousand two hundred bridges have been built and upgraded across the country. [applause]

Of note, we have provided the budget to upgrade three hundred sixty-seven bridges and almost one thousand six hundred kilometers of road along our country's longest thoroughfare --- the Maharlika Highway --- from Luzon all the way to Mindanao.

[01:04:36]

Moreover, significant segments of major expressways, which are part of the Luzon Spine Expressway Network, have now been opened to the public.

The CLEX, NLEX-SLEX Connector and the Plaridel Bypass will be fully completed by the end of this year. [applause] CALAX and the C5 South Link will be fully operational by next year.

Dahil sa mga mahahalagang daan na ito, ang Norte, Gitnang Luzon, Maynila at Katimugang Luzon ay lalo pa ngayon magiging mas konektado sa isa't isa.

Under our Inter-Island Linkage Bridge Program, we expect two major bridges to be opened to motorists this year.

One is the Panguil Bay Bridge --- touted as the longest water-spanning bridge in Northern Mindanao. [applause] This bridge will connect Lanao del Norte to Misamis Occidental. The other is the Guicam Bridge in Zamboanga Sibugay, which shall connect Olutanga Island to the mainland of Mindanao. [applause]

In addition, travel to and from Clark Airport is now much faster and more convenient, with the inauguration of the twenty-kilometer Airport-New Clark City Access Road in Pampanga. [applause]

We are also in the midst of a “railway renaissance.” The Metro Manila Subway Project has logged significant accomplishments in its tunneling works. Sa puntong ito, katumbas na ng tatlo hanggang anim na palapag ang lalim na nahukay at tuloy-tuloy na na umuusad sa susunod na istasyon.

Other railway projects, such as the MRT-7 and the North- South Commuter Railway, are likewise progressing. We will make sure that the right of way issues are resolved in the most equitable, efficient and expeditious manner, so that these will not get in the way of our infrastructure development.

Bilang bahagi ng LRT 1 Cavite Extension project, ang ruta ng LRT Line 1 sa Metro Manila ay madadagdagan mula sa Baclaran hanggang Sucat. Bubuksan ito sa publiko sa loob ng taong ito. At sa ilang taon, aabot na ang linya na ito hanggang Bacoor.

Nagdagdag din tayo ng pitumpu’t anim na bago at modernong mga tren sa LRT 1 upang mas dumami, bumilis at maging mas kumportable ang biyahe ng mga pasahero. [applause]

[00:26:23]

Kamakailan lamang, binuksan naman nating muli sa publiko ang PNR Bicol Line na may habang isandaang kilometro, mula Naga hanggang sa Legazpi. [applause]

Gayundin, patuloy ang pagpapaganda ng ating mga paliparan at ang ating mga daungan para sa ikakaginhawa ng ating mga manlalakbay.

Unang-una na rito ang Paliparan ng Maynila. Sa pangangasiwa ng pribadong sektor, inaasahang gaganda ang hitsura at serbisyo nito sa mga susunod na taon.

Soon, it will be capable of accommodating 48 flights per hour, servicing our ever-increasing local and international flight routes and catering to more than 62 million passengers every year.

More than seventy airport and seaport development projects across the country have now been completed and another three hundred fifty ongoing projects are set to be completed by the year 2028. [applause]

Notably, the capacities of the Passenger Terminal Buildings of the General Santos Airport and the Bicol International Airport have been expanded by three hundred and five hundred percent, now catering to two thousand and one thousand six hundred passengers, respectively.

Meanwhile, the Batangas Port PTB, our popular marine gateway to MIMAROPA, the Visayas and to Mindanao, can now accommodate eight thousand travelers at any given time.

Thanks to Congress, the Public-Private Partnership, as a crucial funding mechanism for big-ticket projects, is now institutionalized by the force of law. [applause]

PPP is seen to facilitate strategic investments and the timely development of projects under our Build Better More program, especially since around one-fourth of our flagship projects have been envisioned to be funded through this modality.

As a perfect example, the NAIA PPP will go down in our history not only as among the largest and fastest approved PPP, but one that has set the bar in terms of openness, transparency and competitiveness of the process.

[00:28:52]

Through this partnership, our foremost aerial gateway is now primed for a revitalization. Once considered as among the worst and most stressful airports in the world, it will soon be a world-class international airport that we can all be proud of. [applause]

But even before that, the UP-PGH Cancer Center is the first PPP to be approved in this administration. Together with the Philippine Cancer Center of the DOH, which broke ground last March, these two specialty hospitals will soon join our nation's fight against cancer. These Centers will be a godsend to the more than four hundred thousand Filipinos who are afflicted with this deadly disease.

Habang ang mga modernong ospital na ito ay ginagawa pa, patuloy tayo sa pagdadagdag at pagpapataas ng kalidad ng ating mga ospital at mga specialty center.

Binuksan na natin sa publiko ang mahigit dalawampung Bagong Urgent Care and Ambulatory Service, o mga "BUCAS" Centers, sa iba't ibang lugar sa bansa. [applause]

Intended to decongest public hospitals, these Centers shall provide competent ambulatory care, most especially to the poor and to the disadvantaged, for health conditions that do not require hospital admission.

Katuwang din natin ang lokal na pamahalaan sa mga tinatayo nating mga tawag na “Super Health Centers.” Sa tulong ng mga LGU, malalagyan natin ng sapat na mga doktor at nars ang mga ito at madadagdagan pa natin sa mga susunod na taon. [applause]

Layunin natin na sa lalong madaling panahon, lahat ng lalawigan natin ay may sapat na mga center o pasilidad na may kakayahang makapagbigay ng pangunahing serbisyong medikal para sa ating mga mamamayan.

Samantala, titiyakin natin na ang bawat isang probinsya ay mabibigyan ng Mobile Clinic, upang ang laboratory exam at ilan pang pangunahing serbisyong-medikal ay mapapalapit natin sa ating mga kababayan. [applause]

Sa PhilHealth naman, dinamihan na ang klase ng generic na gamot na kasama sa benepisyo para sa mga outpatient. [applause] Mula sa dalawampu’t isang generic na gamot, ay limampu’t tatlo na. May mga bagong gamot para sa altapresyon at mayroon na rin para sa nerve pain at sa epileptic seizures. [applause]

[00:31:42]

Bilang tugon sa dumaraming insidente at tumataas na presyo ng pagpagamot, itinaas na ng Philhealth ng mahigit doble ang mga benepisyo para sa mga malulubhang karamdaman tulad ng acute stroke at pulmonya. Ang limit na ngayon para sa mga kundisyon na ito ay itinaas na hanggang pitumpu’t anim na libong piso at siyamnapung libong piso. [applause]

Upang mapaingting pa ang paglaban natin sa cancer, tinaasan ng PhilHealth ng mahigit isang libong porsyento ang benepisyo para sa pagpagamot ng breast cancer. [applause] Ang dating limit na isandaang libong piso, ngayon ay ginawa na nating 1.4 million pesos. [applause]

Ang benepisyo naman para sa colon cancer ay pinag-ibayo na rin. At bago matapos ang taon, maisasama na rin sa mga benepisyo ng PhilHealth ang chemotherapy para sa cancer sa бага, atay, ovary at prostate. [applause]

Naglaan po tayo ng mas mataas na pondo para sa ating medical assistance program, kaya higit na mas marami pang mga Pilipino ang matutulungan nito ngayong taon. [applause]

Aside from our aggressive hiring efforts, we have enhanced medical and allied health programs allocated seed funds for public medical schools and launched scholarships and review and upskilling programs. These are to support the medical and nursing professions, with the goal to strengthen and increase our human resources for health.

As part of our recalibrated health approach towards prevention and healthy habits, we are prioritizing vaccinations, nutrition, mental well-being and active and healthy lifestyles.

Tuloy-tuloy ang ating paghahabol sa pagbabakuna ng mga sanggol at ang mga bata --- lalo na sa Region VI at sa BARMM, kung saan kulang pa sa kalahati ang nababakunahan. At tuloy na tuloy din ang Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition, na ating binibigyang-tuon ngayong Hulyo, Buwan ng Nutrisyon.

Our convergent programs to stamp out hunger and malnutrition were not only successfully launched, but have yielded inspiring results thus far.

One survey confirmed that our expanding School-Based Feeding Program has had a significant impact on the physical and mental well-being of more than half of the learner-beneficiaries. Therefore, we will continue to further enhance these feeding programs in our schools and day-care centers. [applause]

[00:34:46]

The recently launched “Walang Gutom 2027” will now be fully rolled out from the initial two thousand three hundred households, now all the way to three hundred thousand food-poor households across the country by the end of this year. But the program will go on until we feed the one million most food-poor families by 2027. [applause]

An important component of our strategies to address malnutrition shall be the program for the “First One Thousand Days,” or the first two years of a child’s life.

To ensure the health and nutrition of children zero to two years old from the poorest families, we have proposed in the 2025 Budget a new grant under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program for this purpose.

Sa pamamagitan nito, ang isang buntis o ang isang ina na benepisyaryo ng 4Ps ay mabibigyan ng karagdagang tulong-pinansyal na laan para sa kanya at sa kanyang anak.

Ang tulong na ito ay upang matiyak na siya at ang sanggol na kanyang sinapupunan, o batang anak, ay maaasikaso ng doktor, mababakunahan at mabibigyan ng sapat na nutrisyon. [applause]

Closely related to these, the DOST has been continuously undertaking scientific research to develop nutritious food and drinks, which can be integrated into the government's feeding program.

Government is aware of the pressing yet delicate social issues of the day such as the mental well-being of our people.

The DOH has launched its comprehensive mental health plan and ensured sufficient supply of medications. PhilHealth has also released the share of its mental health benefit package for all its members. At the same time, grassroots and Sports for All Programs are back in the mainstream, catering to Filipinos of all ages.

Nailunsad na namang muli ang taunang Palarong Pambansa matapos ang tatlong taon na pagkakatigil nito dahil sa pandemya. Binabati natin ang Marikina at Cebu at at Kagawaran ng Edukasyon sa kanilang matagumpay na pagtatanghal ng mga Palarong ito. [applause]

We will continue to support these health enhancing sports programs. Through this, we will also set forth our youth on the same well established path that has taken some of our national champions and renowned athletes to sporting greatness. [applause]

As we speak, twenty-eight of our finest athletes are competing in Paris now for the glory of the Philippines. [cheers and applause] Let us wish them well and the best of luck.

Sa larangan naman ng edukasyon, investing in our own people is not only a fundamental moral imperative for us, but an economic one as well.

In its report, the World Bank revealed that our promising economic growth is largely attributable to our people. The great bulk of the country's wealth is being created by the skill, the industry and the resourcefulness of all Filipinos.

Ngunit sadyang marami pang ibubuga ang Pinoy.

We must harness the totality of the Filipino's potential. Thus, for consecutive years, we have prioritized an increase in budget for the inclusive development of Filipinos. Not just in food, nutrition and health, but even more so, in education and training.

[00:38:46]

Recent assessments have revealed the poor reality that more than half of our grades 6, 10 and 12 students have failed to reach the ideal proficiency levels, faring low in information literacy, problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

Therefore, our national learning recovery program must proceed without the slightest disruption, especially in basic education. Our system of education must be strategically calibrated to make sure that our youth are not only taught to become literate. But it must also consciously develop them into problem-solvers, and into critical thinkers --- hungry for success, ready for the future.

Similarly, as we relentlessly address the classroom gap, the digital gap must also be bridged with equal intensity. We are working towards the day when all students will be equipped with computers, smart TVs, essential programs, digital books --- and once again, access to reliable power and the Internet.

Digitalization and solar-powered electricity must now become the standard features in our schools and in our classrooms. Simply put, this is educational reform through technology.

The perennial problem surrounding textbooks shall be resolved. The production of instructional materials, especially textbooks, which are up-to-date and error-free, must be ensured. The whole process, from approval of manuscript to procurement, all the way to distribution, will be cut short from its present three years to just one year. [applause]

Ito ngayon ang magiging hamon sa ating bagong Kalihim: na tiyakin ang pagbangon at pagtaas ng kalidad ng edukasyon sa bansa, sa lalong madaling panahon. [applause]

Clearly, of course the quality of our education rests on the quality of our teachers. Every classroom that we build will be but an empty and lifeless structure without its moving force --- the teacher. But our teachers are not just perfunctory figures in our schools; they are the very foundation of our educational system.

And so, as we build and upgrade schools, so too must we uplift and upskill our teachers, whose competence and trademark Filipino patience, determination and compassion will be at the core of our national learning recovery.

[00:41:36]

Dinagdagan natin ang mga empleyado na hahalili sa mga guro upang magampanan ang mga sari-saring gawain sa paaralan. Sa gayon, ang ating mga guro ay makakatutok nang mabuti sa kanilang propesyon ng pagtuturo.

Katuwang ang Kongreso, naisabatas na ang “Kabalikat sa Pagtuturo” Act. Ito’y magbibigay sa mga guro na sa pampublikong paaralan ng taunang teaching allowance para pambili ng mga kagamitan sa pagtuturo at mga kaugnay na gastusin. [applause] Matatanggap na nila ito simula sa susunod na taon.

Mayroon na rin silang Personal Accident Insurance mula sa GSIS. Makakapaghatid din ng dagdag na ginhawa ang Special Hardship Allowance para sa mga karagdagang public school teacher na masasaklaw nito, na nakakaranas ng matinding hrap at panganib sa kanilang araw-araw na pagtatrabaho.

At wala na ring “Utang-Tagging” sa mga titser. Hindi magiging hadlang ang kanilang pagkakautang upang makapag-renew ng kanilang mga lisensya. [applause] Bagkus, marapat lamang na sila ay payagan pa ring makapagturo nang sila ay makapaghanapbuhay at mayroong kinikita.

Of equal significance, we have allocated funds to finally implement the expanded career progression system for our public school teachers. This will promote professional development and career advancement within their ranks. This expanded system lays out two major career paths for our teachers to pursue: the teaching and the school administration tracks, each of which shall have ample career growth opportunities.

With this system in place, we will accelerate the career growth of teachers. Sa sistemang ito, wala ng public school teacher ang magre-retire na Teacher I lamang. [applause]

Sa madaling sabi, kung talagang ninanais nating maging matagumpay ang hinahangad nating pagbangon sa larangan ng edukasyon, sila --- ang ating mga guro --- ang dapat nating itaguyod at patatagin.

Last year, we reported that our system of higher education was gaining international recognition for all the right reasons. As further evidence, eighty-seven of our Higher Educational Institutions have now made it into various world university rankings. Fifty-one of them are public universities or colleges. [applause]

[00:44:36]

Also, we witnessed this past school year a significant rise in the enrollment rate in higher education, both in public and in private institutions. The same upward trend is likewise noted in technical-vocational education and training or TVET.

Statistics do not lie. Eight out of ten graduates of TVET ultimately land decent jobs. So, with its high employability rate, TVET will definitely be instrumental in capacitating our people and in maintaining our employment rate at consistently high levels.

Cognizant of its potential, the DEPED, CHED, DOLE and TESDA have joined forces now to incorporate TVET in the Senior High School curriculum to further boost the employability of our students. [applause]

The Filipinno and Malikhaling Pinoy programs have been launched, both drawing vast interest and inspiring key sectors and the public to generate solutions, to share ideas and to drive innovation forward across the country.

The IT and creative sectors are burgeoning industries, knowing no territorial bounds and they hold great promise for our talented and hardworking people.

This is the call of our times and we are moving to answer that call. The schools will serve as the preeminent incubators of the innovative and creative energies of all Filipinos.

Advanced learning systems and technologies in the areas of robotics, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things, shall be made available in TVET Innovation Centers nationwide. Highly technical and professional-level training courses will soon be launched, notably in cybersecurity and in the creative industries.

Of our globally ranked HEIs, sixty-three have made it into the WURI Global Top 300 innovative universities. [applause]

In the face of tough global competition, the Mabalacat City College in Pampanga was awarded the Technological or Digital Innovation of the Year. [applause] And for the second straight year, Samar State University topped the rankings for its digitally pioneering R&D project entries. [applause]

Relevant scholarships and R&D grants will continue to be available, aligned with our agenda to foster start-ups. To commercialize and mass produce R&D

outputs, crucial support, such as intellectual property rights enforcement and venture financing, have been put in place.

[00:47:27]

We are also building essential infrastructure and linkages to support the ethical development of artificial intelligence systems for high-impact practical applications.

Since the nation's foray into space technology, our satellites in space have generated more than fifty-one thousand maps, images and space-borne data for various purposes. These now provide us with vital information that guides our country's stratagems and decision-making in agricultural development, urban planning and environmental management, including the strengthening of our maritime domain awareness, to name but a few examples.

Along with these discoveries, we are likewise in awe of our countrymen who have carved out their niche as pioneering space scientists and engineers in this emergent field, in collaboration with local space technology companies that provide an additional impetus.

As we speak, sixteen of our space engineers are in the United Kingdom resuming work on the development of the Multi-Spectral Unit for Land Assessment, or the MULA satellite. Once completed, the MULA satellite will be our largest earth observation satellite to be launched into space so far. [applause]

May they inspire the next generation of Filipino students to follow their footsteps and reach for the stars.

Sa ating mga trabahador, our employment rate has increased to 95.9%. [applause] We also saw a significant increase in high-quality jobs. Underemployment too has decreased from 11.7% in May of 2023 to 9.9% today. [applause] This is our lowest number since 2005. [applause]

Notably, we also saw an increase in middle-skilled employment, wage and salaried employment and full-time jobs.

Magagandang balita pa rin ang mga ito sa kabila ng nararanasang mataas na presyo ng pagkain. Bukod sa paglikha ng trabaho, pinalalakas din natin ang kakayahan ng ating mga mamamayan, lalo na sa panahon ng kanilang kagipitan.

[00:49:58]

Our adaptive and responsive social protection programs assist our countrymen in times of dire need, reaching those in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas. More importantly, these programs seek to develop their productive potential and bridge their capacities towards self-sufficiency.

With the noble aim of breaking the cycle of poverty across the country, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program has not only consistently accomplished its annual targets, it has also proven its efficacy over the years. [applause]

Mula noong nakaraang SONA, mahigit apat na raan at dalawampung libong pamilya ang nag-graduate sa programa. [applause] Ibig sabihin, sa tulong ng 4Ps mas gumanda na ang kanilang kalagayan at kakayahang makipagsapalaran sa laban ng buhay. [applause]

Sa katunayan, mahigit apat na libong graduate ng 4Ps ay nasa hanay na ngayon ng mga lisensyadong guro. [applause] At hindi lamang iyon: tatlumpu't lima sa mga topnotchers ng sari-saring mga board exam na idinaos nitong nakalipas na dalawang taon ay nagmula sa mga pamilya na benepisyaryo ng 4Ps. [applause]

Ilan sa kanila ay si Teacher Khane Jevie Cervantes ng Davao Oriental, na nakuha ng number one sa Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers. [cheers and applause] Isa rin si Engr. Alexis Alegado na nanguna sa Civil Engineering Board Exam noong Abril ng nakalipas na taon. [applause]

Tomorrow --- the birthdate of Apolinario Mabini --- we cap off the National Disability Rights Week. Our PWDs can rest assured of government's effective implementation of beneficial policies and programs that will guarantee equitable opportunities, special interventions and incentives for them.

Mula nang pumasok ang administrasyong ito, nagsimula na ang mga programang pangkabuhayan na nakalaan para sa ating mga PWD. Sa susunod na taon, ilulunsad naman ng PhilHealth ang benepisyo nito para sa mga batang may kapansanan. [applause]

Halos dinoble na rin ang diskwento na ibinibigay sa mga PWD at sa mga senior citizen na tulad ninyo — para sa mga basic necessities at prime commodities. [cheers and applause] Natuwa kayong lahat doon. [laughter]

Sa lahat ng mga ginagawa nating ito, katuwang natin palagi ang pribadong sektor lalo na sa mahahalagang bagay ng trabaho at pasahod.

With tripartite consensus, minimum wage levels have been increased in various sectors in all regions, including the BARMM, for workers in private establishments. Makakapagdulot ito ng ginhawa sa mahigit apat na milyong mga kababayan natin at ng kanilang mga pamilya.

Para naman sa ating mga kawani ng gobyerno, mayroon silang maaasahang medical allowance bilang karagdagang benepisyo sa susunod na taon. [applause]

At hindi lamang iyon. Mayroon ding napipintong omento sa suweldo na makukuha nila sa apat na tranche. Naglaan na po tayo ng pondo para dito simula sa taong ito at sa mga susunod na taon. [applause]

Furthermore, we have extended the services of our job order and contract of service personnel working in government. This will also afford them ample opportunity to work on their civil service eligibilities, while gaining additional relevant experience and training to upgrade their employment qualifications.

[00:54:33]

Our aggressive infrastructure development, business-friendly policies, investment and export promotions, foreign visits and economic missions are all aimed at generating not just jobs, but quality and competitive jobs. A substantial number of investment pledges have already commenced operations, with many more at various stages of development.

Sa bilang natin, bukod sa malalaking kita para sa bansa, makakalikha ang mga ito ng mahigit dalawang-daan at dalawang libong trabaho para sa ating mga kababayan. [applause]

The rationalized incentives scheme under the CREATE Act has also made possible the generation of investments amounting to more than one trillion pesos and more than a hundred thousand new jobs. This promising state of affairs is now beckoning us to create more --- through the passage of the CREATE MORE Act. [applause]

Conscious efforts to improve the ease of doing business and of delivering government services, through our digitalization, integration and streamlining of processes, have produced their intended multiplier effects. Cost savings from operations have translated to higher revenues and to more speedy transactions.

These have effectively addressed the fragmented, overlapping and time-consuming procedures that have hindered optimal productivity by government.

Attributable to these transformative reforms, government services are becoming more efficient. More and more systems are now digital and cashless, assimilating individuals, MSMEs, even agricultural workers. These have expedited transactions and commercial exchanges and promoted the convenience of all parties concerned.

Ang Palen-QR ay isa sa mga programang unti-unting lumalakas ang hatak sa publiko at dumarami ang gumagamit.

Bolstering our Cybercrime Prevention Act, the recently passed Anti-Financial Accounts Scamming Act will further protect the public by heightening the responsibility and security systems of banks and financial institutions and imposing high criminal liabilities on social engineering schemes and money mules.

[00:56:59]

Job placement also has seen significant progress, especially through our Public Employment Service Offices or PESOs nationwide. PESOs have harnessed IT capabilities and improved labor-industry coordination. Collectively, they boast a job placement success rate of ninety-eight percent. [applause]

Likewise, due to shortened timelines, we have recorded a significant increase in new business and corporate registrations, including foreign firms, which surpassed last year's numbers.

The observed chokepoints in our food supply chains and in the logistics sector are now being removed. And, at the same time, the identified gaps are being filled in to make them efficient, interconnected and seamless, saving precious time and cost.

The approval of energy projects is moving towards complete virtual integration of its required procedures. The expedited processing of our infrastructure flagship projects under the Build Better More program shall also follow suit.

Our digital infrastructure was substantially strengthened courtesy of common towers that more than tripled in number since last year, owing to streamlining of permitting requirements.

Air transport and tourism have been made more convenient, because of the shift to paperless immigration and customs forms, thanks to the E-Travel system. And soon, the piloted E-Gates will be standard fixtures at airports, to further facilitate ease of mobility during departures and arrivals. And with

all these said, the implementation of the Philippine E-Visa will be next in our digital transformation agenda. [applause]

Let us now go to tourism, because we, in the Philippines, have no less than seven thousand six hundred forty-one beautiful reasons to tap the potential of our tourism sector, for which our archipelagic nation is internationally renowned and from which many Filipinos derive their livelihood.

While a resurgence in this all-important sector is being observed, pre-pandemic data present to us a great challenge that we must surpass. It is a challenge that is well within our grasp.

[00:59:27]

Our infrastructure and digital reforms, through development of tourism sites and the enhancement of the overall tourist experience, are all calculated to boost the productivity of the tourism sector. While doing so, we shall interpose the wholesome and hospitable Filipino brand in all the key tourism touchpoints --- from tourist arrival all the way to departure.

But the tourism challenge has already evolved and now requires a multi-faceted strategy. The focus now is on “experiential tourism”.

Food, culture, heritage, the arts, education, halal, Islamic traditions, dive, cruise, farm and eco-tourism, even sports, have now become potent subjects and products of a nation’s tourism.

This is an imperative and that we must elevate and expand our understanding of the “one town, one product” or OTOP concept. It must not inhibit, but rather, it must inspire. We must not rest content to have just “one.” Rather, we must seek the “optimal” number of high-quality products and services, which at the same time showcase our community’s distinctive history, traditions and talents.

Filipino creativity and ingenuity will enliven and unlock the as yet untapped potential of these new facets of Philippine tourism.

Sa ating mga OFWs, ayon sa datos ng Bangko Sentral, mahigit tatlung-pitong bilyong dolyar ang naipasok sa bansa ng ating mga OFW noong nakalipas na taon. [cheers and applause] Sadyang napakalaking tulong nito sa ating bumabangon na ekonomiya.

Kaya hindi lamang pasasalamat, kundi parangal ang ating ipinapaabot sa lahat ng ating mga OFWs. [applause] Sana ay napapanood nila ito. Ramdam na ramdam hanggang dito sa ating bansa ang inyong sakripisyo.

Through vital partnerships with like-minded states, we have been able to promote our mutual interests, resulting not only in investments here and our strengthened national security, but also in quality jobs for our nationals seeking foreign employment.

Through intense Philippine lobbying, the United Nations has adopted the resolution on “Promoting and Protecting the Enjoyment of Human Rights of Seafarers.” This will ensure their safe and decent living and working conditions at sea --- a human rights imperative. [applause]

[01:02:24]

Patuloy ang ating pagtulong sa mga OFWs. Hindi ito natatapos sa kanilang paglisan sa bansa. Karagdagang mga espesyal na pasilidad at serbisyo ang ating binuksan para sa kanila, tulad ng OFW Lounge sa NAIA at Seafarer’s Hub sa Maynila.

Ang mga OFW natin na naapektuhan ng sari-saring mga kaguluhan tulad sa Israel, sa Gaza, sa Sudan, Lebanon at Yemen ay natulungan natin at naiuwi ng ligtas sa bansa. [applause] Gayundin ang naging pagtulong natin sa mga kababayan nating nasalanta ng kalamidad at krisis, tulad sa Taiwan at sa New Zealand.

Hanggang sa kanilang pag-uwi, buong-puso ang ating pagtanggap at paglingap. Ang nagbabalik-bayang mga OFW, kasama ng kanilang pamilya, ay sinusupportahan nating mabuti upang maging maayos ang kanilang bagong simula dito sa bansa --- para makakuha ng magandang trabaho o di kaya’y makapagtayo ng negosyo.

Kaugnay sa aking naiulat noong isang taon, sinimulan na ng Saudi Arabia ang pamimigay ng cheke sa ating mga trabahanteng nawalan ng trabaho doon. [applause] Unti-unti, ang ating mga naapektuhang OFWs ay nababayaran na.

For this, we convey our sincerest gratitude to the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. [applause]

Lessons from history and current events teach us that peace and order is an essential ingredient of genuine prosperity and social development. This is the path that we choose to take.

Despite difficulties, despite our diversity and differences as a people, we are joined together by a unique history and have constantly invested our energies and resources in strengthening the pillars of peace.

Our police, military and coast guard undergo continuous capacity-building and asset-upgrading so that they are better able to preserve the peace and defend our territory.

We have noted an overall decrease in crime rate and an improvement in crime solution efficiency. But this is not enough. [applause] This is not enough. Our law enforcers need to continue to earn the trust of our people. The strong pillars of our criminal justice system, especially in light of the new rules on criminal investigation and our independent judiciary, function in unison.

[01:43:25]

In tandem with the justice system, COA's audit mechanism works in harmony with our transparency, streamlining and open government initiatives. All in all, these successfully foster a culture of accountability that curbs corruption in government.

With the newly enacted Republic Act No. 12009 that I signed just last Saturday, government procurement will be modern and innovative, more streamlined and efficient and truly at par with global best practices. [applause]

We sincerely thank Congress for its timely and decisive action in amending the twenty-year old law.

We have come a long way in our quest for a lasting and inclusive peace. No guerilla fronts remain active across our country today. Only seven weakened groups remain to be dismantled, and they are the subject of focused operations. But along with the assertion of government might, we also offer peace, community development and reintegration programs for those who have returned to the fold of the law.

Through a comprehensive and transformative approach, we have rebuilt not only lives, but also conflict-affected communities.

The implementation of peace agreements is now in its concluding phase. Former combatants now live peaceful and productive lives in their respective communities. Some of our former rebels are now absorbed into the AFP, serving in the defense of the Republic; while others are now part of the PNP-BARMM.

Government will honor and fully comply with its remaining deliverables and commitments under these agreements. [applause]

In November last year, we signed proclamations granting amnesty to former rebels. A month later and then in June of this year, the House of Representatives and the Senate issued their respective resolutions concurring with these amnesty proclamations. [applause]

That Congress is one with us, is a testament to the whole nation's sincere desire for peace.

In such a short period, the BARMM has impressively established the strong foundation for its progressive autonomous social development. Investments continue to pour into the BARMM. Last year, investments in the region increased by one hundred forty percent year-on-year.

[01:07:55]

The improved peace and order situation, good governance --- not to mention high hopes and confidence amongst its people --- all contribute to the reasons why BARMM's poverty index has significantly decreased since 2018. [applause]

In Marawi, the rehabilitation and rebuilding continue --- under the supervision now of the Office of the President. [applause] Our focus remains on restoring energy, water and livable communities.

As of today, all seven inter-governmental mechanisms of the BARMM, as mandated under the Organic Law, have been organized and activated. These will guarantee effective and constant consultation between the Bangsamoro and National Governments in the fundamental aspects of governance.

Five out of the seven essential laws for the BARMM have already been enacted by the BTA Parliament. Now, it has its own Administrative Code; [applause] it has its own Local Government Code, its own Election Code and those for Education and the Civil Service as well.

So, with these inspiring developments, the BARMM appears primed and ready for its regular elections, the first ones that they will have in the coming year. [applause]

On the fight against dangerous drugs, our bloodless war on dangerous drugs adheres and will continue to adhere to the established "8 Es" of an effective anti-illegal drugs strategy. Extermination was never one of them. [cheers and applause]

And yet, in more than seventy-one thousand five hundred operations, it has resulted in the seizure of more than forty-four billion pesos worth of illegal drugs and the arrest of more than ninety-seven thousand drug personalities.

More than six thousand of those arrested were high-value targets. Four hundred forty of them were government employees, of whom forty-two were uniformed personnel. Seventy-seven were elected officials. [applause]

So to further paralyze their operations, dirty money and assets worth more than five hundred million pesos have been frozen and preserved. With strong case build-up and efficient prosecution, the drug conviction rate is at a high of seventy-nine percent. [applause]

[01:10:56]

Together with this, we welcome the report that the number of drug-affected barangays in our country has been reduced by thirty-two percent. [applause]

In our international relations, we have faced challenges to our territorial sovereignty and we will assert our rights and interests in the same fair and pacific way that we have always done. [cheers and applause]

Proper diplomatic channels and mechanisms under the rules-based international order remain the only acceptable means of settling disputes. Peace and community-building will always be our clarion call, especially when the country serves as chair and the host of ASEAN Summit in 2026.

We continuously try to find ways to de-escalate tensions in contested areas with our counterparts, without compromising our position and our principles. I know that our neighbors too are doing their best to make this work.

The Philippines cannot yield. The Philippines cannot waver. [cheers and applause]

We are now more conscious as a people and strategic in heightening our aerial and maritime domain awareness. We are continuing to strengthen our defensive posture, both through developing self-reliance and through partnerships with like-minded states.

Ang West Philippine Sea ay hindi kathang-isip natin lamang. Ito ay atin. [cheers and applause] At ito ay mananatiling atin hangga't nag-aalab ang diwa ng ating minamahal na bansang Pilipinas. [cheers and applause]

Pagtitibayin at palalaguin natin ang kamalayan at kaalaman ng buong bansa at titiyakin na maipapasa natin ito sa kabataan at ating susunod na mga salinlahi.

Laws on our Maritime Zones and Archipelagic Sea Lanes will make sure that this intergenerational mandate --- this duty will firmly take root in the hearts and minds of all our people.

[01:14:00]

Sa buong Sandatahang Lakas, sa Coast Guard, sa ating mga mangingisda sa West Philippine Sea: Tanggapin po ninyo ang taos-pusong pasasalamat ng buong bansa dahil sa inyong ginagawang pagmamatyag at sakripisyo. [cheers and applause]

Let us now turn to our economic status and our prospects, in spite of headwinds that we have faced, we have stayed the course. The country exhibits healthy signs of post-pandemic resilience comparable to strong economies in our region.

Our poverty rate has significantly dropped to 15.5%, down from 18% in 2021. [applause] This present figure is even lower than the pre-pandemic level of 16.7% in 2018. [applause]

Ang katumbas nito ay halos dalawa't kalahating milyong Pilipino ang naiangat natin mula sa kahirapan. [applause]

Kasabay nito, nabawasan ng lagpas isang milyon at pitong daang libo ang bilang ng mga Pilipinong walang sapat na pambili ng pagkain. Patuloy nating pagsisikapan na marami pa tayong maiaahon mula sa kahirapan. [applause]

To sustain the country's economic gains, we are promoting investment-led growth. We have set in motion policies and programs to create an environment conducive for businesses to thrive, like reforms in the capital markets and implementation of "green lanes".

As a result, we have "green-lane certified" around a hundred projects with a total investment of about three trillion pesos across the sectors of renewable energy, digital infrastructure, food security and manufacturing. [applause]

The Philippine financial system remains robust and resilient. Tax and non-tax revenue collection has also become more efficient in pace with our rejuvenated economy. Notably, for the past two years, our GOCCs have remitted dividends to the National Government with a combined tally exceeding their contributions in 2022. [applause]

To build on these and guided by strong fiscal discipline, our proposed government budget for this year was crafted with utmost care, diligence and meticulous attention.

[01:17:15]

We look to the cooperation of our colleagues in the Legislature, not only that our proposed National Budget be approved in your usual timely manner, but it be adhered to as closely as possible. [applause]

We expect all agencies to ensure that every centavo allocated will be judiciously spent for our urgent priorities and socially impactful programs.

Mga kababayan: sa lahat ng ginagawa nating ito at mga gagawin pa, mataas ang aking kumpiyansa na malalampasan din natin ang hamon na ating pinagdadaanan. Dahil ito ang pangunahing hinaing ng taumbayan, hindi tayo titigil sa paglalaban sa kahirapan at sa paghahanap ng lunas upang maibalik sa normal ang presyo ng bilihin --- lalo na ang bigas.

At ngayon po, naririnig po namin ang malakas na sigaw ng taumbayan laban sa mga POGO.

Disguising as legitimate entities, their operations have ventured into illicit areas furthest from gaming such as financial scamming, money laundering, prostitution, human trafficking, kidnapping, brutal torture, even murder.

The grave abuse and disrespect to our system of laws must stop.

Kailangan nang itigil ang panggulo nito sa ating lipunan at paglalapastangan sa ating bansa. [cheers and applause]

Effective today, all POGOs are banned. [cheers and applause]

[Crowd chanting: BBM! BBM! BBM!]

I hereby instruct PAGCOR to wind down and cease the operation of POGOs by the end of the year. [cheers and applause]

The DOLE, in coordination with our economic managers, shall use the time between now and then to find new jobs for our countrymen who will be displaced. [applause]

This will solve many of the problems that we are encountering. It will solve many of the problems that we have been encountering, but it will not solve all of them.

To solve all the problems that we have been suffering under, all officials, law enforcers, workers in government and most of all the citizenry, must always be vigilant, principled and think of the health of the nation.

So, ladies and gentlemen, let me end by recalling the words of a great man: Let not any one pacify his conscience by the delusion that he can do no harm if he takes no part and forms no opinion. Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends than that good men should look on and do nothing. [cheers and applause] He is not a good man who, without a protest, allows wrong to be committed in his name. [cheers and applause]

Mga minamahal kong kababayan, lagi po nating labanan ang mali at ang masama. Lagi po nating ipaglaban ang tama at ang mabuti. [applause]

Lagi po nating mahalín ang Pilipinas. Lagi po nating mahalín ang Pilipino. [applause]

Mabuhay po kayo at mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas! [applause]

Maraming, maraming salamat po. [cheers and applause]

[Crowd chanting: BBM! BBM! BBM!]
[01:22:06]

{applause count: 125}

BAGONG PILIPINAS