

CAVITE FOOTBALL CUP SEASON 2 KICKS

The vibrant spirit of grassroots football was on full display as the 2nd Season of the Cavite Football Cup officially opened at the Imus Grandstand and Track Oval on Saturday, September 13, 2025. The event brought together local football teams from across the province, signaling a renewed commitment to sports development and youth engagement in Cavite.

The program began with

a colorful parade and presentation of teams, showcasing the unity and competitiveness of participating clubs including the Aguinaldo Warriors, Bacoor Football Club, Batang GenTri, Ciudad de Cavite, Dasmariñas Monarchs, Imus City Gunners, Indang Football Club, GMA Generals, Naic Football Team, One Mind Trece, and Silang Football Club.

City officials led the formal ceremonies, with

3rd District Congressman Adrian Jay C. Advincula delivering heartfelt welcome remarks. The event also featured a project overview by Cavite SK Federation President Chelsea Jillian G. Sarno and Ms. Jolinn Angela Cerrero, representative from the Office of the Provincial Youth and Development Office (OPYDO), who underscored the importance of sports in youth development.

Highlighting the spirit of fair play, Ralph Sebastian Felicitas, team captain of the Imus City Gunners, led the oath of sportsmanship, before the match draw lots determined the opening fixtures.

The ceremony concluded with the official declaration and ceremonial kick-off of the 2nd Cavite Football Cup, marking the beginning of what promises to be an exciting season of youth football in the province.

This year's tournament not only champions athletic excellence but also fosters unity among Cavite's diverse communities, proving once again that football is more than just a game, it's a force for local pride and positive change.

— A. SARTE

BACOOR CITY STRENGTHENS BARANGAY PEACEKEEPING TEAMS THRU TRAINING

CITY OF BACOOR, Cavite (PIA) – The City Government of Bacoor recently conducted a comprehensive Skill Enhancement Training for barangay tanods from various communities across the city.

The training initiative, which was organized by the Barangay Affairs Office, aimed to equip barangay tanods with the necessary skills to effectively maintain peace and order in their respective areas.

The simultaneous sessions were held at Villar Hall for tanods from Aniban 1 & 2, Bayanan, Dulong Bayan, and Molino 1 to 4, while Gawaran Hall hosted participants from Habay 1 & 2, Ligas 1, Kaingin Digman, Niog, and Molino 5 to 7.

The event also drew support from key officials, including LNB Vice President Randy Francisco, Bacoor Chief Prosecutor Fiscal Johnny Ompong, and Bacoor PNP Chief PLtCol Alexie Desamito, along with representatives from partner agencies.

In his message, Mayor Revilla emphasized the crucial role of barangay tanods as the “first line of defense” in community security, especially amid the city's limited law enforcement manpower.

He announced plans to

issue an executive order to formally deputize tanods, providing them with greater authority to enforce local ordinances.

“Law enforcement must be impartial,” the mayor stressed, urging tanods to uphold their duties without bias. “Kung mali, mali—regardless if they're your relative, friend, or kumpare,” he firmly stated. In recognition of their vital role, Mayor Revilla also announced a ₱2,000 monthly allowance increase for all tanods, with hopes of further adjustments as the city's financial capacity improves.

The training underscores the city's continued commitment to building a safer Bacoor by empowering its community-based peacekeepers.

Mayor Revilla concluded with a call for cooperation, highlighting the shared responsibility of maintaining peace, order, and safety in every barangay. (RBF/Bacoor CIO) **BY RUEL FRANCISCO**



MOST WANTED PERSON (REGIONAL LEVEL), ARESTADO NG CAVITE PIU AT IMUS PNP

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite

— Naaresto ng pinagsanib na pwersa ng Provincial Intelligence Unit (lead unit) at Imus City Police Station ang isang Most Wanted Person (Regional Level) dakong 7:30 PM ng Setyembre 18, 2025 sa Brgy. San Francisco, General Trias City, Cavite. Kinilala ni PLTCOL CHESTER NOEL R BORLONGAN, ang suspek na si alyas “Rolando”, residente ng Brgy. Malagasang II-C, Imus City, Cavite.

Ang operasyon ay isinagawa ng Provincial Intelligence Unit kasama ang Imus CPS gamit ang Alternative Recording Device

(ARD) na nagresulta sa pagkakaaresto ng suspek sa bisa ng Warrant of Arrest para sa paglabag sa Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 na inisyu ng Regional Trial Court, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 21, Imus City, Cavite na may petsang September 3, 2025 (Service of Sentence).

Sa kanyang pahayag, sinabi ni PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director ng Cavite PPO, “Ang matagumpay na pagkakaaresto ay patunay ng ating walang humpay na kampanya laban sa kriminalidad at ilegal na droga para sa kaligtasan ng ating mga kababayan.”

WANTED PERSON, NAARESTO SA PAMAMAGITAN NG NATIONAL POLICE CLEARANCE SYSTEM SA MAGALLANES, CAVITE

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite

— Naaresto ng mga tauhan ng Magallanes Municipal Police Station ang isang wanted person, dakong 10:30 AM ng Setyembre 17, 2025, sa loob mismo ng kanilang himpilan sa Magallanes, Cavite, sa pamamagitan ng National Police Clearance System (NPCS).

Kinilala ni PMAJ RAYMOND T BALBUENA, hepe ng Magallanes MPS, ang akusado na si alyas Isaac, at naninirahan sa Brgy. Medina, Cavite.

Batay sa beripikasyon sa E-Warrant System, lumabas na may nakabinbing Warrant of Arrest laban sa akusado na inilabas ng RTC, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 15, Naic, Cavite, may petsang Hulyo 20, 2023, para sa kasong paglabag sa Comprehensive Law on Firearms and Ammunition (RA 10591 na sumasaklaw sa RA9516, RA8294, at PD 1866) sa ilalim ng Criminal Case Number NC-5732, na may rekomendadong

piyansa na Php80,000.00. Naipabatid sa akusado ang kanyang mga karapatang konstitusyonal sa oras ng pag-aresto at siya ay kasalukuyang nasa kustodiya ng Magallanes MPS para sa wastong dokumentasyon at disposisyon.

Sa kasalukuyan, ang akusado ay nasa kustodiya ng Magallanes MPS, at ang Warrant of Arrest ay isasauli sa pinagmulan nitong korte. Mensahe ni PCOL ARIEL R RED:

“Ang matagumpay na pagkakaaresto sa akusado sa pamamagitan ng ating National Police Clearance System ay patunay na walang makakatakas sa kamay ng batas. Patuloy nating ginagamit ang modernong teknolohiya upang mas mapabilis at mas mapagiging ang pagpapatupad ng hustisya. Nananawagan din tayo sa ating mga kababayan na makipagtulungan sa ating kapulisan upang mapanatili ang katahimikan at kaayusan dito sa Cavite.”

MOST WANTED PERSON (REGIONAL LEVEL RANK 6) NAARESTO SA TRECE MARTIRES CITY

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite

— Matagumpay na naaresto ng mga tauhan ng Trece Martires Component City Police Station ang isang Most Wanted Person (Regional Level Rank 6) na suspek, dakong 4:00 PM ng Setyembre 17, 2025, sa Custodial Facility ng Trece Martires CCPS, Brgy. Gregorio, Trece Martires City, Cavite.

Kinilala ni PLTCOL DENNIS A VILLANUEVA, ACOP, Trece Martires CCPS, ang akusado na si alyas Vincent, at residente ng Brgy. Hugo Perez, Trece Martires City, Cavite. Ang pag-aresto ay naisagawa sa bisa ng Warrant of Arrest na inilabas ng Family Court, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 5, Trece Martires City, Cavite noong Agosto 11, 2025, para sa kasong 12 Counts of Lascivious Conduct sa ilalim ng Sec. 5 (b) ng RA 7610 (na inamyendahan ng RA 116481) at 9 Counts of Statutory Rape sa ilalim ng

Article 266-A ng Revised Penal Code, na may Criminal Case Numbers TMCR-1125-25 hanggang TMCR-1145-25, at may nakatakdang piyansa na Php200,000.00.

Ang operasyon ay naidokumento gamit ang Alternative Recording Device (ARD) sa kawalan ng Body-Worn Camera (BWC). Naipabatid din sa akusado ang kanyang mga karapatang konstitusyonal sa wika na kanyang nauunawaan.

Kasalukuyang nasa kustodiya ng Trece Martires CCPS ang akusado para sa wastong dokumentasyon at disposisyon.

Mensahe ni PCOL ARIEL R RED:

“Ang pag-aresto sa isa sa mga Most Wanted Person sa rehiyon ay malinaw na patunay na hindi makakatakas ang mga kriminal sa kamay ng batas. Patuloy na nagsusumikap ang Cavite Police na ipatupad ang hustisya at tiyakin ang kaligtasan ng bawat Caviteño.”

MOST WANTED PERSON SA REHIYON, NAARESTO SA A STA. ROSA, LAGUNA

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite

— Isang Most Wanted Person sa regional level ng PRO-4A CALABARZON ang matagumpay na naaresto ng mga tauhan ng Silang Municipal Police Station dakong 3:30 ng hapon ng Setyembre 17, 2025, sa Barangay Balibago, Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

Kinilala ni PLTCOL LOUIE DC GONZAGA, Hepe ng Silang MPS, ang akusado na si alyas Cardo na naninirahan sa San Lorenzo South, Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

Ayon sa ulat, isinagawa ang operasyon ng warrant personnel ng Silang MPS gamit ang Alternative Recording Device (ARD), na nagresulta sa pagkakaaresto sa akusado sa bisa ng isang Warrant of Arrest na inilabas ng Regional Trial Court Branch 18, Tagaytay City, Cavite, para sa kasong Murder (RPC Art. 248), na

may petsang Setyembre 12, 2014. Ang nasabing kaso ay walang piyansa.

Naipabatid sa akusado ang kanyang mga karapatang konstitusyonal sa oras ng pag-aresto at siya ay kasalukuyang nasa kustodiya ng Silang MPS para sa kaukulang dokumentasyon. Ang Warrant of Arrest ay isasauli sa korte ng pinagmulan.

Mensahe ni PCOL ARIEL R RED: “Ang pagkakaaresto sa isa sa mga Most Wanted sa buong rehiyon ay isang patunay na patuloy nating pinagtitiyab ang ating mandato na mapanatili ang kapayapaan at seguridad sa CALABARZON. Sa tulong ng dedikasyon ng ating mga kapulisan at paggamit ng makabagong teknolohiya, hindi makakatakas sa kamay ng batas ang mga may sala. Inaasahan namin ang patuloy na suporta at kooperasyon ng publiko sa adhikaing ito.”

MOST WANTED PERSON (PROVINCIAL LEVEL), ARESTADO NG MENDEZ PNP

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite

— Naaresto ng mga tauhan ng Mendez Municipal Police Station ang isang Most Wanted Person (Provincial Level) dakong 5:35 PM ng Setyembre 18, 2025 sa Brgy. Poblacion 1, Kalayaan, Laguna.

Kinilala ni PMAJ IAN JASPER M MONTOYA, hepe ng Mendez MPS, ang akusado na si alyas JERRY kasalukuyang naninirahan sa Brgy. Poblacion 1, Kalayaan, Laguna.

Ang operasyon ay isinagawa ng Warrant Personnel ng Mendez MPS gamit ang Alternative Recording Device (ARD) sa kawalan ng Body Worn Camera (BWC), na nagresulta sa pagkakaaresto ng akusado sa bisa ng Warrant of Arrest

na may petsang August 5, 2024 para sa kasong “Lascivious Conduct under Sec. 5(b) of RA 7610 Art VI” na inisyu ng Regional Trial Court, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 15, Naic, Cavite, na may nirekomendang piyansa na Php 200,000.00.

Kasalukuyang nasa kustodiya ng Mendez MPS ang akusado para sa kaukulang dokumentasyon at disposisyon.

Sa kanyang pahayag, sinabi ni PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director ng Cavite PPO, “Ang mabilis na pagtugon at aksyon ng ating kapulisan sa pagpapatupad ng warrant of arrest ay patunay ng ating dedikasyon na mapanatili ang katahimikan at seguridad sa buong Cavite.”

TATLONG STREET-LEVEL DRUG PERSONALITIES, ARESTADO SA BUY-BUST OPERATION SA DASMARINAS CITY

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite

— Tatlong Street-Level Individuals ang naaresto ng mga tauhan ng Dasmariñas Component City Police Station matapos isagawa ang matagumpay na buy-bust operation dakong 8:20 AM ng Setyembre 18, 2025, sa Brgy. Salitran 1, Dasmariñas City, Cavite.

Kinilala ni PLTCOL REGINO L OÑATE, hepe ng Dasmariñas CCPS, ang mga suspek na sina: alyas Dasoy, at residente ng Brgy. Salitran 1, Dasmariñas City (nahaharap sa kasong paglabag sa Sec. 5 at 11, Art. II ng RA 9165); alyas Angelo, na residente ng Brgy. Salitran 1, Dasmariñas City (nahaharap sa kasong paglabag sa Sec. 26 at 11, Art. II ng RA 9165); at alyas Mar, at residente ng Brgy. Salitran 1, Dasmariñas City (nahaharap sa kasong paglabag sa Sec. 11, Art. II ng RA 9165).

Isinagawa ang operasyon ng Intel/City Drug Enforcement Team ng Dasmariñas CCPS sa

bisa ng koordinasyon sa PDEA. Nakumpiska mula sa mga suspek ang sumusunod na ebidensya: anim (6) na piraso ng heat-sealed transparent plastic sachet na naglalaman ng hinihinalang shabu na may tinatayang kabuuang bigat na 41.29 gramo at may standard drug price na Php280,772.00.

Kasalukuyang nasa kustodiya ng Dasmariñas CCPS ang mga suspek para sa tamang dokumentasyon at pagsasampa ng kaukulang kaso. Mensahe ni PCOL ARIEL R RED:

“Ang pagkakaaresto sa mga sangkot sa ilegal na droga ay malinaw na patunay ng ating determinasyon na ipatupad ang batas at protektahan ang ating mga pamayanan laban sa masamang epekto ng ipinagbabawal na gamot. Patuloy nating palalakasin ang kampanya laban sa ilegal na droga upang masiguro ang kaligtasan at kapayapaan ng bawat Caviteño.”

PNR ON TRACK FIXING RIGHT-OF-WAY ISSUES FOR SOUTH LONG HAUL RAIL PROJECT

SAN PABLO CITY, Laguna (PIA) – The Philippine National Railways (PNR) continues to fast-track addressing right-of-way issues that have caused delays in the completion of the South Long Haul Project.

A priority railway project of the Marcos administration, the 577-kilometer and 33-station rail connection from Metro Manila to Batangas and Bicol, the Calamba-Legazpi route of the SLH project is expected to be operational by 2026.

PNR General Manager Deovanni Miranda said that the railway project has faced issues involving land acquisition, relocation of project-affected persons such as informal settler families, utility relocation and coordination with local government units (LGUs).

“Currently, what we are doing for this project is pre-implementation, most of it is right-of-way activities, including (resettlement of) the informal settlers,” he said.

Miranda said right-of-way activities include the purchase of additional land for the ROW project, for the informal settlers, and utility relocation.

The PNR official assured stakeholders of faster project implementation once issues with the right-of-way are resolved and implementation funding has been allocated.

The rail agency is working closely with the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), National Housing Authority (NHA) and concerned LGUs in the province to fast-track expropriation proceedings and ensure affected families are properly compensated and relocated.

The PNR together with

DHSUD and NHA turned over last Monday 1,099 housing units in St. Barts Southville Heights, San Pablo City, Laguna to families affected by the railway development.

Once completed, the rail line will reduce travel time from Manila to Legazpi from the present 14 to 18 hours to six hours, using regular commuter trains and 4.5 hours, using the line's express trains. (AM/PIA 4A) **BY ANNA MOLE**

CONSUMER RIGHTS, FAIR TRADE LAWS

CITY OF CARMONA, Cavite (PIA) — The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) continues to strengthen consumer protection and promote responsible business practices as its Cavite Provincial Office recently held an orientation on fair trade laws for merchants operating at Davilan Food Park in this city.

The activity formed part of the “Seminar on Consumer Protection Awareness with Focus on Food Safety and Public Health” spearheaded by the City Government of Carmona through its Local Economic Development and Investment Promotion Office (LEDIPO).

DTI-Cavite's Consumer Protection Division OIC, Mr. Rexel Amparo, and Trade and Industry Development Specialist, Mr. Arner P. Olayres, served as resource speakers.

The discussion highlighted the essential provisions of Republic Act No. 7394, or the Consumer Act of the Philippines, including the roles of various implementing agencies, and the consumer rights and responsibilities.

The orientation also tackled recent policy updates directly impacting

SSS INCREASES MONTHLY SENIOR PENSION

SAN PABLO CITY, Laguna (PIA) – The Social Security System (SSS) South Luzon I Division marked its regional celebration of Pensioners' Day in San Pablo City on September 12 by highlighting the agency's pension reform program and the recent increase in monthly senior citizen pension benefits.

The event forms part of the 68th Anniversary of SSS, which highlights the agency's commitment to recognizing the contributions of pensioners while ensuring they remain informed about new reforms and services.

SSS South Luzon I Vice

President Engr. Edwin Igharas emphasized the importance of the annual celebration as a platform to engage with pensioners and address their concerns.

“This is our way of giving back to our pensioners who have been part of the system's growth. We want to assure them that SSS continues to improve our programs for their benefit and we now have a SSS Pension Reform program where they can enjoy a 10 percent percent increase on their pension for three years from the government,” Igharas said. SSS said that the reform is designed to strike a balance between providing adequate pensions to retirees and ensuring that future generations of members will continue to enjoy the same security.

64 year-old Benita Jonos Catahan of Nagcarlan, Laguna, expressed her appreciation for the reforms being implemented by the SSS which directly benefits her in easing financial burden amid rising healthcare costs and daily expenses.

“We are grateful for the 10 percent increase in our pension because us seniors already have maintenance. We already have many needs. This is additional help with our need to buy medicine, so thank you very much,” she said.

Other topics discussed during the program was the SSS Pension Reform Program, which seeks to secure the long-term sustainability of the Social Security Fund by introducing enhancements in benefits for members.

Participants were treated to a series of activities, including free health checks, financial literacy sessions, and forums where they could raise inquiries directly to SSS officials.

The SSS Pensioners' Day is celebrated nationwide to recognize the contributions of retirees to nation-building and to keep them informed of programs that directly affect their welfare. (AM/PIA 4A) **BY ANNA MOLE**

EDITORIAL

Makabagong Imbensyon ng Panahon

Binuong isang Computer Vision Technology na tinatawag na 'Titan' software kung saan kayang mag-generate ng traffic data sa sandaling oras kung saan ginagamitan ng Artificial Intelligence ang software at maaari ring magamit sa marine at crop monitoring.

Kung masusuring mabuti, malaking bagay ang Artificial Intelligence sa pagpapaunlad ng ekonomiya ng isang bansa, lalo pa kung ito ay magagamit sa maayos at matalinong paraan. Ang proyektong ito ay isang malaking tulong pagdating sa agrikultura at batas trapiko. Ngunit ang mga ganitong bagay ay dapat ding matuturing na 'accessible' para sa lahat kung pagdating sa crop at marine monitoring na siyang makakatulong para sa hanapbuhay ng mga magsasaka at mangingisda.

Maganda ang dulot ng mga kalinangan at pag-unlad ng teknolihiya kung ito ay magagamit nang tama. Sana ay ang pag-usbong lalo ng teknolihiya ay magamit sa maayos at hindi sa panloloko ng mga tao.

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DSWD: STRICT MONITORING OF PRIVATE CARE FACILITIES ENSURES COMPLIANCE

MANILA – The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has assured the 921 accredited social welfare and development agencies (SWDAs) that there is no cause for alarm on the agency's semestral monitoring visits as these inspections are aimed at ensuring their compliance to the existing standards.

Director Megan Therese Manahan of the DSWD's Standards Bureau (SB) said that with stronger monitoring measures in place, there is a prevailing apprehension among the 921 SWDAs that agency visits might result in the closure of their facilities following recent incidents of violations which led to the shutdown of two private facilities in Pampanga and Zambales.

"We want to guarantee the non-government organizations (NGOs), the SWDAs, hindi naman abrupt yung pagpapasara natin. And kung maayos naman ang operations niyo, kung maayos naman ang pakikitungo sa beneficiaries niyo, wala kayong dapat ikabahala (there will be no abrupt closure. And if your operations are compliant, you have good relationship with your beneficiaries, there's nothing to worry about)," Manahan said during a media forum Thursday at the DSWD Central Office in Quezon City.

As part of its statutory function, the DSWD issues a registration, license to operate, and accreditation (RLA) certification to organizations and facilities implementing social welfare and development programs and services.

The department enforces quality standards that must be complied with by the SWDAs. Non-compliance and violations are met with sanctions and corrective measures.

The monitoring visits to two facilities in Central Luzon led to the issuance of cease-and-desist orders (CDO) by Secretary Rex Gatchalian due to non-

compliance with standards and reports of abuses against children under their care.

Manahan said the issuance of the CDO goes through a review process and is not an abrupt measure unless the complaint submitted to the DSWD is substantiated with testimonies and other evidence of abuse which put the vulnerable clients in danger.

"May due process po tayong dito (We have due process here). I don't want the public to think that it's okay to issue cease-and-desist order even if there is an unverified complaint. We have a vetting process, a review committee composed of social workers, lawyers, and even SWDA members," she said.

Manahan said the DSWD immediately acts on any report of non-compliance or complaint which is sufficient in form and in substance.

The grounds for the filing of complaint include the mismanagement of funds, improper case management, various abuses, use of SWDAs for immoral or illegal purposes, falsification of documents, injury or death of a beneficiary due to poor management, and the presence of hazards to the SWDAs clients.

"The CDO is a mere preventive measure pending resolution of a complaint and shall be immediately effective once served and the SWDA is ordered to cease and desist from further operations for a maximum period of 30 days. The residents of the facility will be placed under the protective custody of the DSWD," Manahan said.

From February to September this year, the DSWD has issued eight CDOs.

She reminded all SWDAs that application for RLA had been made more accessible with the online Harmonized Electronic Licensing Permit System (HELPS).

In digitalizing the RLA

DOTR BEGINS DEMOLITION OF OLD PNR STATIONS TO FAST-TRACK NSCR SOUTH

MANILA – The Department of Transportation (DOTr) on Thursday began the demolition of Philippine National Railways (PNR) stations from Santa Mesa, Manila to Cabuyao, Laguna as part of the construction of the southern part of the North South Commuter Railway (NSCR).

In an interview at the PNR Cabuyao Station, acting DOTr Secretary Giovanni Lopez said the simultaneous demolition of these stations is in line with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s order to accelerate the construction of big-ticket transportation projects for the benefit of commuters.

He said the demolition works include 10 stations that would help complete the NSCR South viaduct. These stations include the Cabuyao, Santa Rosa, Alabang, Bicutan, Blumentritt, Sucat, Muntinlupa, Biñan, San Pedro, and Mamatid Stations.

"Ito lang ang isang paraan para matuloy na ang ating proyekto. At hindi rin po natin magagawa ito kapag wala ang tulong ng lokal na pamahalaan (This is one way for us to continue the project. And we can't do this without the help of the local government)," Lopez said.

service, the DSWD streamlined the process from 20 days to just seven days, and with 10 to 11 documentary requirements instead of 50.

Manahan said streamlining the process does not equal to leniency in quality standards.

"We made it easier for the SWDAs to apply for their licenses and accreditation, so, mag apply po kayo (Please apply). And to the public, just for the public to know, even if we simplified the process for the NGOs, we are very strong with regard to monitoring and enforcement. We want to guarantee to the public that all the licenses of the NGOs, vetted po ng DSWD," she said.

Manahan said the agency honors complaints against SWDAs, even anonymously, which can serve as a reason for the conduct of validation visits. (PNA) **BY ZALDY DE LAYOLA**

He added all right-of-way issues of the southern leg of the NSCR are expected to be resolved in 2026.

"Makikita niyo naman na tuloy-tuloy pa rin ang trabaho ng DOTr. Ito rin 'yung sinasabi ng Pangulo na huwag dapat huminto ang mga trabaho ng DOTr at attached agencies nito (As you can see, the DOTr's job continues. This is what the President is talking about when he said that the DOTr and its attached agencies should not stop)," he said.

The NSCR is expected to be completed in 2032, with the Malolos-Valenzuela segment expected to be completed in 2027, while the Malolos-Clark segment will be finished by 2028.

Once operational, the NSCR is expected to serve around 800,000 passengers daily.

"We mean business." On the other hand, Lopez responded to claims that the recent order for DOTr executives to commute is merely "acting."

"Hindi po ito acting kundi ito talaga ang gagawin namin (This is not acting and we are actually doing this). We have to show it to the public, not only [to public transport group] Manibela, that we mean business and we're sincere in doing this," he said.

On Monday, Lopez issued a memorandum ordering the high-ranking DOTr executives, particularly those in the road transport and rail sectors, to commute to the office at least once a week.

The order was meant to ensure that DOTr officials are aware of the needs of commuters (PNA) **BY RAYMOND CARL DELA CRUZ**

PH, HUNGARY BOOST TIES THROUGH STRONGER OFW WELFARE COOPERATION

MANILA – The Philippines and Hungary reaffirmed their strong bilateral relations following the courtesy visit of Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) Administrator Patricia Yvonne Caunan to Budapest on Wednesday. Caunan's meeting with Hungarian State Secretary Illés Boglárka focused on migrant worker support and bilateral cooperation. OWWA said in a social media post Thursday.

In a separate post, Boglárka underscored the significance of the Central European Regional Center established in Budapest in 2024, in strengthening the ties between the two nations.

"It is due to the strong relationship and stable environment between the Philippines and Hungary that they chose our country as the location for their Central European regional center, and it has been operating successfully since its opening last year," she said.

Since its opening, the hub has provided vital services to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) across Europe, further cementing Hungary's role as a partner in migrant welfare.

Meanwhile, Caunan also met with Philippine Ambassador to Hungary Maria Elena Alagabre to discuss tighter coordination between OWWA, the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

The meeting focused on strengthening programs that safeguard the welfare of OFWs in Budapest and nearby countries. OFW caravan

Nearly 200 OFWs attended the "Alagang OWWA (OWWA Care): Wellness and Membership Caravan" led by Caunan in the Hungarian capital on Wednesday.

During the event, OWWA was able to distribute 155 eCards and renew the membership of 113 OFWs, ensuring uninterrupted access to the agency's benefits and protection programs.

OWWA emphasized that the caravan was designed to make its core services more accessible to Filipinos abroad.

"Sa pamamagitan nito, hindi na kinakailangang umuwi pa ng Pilipinas ang ating mga OFWs upang maisaayos ang kanilang mga membership at makuha ang iba pang serbisyong kanilang kinakailangan (Through this, our OFWs no longer need to return to the Philippines to update their membership or access the support they are entitled to)," Caunan said.

Aside from membership processing, the caravan also highlighted OWWA's wellness programs, underscoring the Philippine government's commitment to safeguarding the health and well-being of Filipinos overseas and their families. (PNA) **BY MARITA MOAJE**

GSIS REMOVES PENSION CAP, WIDOWS TO GET BIGGER BENEFITS

MANILA – The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) has lifted the cap on survivorship pensions, ensuring that widows and widowers of government workers will now receive bigger benefits.

In a resolution issued recently, the GSIS Board removed the ceiling that previously limited survivorship pensions, granting surviving spouses the full entitlement under Republic Act 8291, or the GSIS Act of 1997.

Survivors will now receive 50 percent of the pension

of the deceased member or pensioner without restriction.

"This policy shift was made to follow the law under Republic Act No. 8291. By lifting the cap, GSIS ensures that surviving spouses will receive what they are rightfully entitled to, while staying true to our duty of providing fair and adequate benefits," GSIS officer in charge President and General Manager Juliet Bautista said in a news release Friday.

Under the old policy, survivorship pensions were

capped at 50 percent of the salary of an undersecretary (Step 8), limiting the amount that survivors could claim.

With the reform, pensions will be automatically recomputed for those affected by the previous cap, while future survivors will likewise receive the full entitlement.

The GSIS assured its 1.8 million active members and nearly 450,000 pensioners that its fund remains financially stable and capable of supporting the policy change. (PNA) **BY WILNARD BACELONIA**

NAPOLCOM FILES RAPS VS. COPS LINKED TO BRIBERY, RAPE, MISCONDUCT

MANILA – The National Police Commission (Napolcom) filed administrative charges on Thursday against several cops involved in three separate incidents of alleged grave misconduct.

At a press briefing at the Napolcom main office in Quezon City, Napolcom Vice Chairperson and Executive Officer Rafael Calinisan said the IMIS (Inspection, Monitoring and Investigation Service) filed formal charges for grave misconduct and conduct unbecoming of a police officer against Col. Rommel Estolano, former chief of the Highway Patrol Group Special Operations Division (HPG SOD), for allegedly accepting PHP7 million in bribes from an arrested suspect.

The case stemmed from a June 13 operation in Parafaque City, in which HPG personnel flagged a certain “JJ Javier” initially for traffic violations, then discovered firearms in his vehicle.

Five of the HPG officers alleged that Estolano accepted bribes for special treatment for the suspect while in detention and for him to fix his case.

However, when asked to comment, Estolano accused the HPG officers of arresting the suspect over a warrant that had already been recalled by a Pasay City court in July 2024.

Meanwhile, Calinisan said another complaint of grave misconduct and conduct unbecoming of a police officer was filed against two Marikina City cops for allegedly raping a patrolwoman.

“Ang IMIS ay nakakita ng probable cause para sila ay kasuhan (Our IMIS saw probable cause to charge them),” he said.

According to reports, the suspects – a patrolman and a staff sergeant – allegedly picked up the victim on Aug. 17 while she was on duty and invited her for coffee.

She was then allegedly molested inside a police

mobile along a jogging lane in the city.

The two suspects are now confined at the Eastern Police District (EPD) Personnel Holding and Accounting Unit (PHAU) and will be facing administrative charges, as well as acts of lasciviousness and violation of Republic Act 8353, or the Anti-Rape Law.

The third administrative charge involved seven police officers from the Caloocan City police who were implicated in the death of Dion Angelo Dela Rosa, a 20-year-old student who died of leptospirosis in July.

The legal complaint, endorsed by Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David, accuses seven police officers of grave misconduct, grave dishonesty, incompetence, oppression, and conduct unbecoming of an officer.

“Kakasuhan sila ng grave misconduct, grave dishonesty, incompetence, oppression, and conduct unbecoming of a police officer (They will be charged with grave misconduct, grave dishonesty, incompetence, oppression, and conduct unbecoming of a police officer),” Calinisan said without identifying the officers being charged.

The three charges were brought by the IMIS to the Napolcom Legal Affairs Service for the assignment of a hearing officer and the serving of summons to the officers being charged.

Manila cops charged anew Meanwhile, Calinisan also presented to the media another delivery rider, Nicole Owen Solleza, who filed a complaint before the Napolcom on Thursday against 11 Manila Police District Drug Enforcement Unit (MPD DEU) personnel for allegedly abducting him and a fellow delivery rider last week.

Solleza accused the officers of forcibly taking him and fellow delivery rider Chester Dumaran into a vehicle and driving them around Rizal province

for hours on Sept. 9 over allegedly fabricated drug charges.

Solleza said he and Dumaran knew each other from their delivery app and were meeting to catch up when the group of officers supposedly accosted them.

Calinisan said that Solleza was released pending further investigation by the Manila city prosecutor on Sept. 11.

Solleza said he was not involved in illegal drugs, claiming that he only underwent a general medication examination and not a drug test while in police custody.

IMIS Chief Edman Pares did not name the 11 respondents but said the group comprised four staff sergeants, two master sergeants, two patrolmen, a major, a corporal, and a senior master sergeant.

Calinisan said regarding Dumaran’s and Solleza’s complaints, the agency received information that some of the 11 police officers accused were also part of an allegedly anomalous June 20 anti-drug operation in Tondo, Manila.

He said the Napolcom had already opened a motu proprio investigation into that supposed incident.

On Sept. 12., Dumaran filed his complaint with the IMIS against a police major, two master sergeants, two staff sergeants, one corporal, and one patrol officer for grave misconduct, grave irregularities in the performance of duty, and conduct unbecoming of a police officer.

“Gumugulong na po ‘yung administratibo nila na kaso at binibigyan po natin ng pagkakataon ‘yung both parties dito sa due process (Their administrative case is rolling and we are giving both parties a chance for due process),” he said during a press briefing at Camp Crame in Quezon City. (PNA) **BY CHRISTOPHER LLOYD CALIWAN**

PDEA: P87.19-B NARCOTICS SEIZED SINCE START OF MARCOS ADMIN

MANILA - The Marcos administration’s anti-drug campaign has so far netted PHP87.19 billion worth of narcotics since July 2022, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) reported on Thursday.

The amount included 11,680.81 kilograms of shabu; 100.57 kg. of cocaine; 144,927 kg. of ecstasy tablets and 7,767.16 kg. of dried marijuana leaves and bricks seized from July 2022 to August this year.

The PDEA also said it conducted 120,787 operations across the country during this period which resulted in the arrest of 162,597 drug suspects, 10,342 of whom were high-value targets.

“This is not just a tally of arrests and seizures, it is a testament to our

unwavering commitment to dismantle the drug menace at every level,” PDEA Director General, Undersecretary Isagani Nerez said.

A total of 1,582 drug dens and three clandestine shabu laboratories were dismantled during the same period.

Meanwhile, 29,633 out of 42,000 villages have been declared “drug-cleared,” while 6,193 barangays declared drug-free.

During his fourth State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. vowed that the government would remain relentless in its fight against the illegal drugs trade in the country.

NCRPO operations Meanwhile, the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) has confiscated PHP7.6 million

worth of illegal drugs and arrested 872 individuals in a weeklong police operation from Sept. 8 to 14.

In a statement on Thursday, acting chief PNP Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said among those arrested were 119 most wanted persons and 198 other wanted individuals.

He said the police also conducted 140 anti-illegal gambling operations, resulting in 295 arrests and the confiscation of around PHP75,000 in bet money while 41 individuals were also apprehended for carrying unlicensed firearms.

“These operations are proof of our commitment to law and order. We are not only enforcing the law but also building trust with the communities we serve,” Nartatez added.

Southern police district Southern Police District (SPD) Director Brig. Gen. Randy Arceo, meanwhile, said SPD operatives arrested a total of 15 wanted persons during a series of law enforcement operations from Sept. 16 (5:59 a.m.) to Sept. 17 (6 a.m.).

He added the 13 other wanted persons were arrested for various offenses, including Unjust Vexation in relation to Republic Act 10175, Qualified Theft, and Serious Physical Injuries.

In Taguig City, 13 individuals - five minors and eight adults - were rescued from an alleged human trafficking scheme inside a spa disguised as a wellness center in New Lower Bicutan, Taguig City on Wednesday.

Col. Byron Allatog, Taguig City police officer-in-charge, said the two suspects identified as Rafael, 39, spa owner, and Riza, 35, co-owner and massage therapist, will face charges for violating RA 9208 (Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003), as amended by RA 10364 and RA 11862 (Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act). He said the rescue stemmed from intelligence information received by the Station Intelligence Section regarding alleged illicit sexual services being offered by both minor and adult therapists. (PNA)

BY CHRISTOPHER LLOYD CALIWAN

PBBM: UAE, PH ‘TRUE PARTNERS’ IN BUILDING ‘FUTURE-READY’ GOVERNMENTS

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has expressed gratitude to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for its unwavering support to the Philippines and for being a “true partner” in building “smarter and future-ready” governments.

Marcos made the statement after his meeting with UAE Deputy Minister of Cabinet Affairs for Competitiveness and Experience Exchange at Malacañan Palace in Manila on Thursday.

“It was a pleasure to welcome Deputy Minister Abdulla Nasser Lootah and the UAE delegation as they conclude the Philippines-UAE Government Experience Exchange Forum,” he said in a Facebook post.

“We are grateful to the UAE for its continued support to our Filipino workers and for being a true partner in building smarter, future-ready governments. Through shared knowledge and collaboration, we are creating meaningful change for our people,”

Marcos added.

During the courtesy call at Malacañang, Marcos expressed his appreciation to the UAE government for supporting the welfare of Filipino workers in the Gulf state and for making the Philippines a partner in various mutually beneficial initiatives.

Lootah relayed the UAE government’s interest in strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries, emphasizing its great importance.

Lootah and the UAE official delegation are in the country to participate in the Philippines and UAE Government Experience Exchange Forum held from Sept. 16 to 18.

The forum, organized by the Department of Budget and Management and the UAE Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, aims to empower government personnel from both countries through the exchange of experiences and best practices, working together toward building innovative, future-ready governments. (PNA) **BY RUTH ABBEY GITA-CARLOS**

BONTOC CELEBRATES UNITY, RICH HERITAGE IN 117TH ANNIVERSARY

BONTOC, Mountain Province (PIA) — The Municipality of Bontoc celebrated its 117th Founding Anniversary and the 21st Am-among Festival on September 16, 2025, with the theme: "Bontoc in Step with One Cordillera: Stronger Together."

Mayor Franklin Odsey emphasized that the celebration is an excellent opportunity to reinforce shared vision for a united Cordillera—moving forward together through community effort and collaboration.

"Bontoc has been a convergence of culture, traditions, and communities. As the capital town of the old Mountain Province, it embodies the strength of the Cordillera—strong yet compassionate, diverse yet united, rooted in heritage but open to new possibilities," he said.

A highlight of the celebration was the Am-among Festival Skills Challenge on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) participated by trained responders from Bontoc and other municipalities in the Cordillera Region who shared their best practices on DRRM and climate change adaptation, and fostered community resiliency and camaraderie.

Senator Christopher Lawrence "Bong" T. Go, the invited guest of Honor represented by Florinda Princess Duque, recognized the unity of Bontoc as depicted in the theme. He cited that the municipality's culture and tradition led to the continued recognition of Bontoc in the Cordillera.

Congressman Maximo Y. Dalog Jr., highlighted the importance of celebrating heritage, emphasizing that traditional dances help preserve the culture and showcase the richness of Bontoc's history.

"In celebrations like this, we see the diverse cultures inherited from our elders. The customs and warm community spirit are ways of honoring our traditions. This is where we can showcase the richness and beauty of the Bontoc's culture," he stated.

Some text Sampling the town's rich heritage, the festival

featured a cultural competition with two categories: the Takik (marriage dance) and Pinanyo-an (courtship dance). Barangay Dalican dominated the competition, winning both categories.

Barangay Callutit came in second for the Takik Dance followed by Barangay Alab Proper in third place and Barangay Can-ao in 4th Place. For the Pinanyo-an, Barangay Alab Proper placed second while barangays Callutit and Can-ao came in 3rd and 4th, respectively.

The celebration serves as a reminder of Bontoc's rich history and ongoing progress, with local leaders reaffirming their commitment to unity, public service, and sustainable development.

Bontoc celebrates its foundation day every 16th day of September by virtue of Municipal Ordinance No. 35, s. 1997, which cited that based on official records, Bontoc was proclaimed as the capital town of old Mountain Province on September 16, 1908. (JDP/VJLT/JFI-PIA-CAR, Mountain Province)

BY JUDALYN ISIGUEN AND VALERIE TAGUBA

SIBUGAY STRENGTHENS PEACE THRU COMMUNITY SERVICES

IPIL, Zamboanga Sibugay (PIA) — The Grand Pulong-Pulong and Serbisyo Caravan reached Barangay Mamagon, Naga town, delivering essential government services to residents of a community once influenced by radicalism.

The initiative, through a "pulong-pulong" or community gathering, showcased the government's continuing efforts to strengthen peace, reintegration, and sustainable development in areas formerly affected by conflict.

Residents of Barangay Mamagon received free medical and dental check-ups, haircut and circumcision services, along with the distribution of slippers for children.

These interventions brought immediate relief to families and reflected the government's commitment to respond to basic community needs.

Nihma Ahod, a 52-year-old housewife, availed of a free medical check-up, expressed her gratitude for the accessible services brought to the community.

"This is a big help for us to have someone conduct

check-ups because we didn't have this before. I am very thankful because my children were also included in the check-up," she said.

Organized by the 106th Infantry "Tigpanalipod" Battalion in partnership with the local government and various national agencies, the caravan served as a convergence of programs that addressed health and social needs.

Other services during the caravan included updates and assistance from various government agencies, introducing interventions in livelihood and education to raise awareness of available programs for the community.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s commitment to bring services closer to the people is highlighted through the Grand Pulong-Pulong and Serbisyo Caravan in remote communities.

By bringing services closer and addressing community needs, the initiative strengthened trust, unity, and peace in Zamboanga Sibugay. (EDT/RBI/PIA9-Zamboanga Sibugay) **BY ROMMEL B. IGNACIO**

DSWD ENLISTS BOHOL INFO OFFICERS AS ADVOCATES TO SPREAD ACCURATE PROGRAM INFORMATION

TAGBILARAN CITY, Bohol (PIA) — Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Central Visayas Regional Director Shalaine Marie S. Lucero encouraged Bohol information officers to become advocates for the department by sharing accurate information about its programs and services. "As partners for change, we hope you can help us amplify the correct news, proper processes, and accurate guidelines of our programs. Help us make the various programs and services of DSWD easier for the people to understand," Lucero urged in a video message.

The DSWD-7, thru its Social Marketing Unit, recently hosted the monthly assembly of the members of the Association of United Developmental Information Officers (AUDIO)-Bohol in Tagbilaran City.

Lucero recognized the information officers as key partners in delivering the right messages to the public.

She said the initiative supports the department's goal to strengthen its

information drive and provide accurate, relevant, and timely updates to communities.

During the forum, the DSWD resource persons presented their major programs, including the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS), and the Ayuda para sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP).

The agency also highlighted its key advocacies against Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC), Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAE), and Trafficking in Persons (TIP).

The activity is part of DSWD's Tamang Tulong sa Tamang Impormasyon (3TI) campaign that ensures accurate information leads to the right intervention.

The information officers from the local government units and national government agencies appreciated the resource persons, organizers, and the department for implementing programs and services that truly benefit the people.

"Your support has given us the opportunity to come together, exchange ideas, and strengthen our shared commitment to development communication and public service," said AUDIO-Bohol President Doris Isabel.

Racho as she extended the association's gratitude to the DSWD for hosting their September assembly.

"To my fellow AUDIO members, may we always carry the spirit of collaboration and service in every task we do for our communities. Together with development partners and with unwavering support, I am confident that AUDIO-Bohol will continue to make a meaningful impact," Racho said in her closing message. (ECB/PIA7-Bohol) **BY ELVIRA C. BONGOSIA**

TRIKE DRIVERS IN TAGUM HAIL P20 RICE PROGRAM ROLLOUT

TAGUM CITY — The 'Benteng Bigas Meron (BBM) Na' was rolled out in Tagum City on September 16, which benefited over a thousand tricycle drivers in the Davao del Norte capital.

Several beneficiaries hailed the opportunity of buying the more affordable BBM rice as it translates to more savings for them that can be used for other useful purposes.

"Dako kaayo na matabang ang twenty pesos nga kilong bugas sa among mga tricycle driver kay ang ubang mabudget maadto na sa among mga anak, mga allowance sa mga estudyante," says Soliman Limugas, one of the tricycle drivers who bought their allocation of 10 kilos rice during the rollout at the Rotary Park.

(The P20 kilo rice is a big help for us tricycle drivers as the saved

budget would go to our children, allowances for the students.

'Benteng Bigas Meron Na' is the banner project of the national government under the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. which is implemented in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, National Food Authority (NFA), and the Food Terminal, Inc. (FTI), which aims to provide affordable rice at P20.00 per kilo to different sectors. The September 16 rollout in Tagum City targeted the transportation sector particularly the tricycle drivers. Initial target beneficiaries are 3,650 tricycle drivers.

For Feliciana Sugsi, wife of a tricycle driver, with the P20/ kilo rice, they can add more budget to other needs such as maintenance medicines.

"Dako kaayo ikatabang

ang beinte pesos nga bugas kay kung mupalit ka ug tung tag sinkwenta na, ma-short na jud ta sa budget, sa imung pang-sudan, pamasaha ug tambal sa akong senior na bana" Sugsi said.

(The P20 rice is a big help because if you buy the P50/kilo budget it would not be enough for your viands, transportation and medicines for my senior citizen husband.)

Several drivers thanked President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos for the BBM Na rice rollout.

"Magpasalamat mi sa Presidente sa kaning programa kay makatabang jud ni sa mga pobre kay mahal na kaayo ang bugas ron tag sinkwenta na kilo," says Carlito Diagona, who immediately proceeded to the venue when he heard of the news about rice rollout.

(We thank the President

for this program because it will help the poor as rice is very expensive, they are being sold at P50 per kilo.) Mayor Rey T. Uy says the rollout will have an initial 1,000 beneficiaries. "Ang unang benepisyaryo ato ani mga one thousand mga pedicabers, napulo ka kilo na bugas na paliton nilag beinte ka kilo." (The initial beneficiaries 1,000 drivers, they will buy 10 kilos of rice at P20 per kilo)

The Mayor said the rice is good quality, during the event he presented freshly cooked rice taken from the ones being sold at the rollout. "Nagpaluto ko to be sure na iwas ta anang daghang storya," Mayor Uy said.

(I had a sample of rice cooked just to be sure of the quality so other people will not have much to say). The Mayor and several tricycle driver beneficiaries

partook of the rice which they deemed as good quality rice. (PIA/RGA) **BY RUDOLPH ALAMA**

DEPDEV: PH HARNESSING AI FOR INNOVATION, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

MANILA — The Philippines is prepared for a transformation that leverages artificial intelligence (AI) in pursuit of national development and a better quality of life for Filipinos, Department of Economy, Planning and Development (DEPDev) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said Thursday. In his keynote address at the 11th Annual Public Policy Conference of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) in Makati City, Balisacan touted the gains of the country's digital transformation efforts. He said the country's digital economy grew to PHP2.1 trillion in 2024, from PHP1.6 trillion in 2018.

The Philippines has also ranked 56th in the Oxford Government AI Readiness Index 2024 with a score of 58.5, up nine places from the previous year's rank of 65 with a score of 51.98. "These gains affirm that Filipinos are not only adopting technology. We are shaping it to secure our future [and] much has already been achieved," the DEPDev chief added.

Balisacan said the government is committed to expanding inclusive digital infrastructure to connect every Filipino, strengthening human capital through education, reskilling, and partnerships, enhancing governance frameworks rooted in ethics and trust, fostering collaboration across government, academe, private sector, and civil society, and governing with foresight and equity.

He said the National Innovation Agenda and Strategy Development, aligned with the Philippine Development Plan 2023 to 2028, positions innovation as a central driver of growth.

Efforts anchored to this agenda include the Department of Trade and Industry's AI Strategy Roadmap 2.0, which establishes the Center for AI Research, while the Department of Education ensures that AI knowledge flows into schools.

The Department of Science and Technology's Democratized Intelligent Model Exchange Repository (DIMER)

project, meanwhile, makes ready-to-use AI models available for agriculture, disaster response, and industry, lowering barriers for local stakeholders.

The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), through its Strengthening the Philippine Workforce through Adaptive and Responsive Digital Knowledge (SPARK) initiative, has partnered with Google and other institutions to ramp up free AI training.

Among efforts undertaken by the government is the eGov PH app, which features a wide array of services, and the digital national ID, which can now be accessed by 88.5 million Filipinos.

Balisacan also said 55 million physical national ID cards have already been delivered.

He also said the National Fiber Backbone connects six regions and over 17 million people, while the newly enacted Konektadong Pinoy Act introduces reforms to "increase competition in telecommunications, reduce costs and expand access."

Citing the need to uphold integrity and ethics in innovation, he said the DICT and the Civil Service Commission have released joint guidelines on "ethical and trustworthy AI" in government aimed at safeguarding transparency. He also said harnessing AI must be combined with "green standards" geared toward the responsible use of energy.

"Consider good governance. AI can detect anomalies in procurement, reduce bureaucratic friction, and prevent fraud," he added.

He said AI would help develop assistive technologies that can enhance healthcare services and social inclusion, as the Philippines is forecast to have a significantly older population by 2030.

"Through subsidizing AI-enabled health services, reskilling older workers, and ensuring no one is excluded from the digital economy. The opportunities are clear, and the gaps are evident. The challenge is to translate

ABOITIZPOWER TO REDEEM 10-YEAR RETAIL BOND AHEAD OF 2028 MATURITY

MANILA — Aboitiz Power Corporation will fully prepay this month the PHP2.5 billion worth of 10-year fixed-rate retail bonds it issued in 2018, after the company secured new capital.

The debt paper has an annual interest rate of 8.5091 percent, and is part of its PHP30-billion Shelf Registration Debt Program. In a disclosure with the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) Thursday, AboitizPower said the early redemption was approved by its Board of Directors during its meeting Wednesday.

"AboitizPower is coordinating with BDO

Unibank, Inc.-Trust and Investments Group and the Philippine Depository and Trust Corporation (the Trustee and Registrar/Paying Agent, respectively, for the 2018 Series C Bonds) for the issuance of the corresponding notices and the computation of the amounts due to the bondholders of the 2018 Series C Bonds," it said.

The company has several power projects in various parts of the country, and to date, six renewable energy (RE) projects and a coal plant expansion are set to be finished by next year. *(With a report from Joann Villanueva/PNA)*

GOV'T VOWS TO SUSTAIN EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

MANILA — The country's improved ranking in the latest ranking in the Global Innovation Index (GII) reflects sustained efforts to strengthen innovation ecosystem, the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev) said.

The latest GI report, released by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) on Tuesday, showed that the Philippines climbed to 50th place out of 139 economies in 2025.

It was the highest ranking achieved by the Philippines to date and also exceeded the government's 2025 target of 52nd place under the

Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028.

In a statement Thursday, DEPDev said this progress affirms the country's trajectory towards its long-term aspiration of joining the top one-third of global innovation economies by 2028.

"Surpassing our 2025 target is the result of sustained reforms, targeted investments, and strong collaboration across sectors and key players in the country's innovation ecosystem. We remain committed to scaling our innovation capacity, bridging critical gaps in research and digital infrastructure, and ensuring that innovation drives inclusive and sustainable development," said DEPDev Secretary and National Innovation Council (NIC) vice chairperson Arsenio Balisacan.

The Philippines also maintained its status as an "Innovation Overperformer" for the seventh consecutive year (2019-2025), a recognition given to economies that consistently outperform expectations relative to their level of development. In the 2025 report, the Philippines ranked 59th in Innovation Inputs and 49th in Innovation

JAPAN CREDIT RATING AGENCY CITES PH'S GROWTH, SOUND BANKING SYSTEM

MANILA — Japan Credit Rating Agency (JCR) highlighted the sustainable economic growth and soundness of the Philippine banking system.

In its latest report Thursday, JCR noted that the country's high and sustainable economic growth, supported by solid domestic demand, low-level external debt and resilience to external shocks, supported by accumulated foreign exchange reserves, and stable financial system as some of the key factors behind the Philippines' sustained investment-grade credit rating.

"Through government-led infrastructure projects, the economy has maintained strong growth driven by solid private consumption and fixed capital formation. High growth is expected to be retained over the medium term," JCR said.

"The Marcos Jr. administration is implementing a range of policies aimed at fiscal consolidation, infrastructure development, poverty reduction, and other objectives, with steady progress achieved so far," it added.

In June, JCR affirmed the Philippines' investment-grade credit rating of "A-" with a "stable" outlook.

An investment-grade rating reflects low credit risk, which helps lower

borrowing costs.

This, in turn, allows the government to channel more resources toward socially beneficial programs and initiatives.

JCR cited strong loan growth, lower non-performing loans ratio, and capital adequacy ratios that are "well above" both Philippine and international standards.

Latest data showed that the capital adequacy ratio of universal and commercial banks stood at 16.5 percent on a consolidated basis.

The banks also maintained strong asset quality.

Non-performing loan ratio declined to 3.1 percent as of end-July 2025 from 3.6 percent in 2021.

In a statement, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) welcomed JCR's assessment on the strength and stability of the Philippine banking system.

"The BSP continues to implement policies that promote robust capitalization and sound risk management among banks. These support financial stability and further build confidence in the domestic financial system," BSP Governor Eli Remolona Jr. said.

JCR's report also noted the country's easing inflation and robust gross international reserves (GIR).

Inflation averaged 1.7 percent during the first eight months of the year while GIR reached USD 105.9 billion in end-August 2025.

The GIR is equivalent to 7.2 months' worth of imports and 3.4 times the country's short-term external debt.

JCR also said the country's "solid foreign currency liquidity position" will allow it to stay "remarkably resilient" against external shocks.

JCR said the attainment of government targets, including higher per capita income, lower poverty rate, expanded domestic employment opportunities, continued infrastructure investment, and structural reforms would have a positive impact on the credit rating.

A setback in fiscal reforms, however, will have a negative impact on the credit rating. *(PNA) BY ANNA LEAH GONZALES*

Outputs, which DEPDev said reflects the country's ability to translate limited resources into meaningful innovation outcomes.

To sustain this momentum, DEPDev said the NIC, chaired by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., is implementing the National Innovation Agenda and Strategy Document 2023-2032.

This roadmap addresses persistent challenges in infrastructure, research, and human capital, with a focus on increasing investments in research and development, science, and technology, expanding access to digital infrastructure, and cultivating a larger pool of highly trained science and innovation professionals. *(PNA) BY ANNA LEAH GONZALES*



THAILAND'S EXPERIENCE BOOSTS CONFIDENCE AHEAD OF 13TH ASEAN PARA GAMES

MANILA – Preparations for the 13th ASEAN Para Games Thailand 2025 gained momentum this week after the conclusion of the 1st Technical Delegates (TD) Meeting on Wednesday.

Preecha Laloon, deputy governor of Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) for Elite Sports and Sports Science, chaired the three-day meeting attended by ASEAN Para Sports Federation (APSF) President Maj. Gen. Osoth Bhavilai, APSF Secretary-General Senior Colonel Dr. Wandee Tosuwan, APSF Sports and Technical Chairperson Walter Torres, and APSF Sports Director Stefanie Ang.

Also present were 13 technical delegates, competition and venue managers, and nearly 100 representatives from APSF and the Thailand ASEAN Para Games Organizing Committee (THASOC).

Delegates also visited competition venues across Nakhon Ratchasima, assessing facilities as largely ready, with only minor accessibility refinements required, such as restroom upgrades, ramp, and improved layouts.

THASOC confirmed adjustments are underway and will be completed well ahead of the Games. Updates were also presented on accommodations, accreditation, logistics, medical services, and sports operations.

Around 3,000 athletes are expected to compete for 536 gold medals in the biennial tournament set on Jan. 20 to 26, 2026 in Nakhon Ratchasima (Korat) and Bangkok.

The final numbers will be confirmed after the submission of entries by name on Nov. 15.

"Nakhon Ratchasima has repeatedly hosted major international para sports events and has extensive experience. The federations are confident that Thailand

will successfully manage all aspects of the Games including venues, competitions and organizations, up to international standards," said Preecha in a press statement released Thursday.

The 19 sports to be contested are Para Swimming, Wheelchair Basketball, Para Archery, Para Badminton, Para Shooting, Para Athletics, Judo, Sitting Volleyball, Blind Football (5-a-side), CP Football (7-a-side), Boccia, Goalball, Powerlifting, Wheelchair Tennis, Table Tennis, Para Cycling (Track and Road), Para Fencing, Chess and Tenpin Bowling.

Para Athletics, Para Swimming, Para Powerlifting and Para Cycling, are sanctioned by International Federations, with the results counting towards international rankings and possible qualification for major competitions such as the Asian Para Games. Wheelchair Rugby and Lawn Bows are demonstration sports.

During the meeting and venue visits, the technical delegates highlighted two key areas requiring further coordination, ensuring event viability pending final athlete entries and balancing competition schedules with rehearsals for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies at the main Athletics stadium.

THASOC confirmed the sports program will remain as planned to avoid disruption, although National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) may request additional events for joint review with TDs.

"Thailand has repeatedly proven its ability to stage para sports to world-class standards. With Nakhon Ratchasima's experience and strong collaboration amongst stakeholders, we are confident the 13th ASEAN Para Games will be a success," said Bhavilai.

Tosuwan stressed the

aspects of inclusivity and regional spirit.

"Together, we are determined to ensure the Games will not only meet international standards but also serve as a celebration of ASEAN unity, friendship and sporting excellence," she said.

The 13th ASEAN Para Games, carrying the theme "ASEAN Moving Together" and "Create Pride Together," is returning to Nakhon Ratchasima after 18 years. (PNA) **BY JEAN MALANUM**

ALAS VICTORY DREAM COME TRUE, BOOST TO SPORTS TOURISM

MANILA – The historic victory of Alas Pilipinas at the FIVB Men's World Championship on Tuesday night will elevate the landscape of Philippine volleyball.

"It was a dream come true," Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Abraham Tolentino said Wednesday, a day after the Philippines snatched its first-ever win in the FIVB Men's World Championship after beating world No. 22 Egypt, 29-27, 23-25, 25-21, 25-21, at Mall of Asia Arena in Pasay City.

Egypt is a nine-time African champion with a best finish of 13th place in the 2010 edition.

It has played 11 times in the Worlds and six times in the Olympics, including placing ninth in 2016 Rio de Janeiro.

"These men have etched their names in volleyball history and their victory would surely be an inspiration and motivation for the next generation to emulate as role models," Tolentino said.

MANILA – The Philippine Football Federation (PFF) on Wednesday thanked the government for supporting the FIFA Futsal Women's World Cup (FFWWC) 2025 to be held in Pasig City from Nov. 21 to Dec. 7.

On July 30, 2025, the government released Administrative Order No. 35, which clearly stated President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.'s instruction for the creation of an Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) to ensure the Philippines' successful hosting of FFWWC.

The task force, chaired by the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC), is the agency responsible for coordinating the efforts of various government agencies, local government units, and private stakeholders involved in the planning, organization, and implementation of the historic FIFA tournament.

PFF President John Anthony Gutierrez underscored PSC's leadership in bringing together all the FFWWC stakeholders and

facilitating all the efforts.

"I cannot emphasize enough the crucial part that PSC and Chairman Patrick Gregorio play in our country's hosting of the FFWWC. Their support has been key to bringing a world-class international tournament that is the FFWWC," Gutierrez said in a statement.

PSC, PFF, and other members of the FFWWC IATF have been working together for months now, starting with planning sessions and coordination meetings early this year.

The FFWWC 2025 draw ceremony last Sept. 15 at the BGC Arts Center was attended by officials from FIFA, dignitaries representing the 16 countries competing in the tournament, members of foreign and local media, as well as Filipina national athletes Hali Long and Vanie Gandler, Croatia women's national futsal team head coach Tihana Nemčić Bojić, and Brazilian futsal king Falcão.

In a recorded video shown before the draw, FIFA

President Gianni Infantino highlighted PFF's role as the member-association that secured the bid to host the FFWWC, and the tournament's importance in the development of futsal and football in the Philippines and in the region.

"The first-ever FIFA Futsal Women's World Cup is truly a game-changer. It finally gives the world's top women's futsal players the global stage that they deserve. But it will also shape the futsal players of tomorrow by inspiring so many young people. Led by PFF President, my friend, John Gutierrez, as well as former PFF President and current FIFA Council Member, my friend, as well, Mariano Araneta, in a true team effort that has led to this proud day (of the draw ceremony) for you all and for us all," Infantino said.

The FIFA chief added he would be returning to the Philippines to "celebrate this hugely significant step for your country and for us all." (PNA) **BY JEAN MALANUM**

SIA NAMED UE JUNIOR WARRIORS HEAD COACH

MANILA – Matthew Sia will coach the University of the East junior basketball team, Strong Group Athletics announced Wednesday.

The Junior Warriors will kick off their UAAP Season 88 title defense against the National University-Nazareth Bullpups on Sept. 21 at the UST Quadracentennial Pavilion. Sia takes over from Andrew Estrella, who will be the team's consultant as he leads the Letran Squires in the NCAA. He will be assisted by Karl Santos, who also coaches UE's Under 19 team.

Sia served under Santos with the La Salle Greenhills Greenies from 2015 to 2021. He also had stints with the Letran Knights, Adamson Lady Falcons, PBA 3x3 teams, and Maharlika Pilipinas Basketball League teams

town for the Worlds.

"Sports tourism and this is one solid platform to boost this campaign," Tolentino said. (PNA) **BY JEAN MALANUM**

Imus, Pampanga, Bicol, and Valenzuela.

"I was surprised that coach Karl said it's time for me to be a head coach because you saw that we weren't together, but he knows and he sees that I'm maturing in other leagues," Sia said in a statement Wednesday. "Before he left, I was shadowing coach Andrew, I was doing his instructions and advice to me along with coach Karl. They really helped me fast-track the transition," said Sia, whose mission is to continue the system that has produced talents such as Luis Pablo, Seven Gagete, Jacob Cortez, and JC Macalalag. He emphasized building character and laying a strong foundation for the young players.

"I'm just told not to put pressure on myself, and beyond wins and losses, the focus is really on the foundation and character of the kids. That's what coaches Karl and Andrew say tirelessly when mentoring me," he said. (PNA) **BY JEAN MALANUM**