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# HEALTHSCAPE

*Saudade*

Features | Read on page 10

# CONTENTS

- 4** UP Manila Gets Presidential Designation as Only HEI Member to the National Forensics Institute TWG
- 5** CM Alum Gets Nod as New PhilHealth Chief
- 6** IHM Expert Capacitates Herbal Med Research with HPTLC Optimization and Validation Workshop
- 7** Autopsy Technical Support Among New Courses That Will Soon Be Offered in TESDA
- 8** CN Faculty Member and Librarian Win Award, Elections  
NTTCHP Celebrates 50 Years of Excellence in Health Professions Education
- 9** HPP Cops Award in Participatory Action Research, Initiates Community Immunization for Adolescents  
Inhaled Solvent Addiction Leads to Poor Decision-making and Social Isolation, New Study Says
- 10** Saudade
- 12** "The Pioneer": An Interview with the Hon. Carl Marc Ramota, 27th UP Faculty Regent
- 14** Ugnayan ng Pahinungod Disaster Relief Activity for Typhoon Pepito Victims in Aurora  
2nd Materials Chemistry for High School Teachers Seminar-Workshop
- 15** UP and Hong Kong PolyU Vision-Screening Project  
Enhancing Community HPV Immunization for PH Adolescents
- 16** UP Manila, NSP Ink MOU on Nanotech Partnership  
UPM Signs MOU with MarSU, Igniting "Co-creation" on DRRM  
College of Medicine Shares Best Practices with Bulacan State University Officials
- 17** CPH, University of Northern Philippines Herald Beginning of Partnership in Public Health  
Forging the Future of Biotechnology: VSU-UPM Partner to Advance Biotech Research and Medical Development  
UP Manila, PNU Explore Academic Partnership Via Student Leadership





## HEALTHSCAPE

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# RESOLUTIONS



“I will exercise more,” “I will be eating healthy food,” “I will be less angry,” and “I will save more and spend less”—these are the usual New Year’s resolutions we hear people say when a new year is beginning. It is always an ideal time to start a new endeavor as we usher in a new year or a chance to improve something existing before.

However, resolution abandonment usually occurs when setbacks start to creep in or when inconsistency downplays the initial excitement for the motivation and discouragement sets in. This results in the negative trait called the *ningas kugon* (to ignite the cogon grass)—starting very eagerly and enthusiastically, then fizzling out in the end, leaving the goal unfinished.

At IPPAO, we also have our own resolutions with regards to Healthscape. If last year we missed some deadlines and some issues were uploaded late, at the start of 2025, we have resolved to upgrade the quality of our issues to improve the coverage and its overall look. We have developed ways to offset our shortcomings but still provide visually enhanced issues with up-to-date wide coverage of activities inside and outside the university.

We are determined that our *kugon* shall burn for a long time and not fizzle out as the year rolls on. Continuing this resolution until December and onwards will be a welcome challenge for our office. Please continue with your patronage and support.

*Doc Sarsi*

**Dr. Cesar Perez Jr.**  
Editor in Chief

# UP Manila Gets Presidential Designation as Only HEI Member to the National Forensics Institute TWG

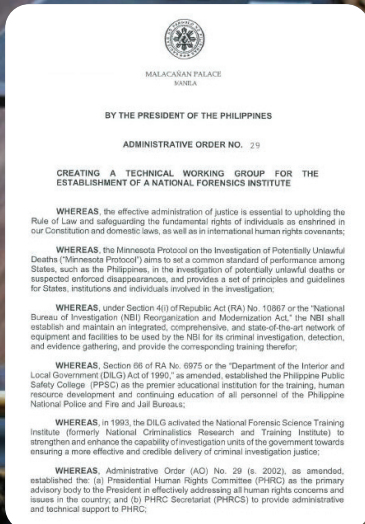
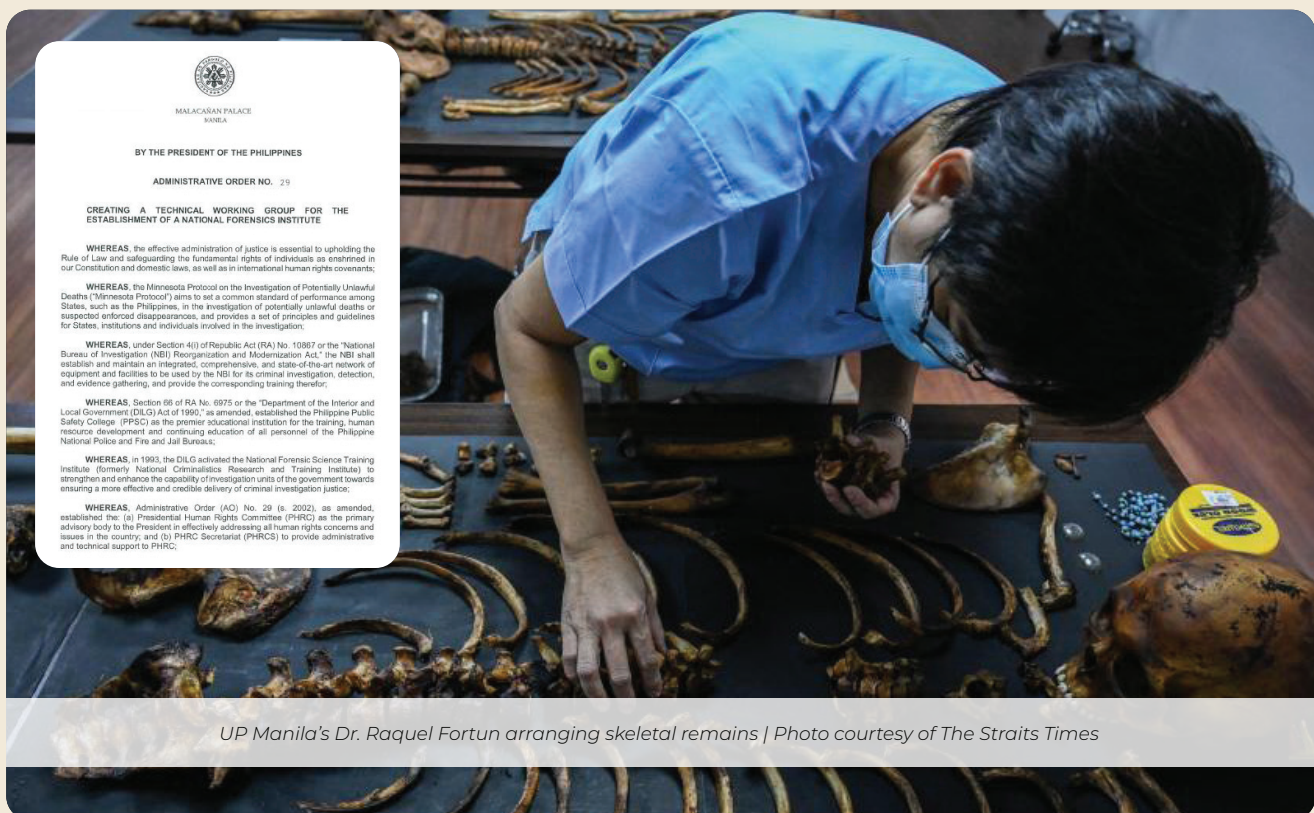
The University of the Philippines (UP) Manila received a distinct designation from President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. as being the only higher education institution (HEI) appointed to the technical working group (TWG) for the establishment of a National Forensics Institute (NFI).

The TWG, created by Pres. Marcos through Administrative Order No. 29, is tasked to “facilitate the conduct of a comprehensive study and submit recommendations relative to the immediate establishment of the NFI, taking into consideration the need to rationalize and streamline the functions of relevant government agencies, and strengthen the capacity of the Philippines in the field of forensics.” The group is to be chaired by the Office of the Executive Secretary and co-chaired by the Department of Justice, with the Department of Interior and Local Government, the Department

of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Health, the Department of Budget and Management, the Commission on Higher Education, and the Presidential Human Rights Committee Secretariat joining UP Manila as members.

The establishment of the NFI is part of the government’s commitment to strengthen the country’s justice system and its expertise in the field of forensics, pledged during the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights held in Geneva, Switzerland in December 2023.

UP Manila has been leading the way in such studies, having signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding on Oct. 24, 2024, in collaboration with Australia’s Monash University to elevate the practice and conduct of forensic science training and research in the Philippines. □



UP Manila’s Dr. Raquel Fortun arranging skeletal remains | Photo courtesy of The Straits Times

## CM Alum Gets Nod as New PhilHealth Chief

**Dr. Edwin Mercado, an orthopedic surgeon and alumnus of the College of Medicine (CM), has been appointed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. as the new president and chief executive officer of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth).**

Mercado, a member of CM Class 1987, was the chief resident and awarded most outstanding researcher during his service in the Philippine General Hospital. He finished with a master's degree in healthcare administration at the Gillings School of Global Public Health of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Recently, Harvard Medical School conferred on him a Master of Medical Sciences in Global Health Delivery degree. He has

published studies on bone graft substitutes and fracture treatment but has lately focused on health economics and delivery models to comply with the universal healthcare law.

Dr. Mercado is the vice chair of Mercado General Hospital Inc., a national chain of healthcare facilities that includes four general hospitals, six multi-specialty clinics, two surgery centers, 150 primary care corporate clinics, and more. □



*President Marcos Jr. administers the oath of office to Dr. Edwin Mercado.*

# IHM Expert Capacitates Herbal Med Research with HPTLC Optimization and Validation Workshop

The Institute of Herbal Medicine (IHM) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) held a hands-on workshop and lectures on “Validation and Optimization of HPTLC Quantification Experiments for Authentication” on Jan. 13, 2025, as part of their Balik-Scientist Free Webinar Series on “Ensuring Precision, Reliability, and Standardization: Validation and Optimization of HPTLC and Bioassays in Herbal Medicine.”

High-performance thin-layer chromatography (HPTLC), a more efficient version of thin-layer chromatography (TLC), is a technique used to analyze compounds quantitatively and qualitatively. Validating and optimizing it requires systematic evaluation and refinement to ensure its accuracy, precision, specificity, sensitivity, and robustness for reliable analysis, typically involving adjustments to parameters like mobile phase composition,

stationary phase selection, development conditions, and detection methods to achieve optimal separation and quantification of analytes in a sample.

Prof. Ivan Lawag, guest speaker and lecturer, is an analytical chemist on HPTLC, a health researcher, scientific writer, editor, and reviewer, and is a bioassay and innovation expert. He is one of the Balik Scientists of the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD) and is currently an adjunct research fellow at the University of Western Australia. His work focuses on *in vitro* assays evaluating antioxidant and antidiabetic activities and therapeutic drug monitoring of anticancer drugs. □



Prof. Ivan Lawag (left), guest speaker and lecturer for the workshop, guided the participants during the activity.

# Autopsy Technical Support Among New Courses That Will Soon be Offered in TESDA

**The University of the Philippines (UP) Manila is working with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) in upcoming certificate programs that will support courses offered by health sciences schools.**

UP Manila experts are coordinating with TESDA counterparts for the creation of the academic modules of new Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) courses on autopsy technical support, advanced cadaver care for human anatomy courses, and technical support for simulation-based health sciences education. There is a growing need for trained technicians in autopsy, embalming for academic purposes, and simulation-based education as medical colleges in the country continue to increase.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) recently approved 22 new medical schools following Republic Act No. 11509, or the Doktor Para sa Bayan Act, which provides a Medical Scholarship

and Return Service (MSRS) program for deserving students.

Anatomy is a basic subject for health sciences courses, including medicine, nursing, physical therapy, and dentistry. Medical schools are equipped with anatomy laboratories that allow students to dissect and learn from cadavers. Proper handling and preservation of the cadavers are imperative in these laboratories. At the same time, simulation-based education technicians are needed to ensure the proper functioning of equipment and simulation mannequins in the clinical simulation laboratories.

The TVET academic modules will serve as the basis for the systematic training, evaluation, and certification of students taking the new courses. These courses are for students who have finished K-12 education and other individuals who are interested in entering the highly competitive field of academic technical support here and abroad. □



*The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is poised to roll out a new set of certificate programs designed to support health sciences courses in the country. UP Manila has partnered with TESDA to develop the modules for autopsy technical support, advanced cadaver care for human anatomy courses, and technical support for simulation-based health sciences education.*



IDEA

## CN Faculty Member and Librarian Win Award, Elections

The College of Nursing celebrates two recent victories netted by Assistant Professor Aprille Banayat as one of the awardees of the 2024 Asia-Pacific Journal of Oncology Nursing Outstanding Reviewer and by CN Head Librarian Marybel Caasi on her election as director of the 2025 Executive Board of the Association of Special Libraries of the Philippines.

[Read the full article](#)



IDEA

## NTTCHP Celebrates 50 Years of Excellence in Health Professions Education

The National Teacher Training Center for the Health Professions (NTTCHP) celebrated its 50th founding anniversary with a two-day research conference on Jan. 30 and 31, 2025, at the Manila Prince Hotel. Themed *Sigasisig, Integridad, Karunungan, at Husay: Adhikaing Yaman (SIKHAY)* ng NTTCHP, the event showcased the institution's contributions to health professions education (HPEd) and its role in the implementation of the Universal Health Care (UHC) law.

[Read the full article](#)

I D E A



## HPP Cops Award in Participatory Action Research, Initiates Community Immunization for Adolescents

The Health Promotion Program of the National Institutes of Health was recognized by the Eastern Visayas Center for Health Development during the Eastern Visayas Health Summit and Awards 2024 held last Dec. 11, 2024, in Tacloban City. The award acknowledges HPP's unwavering commitment to empowering communities and improving health outcomes through the implementation of Participatory Action Research in Eastern Visayas.

[Read the full article](#)



I D E A

## Inhaled Solvent Addiction Leads to Poor Decision-making and Social Isolation, New Study Says

A team of Filipino scientists and experts have found previously unreported effects of solvent abuse on social behavior and decision-making in a rat model. These findings are expected to pave the way for future treatments of adolescents struggling with inhaled solvent addiction.

[Read the full article](#)



Tambayan



On the way to kule



White college



Quad

### *Why do we associate feelings with places?*

It was a sunny February morning when I rode a bus going to the University of the Philippines (UP) Manila for my scheduled employment interview. More than a decade ago was the last time I set foot in UP Manila and also the day that I promised to never walk on its pavements again.

UP Manila was a witness to my naivety. Everything was simple and ideal back then. All you had to do was to show up—show up to your classmates, to your professors, to your friends, to your family, and to people dear to you. You had the luxury of time and an empty memory bank that made adolescence interesting and exciting. A lot of things can happen each day and no one could predict what was in store for you. You had no idea that interactions from people could create an imprint in your mind until God knows when.

# Saudade

✍️ 📷 Ehcel Hurna

UP Manila had impressed me a lot, and it still does. It possesses a rich history, having a cultural heritage that is distinct from other UP units. It is the first UP campus. Its decades-old facilities are a testament to how it survived in the nick of time. Though some of the buildings were already retrofitted, the aftermath of World War II can still be seen and felt on its structural surfaces.

These very same paths and structures that witnessed my naivety and carefree youth also bore the weight of my regrets and poor romantic pursuits and life choices. The whitewashed walls of Rizal Hall scream imprints of memories that were equally too happy and too regretful to be erased. It was a solid reminder that something so good did happen despite the reign of uncertainties and impulsive decisions. How can you forget a feeling that gave you all the butterflies gyrating inside your stomach through the existence of a

young and selfish love?

We often associate people with places because we were elated or somber during our stay there. Those extreme emotions were cloaked in bitterness because the truth is, we want to recreate the past. But the past is just a story we tell ourselves. Perhaps what is left is the lingering feeling that had happened in UP Manila. The nostalgia. Quoting Wong Kar-Wai in the *In The Mood for Love* (2000), "That era has passed. Nothing that belonged to it exists anymore."

The halls and the walls of UP Manila remain, yet I resolve to gracefully let go of the regrets and the longings for those who no longer exist. *Saudade*\*.

\*Saudade is a Portuguese word denoting an emotional state of nostalgic longing for something that does not and probably cannot exist. It can also mean a melancholic desire towards a beloved that is out of reach.



I D E A

# “The Pioneer”:

## An Interview with the Hon. Carl Marc Ramota, 27th UP Faculty Regent

 Martin Racza

 Joseph Bautista



When University of the Philippines (UP) Manila Assistant Professor Carl Marc Ramota learned of his selection as the 27th Faculty Regent (FR) of the UP system, his immediate reactions were those of happiness and gratitude.

“I felt happy to be given the opportunity to serve and represent more than 4,000 faculty members in the Board of Regents (BOR), the highest policymaking body of the university,” Regent Ramota said. “I was also very grateful for the overwhelming support and mandate given to me by colleagues across the UP System and the record voter turnout then for a Faculty Regent selection process.”

### Championing academic freedom and staff welfare

The Hon. Ramota, who served as FR from Jan. 1, 2023 to Dec. 31, 2024, encountered multiple challenges during his term, two of which were at the center of his advocacies.

“The two biggest challenges are ensuring that welfare needs are met and protecting the university community from threats to academic freedom and university autonomy amid the worsening political climate,” he said.

“Our common pandemic experience reminded us of the growing mental health challenges facing various university sectors, including faculty members. The urgent need to address these multifaceted welfare concerns—health and wellbeing, academic concerns, and economic security—led to the policy proposal for the

”

*True to my program of action and oath of office, I'd like to believe that I went above and beyond what is traditionally expected of a Faculty Regent*



establishment of Faculty Welfare Councils (FWC) both at the constituent university and UP system levels. FWCs will ensure that the university has programs and policies in place that look after the various dimensions of faculty welfare. The Office of the Faculty Regent (OFR) also launched the Kapakanan Faculty Welfare Forum series in 2024 as part of this system-wide campaign initiative.

“Another policy proposal from the OFR that gained system-wide support is the creation of the UP Committee on the Promotion and Protection of Academic Freedom and Human Rights (CAFHR). From 2023 to 2024, University Councils from UP Baguio to UP Mindanao passed resolutions supporting its creation in response to cases of terror-tagging and harassment against faculty members and university constituents after the abrogation of the UP-Department of National Defense Accord in 2021. Four Academic Freedom Committees have been established to date—in UP Los Baños, UP Cebu, UP Diliman, and UP Manila.”

Regent Ramota also addressed other challenges, such as the lack of spaces for work and recreation, and the need for more plantilla positions remains the biggest challenge among UP Manila constituents.

“As FR and member of the BOR, we approved all requests for reprogramming of funds from UP Manila units, including the Philippine General Hospital (PGH), to augment funds for pending infrastructure projects, as well as push the [UP] system administration for more plantilla positions and additional incentives for employees.”

### “I Went Above and Beyond What Is Expected of Me”

When Regent Ramota was asked to encapsulate his term in a word, he chose “pioneering.”

“True to my program of action and oath of office, I’d like to believe that I went above and beyond what is traditionally expected of a Faculty Regent,” he stated.

“In two years’ time, we have accomplished so much together. The OFR became a center for policy initiatives and a national campaign center, a model of good university governance, and a staunch defender of academic freedom.



Regent Ramota assists in raising the Philippine flag during the 2024 UP Foundation Week opening ceremony.

Our proposals for the creation of the UP CAFHR and FWC were widely supported across the university.

“We have increased in the BOR the amount of eHOPE and its coverage, adjusted the rates for lecturers, and gave recognition to more eligible faculty members in the One UP professorial chair and faculty grant, among others.

“Three inaugural systemwide gatherings were launched by the OFR in 2024—the UP Basic Education Summit, the UP Public Service Summit, and the Academic Freedom and Human Rights Conference—that brought together scholars and advocates from UP and other schools. The recommendations in the UP Basic Education and Public Service Summits were incorporated into the guidelines of the upcoming Faculty Merit Promotion, recognizing alternative pathways in career development.

“We also launched the OFR’s official newsletter, UP Kalipunan (Kaguruan, Lipunan, at Pamantasan), official website (<https://facultyregent.up.edu.ph>), systemwide programs (Tipunan-systemwide assembly; Ugnayan or Usapang Guro at Pamayanan- CU/campus consultative meetings; and Talakayan or Talastasang Akademiko at Bayan-fora, discussions), and increased the staff complement and internal operating budget of the office.”

However, Regent Ramota refused to take sole credit for all these achievements, stating that “all of these were made possible because of the support of colleagues across the system.”

### Passing On the Legacy

When asked what one message or piece of advice he would leave for his successor, Prof. Early Sol Gadong, or a piece of advice, Regent Ramota answered, “I mentioned this during her oath-taking ceremony on January 6: ‘Never lose sight of your purpose and the nature of the office that you represent.’”

“Being one of the few elected members of the Board, the position of the Faculty Regent has a clear line of accountability. We do not simply represent ourselves but serve to articulate and advocate the preference and aspirations of our sector, the greater university community, and the Filipino people as a whole.” □



*Never lose sight of your purpose and the nature of the office that you represent*

Click the link below for the full end-of-term report of Regent Ramota

[Faculty Regent Ramota EOTR](#)

**I D E A**

## Ugnayan ng Pahinungod Manila Disaster Relief Activity for Typhoon Pepito Victims in Aurora

The Ugnayan ng Pahinungod Manila spearheaded a disaster relief initiative in Dinadiawan, Aurora, on Jan. 16, 2025.

This activity aimed to provide assistance to affected communities, offering much-needed support in the form of relief goods.

[Read the full article](#)



**I D E A**

## 2nd Materials Chemistry for High School Teachers Seminar-Workshop

The College of Arts and Sciences through the Laboratory of Materials and the GAEA Research Laboratory conducted the 2nd Materials Chemistry for High School Teachers Seminar-Workshop on Jan. 15, 2025, with representatives from Paco Catholic School, the University of Batangas, and the Philippine Normal University as participants.

The seminar-workshop focused on Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) and Energy Dispersive X-Ray Spectroscopy (EDX).

[Read the full article](#)

**I D E A**

## UP and Hong Kong PolyU Vision-Screening Project

Students from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) and the University of the Philippines (UP) partnered on a vision screening project for students at Krus na Ligas Elementary School on Jan. 8, 2025.

The project featured 12 stations where students from PolyU, UP Diliman, and UP Manila conducted vision screenings, shared eye health tips, and distributed 200 free pairs of eyeglasses to students in need.

[Read the full article](#)



**I D E A**

## Enhancing Community HPV Immunization for PH Adolescents

The Health Promotion Program of the National Institutes of Health held a "kick-off" meeting on Jan. 15, 2025, to gear up for the commencement of its newest project, "Enhancing Community HPV Immunization for Filipino Adolescents through Health Policy and System Research," or CHIFA-HPSR.

This project aims to address the issues surrounding persistent low human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine uptake among adolescent women in the Philippines.

[Read the full article](#)



## UP Manila, NSP Ink MOU on Nanotech Partnership

[Read the article](#)



## UPM Signs MOU with MarSU, Igniting "Co-creation" on DRRM

[Read the article](#)



## College of Medicine Shares Best Practices with Bulacan State University Officials

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# CPH, University of Northern Philippines Herald Beginning of Partnership in Public Health

[Read the article](#)



# Forging the Future of Biotechnology: VSU-UPM Partner to Advance Biotech Research and Medical Development

[Read the article](#)



# UP Manila, PNU Explore Academic Partnership Via Student Internship

[Read the article](#)



## OTHER NEWS



CAMP Launches Faculty Mentoring Program



HRDO Caravan Series Brings GSIS Services to UP Manila Employees



2025 UPCM Grand Alumni Homecoming Launch



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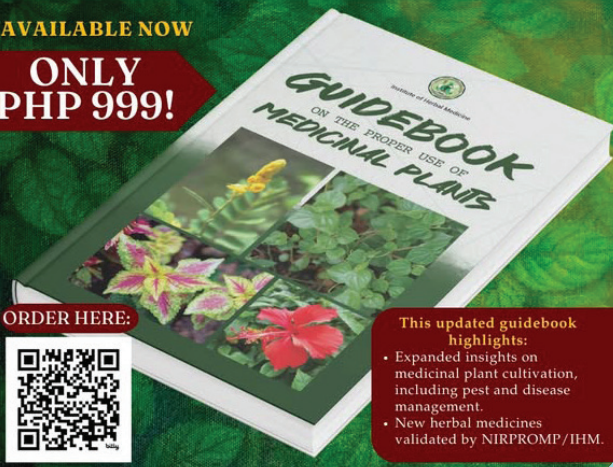
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