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DSWD TAPS CHURCH TO BOLSTER AID FOR MARGINALIZED SECTOR

TAGAYTAY CITY, Cavite (PIA) — The Catholic Church has become a key partner for the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to expand the reach of government social programs to the poor.

During the 42nd National Social Action General Assembly (NASAGA) hosted by Caritas Philippines last February 3, Secretary Rex Gatchalian underscored the Church's referral network in connecting marginalized sectors to government social services.

"You can use your

Churches to refer your needy, 'yung mga nangangailangan 'nyong parokyano para sa financial assistance namin."

While the DSWD is widely known for financial aid such as the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) and the Ayuda Para sa Kapos ang Kita (AKAP) programs, among others, Gatchalian emphasized that the agency also provides developmental services designed for long-term community impact.

"Everybody knows DSWD for our financial assistance and ayuda. But

there's more to us than financial assistance. We keep on highlighting the development side of the Department."

Highlighting the importance of local networks, Gatchalian credited the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) and Caritas Philippines as key partners in delivering social services to the grassroots communities.

"You already have set up a focal group na tatapatan ng social workers namin. So that's direct referral from the Churches into the system of the DSWD

The Provincial Government of Cavite (PGC) through the Office of the Provincial Youth Development Officer officially opened the much-anticipated 2026 Cavite Provincial Inter-Department Sportsfest during a vibrant opening ceremony held at the New

Provincial Government Center in Trece Martires City.

Employees from various departments gathered in high spirits, proudly representing their respective offices in a colorful parade of teams that highlighted unity, camaraderie, and sportsmanship. The event marks the beginning of months of friendly competition, with sports activities scheduled to run until July 2026.

Adding excitement to the opening program was the awarding of special recognitions to outstanding delegations. The Office of the Provincial Health Officer (OPHO) proudly took home the Best Delegation Award for their energetic participation and strong team presence. The Office of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (OPENRO) was recognized as the Best in Uniform. Meanwhile, Ms. Hershey Lyn Sarte of the Office of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (OSP) captivated the audience and judges as she was

hailed Best Muse for her grace and confidence.

This year's Sportsfest will feature a variety of sporting events catering to diverse interests and talents, including badminton, chess, darts, e-sports (Mobile Legends), volleyball, and basketball. These activities aim to promote physical fitness, teamwork, and a healthy work-life balance among PGC employees.

The annual Inter-Department Sportsfest is one of PGC's initiatives to strengthen solidarity and boost morale within the organization. Through sports and friendly competition, employees are given the opportunity to build stronger relationships beyond the workplace while fostering discipline, cooperation, and mutual respect.

As the games officially commence, departments are gearing up for intense yet friendly matches in the coming months, all in the spirit of unity and excellence that define the Provincial Government of Cavite. — OPIO

PGC HOLDS LOCAL RECRUITMENT ACTIVITY

The Provincial Government of Cavite (PGC), through the Office of the Provincial Public Employment Service Manager led by Ms. Rizalie Pinpin-Enero, conducted a Local Recruitment Activity with Star Appliance Center, Inc. (SM Appliance Center) on February 13, at the New Provincial Government Center in Trece Martires City.

Out of 27 applicants who applied for 70 available vacancies, two were hired on the spot, while

seven were endorsed for examination at the company's warehouse in Kawit, Cavite. Other applicants received guidance and next steps to continue their employment process.

The activity reflects PGC's continuing commitment to connect Caviteños with accessible and meaningful employment opportunities through strong public-private partnerships.— R. Dones/ Cavite - PIO



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CAVITE'S MOST WANTED, SUCCESSFULLY ARRESTED BY NOVELETA POLICE

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite – A Provincial Level Most Wanted Person was successfully arrested at about 5:30 in the afternoon of February 10, 2026, in Noveleta, Cavite, through a focused law enforcement operation conducted by personnel of Noveleta Municipal Police Station. PMAJ MARK ANTHONY D SARNO, Chief of Police, Noveleta MPS, identified the arrested accused as "Rom", a resident of Noveleta, Cavite.

Personnel of Noveleta MPS, warrant PNCO using Alternative Recording Device (ARD) conducted operation against Most Wanted Person (listed provincial level), which resulted in the arrest of the accused for Violation of PD 1602 as amended by RA 9287 and Viol. of section 11 Article II RA 9165, with recommended bail of Php30,000.00 for Viol of PD 1602 as amended by RA 9287 and Php200,000.00 for Viol of Sec. 11 of Art II RA 9165 issued by Presiding Judge RTC 4th Judicial Region Br 16 Cavite City, Cavite on the 10th day of February 2026 at Cavite City, Cavite.

Upon arrest, the accused was properly apprised of his constitutional rights in a language known and understood by him.

The arrested accused is currently detained at the Custodial Facility of Noveleta Municipal Police Station, while the warrants of arrest shall be returned to the court of origin for proper documentation and disposition.

In his message, PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director, Cavite Police Provincial Office, emphasized that the arrest underscores the Cavite PNP's firm commitment to ensuring that convicted offenders are immediately made to face the consequences of their actions. "The arrest of this Most Wanted Person demonstrates the Cavite PNP's unwavering commitment to pursue and apprehend wanted individuals, especially those involved in illegal drugs. We assure the public that our personnel will continue to intensify operations, uphold justice, and ensure the safety and security of every Caviteño." PCOL Red stated.

He further assured the

AFTER 8 YEARS OF HIDING, MAGALLANES POLICE SUCCESSFULLY ARRESTED WANTED PERSON IN ILOILO CITY

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite – Personnel of the Magallanes Municipal Police Station, in coordination with the Iloilo City Police Station 3, successfully arrested a Wanted Person during a joint law enforcement operation at about 8:45 in the evening of February 10, 2026, in Brgy. Ungka, Jaro, Iloilo City.

PMAJ RAYMOND T BALBUENA, Chief of Police, Magallanes MPS, identified the arrested accused as "Lito", presently residing in Brgy. Balantang, Jaro, Ilo-Ilo City.

The arrest was carried out by virtue of an Alias Warrant of Arrest for the crime of Attempted Homicide, dated November 27, 2017, issued by Presiding Judge of the 1st Municipal Trial Court of Maragondon-Ternate-Magallanes, sitting in Maragondon, Cavite, for

public that intensified manhunt operations across the province will continue to ensure that no fugitive of justice remains beyond the reach of the law.

failure to appear in court. The suspect had been evading the law for over eight years.

During the operation, the accused was properly informed of his constitutional rights. He was subsequently brought to Iloilo City Police Station 3 for documentation and proper disposition.

The operation was recorded using an Alternative Recording Device (ARD) in compliance with standard operating procedures.

In his message, PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director, Cavite Police Provincial Office, emphasized that the arrest underscores the Cavite PNP's firm commitment to ensuring that convicted offenders are immediately made to face the consequences of their actions. "This arrest demonstrates the unwavering commitment of the Cavite Police Provincial Office to pursue justice, no matter how long it takes, and ensure that law violators are held accountable." PCOL Red stated.

PROVINCIAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON NABBED BY CARMONA POLICE

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite – In a significant operation aimed at protecting the rights and welfare of women and children, the Carmona Component City Police Station (CCPS) successfully apprehended a Provincial Level Most Wanted Person in Carmona City, Cavite, at approximately 7:50 PM on February 10, 2026.

PLTCOL MELVIN M BALBA, Chief of Police of Carmona CCPS, identified the accused as alias Alberto, a resident of Carmona, Cavite.

The arrest was the result of a manhunt operation conducted by the station's warrant operatives. The

accused was apprehended by virtue of a Warrant of Arrest for four (4) counts of violation of Republic Act 9262, otherwise known as the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004. The court recommended a total bail of Php 288,000.00 for his temporary liberty.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, stated, "This accomplishment by Carmona CCPS underscores our relentless pursuit of high-ranking fugitives to ensure that justice is served for the victims and that the law is strictly enforced across the province."

RANK NO. 5 MOST WANTED PERSON FOR QUALIFIED RAPE, ARRESTED BY GENERAL TRIAS

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite – Personnel of the General Trias City Component City Police Station successfully arrested a Rank No. 5 City Level Most Wanted Person in San Juan City, Manila at 5:00 in the afternoon of February 10, 2026.

PLTCOL BISMARCK S MENDOZA, COP, General Trias CCPS, identified the accused as Alias Louie, a resident of General Trias

City, Cavite. Warrant Personnel of General Trias CCPS conducted operation against wanted persons using an alternative recording device that resulted to the arrest of the accused for Qualified Rape under Article 266-a in relation to article 266-B of the RPC, as amended by R.A. 8353 issued by Presiding Judge of Family Court, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 5, Trece Martires City, Cavite dated November 11, 2024 with no bail recommended.

The accused is temporarily detained at the General Trias City Custodial Facility, Brgy. Bagumbayan, General Trias City, Cavite, pending the return of the warrant to the court of origin and the subsequent issuance of a Commitment Order.

The Acting Provincial Director of Cavite Police Provincial Office, PCOL ARIEL R RED, lauded the operating unit for the successful apprehension stating: "The arrest of this Most Wanted Person demonstrates the Cavite PNP's unwavering commitment to pursue and apprehend wanted individuals, especially those involved in heinous crimes. We assure the public that our personnel will continue to intensify operations, uphold justice, and ensure the safety and security of every Caviteño."

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DEPED LAUNCHES CLASSROOM LEASING PROJECT TO ADDRESS SCHOOL OVERCROWDING

PILA, Laguna (PIA) — The Department of Education (DepEd) is leasing shuttered private school buildings to help ease classroom shortages in the country.

In an interview during the inauguration of the country's first Classroom Leasing Project at Don Manuel Rivera Memorial Integrated National High School (DMRMINHS) of this town last February 10, Secretary Sonny Angara noted that the government is eyeing to convert 700 to 800 private schools nationwide into additional learning spaces.

"Siguro ay hindi ito ang huli dahil napag-alaman natin na nasa 700 o 800 ang private schools na nagsara noong pandemya. So kung ma-match natin ang kakulangan sa mga public schools na may kakulangan sa silid aralan, pwede natin i-lease."

DepEd has earmarked approximately P1 billion in funding to decongest classrooms through various methods, including leasing arrangements.

"Mayroon kaming mga tinitingnang school at kinakausap na rin namin yung mga local government chief executives, mga mayor at governor dahil sila ang nakakaalam sa lugar nila kung alin 'yung malalapit at pwedeng lakarin ng mga estudyante."

The Classroom Leasing Project is among DepEd's new strategies to address nationwide classroom shortage—an effort that is welcomed by teachers and students alike.

For teacher Sarah Jane Esguerra, who teaches Physics and Research subjects to Senior High School students, the additional facilities ensure a more comfortable environment where students can learn without cutting classes short to accommodate other sections.

"Bilang isang science teacher, isa sa challenges na na-encounter ko ay yung space dahil maliit lang yung classroom namin, kapag may demonstration teaching, may experiment, mahirap para sa mga estudyante at limited lang rin po ang galaw," "Dahil shifting kami, 45 minutes lang ang subject

wherein sa isang laboratory it takes two hours para maging successful 'yung experiment. Talagang kulang kami sa oras dahil sa limited classrooms."

As the first school in the country to benefit from the DepEd Classroom Leasing Project, DMRMINHS anticipates more collaborative and practical learning, especially in its science programs.

"Nakakatuwa dahil ang mga estudyante ay magkakaroon na ng space designed for collaboration. Isa lang itong patunay na hindi lang ito temporary solution kundi nakikinig sila sa hinaing ng mga guro at nagbibigay ng mga solusyon para mabigyan ng quality education ang mga estudyante. Sa ating Secretary Angara, lubos kaming nagpapasalamat sa inisyatibo pong ito."

As one of the primary beneficiaries of the Classroom Leasing Program, student Elajiah Pahitan was among those who took the afternoon classes as part of the school's shifting scheme due to the limited number of available classrooms.

"Ang uwian po kasi namin ay mga six na po ng gabi, at very worried po 'yung parents ko. Syempre po, madilim na rin po at mahirap na rin po kasi maghintay ng sasakyan pauwi."

With the new classrooms, Elijah and her classmates were welcomed with more comfortable learning spaces.

"Dito sa current classroom namin, very spacious na po sya at very comfortable dahil may exhaust fans and yung lamesa po namin ay napakabago."

Grateful for the improved learning environment, students at DMRMINHS have shown their appreciation by taking the initiative to assign among themselves cleaners who will help maintain the cleanliness of their classroom.

"Gusto ko lang po magpasalamat sa DepEd at sa aming mga teacher because they created a safe environment for effective learning. Sana po sa mga susunod po na mga school na magkakaroon rin ng ganito ay sana magkaroon pa ng mas maraming opportunity

COAST GUARD STARTS PROBE ON UNAUTHORIZED TOURIST ENTRY IN TAAI'S DANGER ZONE

SAN NICOLAS, Batangas (PIA) — The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has launched an investigation into the reported entry of a group of tourists at the Taal Volcano's Permanent Danger Zone (PDZ) on February 8, citing potential legal liabilities and violations of protected area protocols.

The Coast Guard investigation is conducted jointly with the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) and the Taal Volcano Protected Landscape-Protected Area Management Board (TVPL-PAMB).

Initial probe showed that five individuals, including four tourists who hired a boat, entered the Taal Volcano Island restricted zone over the weekend to photograph the volcano's crater.

The Coast Guard Station (CGS) Batangas deployed personnel to Barangay Alas-as in San Nicolas to search for the group. However, local fish cage owners informed authorities that the tourists had already left for Laurel town.

Further investigation revealed that the hired boat was not registered under the Safety, Security, and Environmental Numbering (SSEN) system. Additionally, it left port

without PCG clearance, which violated maritime safety protocols.

Both the boat owner and operator claimed they were unaware of existing entry restrictions in the area. In a statement, the PCG confirmed that it is conducting a joint investigation with the PHIVOLCS and PAMO-TVPL to determine further legal liabilities and potential violations of protected area protocols resulting from the unauthorized entry.

Captain Jerome Jeciel PCG, Commander of CGS Batangas, urged boat operators to follow safety regulations and exclusion zones to prevent untoward incidents.

"The safety of the public remains our highest priority. We urge all boat operators to strictly adhere to safety regulations and respect the exclusion zones set by the government to prevent any untoward incidents."

Following its January 12, 2020 eruption, PHIVOLCS has declared the TVI as strictly off-limits.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) Maritime Group had set up checkpoints within the 14-kilometer danger zone to prevent civilians from entering. (PB-PIA CALABARZON, Coast Guard Station Batangas, Office of Civil Defense) **BY PATRICIA BERMEDEZ**

MEDICAL AND DENTAL MISSION BRINGS FREE HEALTH SERVICES TO RESIDENTS OF VILLA APOLONIA

The Provincial Government of Cavite successfully conducted a medical and dental mission at Villa Apolonia, Brgy. Ibayo Silangan, Naic on February 6, providing free health services to a total of 627 beneficiaries.

Residents availed various essential health services including medical consultations, dental check-ups and tooth extractions, diagnostic procedures such as blood sugar testing, ECG, and X-ray, as well as free prescribed medicines. These services aimed to promote early detection,

prevention, and proper management of common health concerns within the community. The activity was made possible through the collaborative efforts of medical and dental professionals from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, with the help of barangay personnel, who ensured the smooth and orderly delivery of services throughout the mission. The medical and dental mission reflects the provincial government's continued commitment to bringing accessible and quality healthcare closer to communities, especially in barangays, reinforcing its dedication to the welfare and well-being of Caviteños. — **OPIO**

EDITORIAL

Ang Hamon sa Pamahalaan at Lipunan

Ang mga kabataan ang pag-asa ng bayan, ngunit paano sila magiging sandigan kung ang pundasyon ng kanilang kaalaman ay marupok? Ang learning crisis ay hindi lamang problema ng mga paaralan; ito ay krisis ng buong bansa. Kung hindi tayo kikilos ngayon, hinahayaan nating mapag-iwanan ang susunod na henerasyon sa mabilis na takbo ng mundo.

Panahon na upang gawing prayoridad ang tunay na pagkatuto. Dahil sa huli, ang edukasyon ang tanging armas natin laban sa kahirapan at kawalan ng pag-asa.

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SHIPPING FIRM, SOME GOV'T EXECs, WORKERS FACE RAPS OVER FERRY TRAGEDY

MANILA—The Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) are set to file administrative and criminal charges against the Aleson Shipping Line (ASL) and some government officials and personnel following the sinking of passenger ferry M/V Trisha Kerstin 3 in Basilan waters.

In a press conference at the DOTr office in San Juan City on Wednesday, acting Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez demanded accountability from both ASL and concerned government agencies, in line with the order of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.

"Ang sabi nga po ng Pangulo sa akin (The President told me), justice must be served, and justice must be served swiftly," Lopez said. He noted that M/V Trisha Kerstin 3 was able to sail to its destination despite "glaring safety deficiencies" in its passenger capacity certification, drydock/repair compliance, and seaworthiness certification.

The issues found by MARINA investigators include overloading of both passengers and cargoes, non-use of the weigh bridge at the Global Port Zamboanga Terminal, Inc. by rolling cargoes and private vehicles, and inconsistencies in the number of people in the passenger manifest as against the actual number of passengers on board.

"Why did they issue a safety certificate to M/V Trisha Kerstin 3 despite its safety deficiencies? Why did they let it sail away despite its safety violations on that day? Why is ASL repeatedly involved in these incidents? What did they do to address deficiencies?" he said in Filipino.

Due to the lapses, Lopez relieved several government personnel who were involved in allowing the ship to travel — eight from MARINA, including its Zamboanga

regional director, five from the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) who conducted the pre-departure inspection, and the PCG Zamboanga Station commander.

He also directed MARINA to file administrative charges against its Zamboanga regional head, Jedini Nur Sibal, shipping operations specialist Bevin Bibi, and shipbuilding specialist Jose Ray Quimiguing for neglect of duty.

"If in their administrative cases they were found to have committed grave neglect of their duties, we will not hesitate also to file criminal cases against them for possible violations of RA (Republic Act) 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act," he said in Filipino.

Meanwhile, to avoid similar incidents in the future, the DOTr is set to issue a department order for risk-based categorization of ships and routes as part of corrective measures to ensure the observance of strict passenger and vessel safety.

Life vests were also ordered to be placed under the ships' seats to ensure ready access and their availability at all times.

"Yun yung mga gagawin naming pagbabago — mga short-term, medium-term, long-term (measures). But as we go along, maglalabas pa kami ng mga iba't-ibang polisiya (Those are our plans — short-, medium-, and long-term measures. But as we go along, we will issue more [enforcement] policies)," Lopez said.

Updated death, survivor toll

The PCG announced the result of its consolidated verification of survivors and casualties of the sunken M/V Trisha Kerstin 3.

To date, the total number of survivors has been adjusted to 293 from the previously reported 316.

On the other hand, the total number of confirmed deaths has increased to 52 after another body was found by PCG divers on Wednesday.

"This revision reflected the verification of passenger

LRT-1 LAUNCHES WORKFORCE DIVERSITY PROGRAM FOR PWDS

MANILA — The Light Rail Manila Corporation (LRMC) on Wednesday rolled out a workforce inclusivity program for persons with disabilities (PWD) that aims to hire persons with special needs as part of the Light Rail Transit Line 1 (LRT-1) station workforce.

In a statement, the LRMC said the program, dubbed "Project PWD: Promoting Workforce Diversity," will deploy PWDs as station service aides with the goal of providing gainful employment opportunities for these individuals.

Under the program, station service aides will be engaged in part-time employment of four hours a day for a duration of less than five months.

"By empowering these individuals to take on vital roles as ambulant ticket sellers, LRMC is creating a platform where unique skills contribute directly to the community," it said.

It added the additional workforce will also optimize the LRT-1's operational efficiency by having additional frontline support and reducing ticket queues, allowing for faster

and more comfortable commutes during peak hours.

LRMC president and chief executive officer Enrico Benipayo said the program is a testament to the LRMC's belief that a diverse workforce is a key driver in providing better service to passengers while creating opportunities for PWDs.

"At LRMC, we are proud to lead the way in ensuring equal opportunities for all, regardless of their physical abilities. By integrating persons with special needs into our frontline operations, we are not only addressing operational bottlenecks but also fostering a culture of dignity and empowerment," Benipayo said.

The rollout follows the signing of a memorandum of agreement between LRMC and the city government of Manila, led by Mayor Isko Moreno, Manila Public Employment Service Office acting Manager John Hiroshi Umeda, Jr., and Benipayo. (PNA) **BY RAYMOND CARL DELA CRUZ**

7 'ILLEGALLY ARRESTED' WORKERS WANT DOJ TO HANDLE CASE VS. DASMA COPS

MANILA — Seven workers who claimed to be illegally arrested by the Dasmariñas City police in Cavite have asked the Department of Justice (DOJ) to allow them to file their complaint directly with its main office.

In a letter to Justice Secretary Frederick

identities, including survivors listed in the manifest, individuals who survived, but were later confirmed to have not been listed, as well as declared and undeclared crew members," PCG spokesperson, Capt. Noemie Cayabyab, said. (PNA) **BY RAYMOND CARL DELA CRUZ**

Vida, the seven workers —carpenters and security guards of a property— said they chose to bypass the Dasmariñas City Prosecutor's Office due to safety concerns, noting the "status and influence" of the respondent officers.

"The complainants cannot help but to feel the possibility that their life might be in danger due to the status and influence of the respondents in this case," their letter read.

The complainants said they were taken to a police station on Dec. 21, 2025 without warrants and charged.

They also alleged that the police manhandled security personnel at a property involved in an ownership

CWC BACKS INTENSIFIED CAMPAIGN VS. BABY SELLING, CHILD TRAFFICKING

MANILA — The Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) on Wednesday expressed full support for the National Authority for Child Care (NACC) and the Philippine National Police—Women and Children Protection Center (PNP-WCPC) in the campaign against baby selling and other forms of child trafficking.

In a press statement, the CWC cited the recent rescue of two infants by the PNP-WCPC Luzon Field Unit in separate entrapment and rescue operations conducted on Feb. 4 in Pampanga and Bulacan.

Four suspects were arrested for allegedly attempting to sell the infants for PHP30,000 and PHP130,000.

Authorities said the sale of a child constitutes child trafficking, which is strictly prohibited under Section 4(k) of Republic Act (RA) 9208, or the "Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act," as amended by RA 11862. The offense carries a penalty of up to 20 years imprisonment and a fine ranging from PHP1 million to PHP2 million.

CWC Executive Director Undersecretary Angelo Tapales strongly condemned any form of child selling and exploitation.

"Walang puwang sa ating lipunan ang pagbebenta

dispute.

"[T]o ferret out the truth from the opposing claims of the parties in the controversy by means of a fair and impartial inquiry, we respectfully submit the complaint-affidavits of all the complainants before the Department of Justice instead of submitting it to the Office of the City Prosecutor of Dasmariñas," their letter read.

A separate complaint has earlier been filed before the National Police Commission in connection with the incident. (PNA) **BY BENJAMIN PULTA**

ng bata at anumang anyo ng child trafficking. Ang bawat bata ay may karapatan sa proteksyon, pagkalinga, at isang ligtas na kapaligiran (There is no place in our society for the selling of children and any form of child trafficking. Every child has the right to protection, care and a safe environment)," he said.

He added that the CWC will remain steadfast in working with law enforcement agencies and child protection partners to ensure that cases are acted upon promptly, perpetrators are held accountable, and victims are provided with adequate protection and social services.

Tapales also said the CWC will further strengthen coordination with national government agencies and local government units to intensify monitoring, prevention efforts and public awareness campaigns against illegal adoption and child trafficking.

For her part, PNP-WCPC director Brig. Gen. Maria Shiela Portento emphasized that any form of exploitation of children, including baby selling and illegal adoption, is unacceptable.

She said the PNP-WCPC will sustain and intensify its operations and inter-agency collaboration to safeguard the rights and welfare of women and children.

The CWC urged the public to report incidents of child abuse or violence through the 24/7 MAKABATA Helpline 1383.

Reports and consultations may be made by calling 1383; Smart: 0919-354-1383; Globe: 0915-802-2375; through the Makabata Helpline 1383 Facebook and Instagram pages; or via the e-Gov Super App of the Department of Information and Communications Technology by clicking "Child Abuse." (PNA) **BY MA. TERESA MONTEMAYOR**

DOLE TO FIRMS: ALLOW EMPLOYEES TO TAKE LEAVE FOR KIDS' MEASLES VAX

MANILA – The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) urged companies to allow their employees with children less than five years old to be excused when they accompany their kids to be vaccinated against measles-rubella.

In Labor Advisory No. 02-2026 dated Feb. 9 and released on Wednesday, the agency said employers should support the Measles-Rubella Supplemental Immunization Activity (MR-SIA) of the Department of Health (DOH) by allowing working parents to have their children vaccinated.

"Employers are strongly encouraged to allow employees to be excused from work when they accompany their children for scheduled vaccinations, or when they must care for their children due to adverse effects or reactions to the vaccine on the day after vaccination," it added.

"They may also be allowed to use their available leave

credits during the MR-SIA, subject to company policy or the collective bargaining agreement that permits it." DOLE said the concerned employee must present proof of vaccination.

On the other hand, the DOLE also urged companies to open their workplaces to the MR-SIA of the DOH, as it can form part of their occupational safety and health or family welfare programs.

"For this purpose, employers may establish temporary vaccination posts within their premises and use occupational health personnel as part of the vaccination team," it said.

The DOLE added firms may inquire from the DOH regarding the schedule of the vaccination activities.

"Employers are encouraged to coordinate with the health department or the local government units on the schedule of immunization activities," it added. (PNA) **BY FERDINAND PATINIO**

DFA WARNS FILIPINOS VS. DECEPTIVE OVERSEAS MILITARY RECRUITMENT

MANILA – The Department of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday cautioned Filipinos seeking overseas employment to be vigilant against job offers that may secretly involve recruitment into foreign armed forces, including positions disguised as ordinary civilian jobs.

In an advisory, the DFA stressed that involvement in foreign conflicts carries serious risks, including grave physical danger and legal consequences.

"Recruitment into foreign armed forces, whether directly or indirectly, may violate Philippine laws and lead to loss of citizenship," the advisory reads.

Commonwealth Act 63 stipulates that participation in the military, naval, or air service of a foreign country without consent from the Philippine government may result in the forfeiture of their Filipino citizenship.

"Filipinos seeking overseas employment are strongly encouraged to verify job offers, recruitment agencies, and employers with the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) and to remain vigilant against illegal or deceptive recruitment practices that may put their lives and welfare at serious risk," it added.

The statement was issued following the circulation of a video on social media showing Raymond Gumangan from Alcala, Pangasinan, narrating that he was recruited for a logistics role, but was given a different assignment when he arrived in Russia. In the video, Gumangan said that he is at a detention camp in Ukraine as a prisoner of war after he was captured.

In an earlier briefing, the Armed Forces of the

PH LITERATURE BRIDGES 'DIASPORA YOUTH' WITH THEIR ROOTS

MANILA – The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) is strengthening efforts to reconnect younger generations of Filipinos abroad with their roots through Philippine literature and partners, with the Philippine Board on Books for Young People (PBBY).

In a news release on Wednesday, CFO Chairperson and Secretary Dante "Klink" Ang II said the agency signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the PBBY to establish a framework for engaging young Filipinos abroad through reading and strengthening a culture of literacy.

"My dream is to help the young members of the Filipino diaspora discover our rich literature through this partnership," he said. Ang called the initiative a "bridge" connecting Filipino literature to youth, particularly for second- and third-generation migrants who were raised outside the country.

The agreement aligns with the CFO's mandate to maintain and deepen cultural ties between overseas Filipinos and their motherland.

Ang said among the CFO's flagship programs is Sentro Rizal, which was established under the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, and serves as the primary repository of Filipino art, culture, and language resources.

Sentro Rizal is found in Philippine embassies and consulates worldwide to give easier access to Filipinos outside the country.

Other programs include the Youth Leaders in the Diaspora (YouLead) platform, which immerses overseas Filipino youth in Philippine history and culture.

Philippines said that they are working to prevent deceptive recruitment that could endanger Filipinos abroad. (PNA) **BY MARITA MOAJE**

Recent participants include a group of Filipino-Australians who traced their roots beyond textbooks and family stories, and embarked on an 11-day immersion in the Philippines in January, touring heritage sites, such as Intramuros in Manila and Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar in Bataan.

The agency also engages recipients of the Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas (PAFIOO) to serve as mentors and lead cultural activities.

Ang said that through its collaboration with the PBBY, the CFO aims to enrich libraries and educational materials used in these programs, providing tangible Filipino books that support identity formation and heritage appreciation.

PBBY Chairperson Paula Reyes emphasized that the partnership reflects a shared goal of making books accessible to all young Filipinos, regardless of their location globally. (PNA) **BY MARITA MOAJE**

LTFRB SUMMONS OPERATORS OF DILAPIDATED JEEPNEYS IN QC

MANILA – The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) has summoned several operators who owned dilapidated jeepneys found during an inspection in Quezon City on Tuesday.

In a statement on Wednesday, LTFRB Chair Vigor Mendoza II said show cause orders (SCO) have been issued against the operators of at least 10 passenger jeepneys as part of a crackdown against dilapidated public utility vehicles (PUV).

The operation is in line with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s order to ensure road safety and prioritize the welfare of commuters.

"This should serve as a strong message that we are serious and committed to a drastic change when we in the LTFRB declared that we will run after run-down PUVs and bus and PUV terminals with dilapidated facilities," Mendoza said.

These dilapidated passenger jeepneys were found parked by LTFRB inspectors along West Avenue, Fernando Poe

Jr. Avenue, and Roosevelt Avenue.

He said parking on the road was proof that there was no designated garage for these passenger jeepneys, which is a violation of LTFRB Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 2017-027.

During the inspection, PUV drivers who were not in proper uniform were also called out and reminded of the policy about wearing presentable clothes.

A separate team was also sent to the Eton Centris Mall in Quezon City, where the PUV terminal operator was reminded of the need to further improve their facilities.

"Simultaneously, PUV units were inspected and found to have defective brake lights, worn-out cushion seats, and ceiling," he said.

To date, at least 87 bus and PUV terminals have been issued with SCOs and notice of violation across the country as part of the LTFRB's campaign against dilapidated PUVs and terminals. (PNA) **BY RAYMOND CARL DELA CRUZ**

PNP PROBES PHOTO OF VLOGGER IN COP UNIFORM

MANILA – The Philippine National Police (PNP) is investigating a photo circulating online showing a vlogger wearing a police uniform.

In a press briefing in Camp Crame on Wednesday, PNP information chief and spokesperson Brig. Gen. Randulf Tuaño said the vlogger could be charged for violation of Article 179 of the Revised Penal Code. The article penalizes unauthorized wearing of PNP uniform or insignia with imprisonment of up to six months.

"Base sa initial na investigation na lumalabas ng PRO (Police Regional Office) 2, ang liability ay nasa nagsuot ng uniporme. Ang posibleng violation niya ay Revised Penal Code Article 179, ito ay ang illegal use of uniforms and insignias (Based on

the initial investigation by PRO 2, the liability falls on the person wearing the uniform. The possible violation is under Revised Penal Code Article 179, which is about the illegal use of uniforms and insignias)," Tuaño said.

Authorities are also tracing where the vlogger obtained the uniform.

Under Executive Order No. 297, establishments that illegally manufacture or sell police uniforms may face closure, confiscation of products, license cancellation and fines.

The National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM), meanwhile, is also looking into the incident "in solidarity with the PNP," according to NAPOLCOM Executive Officer Rafael Vicente Calinisan

"I am directing our Legal

Affairs Service (LAS) and our Inspection Monitoring and Investigation Service (IMIS) to coordinate with the PNP to file the appropriate charges and put a stop to this circus," Calinisan said in a statement.

Aside from unauthorized use of police uniforms, the PNP also reminded the public that presenting oneself as a police officer is a serious criminal offense punishable under the Revised Penal Code.

Tuaño urged the public to report individuals misrepresenting themselves as police officers. By doing so, everyone helps protect communities from scams, fraud, and potential harm. (PNA) **BY CHRISTOPHER LLOYD CALIWAN**

849 STUDENTS, TEACHERS IN REMOTE NEGOR BARANGAY GET BAYANIHAN SIM CARDS

NEGROS ORIENTAL (PIA) — A total of 849 students, teachers, and non-teaching personnel in the remote village of Nalundan in Bindoy town now have access to 25 gigabytes (GB) of monthly reliable internet data through the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT)'s Bayanihan SIM cards.

DICT Assistant Secretary June Vincent Manuel Gaudan, with the DICT-Negros Island Region (NIR), led by Regional Director Ramil Jeff Taboso, distributed Bayanihan SIM cards to the residents of this barangay on January 30.

The primary recipients of the SIM cards are the students, faculty, and non-teaching staff of Nalundan Elementary School and the Demetrio L. Alviola National High School (DANHS) - Nalundan Extension Campus.

Each SIM card is pre-loaded with 25GB of data, which is automatically replenished every month. Students can use the data allocation for their research assignments, while teachers can use it for communication and for the timely submission of their reports.

DLANHS-Nalundan student Julian Rhea Mae Gedorio thanked DICT for distributing the Bayanihan SIM cards, noting that the data allocation is more than enough for their study needs, adding that she would no longer have to go to a house with a "Piso WI-FI" machine just to get internet access.

"Dako kay kog pasalamat sa DICT nga nanghatag sila og libreng sim card then naa pod load every month. Dakong kaayong tabang ni namo labi na sa a grade 12 student nga daghan galam-on," Arca said.

(I am very grateful to DICT for giving us free sim cards with loads every month. This is a big help to us grade 12 students who have a lot of school work to

accomplish.)

"Piso wi-fi" machines are vending machines that allow internet service to people for a limited time for a certain amount of money. DLANHS-Nalundan Teacher in Charge June Mark Tenorio said the free internet that comes with the Bayanihan sim card also makes internet surfing and research safer for students.

"Usually ang gigamit kon mag-research sila katong Piso WI-FI. Magreklamo ang mga ginikanan kay mauli alas diyas, alas onse sa gabie to think nga lagyo silang mga balay. Molakaw pa na sila og 30 minutes. Karon maabot naman sa ilahang balay ang signal. Naa sila free SIM cards nga naay 25 ka gigabyte (nga data). No need na sila mogawas. Safety na ang mga bata," said Tenorio

Gaudan said the department aims to distribute 500,000 Bayanihan SIM cards nationwide in keeping President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s promise to provide internet connectivity to schools, particularly in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDAs) throughout the country.

Brgy. Nalundan is an upland barangay located 18 kilometers away from the town proper of Bindoy. "Isa yan sa mga utos ni Pangulong BBM (President Marcos' directive is), we need to really focus on improving the education sector. By giving them internet connectivity, that's an information gateway for them. You now have a wealth of data coming from the internet," Gaudan said. DICT has entered a service-level agreement with telecommunications company Smart, which will provide a 25GB monthly data allocation and ensure that internet speed is at 99%.

This was also made possible because of the existence of a telecommunications tower in the said village.

PUERTO PRINCESA SEAWEED FARMERS CONTINUES TO GROW

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY, Palawan (PIA) —

The City Agriculture Office has observed an increase in the number of seaweed farmers in Puerto Princesa, covering 11 barangays after almost two decades of continuous rollout of the seaweed farming program.

Seaweed farming in the city started in 2010 with 10 fishers in Barangay Babuyan and has now grown to about 400 to 500 under various associations.

Supervising agriculturist Joven Delgado of the City Agriculturist Office said that the program aims to provide an alternative livelihood to fisherfolk and lessen the problem with

Gaudan said service providers are also required to build towers or cell sites in the area in order for these sim cards to function. Bayanihan sim cards were also configured to block pornographic sites and illegal gambling sites so that it could only be used for educational purposes and safe internet surfing.

Meanwhile, Taboso said the department aims to distribute 13,000 Bayanihan sim cards across the region.

"Kani first batch pa lang ni kani siya nga gi-deliver (na mga) 2,000 plus) nga sim card. Naa pa gud moabot pa. Ang gusto sa gobyerno tanan eskwelahan connected," Taboso saod.

(This is the first batch of the SIM cards that were delivered to us, which is 2,000 pieces. There are also more pieces coming here. The government really wants to make every school connected.)

The DICT - NIR earlier distributed 548 Bayanihan SIM Cards to Brgy. Luz Elementary School in Guihulngan City benefits students and teachers from the said school and other nearby schools. (RAL/JCT/PIA-NIR Negros Oriental)

BY ROY ANTHONI LOMOTAN

red tide.

"Makikita ang tagumpay ng programa sa pag-angat ng kabuhayan ng mga mangingisda, pagtugon sa pangangailangan ng kanilang pamilya, at sa pagkakataon na maipagpatuloy ng kanilang mga anak ang pag-aaral," said City Information Office.

Among the beneficiaries of the program are fisherfolk in the barangays of San Manuel, Tagburos, Lucbuan, Manalo, Maruyugon, Babuyan, San Rafael, Salvacion, and Sta. Cruz, and Kamuning.

The program helps to provide fishers with skills and training in planting, maintaining, and developing seaweed as an alternative source of income, particularly in times when they are unable to sail due to storms, gusty winds, or rough waves. They also avail themselves of free seaweed seedlings and other materials needed in farming.

The continuous assistance extended under the program helped increase the number of seaweed farmers who have formed themselves into associations.

Seaweed is the second most sought-after commodity in the country, with the MIMAROPA region as the second largest seaweed producer, according to the 2024 Seaweed Congress

Former Palawan Provincial Agriculturist Romeo Cabungcal added that Palawan alone, including Puerto Princesa, supplies 98 percent of the total seaweed and seagrass production in the region. The province's extensive coastline and thriving aquaculture industry are cited as factors for the province's contribution.

The seaweed farming is also supported by the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR).

Bureau's regional director

DHSUD ROLLS OUT HOUSING AID FOR BASYANG-HIT FAMILIES IN NORTHERN MINDANAO

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY (PIA) — The Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD)-10 will provide housing assistance to families affected by Tropical Storm Basyang.

The aid will be given under the Integrated Disaster Shelter Assistance Program (IDSAP), a government program that supports households affected by natural and human-induced disasters. IDSAP is implemented in three phases, namely, emergency response, early recovery, and rehabilitation and recovery. "The emergency shelter support will be given as a one-time unconditional shelter assistance to households with totally and partially damaged houses. This is intended to address the immediate and temporary shelter needs of affected families," said DHSUD Regional Director Paris Raymond Gaballo.

Gaballo said priority beneficiaries are identified based on vulnerability criteria set by the agency. These include households with deaths or incapacitated members due to the disaster; families with children; households with seriously ill members or persons with disabilities

Roberto Abrera previously said that quality seaweed seedlings play a crucial role in competitive global markets.

High-quality seedlings can produce resilient seaweed and seagrass that can withstand the shipping process as raw ingredients before being processed as food products like gelatin. (RG/JBG/PIA MIMAROPA Palawan/Photos from Puerto Princesa Agriculture Office FB) **BY RACHEL P. GANANCIAL**

or special needs; women-headed households at risk due to gender, such as single mothers, widows, older women, survivors of violence, and pregnant or lactating women; and households headed by senior citizens.

Qualified beneficiaries with totally damaged houses will receive P50,000 each. Those with partially damaged houses will get P20,000 each.

Beneficiaries who have already received similar assistance from other government programs are not eligible to prevent duplication.

Reports from the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (RDRRC)-10 show that a total of 567 houses were damaged in the region, including 145 totally damaged and 422 partially. In Misamis Oriental, nine houses were totally damaged, and eight were partially damaged. Lanao del Norte recorded 135 totally damaged and 407 partially damaged houses. Camiguin had six partially damaged houses, while Bukidnon had one totally damaged and one partially damaged house.

DHSUD-10 reminded local government units that the program is open to all affected families, regardless of political affiliation. LGUs seeking assistance must submit a request letter and a master list of beneficiaries within three days of a state of calamity declaration, the activation of the National Shelter Cluster, or the reporting of an incident.

The agency said all submitted documents will be evaluated by DHSUD and LGU representatives to ensure compliance with IDSAP requirements. (JAKA/PIA-10) **BY JAN ALBERT K. ARAÑA**

LEDAC OKS 21 KEY MEASURES TO RESTORE PUBLIC TRUST

MANILA – The Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) has approved 21 measures targeted for passage by June this year as part of efforts to strengthen governance and restore public trust.

In a news release on Tuesday, the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev) said two of the measures that were included in the Common Legislative Agency (CLA) to address critical national issues are the Amendments to the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children (OSEAC) and the Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials (CSAEM) Act.

The two aim "to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement and cover emerging technologies," DEPDev said.

Another one is the Anti-Fake News and Digital Disinformation Act, aimed to "penalize malicious and deliberate dissemination of false information that threatens public order or national security."

Another is the Travel Tax Abolition, which seeks to lower expenses of travelers and help the tourism sector. LEDAC also proposed the immediate approval of the measure on reset the First Regular Elections in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

It also included in the list the Anti-Political Dynasty Act and the proposed Party-list System reforms to help "strengthen the country's democratic processes by creating fairer, more inclusive political representation through safeguards that prevent abuse of public office."

Also on the list are the Independent People's Commission Act and the proposed reforms to the Bank Deposits Secrecy Law, which targets to "strengthen accountability and fight corruption by empowering dependent investigations and removing barriers to uncovering government

and financial irregularities." Other items on the list are the CADENA Act as well as the Right to Information Act, which aim "to institutionalize transparency and accountability in governance by ensuring reliable public access to government financial data and information."

"By establishing stronger oversight mechanisms over infrastructure spending and advancing real-time transparency in the budget process, the administration continues to drive reforms to make sure every peso spent works for the benefit of the Filipino people," DEPDev Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said.

Also part of the list are measures targeted to improve resource management in energy, agriculture, water, and fiscal sectors.

"Looking ahead, we see 2026 as our rally point. To regain our stride, we must act decisively to restore public trust through better governance and stronger public service delivery—improvements that Filipinos can see and feel in their daily lives," Balisacan added. Meanwhile, 31 other measures have been included in the CLA. These are:

1. National Land Use Act
2. Excise Tax on Single-Use Plastics
3. Blue Economy Act
4. Progressive Budgeting for Better and Modernized Governance Act
5. Amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering Act
6. Philippine Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Act
7. Amendments to the Universal Health Care (UHC) Act
8. Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) Act
9. Amendments to the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act
10. Amendments to the Teachers Professionalization Act
11. Amendments to the Local Government Code (LGC)
12. General Tax Amnesty

PSEI RECOVERS AS PESO WEAKENS VS. DOLLAR

MANILA – The Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) partly recovered on Tuesday, supported by the recent strengthening of the peso, although the currency weakened during the day.

After ending Monday's session in the red, the benchmark index rose 1.98 percent to 6,474.60 points, while the broader All Shares index gained 0.89 percent to 3,593.10 points. All sectoral indices advanced, led by Services, which surged 4.40 percent. Financials followed with a 1.44 percent gain, alongside Holding Firms, 1.18 percent; Mining and Oil, 0.47 percent;

13. Amendments to the Fisheries Code
14. Amendments to the Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Law
15. Amendments to the Biofuels Act
16. Cybersecurity Act
17. Amendments to the National Building Code
18. Amendments to the Magna Carta for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)
19. National Reintegration Bill
20. Reprogramming of Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG)
21. Digital Payments Act
22. Masterplan for Infrastructure and National Development (MIND)
23. Requiring Civil Servants to Waive Bank Secrecy
24. Law on Online Gambling
25. Disaster Risk Financing Insurance
26. Strengthening the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA)
27. Presidential Merit Scholarship Program
28. Disqualifying Relatives of Officials (4th degree) in Government Contracts
29. Fair Use of Social Media, AI and Internet Technology in Elections
30. Modernizing the Bureau of Immigration
31. Magna Carta for Barangays. (JOANN VILLANUEVA/PNA)

Property, 0.44 percent; and Industrial, 0.29 percent.

Trading volume reached 754.25 million shares valued at PHP6.86 billion. Advancers outnumbered decliners, 110 to 90, while 63 issues were unchanged.

"The PSEi ended sharply higher, rebounding from yesterday's decline as buying interest returned to the market. Sentiment was supported by the peso holding firm against the US dollar, which encouraged renewed foreign inflows during today's session," Luis Limlingan, Regina Capital Development Corporation head of sales, said.

He added that gains were broad-based as investors took advantage of lower prices amid improved currency stability.

Meanwhile, the peso weakened to 58.53 from Monday's 58.45.

It opened stronger at 58.40 from 58.50 previously and traded between 58.38 and 58.53, averaging 58.48 for the day.

Foreign exchange volume rose to USD1.18 billion from USD1.08 billion in the previous session. (PNA) BY JOANN VILLANUEVA

MERALCO HIKES FEBRUARY RATES AMID HIGHER TRANSMISSION CHARGES

MANILA – Higher transmission charges will raise Manila Electric Company's (Meralco) power rates in February 2026, ending two months of reductions.

In a briefing on Tuesday, Meralco vice president and head of corporate communications Joe Zaldarriaga said rates will increase by PHP0.2226 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) to PHP13.1734 per kWh.

Households consuming 200 kWh per month will see an increase of about PHP45.

Zaldarriaga said transmission charges rose by PHP0.1975 per kWh due to higher ancillary service costs from the reserve market and an increase of PHP0.0779/kWh in the universal electrification (UCME), which subsidizes power in off-grid and remote areas.

The impact of higher transmission charges was partly offset by a drop in generation charges, which fell by PHP0.1073 per kWh to PHP7.639 per kWh, driven by lower rates from independent power producers.

However, generation charges did not fall further

due to higher prices from the wholesale electricity spot market amid tighter supply in the Luzon grid. Charges from power supply agreements also increased by PHP0.0483 per kWh ahead of scheduled maintenance shutdowns of Excellent Energy Resources Inc. and South Premier Power Corporation.

Zaldarriaga said these maintenance shutdowns are routine and meant to prepare for higher electricity demand during the dry season.

Lifeline subsidy Meanwhile, Zaldarriaga said Meralco will continue to grant discounts under the government's lifeline subsidy program for low-income consumers using up to 50 kWh per month, mostly beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps).

Households consuming 50 kWh or less receive a 100 percent discount. Meralco also provides a 35 percent discount for those using 51–70 kWh and a 20 percent discount for those using 71–100 kWh.

Under an Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) directive, a uniform national lifeline subsidy rate of PHP0.01 per kWh will take effect in March 2026. The new discount structure will apply the following month.

"We welcome this directive from the ERC which we hope will provide additional relief to our qualified customers," Zaldarriaga said. (PNA) BY JOANN VILLANUEVA

ERC OKS P374.98-B ANNUAL REVENUE FOR NGCP FOR 2023-2027

MANILA – The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) has approved a lower annual revenue requirement (ARR) of PHP374.98 billion for the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) for 2023–2027 under its fifth regulatory reset (5RP). The amount is 15.28 percent below NGCP's proposed PHP442.6 billion for capital expenditures and other investments. In a news release Tuesday, ERC said the reduced maximum allowable revenue (MAR) reflects that "the MAR being implemented still covers the fourth regulatory period."

The commission completed the fourth regulatory period rate reset in 2025, covering the years 2016 to 2022.

ARR represents the amount NGCP needs to recover to cover its operating costs, maintenance expenses, and approved investments, while MAR is the maximum amount the ERC allows the company to collect from consumers, even if its requested costs are higher. The ERC also cut NGCP's capital expenditure by 17 percent, noting that some projects were removed as they were "sufficiently considered in the prior regulatory reset."

ERC said the approved capex "will support grid upgrades, system reinforcements, and new transmission projects necessary to meet growing electricity demand and improve the reliability of power supply nationwide." ERC also disapproved

NGCP's proposed recovery of real property taxes from consumers, citing existing legal rulings exempting the company from paying taxes on assets used for its franchise.

"The Commission remains committed to ensuring that transmission rates changed to consumers are just and reasonable, while at the same time allowing the transmission concessionaire to recover only efficient and necessary costs to maintain a reliable and secure power grid," ERC said. (JOANN VILLANUEVA/PNA)



FRAYNA SECURES WORLD CHESS OLYMPIAD BERTH

MANILA – Janelle Mae Frayna defeated Shania Mae Mendoza on Wednesday, moving closer to winning the Philippine National Women's Chess Championship in Malolos, Bulacan.

After Mendoza uncorked a sacrificial kingside attack, the country's first and only Woman Grandmaster managed to secure the win after 29 moves of the Slav Defense.

For garnering 11 points, Frayna assured her spot in the national team going to the World Chess Olympiad in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in September.

The Army woman from Bicol was playing against Bernadette Galas in the 15th and final round as of press time. If the game ends in a draw, Frayna will reclaim the title she won in 2013, 2016 and 2021.

Meanwhile, 18-year-old Ruelle Canino, who won the event two years ago, settled for a draw with Vic Derotas after 41 moves of a King's Indian duel.

Jan Jodilyn Fronda and Bernadette Galas, with similar 9.5 points, are also seeking Olympiad berths. Fronda split the point with

Maria Lavandero in 52 moves of a Center-Counter encounter, while Galas drew with Allaney Jia Doroy after 52 moves of an English showdown in the competition supported by Mayor Christian Natividad and the Philippine Sports Commission. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**



Woman Grandmaster Janelle Mae Frayna (Contributed photo)

PH ADVANCES TO ITF ASIA U14 DEV'T CHAMPIONSHIPS 2027 FINALS

MANILA – The Philippines finished second overall behind Vietnam in the two-leg International Tennis Federation (ITF) Asia U14 Development Championships (South, Southeast and East Asia) in Cambodia to earn a slot to the finals in 2027.

Maristella Torrecampo swept the girls' singles category and reached the doubles semifinal with Ella Paglalunan, who placed ninth in singles.

Dubai-based Alexi Luca Rafael Almedita finished third (1st leg) and fifth (second leg) in singles, while Marcus Lorenzo Go ranked sixth in singles. They also made it to the doubles semis.

"My experience in this tournament was so wonderful and transformative all in all. During this competition, I learned that there are so much things I need to do to improve in my game and a lot of things to work on

physically and mentally if I want to get better results should I qualify again," the 13-year-old Paglalunan, the country's No. 2 player in the U14 category, said in an interview Saturday.

Almedita, 13, said he enjoyed the level of competition, and was excited playing against familiar faces and meeting new ones.

"I am grateful to the ITF and ATF (Asian Tennis Federation) for organizing such a unique event where we can compete individually as well as a team, providing aspiring young tennis players like myself another development pathway option," Almedita, who improved to a career-best No. 16 in the ATF U14 rankings, said.

Aldemita placed fifth in the second leg, pulling off a 6-2, 6-0 win over teammate Marcus Lorenzo Go.

"I didn't get the results I was really aiming for at the

individual level but I think I still managed to finish solid overall in singles, 3rd in the 1st week then 5th in the 2nd week, contributing to our team points and landing us the 2nd position overall," he said.

Go, a first-timer in the tournament like Almedita, said he gained a lot from the Cambodia exposure.

"I was able to play and meet new players with different game styles which helped me improve more. Overall, I feel I could have done better playing against these new opponents and look forward to playing with them again. I am grateful for the support of my family and coaches," Go said.

After a brief rest, Aldemita said he would resume training for the World Junior Tennis Championships slated in Vietnam. Competition in the girls' division is scheduled March 2 to 7, followed by the boys' play on March 9 to 14. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**

MANILA HUSTLE 3X3 FUELS LA 2028 OLYMPICS DRIVE

MANILA – The Philippines continues to make a good impression on the international stage following Uratex Dream's runner-up finish at the Manila Hustle 3x3 Season 4 over the weekend.

The event delivered high drama, fierce battles and a clear vision: The road to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Uratex Dream shocked reigning champion ZOOS Tokyo, 18-16, but Japan's Flowlish Gunma eventually prevailed in the finals, 17-11, in the FIBA 3x3 Women's Series Qualifier at SM Mall of Asia Music Hall in Pasay City on Sunday.

Led by Afril Bernardino, Kaye Pingol, Sam Harada, and Li Renzhu, the Dream rallied from 13-6 deficit in the finals before surrendering to the Japanese squad.

Bernardino's eight-point explosion earned her a spot in the Mythical Three alongside CT Tigers' Supavadee Kunchuan.

"Basketball is close to my heart. The players are my inspiration. We will continue this program until hopefully we reach the LA Olympics," tournament

director Peachy Medina said in a news release Tuesday.

Canadian Olympian Saicha Grant-Allen led Flowlish Gunma with eight points, including a clutch layup in the dying seconds, to go with four rebounds, and three assists.

Teammate Misa Yokoi added seven points as the Japanese squad pocketed USD4,000 (about

PHP233,000) and secured a ticket to the FIBA 3x3 Women's Series Shanghai stop in May.

Uratex Dream earned USD2,500 (about PHP146,000) as runner-up, while CT Tigers, who beat Gilas Pilipinas Stars, in the battle for third place, 21-11, bagged USD1,500 (about PHP87,000). **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**



FILIPINO PRIDE. Philippine Sports Commission Chairperson John Patrick Gregorio (3rd from left) attends the Manila Hustle 3x3 Season 4 finals at SM Mall of Asia Music Hall in Pasay City on Sunday (Feb. 8, 2026). With him are (from left) Gilas Pilipinas 3x3 Program coordinator Ryan Gregorio, Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas executive director Erika Dy and tournament director Peachy Medina. (Contributed photo)

LADY KNIGHTS REMAIN UNBEATEN IN NCAA VOLLEYBALL

MANILA – Letran kept its immaculate record after beating Jose Rizal University, 25-17, 25-12, 25-21, Friday in the NCAA Season 101 women's volleyball tournament at San Andres Sports Complex.

Verenicce Colendra scored 18 points built on 17 attacks, six digs and a block as the Lady Knight rolled to their sixth win in Group B.

"The coaches really help us learn JRU's game. That helped because we knew exactly where the ball was going to go. With our new system, we focus on everything," Colendra said after the match, adding that the team should avoid complacency, especially with the new tournament format in play.

"We are reminded to rest and recover because we know this season is long." Sheena Vanessa Sarie

chipped in 14 points, all from attacks, while Leonily Padilla, Nizelle Aeriyeen Martin and Natalie Marie Estreller scored six points each.

Estreller, who had two aces, dished out 23 excellent sets.

Czarina Ramos scored 10 points for the Lady Bombers, who slid to 1-6 in Group A.

Earlier, San Sebastian

College-Recoletos ended a three-game skid with a 25-23, 28-26, 25-16 win over Emilio Aguinaldo College.

Katherine Santos scored 21 as the Lady Stags improved to 2-5 in Group A.

Angel Joy Perez finished with 16 points for the Lady Generals, who remained at the bottom with a 0-7 slate. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**



ATTACK. Sheena Vanessa Sarie of Letran tries to score against Ma. Rachel Ann Lalongisip of Jose Rizal University in the NCAA Season 101 volleyball at San Andres Gym in Manila on Friday (Feb. 13, 2026). The Lady Knights won, 25-17, 25-12, 25-21. (NCAA photo)