

CAVITE PNP HOLDS "ZUMBA FOR A CAUSE" TO SUPPORT A FELLOW OFFICER'S MEDICAL NEEDS

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite – The spirit of bayanihan can be felt and seen as the members of the Cavite PNP gathered for a Zumba for a Cause activity in relation to the women's month celebration, raising an amount of ₱85,000 for the benefit of a WCPD PNCO of Indang Municipal Police Station who is currently undergoing medical treatment. The turnover of the funds was led by PLTCOL Sharon Fabros, along with PMAJ Jean Alagos, WCPD Officer; PMAJ Maritess Julian, Deputy Chief, Logistics and Supply Officer;

and PMAJ Cecille Hernandez, Team Leader of the Provincial Medical and Dental Team. The activity was attended by uniformed and non-uniformed personnel (NUP) from different city and municipal police stations, Mobile Patrol Unit (MPU), Tourist Police Unit (TPU), and Provincial Forensic Unit (PFU). Their participation highlighted the strong sense of camaraderie and support within the PNP family. Our beneficiary, PSSg Ravelo is a dedicated public servant, has been battling serious health challenges. She has undergone two consecutive operations due to kidney infection, resulting in the total removal of her left kidney. Currently, she is undergoing treatment for urinary bladder stone, adding to the financial burden she faces. As a single mother of two, her fight against illness is not just a personal struggle but a challenge for her family as well. The Zumba for a Cause

initiative was a testament to the unwavering support of the PNP community, proving that beyond law enforcement, the organization values the well-being of its members. The funds raised will help ease the medical expenses of PSSg Ravelo, providing her with much-needed assistance as she continues her treatment. The Zumba for a Cause initiative was a testament to the unwavering support of the Cavite PNP, proving that beyond law enforcement, the organization values the well-being of its members. The funds raised will help ease the medical expenses of PSSg Ravelo, providing her with much-needed assistance as she continues her treatment. The Cavite PNP and all the participating police units, expresses its appreciation to all those who helped make this event a success. The Cavite PNP continues to stand firm in its commitment to its people, strengthening the spirit of "Serbisyong may Malasakit" in all aspects of service. *Story from Cavite PPO*



PBBM TO PH ARMY: SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS, EMBRACE INNOVATION

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Saturday urged the Philippine Army (PA) to enhance their skills and keep up with the latest trends to make sure the next generations will inherit a "New Philippines" that is "peaceful, progressive, and full of promise." Marcos made the call during the PA's 128th anniversary celebration at Fort Andres Bonifacio in Taguig City, as he assured its personnel of continued government support to make sure that they are "always ready" to fulfill their mission in protecting the country. "As your Commander-in-Chief, I enjoin you to stay relentless in your pursuit for excellence. Sharpen your skills, master your craft, embrace innovation. After all, the Philippine Army's strength extends beyond firepower. It draws from its personnel's honor, integrity, and fortitude," he said. "Ladies and gentlemen, the road ahead is not easy. There will be delays, frustrations, and challenges as they always are. Our strength and resolve will continue to be tested." The President said his administration would continue looking for ways to boost the military's capability and welfare. The conduct of training exercises would sharpen the government troops' combat readiness and strengthen their ability to respond effectively to any threat, he added. Marcos said the government is also reinforcing its welfare programs, such as the mandatory annual physical examination, reimbursement of hospital expenses, and

assistance for wounded-in-action personnel. He noted that after a decade, the AFP personnel's daily subsistence allowance was raised to PHP350 from PHP150. "These efforts are part of a broader vision: a nation where Filipinos no longer need to worry about their safety, where they can build a more dignified lives for themselves and for their families. When peace and order are in place, we can pursue knowledge, we can work towards prosperity, and we can contribute to our country's progress," he said. "As we mark the 128th founding anniversary, we are again reminded why we choose to serve. We do it not for ourselves but also for the countless generations that will come after us. Every Filipino wants their children to grow up in a country where they are safe, where they have access to quality education, and where they can build a future that has opportunities awaiting." Founded on March 22, 1897, the PA remains at the forefront of safeguarding the nation, evolving to meet national and global security challenges. This year's anniversary celebration carries the theme "Hukbong Katihan @128: Matatag na Sandigan ng Bagong Pilipinas," highlighting the PA's crucial role in national defense and commitment to being a steadfast pillar of support for a new and stronger Philippines. *(PNA) By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos*

LIKHANG LAGUNA LEADS DTI'S PUSH FOR MSME DIGITIZATION, GLOBAL REACH

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is prioritizing business digitization and leveraging programs like Likhang Laguna to expand the reach of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to a wider consumer base, both locally and internationally.

Highlighting the success of Likhang Laguna, Marissa Argente, Regional Director of DTI Calabarzon, emphasized the program's vital role in facilitating international market penetration for Filipino-made products. During the Kapihan sa Bagong Pilipinas, she revealed that Likhang Laguna recently generated over P29 million in profits in the United States through on-the-spot sales, booked orders, and ongoing negotiations.

This achievement was made possible through a collaborative effort between the DTI Laguna Provincial Office, the Philippine Trade and Investment Center (PTIC) Silicon Valley, and the provincial government of Laguna.

"Through the Competitiveness and Innovation Group's Tatak Pinoy Program, I had the opportunity to go abroad with the Provincial Government of Laguna. We conducted market sensing and opened an OTOPI Hub in San Francisco and New York, where we brought our entrepreneurs," Argente said.

The Likhang Laguna initiative provided

entrepreneurs with a platform to showcase their products internationally, particularly to Filipino-Americans interested in importing.

"We also discovered that anything made by Filipinos is something Filipino-Americans really want to try and buy. That's why we realized that penetrating online stores managed by Filipino entrepreneurs will be a fast and effective way of bringing our products to the US," Argente added, underscoring the importance of digitization for international expansion.

Building on this momentum, the Laguna group, including entrepreneurs and government employees, participated in a European fashion event last year, showcasing the province's lifestyle products. This resulted in recent visits from interested companies to negotiate with local entrepreneurs.

These initiatives exemplify DTI's commitment to elevating opportunities for MSMEs through programs like Likhang Laguna, opening new avenues for growth and development on the global stage.

Argente also encouraged the public to support local products, dispelling the notion that they are inferior. She stressed that Filipino-made goods, with programs like Likhang Laguna leading the way, have the potential to gain global recognition, but require strong consumer support. **(CO, CH/PIA-4A)**

By Charmaine Odong

LAGUNA YOUTH EMPOWERED TO DEFEND TRUTH ON WEST PH SEA

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The Philippine Information Agency (PIA) continues to strengthen its commitment to raising youth awareness about the West Philippine Sea through a symposium held in Calamba City, Laguna, on Wednesday, March 19.

In partnership with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), National Youth Commission (NYC), and the City Government of Calamba, the event gathered more than 500 Sangguniang Kabataan officials and students from various universities and colleges in Laguna.

PIA Regional Head Ma. Cristina C. Arzadon emphasized that the symposium aimed to equip the youth with the knowledge needed to combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation about the West Philippine Sea.

"Layunin ng pagtutulungan na ito na labanan ang pagpapakalat ng maling impormasyon tungkol sa West Philippine Sea at palakasin ang kamalayan ng mga kabataang Pilipino upang matutong kumilala ng wasto at makabuluhang impormasyon," said Arzadon.

She added measures involving the youth such

as fact-checking initiatives, face-to-face engagements, and awareness campaigns are crucial in countering false information and promoting meaningful public discourse.

The event provided a platform for the youth to deepen their understanding of their role in combating fake news through the PIA's Maging Mapanuri campaign, which was discussed by PIA Laguna Information Center Coordinator Christopher Hedreyda.

Meanwhile, the NYC, through Assistant Secretary Karl Jose Legazpi, shared insights on how the youth can contribute to national advocacy efforts, particularly in strengthening the country's stance on the West Philippine Sea. He emphasized the importance of awareness campaigns launched by the commission to promote nationalism and patriotism among the youth. PCG Spokesperson for the West Philippine Sea, Commodore Jay Tariella, discussed the Philippines' sovereign rights and maritime security in the region. He stressed that the youth have a vital role to play in safeguarding national interests.

PIA Director-General Katherine Chloe S. De Castro also graced the event and encouraged the youth to use their influence in the fight against the proliferation of fake news on social media.

Citing the youth's strong influence, De Castro emphasized how they can lead efforts in sharing and verifying accurate information about the West Philippine Sea.

Bea Dabut, a student from Laguna State Polytechnic University, thanked the PIA, PCG, and NYC for equipping them with knowledge on the West Philippine Sea issue. She stressed that, as the nation's next generation, they must take an active role in protecting the country's interests and ensuring that accurate information is shared. **(FC, PIA4A)**

By Fredmoore Cavan

individuals can harness their power to combat misinformation and disinformation across digital media platforms. **(FC, PIA4A)**

By Fredmoore Cavan

RTF-ELCAC URGES POLL CANDIDATES TO DENOUNCE COMMUNIST ARMED STRUGGLE

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The Regional Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (RTF-ELCAC) in Calabarzon has called on candidates in the 2025 National and Local Elections to make a public declaration against the communist armed struggle and private armed groups.

"Everyone who wants to participate in this election should have a public declaration against the communist armed struggle and private armed groups," said 202nd Unifier Brigade Commander Brig. Gen. Ronald Jess Alcudia during the Kapihan sa Bagong Pilipinas forum March 18.

He urged local candidates and party-list groups to openly denounce the armed struggle led by Communist Terrorist Groups (CTGs).

"You can't want to participate in a free election but remain silent when it comes to armed groups. You want to enjoy the benefits of democracy, but you must also publicly denounce the armed struggle of the CPP-NPA," Alcudia stressed.

While advocating for a strong stance against armed conflict, he clarified that RTF-ELCAC is not against leftist groups that oppose the government through legal means but is

focused on countering "armed rebellion."

National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) IV-A Regional Director Niño Balagtas echoed Alcudia's call, emphasizing RTF-ELCAC is now recalibrating its strategy following what he described as a "strategic victory" against CTGs.

Balagtas noted only one remaining guerrilla front is left in the country as the government shifts focus toward the National Action Plan on Unity, Peace and Development.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), which leads several RTF-ELCAC clusters, also supported the call, underscoring the critical role of local government units (LGUs) in addressing gaps in basic services to prevent CTG recruitment.

"Local government units play a huge role in addressing the CTG's selling point of government service deficiencies, to prevent CTG recruitment.

Therefore, our LGUs, through the whole-of-nation approach, have an important role in promoting peace," said DILG Regional Director Ariel O. Iglesia. **(CCM, PIA 4A)**

By Cecile Maloles

LAGUNA PRIEST STANDS WITH DUTERTE'S DRUG WAR VICTIMS: 'JUSTICE IS MOVING FORWARD'

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — A church leader in Laguna has expressed solidarity with the families of extrajudicial killing (EJK) victims following the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Catholic priest Msgr. Jerry Bitoon, who is also a human rights advocate, described Duterte's arrest as a significant step towards justice.

"Tahan na sa pagtanggap. Nadakip na ang utak ng walang-habag na 'di makatarungang pagkilil ng buhay sa ngalan ng War on Drugs," Bitoon said. He also urged the public to remain vigilant, emphasizing that while justice may be slow, it is now moving forward.

"Nagsisimula nang umusad ang makupad na gulong ng hustisya. Bantayan pa rin natin ang mga pangyayari at mangyayari pa. Huwag mawalan ng pag-asa. We are pilgrims of hope. Ang Diyos na may awa ay Diyos din ng katarungan," he added.

As legal proceedings unfold, Bitoon calls for continued vigilance and support for the victims and their families.

He also added that all those who played roles in the

implementation of the drug war campaign must also be arrested.

"It is a crime against humanity, a mass murder using the very institution (PNP) of government and resources of the government—substantial monetary reward to police who can kill an alleged drug pushers or users—to kill without due processes people including children and youth," Bitoon said in his Facebook post.

He also supported the Clergy for Good Governance statement, emphasizing that the arrest order was an answered prayer from the thousands of victims.

"The International Criminal Court's arrest order against former President Rodrigo Duterte answers countless prayers for justice that have risen from the depths of grief," the Clergy for Good Governance said in a statement.

"We look forward with hopeful hearts to the Philippines reborn in justice, transformed by truth, and united in compassion. The path may be difficult, but with each step toward justice, hope grows stronger," it added. **(CCM, PIA4A)**

By Cecile Maloles

PIA CHIEF URGES YOUTH TO FIGHT DISINFORMATION

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The Philippine Information Agency (PIA) has urged the youth to use their influence in the fight against the proliferation of fake news on social media. PIA Director-General Katherine De Castro, speaking at the West Philippine Sea Symposium held in Calamba City, Laguna, on March 19, stressed that the youth, who have a strong voice on social media, also bear a great responsibility to ensure that truth prevails.

"As Gat Jose Rizal once said, 'The youth is the hope of the nation.' You are the generation with access to the most information, and because of this, you also have the greatest responsibility to ensure that the truth prevails," said De Castro.

She added that fake news is one of the most pressing issues that need to be addressed, as it affects not only public perception but also national security and democratic integrity.

Citing sources of fake news, De Castro explained that some foreign entities are actively using social media to spread false narratives and weaken the nation's stance on key issues such as the West Philippine Sea. She warned that these deceptive tactics are designed to manipulate public discourse and create confusion among Filipinos.

De Castro stressed that fake news is being spread to divide public opinion, propagate misinformation, manipulate democracy, and, most importantly, attempt to control perspectives on the West Philippine Sea dispute.

The PIA chief also urged the more than 500 students and youth leaders present to be vigilant and take action against fake news by fact-checking information using verified sources, being responsible on social media by avoiding disinformation and refraining from sharing unverified content, and spreading the truth by

speaking up and standing for what is right.

"This is not just about fake news, it is also a matter of freedom and sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea. The future of truth is in your hands. You are the next generation of journalists, leaders, and defenders of our nation," she stressed.

In partnership with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), National Youth Commission (NYC), and the City Government of Calamba, the PIA launched the West Philippine Sea Youth Symposium on Wednesday to strengthen youth awareness and commitment to the government's efforts regarding the territorial dispute.

As part of the symposium, the PIA also introduced its Maging Mapanuri: Media and Information Literacy Campaign, discussed by PIA Laguna Information Center Coordinator Christopher Hedreyda.

Hedreyda highlighted how students and young

ENROLL FOR INTERNET VOTING, COMELEC URGES FILIPINOS OVERSEAS

MANILA – The Commission on Elections (Comelec) on Thursday opened the enrollment period for those who will be using the online voting and counting system (OVCS) in the May 12 midterm polls.

Comelec Chairperson George Garcia reminded the over 1.2 million registered overseas voters to start enrolling for the internet voting.

"This marks the first day of enrollment through our website and we can accomplish this in less than two minutes. From today until May 7, let us take the time to get enrolled. Even if you are a registered overseas voter, if you aren't enrolled, you cannot cast your vote," he said in an interview.

Garcia said the enrollment is necessary for the poll body to verify the identity of voters.

"We need to be sure that it is you voting, and give you your password to be able to use the (internet voting) system," he added.

Garcia also urged families of Filipinos abroad to encourage their loved ones overseas to enroll for the OVCS.

The Comelec said enrollment may be done using the voter's own internet-capable device during the pre-voting period. Another way to enroll is through the voting kiosks set-up at the Philippine posts during the overseas voting

period.

A total of 77 posts abroad will be using the OVCS, while the remaining 16 Philippine Embassies (PE) and Philippine Consulates General (PCG) will use the automated counting machines (ACMs).

The overseas voting period will be from April 13 to May 12. They will be voting for national positions only or 12 senators and one party-list group.

Data from the poll body showed there are a total of 1,241,690 overseas registered voters.

On the other hand, the Comelec, in a social media post, said those who would like to enroll may visit its official website: <https://comelec.gov.ph/> or the official social media accounts of Comelec, Philippine Embassies and Consulates.

"Overseas voters are strongly advised to remain vigilant against fraudulent websites, emails, and social media pages posing as official sources. To ensure the security and integrity of your internet voting enrollment, always verify that you are accessing the official enrollment link. For further inquiries and official updates, please contact your respective Philippine Post or visit Comelec's official website," it said. (PNA) By **Ferdinand Patinio**

PH, INDIA WORKING ON MARCOS' STATE VISIT WITHIN 2025

MANILA – The Philippines and India are working on a possible state visit by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to the South Asian nation "as soon as possible this year" in time for the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two states.

In a television interview in India on Wednesday (local time), Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo said Manila is hoping to see a number of "concrete deliverables" and agreements signed should the visit pushes through.

"We're working on that visit, we're hoping that it can be done as soon as possible early this year, so we're working on the dates," he said.

Manalo and Indian Minister of External Affairs Jaishankar previously discussed the visit in a meeting on the sidelines of the Raisina Dialogue held in India from March 17 to 19.

The Filipino top diplomat did not provide specifics about bilateral deals currently in the works but said Manila and New Delhi are working to improve cooperation on a number of areas, including in the maritime sphere.

He said the two nations are looking to expand talks on said area and consider "joint patrol exercises" as well as cooperation on maritime safety.

"I talked about greater Coast Guard cooperation; I think this is essential in the sense that it also will be dealing with issues such as maintaining peace and order in the region, (and) dealing with piracy or trafficking—I think definitely, that's going to be one big aspect of our cooperation with India," he said.

India and the Philippines marked 75 years of diplomatic relations on Nov. 16, 2024.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties, the Philippine Embassy in India said the two countries have witnessed "mutual trust deepen and cooperation expand exponentially" as seen through sustained high-level interaction and political dialogues, record highs in bilateral trade, rising foreign direct investment, and new milestones in defense cooperation, among others. (PNA) By **Joyce Ann L. Rocamora**

NEGROS PRELATE: DUTERTE'S ARREST GLIMMER OF HOPE FOR DRUG WAR VICTIMS

MANILA – A prelate said Thursday the arrest of former president Rodrigo Duterte is a glimmer of hope for the victims of his bloody crackdown on illegal drugs and their families. In a statement, San Carlos, Negros Occidental Bishop Gerardo Alminaza said this development has given renewed vigor to advocates of peace and justice.

"From the harrowing era of state-sponsored killings that plagued our nation to the recent issuance of an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against former President Rodrigo Duterte for alleged crimes against humanity stemming from his drug war policy, a glimmer of hope emerges," he said.

"This development brings a measure of hope and solace to the thousands of families who lost their loved ones during the Duterte regime's war-on-drugs and war-on-rights, a period marked by impunity and reward-driven killings."

Alminaza said the former chief executive's arrest and surrender to the International Criminal Court (ICC) on charges of crimes against humanity is an "initial step

towards accountability".

"We also hope that other perpetrators of this drug war will be brought to justice," he said.

Alminaza, meanwhile, lamented that some Filipinos still support Duterte's violent anti-drug campaign.

"They remain blinded by the false narrative that criminality and drug addiction can be eradicated through death and execution," he said.

"I pray for them even as I challenge them to rethink their position as some have already done! Impunity has long gripped the Philippines. Former President Duterte's penchant to kill and slaughter flourished under these conditions. Holding him accountable will be a warning to other leaders who want to unleash human rights violations (HRVs) in the future," the Catholic prelate added.

Alminaza said the Catholic Church was among the staunch opponents of the previous administration's bloody drug war.

"However, we must also recognize the complicity of those who enabled these atrocities. Thus, we must engage in a critical re-

Cavite Police Arrest High-Value Drug Suspect, Seize P340K Worth of Shabu in Dasmariñas Operation

Camp BGen Vicente P. Lim- Members of the Cavite PNP Drug Enforcement Unit of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, together with the Dasmariñas Component City Police Station, seized Php 340,000.00 worth of suspected shabu and arrested a High-Value Individual (HVI) in a buy-bust operation on March 19, 2025, at Brgy. Datu Esmael, Dasmariñas, Cavite. According to the report, at around 6:00 PM on the said date, combined operatives of the PDEU of Cavite PPO and Dasmariñas CCPS conducted an anti-illegal drug operation that led to the arrest of alias "Nune," 26, a male resident of Waling Waling Street, Brgy. Datu Esmael, Dasmariñas City, Cavite, who is listed as a High-Value Individual in the Cavite PPO's Drug Watchlist.

evaluation of our values as believers, reaffirming our commitment to the sanctity of all life," he added.

Duterte is currently at the ICC Detention Center in The Hague, Netherlands.

The ICC set the next hearing to confirm Duterte's charges on Sept. 23. (PNA) By **Ferdinand Patinio**

Recovered from his possession were 3 plastic sachets containing suspected shabu weighing 50 grams, valued at Php 340,000.00, along with drug bust money. The Regional Director of PRO CALABARZON, PBGEN Paul Kenneth T. Lucas, lauded the successful anti-drug operation, which resulted in the arrest of the high-value individual and the seizure of illegal drugs.

"I commend the diligent efforts of our operatives in Cavite for their successful operation that led to the arrest of a high-value drug suspect and the seizure of P340K worth of illegal drugs. It serves as a clear message that the PNP will continue to track down and apprehend those who are involved in drug trafficking and other criminal activities," RD Lucas said.

Meanwhile, the suspect is currently under the custody of PDEU, Cavite PPO, for documentation and further investigation. Charges for violations of Sections 5 and 11, Article II of RA 9165 are being prepared for filing in court against the drug suspect. (RPIO4A)

EDITORIAL

"TRANSWOMEN" : DAPAT NGA BANG MAISALI SA PAGDIRIWANG SA WOMEN'S MONTH?

Ang pagkakakilanlan ng pagkababae ba ay nararapaa ipagdamot o ipamahagi ang inklusibidad para sa mga taong sumailalim ng pagpapalit kasarian? Sa pagpasok ng buwan ng Marso ay siya ring pagdiriwang ng taunang selebrasyon para sa mga kababaihan. Isa itong daan upang parangalan ang mga kababaihan sa kanilang kagitingan at kontribusyon sa iba't-ibang larangan, nabibigyan ng pagkakilanlan ang sakripisyo ng bawat babae mula pa noong sinauna hanggang sa kasalukuyang panahon, at higit na napagtuunan ng pansin ang bawat isyu na nararanasan ng mga ito. Ngunit sa kasalukuyang taon na ito, laganap ang isyu tungkol sa pakikisama ng mga transwomen sa pagdiriwang ng buwan ng mga kababaihan at ang malayang pagpapahayag ng mga netizen sa kanilang mga saloobin ukol sa isyu na ito.

Para sa aking opinyon, ang hinaing ng ibang mga transwomen tungkol sa inklusyon ng kanilang pagkababae ay mulat matang nabibigyang pansin at niyakap ng mga mamamayan. Ngunit sa kabilang banda ay ang pagpapahayag ng kanilang pagkakakilanlan ay malayang naipapahayag sa buwang ipinagdiriwang ang Pride Month. Hindi nalilimitahan ang kanilang pagkakakilanlan bilang isa sa mga kababaihan at hindi kailanma'y ipinagdadamot at ang paglimita ng selebrasyong ito sa mga biyolohikal na kababaihan ay hindi pagtalikod sa inklusyon ng mga transwomen sa malayang pagpapahayag ng kasarian.

Ang buwan ng mga kababaihan ay hindi dominasyon o rekognisyon ng kung sino ang nararapat na maggunita ng selebrasyong ito. Isa itong daan upang maipahayag ang isyung kinakaharap ng mga kababaihan at ang hirap na dinanas ng mga sinaunang kababaihan upang makilala ang kanilang paghihirap. Sa pamamaraan ng selebrasyong ito ay naipapakita na hindi sila babae lamang at patuloy na umaabante kahit pa sa larangang tumatak sa isipan ng mga tao na dapat ay para sa mga kalalakhian lamang.

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P3.3-M FARM MACHINERIES TO BOOST PRODUCTIVITY OF APAYAO FARMERS

MANILA – A total of 175 agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) in the province of Apayao have benefitted from the PHP3.3 million worth of farm machinery and equipment (FME) from the Department of Agrarian Reform.

In a news release on Thursday, DAR said the FME are expected to boost productivity and enhance the livelihood of the farmers who are members of six agrarian reform beneficiary organizations (ARBOs) across Apayao.

Gilbert Galut, chairman of the Cajoma Multipurpose Cooperative (CAJOMA MPC) of Pudtol, one of the ARBOs, thanked DAR for its continued support in empowering farmers with modern technology.

He said the equipment they received would have a lasting impact on their farming community as these would boost their farmer-members agricultural productivity and efficiency.

Provincial Agrarian Reform Program officer Penelope de Ausen said the initiative is implemented under the DAR's Climate Resilient Farm Productivity Support Program (CRFPSP), which promotes modern farming technologies, climate-smart practices, and essential skills training to ensure sustainable agricultural production.

"Kung ano ang itinanim, siyang aanihin. Ngayon

tinatamasa na ng anim na ARBOs sa Apayao ang bunga ng kanilang pagsisikap. Ang maliit nilang sakripisyo ay nagbunga ng tagumpay (You reap what you sow. These six ARBOs in Apayao are now enjoying the rewards of their hard work. Their small sacrifices have finally brought them success)," she said.

Among the FMEs distributed to the ARBOs were heavy-duty hand tractors, tractors with rotavators, tractor-mounted corn seeders with trailers, standalone corn seeders, water pumps, knapsack sprayers, rotary tillers, and brush tillers.

Aside from increasing productivity, these advanced tools aim to mechanize farming operations and reduce the physical labor of ARBs.

Aside from CAJOMA MPC, other ARBOs that received the FMEs include the Sta. Lina ARB Association Inc. (STARBA) and Cagandungang Marag Valley ARB Association Inc. (CAMAVARBA) of Luna; Malign Upland Farmers Association, Inc. (MUFA) of Flora; Guina-ang Community Development Agriculture Cooperative (GUICOMDA); and Mawigue Proper Farmers Association, Inc. (MPFA) of Conner.

DAR said the distribution was in line with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s directive to uplift the lives of Filipino farmers. **(PNA)**

By Marita Moaje

LAWYER SEES QUICK RESOLUTION OF FPRRD CASE DUE TO SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

MANILA – A private lawyer accredited with the International Criminal Court (ICC) on Thursday said the proceedings against former president Rodrigo Duterte before the Netherlands-based tribunal may be completed sooner than expected due to substantial evidence against the former chief executive.

"The case against Mr. Duterte may be completed in as little as a year considering the evidence at hand," trial lawyer Joel Butuyan told reporters at the Meet the Manila Press forum.

Butuyan made the comment when asked if the proceedings would take as long as the case of another client of lawyer Nicholas Kaufman who has been named as the lead defense counsel for Duterte.

They are referring to Kaufman's client, incumbent Congo deputy prime minister Jean Pierre Bemba, arrested in 2008 and spent ten years in prison at the Hague before the verdicts against him were overturned on appeal in

2018.

Butuyan pointed out that Duterte is not similarly situated as the charges and evidence against him are "much more robust."

In an earlier interview, Butuyan said the evidence gathered and relied upon by the prosecutors in applying for the warrant of arrest is replete with many videos of Duterte where he encouraged police officers to kill drug suspects, promised rewards and promotion, and for the public to kill drug suspects.

He added that the ICC will also determine all available evidence in ruling whether to grant interim liberty for Duterte.

"The fact that he was arrested with a warrant of arrest may help determine whether he is a flight risk."

Butuyan said the decision of Duterte to withdraw from the Rome Statute when he was president was "clearly a case of conflict of interest."

"That should be evidence of his plans." **(PNA)** **By Benjamin Pulta**

BOC SEIZES P95-M UNREGISTERED VAPE PRODUCTS AT MANILA PORT

MANILA – The Bureau of Customs (BOC) has seized 112,750 unregistered vape products worth more than PHP95.7 million at the Port of Manila.

BOC Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio said these items were confiscated in separate inspections on March 18, the bureau said in a news release Thursday.

He said the first shipment was flagged based on derogatory information received by the BOC's Enforcement Group, prompting the issuance of a Pre-Lodgement Control Order (PLCO) requested by Deputy Commissioner Teddy Raval that led to the inspection of two 40-foot-high cube containers.

The examination uncovered 233 cartons containing 46,600 assorted flavored vape products worth PHP23.3 million and supposed duties and taxes amounting to PHP30.2 million.

The Port of Manila District Collector Alexander Gerard Alviar is set to issue a Warrant of Seizure and Detention against the shipments for violation of Section 1113 in relation to Section 1400 of the Customs

Modernization and Tariff Act (CMTA) and Republic Act (RA) 11900, or the Vaporized Nicotine and Non-Nicotine Products Regulation Act.

Meanwhile, the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service – Port of Manila team requested the issuance of a PLCO against three additional shipments suspected of containing unmanifested goods.

Upon physical examination, Customs examiners discovered 66,150 undeclared vape products hidden among boxes of insulated cups. These have an estimated value of PHP72.4 million and supposed duties and taxes worth PHP39.3 million.

Raval said the shipments arrived from China and were declared as "plastic insulation."

The BOC, in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry, Bureau of Internal Revenue, and Philippine National Police, continues to enforce RA 11900 to uphold product standards and prevent minors' access to vape products. **(PNA)** **By Ferdinand Patinio**

PALACE WON'T LET DELA ROSA HIDE FROM POSSIBLE ARREST

MANILA – Malacañang on Thursday expressed dismay over Senator Ronald dela Rosa's plan to go into hiding to evade possible arrest because of his involvement in former president Rodrigo Duterte's war on illegal drugs.

In a Palace press briefing, Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary and Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said it is surprising that such statement came from Dela Rosa, who was a former chief of the Philippine National Police.

Castro said dela Rosa is setting a bad precedent, as his fellow Filipinos might think that evading arrest is acceptable.

"Iyan po ba ang gusto niya ring ipahiwatig sa taumbayan na kapag may warrant of arrest ay dapat magtago (Is that what he also wants to convey to the people that when there is an arrest warrant, one should hide)," Castro asked.

"Hindi natin sinasagayunan ang ganoong klaseng paniniwala ng kaniyang nais gawin. Hindi po ito makakabuti sa mga kababayan natin na mismong lider natin ay hindi haharapin ang anumang kaso o complaint na naisampa o maisasampa sa kanya (We do not agree with that kind of belief and what he wants to do. This will not be good for our countrymen that our own

leader will not face any case or complaint that has been filed or will be filed against him)," she said.

Castro said the Philippine government would cooperate with the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), once it seeks assistance if and when the arrest order against dela Rosa is out.

"Ganoon pa rin po ang ating gagawin. Makikipag-coordinate pa rin po tayo sa Interpol. At maaari po nating gamitin ang sinasabi sa batas na RA (Republic Act) 9851 (That is what we will still do. We will still coordinate with Interpol. And we can use what is said in the law RA 9851)," she said.

Section 70 of RA 9851 states that "authorities may surrender or extradite suspected or accused persons in the Philippines to the appropriate international court, if any, or to another State pursuant to the applicable extradition laws and treaties."

Dela Rosa is among the key personalities who are the subject of the International Criminal Court's (ICC) investigation into the drug war launched by Duterte, the Department of Justice (DOJ) said in a Palace press briefing on March 13.

The DOJ, however, clarified that there is no arrest warrant yet against dela Rosa. **(PNA)** **By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos**

MALACAÑANG EXPECTS 'CREDIBLE' 2025 POLLS, CALLS FOR ORDERLY CAMPAIGN

MANILA – Malacañang on Thursday called on local candidates in the upcoming May 12 elections to be "calm" and ensure "orderly" campaigning.

Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary and Palace Press Officer Claire Castro made the call, ahead of the start of the campaign period for local bets on March 28. In a press briefing, Castro said the Palace is expecting a "credible" 2025 elections, considering the decline in the number of areas facing poll-related threats.

"Tayo po ay iyan din ang ninanais ng administrasyon. Makipagtulungan tayo sa lahat ng ahensiya para po magkaroon tayo, especially sa election, maging credible po ang mangyayaring election sa susunod na May 2025 (That is what the administration wants. Let's cooperate with all agencies so that we can have, especially in the election, a credible election in May 2025)," Castro said.

"Ang nais lamang po natin ay maging mahinahon sa kanilang pangangampanya, maging maayos, maging

makatotohanan sa kanilang mga sasabihin. Huwag po sana silang magsagawa ng ano mang pananalita na magke create pa ng kaguluhan (All we want is for them to be calm in their campaigning, to be orderly, to be truthful in what they say. I hope they don't make any statements that will create more chaos)," she added.

The number of areas under the red category or with serious threat of election-related violence has decreased from 38 to 36, according to the latest data from the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

Areas under the red category include 30 from the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, two in the Negros Island Region, and one each in Northern Mindanao, Eastern Visayas, Bicol Region, and Cagayan Valley.

The Comelec, however, is expecting an increase in election-related incidents, when the campaign period for local candidates begins.

(PNA) **By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos**

P272-M SHABU CONCEALED AS 'FREEZE-DRIED DURIAN' SEIZED, SUSPECT NABBED

MANILA – Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) agents have arrested a suspect and seized PHP272 million worth of suspected shabu concealed in 40 black gold foil packs labeled as "freeze-dried durian" in Chinese characters.

In a statement on Thursday, PDEA Director General Isagani Nerez said the suspect, alias Ronald, was arrested by joint elements of PDEA and the Philippine National Police Drug Enforcement Unit in a buy-bust operation at Rizal Cement Village in Barangay Pantok, Binangonan, Rizal late

Wednesday night.

Nerez said each of the 40 black gold foil packs contained one kilogram of shabu.

He said the arrested suspect will be charged with violation of Section 5 (Sale of Illegal Drugs) and Section 11 (Possession of Illegal Drugs), Article II of Republic Act 9165, or The Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

"Operation of this magnitude dealt a major blow to the supply chain of illegal drugs in the streets. There are more to come," Nerez said. **(PNA)** **By Christopher Lloyd Calivan**

PHILHEALTH LIFTS 45-DAY BENEFIT LIMIT

MANILA – The Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) has lifted the 45-day benefit limit to ensure its services remain unhampered.

"The 45-day benefit limit is an outdated cost-containment strategy. Naiintindihan natin kung bakit ito inilagay noon, ngunit, sa pagbabago ng ating payment mechanism, napapanahon na rin talagang repormahin ito (We understand why this was placed before, but with the change of our payment mechanism, it is timely to reform this)," PhilHealth President and Chief Executive Officer Edwin Mercado said in a news release Thursday. He noted that medical needs cannot "always be predicted or scheduled."

"Marami ring mga serbisyo ang kinakailangan ng higit sa 45 days na coverage. Kaya naman nagpapasalamat tayo sa (There are many services that need more than 45 days of coverage. So, we thank the) PhilHealth Board for approving this policy update," he added. Earlier, the state insurer recognized that certain conditions need to cover more than 45 days.

Hence, the extension of the number of sessions covered by its hemodialysis benefit packages – from the initial 90 to the current 156 sessions.

PhilHealth reminds members that the availment of the benefits must be based on proper medical indication, necessity, and alignment with the patient's treatment plan.

It must also adhere to widely accepted standards of care, Clinical Practice Guidelines approved by the Department of Health (DOH), and PhilHealth Circulars on quality standards.

To ensure the responsible and effective implementation of this policy, the state insurer will monitor patient admissions, readmissions, and benefit utilization exceeding 45 days.

Health facility compliance with clinical standards and reimbursement rules will be assessed through the Health Care Providers Performance Assessment System.

Meanwhile, Health Secretary and PhilHealth Board Chair Teodoro Herbosa said the move is in line with the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to ensure that all members receive appropriate healthcare services continuously.

"Sa ating UHC (Universal Healthcare) Act, may tinatawag na 'individual-based services' na siyang binabayaran ng PhilHealth (In our UHC Act, the PhilHealth pays the 'individual-based services')," Herbosa said.

"Yan ang dahilan kung bakit seryoso at nakatutok si PBBM sa PhilHealth. Sa ilalim ng kanyang administrasyon ay tunay na pinapalawak ang benepisyong pangkalusugan ng bawat Pilipino (That is the reason why PBBM is focused and serious about PhilHealth. Under his administration, he is expanding the health benefits of every Filipino."

The PhilHealth Board is the highest governing body of the government-owned and -controlled corporation.

It has 13 seats, five of which are occupied by ex-officio members: the secretaries of health, social welfare and development, labor and employment, finance, and budget and management. **(PNA) By Ma. Teresa Montemayor**

DA REPORTS LOWER RICE IMPORTS AMID LOCAL PALAY HARVEST

MANILA – The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Thursday reported lower rice import arrivals amid the local palay harvest in the Philippines.

As of March 13, only 640,915 metric tons (MT) of imported rice have arrived since January, according to the DA.

This is much lower than 1.19 million MT which arrived for the same period last year.

Only 933 out of the 1,428 approved sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) have been utilized for the said period.

In an interview, DA spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said this drop shows the adjustment of the market considering recent importation and the local harvest.

"Ibig sabihin, mababa. Ibig sabihin ito, malaki talaga yung pumasok na imported na bigas last year. Plus iyong expectation na magiging maganda iyong harvest this year. So makikita natin na nag-a-adjust iyong importation (That means, low. This means, the imported rice that came in last year was really big. Plus the expectation that the harvest will be good this year. So we can see that the importation is adjusting)," he said.

The country logged more than 4.8 million MT rice import arrivals as of Dec. 31, 2024. De Mesa also underscored

an international economist's remarks on the Philippines' rice importation.

"Sabi nga nila doon, nagiging predictive na ngayon iyong pangangailangan (As what they said, it's now becoming predictive, the need) for imported rice which can be manifested ngayon dito sa mga import data na pumapasok (in the import data coming in)," he said.

Earlier, Indian-American agricultural economist and award-winning global food innovator Samarendu Mohanty cited the Philippines' "aggressive" market reforms as one of the game changers which helped bring down global rice prices, alongside policy changes of India.

In particular, he referred to India's lifting of the import ban on non-Basmati white rice and the Philippines' setting of the maximum suggested retail price for 5 percent broken imported rice, stringent moves against agricultural smuggling and hoarding, and market monitoring.

In terms of the local harvest, de Mesa assured continuous support to farmers through the higher buying price of the National Food Authority (NFA).

To date, the NFA buys clean and dry palay at PHP24 per kilogram; and PHP18/kg for fresh and wet palay. **(PNA) By Stephanie Sevillano**

Most Wanted Person Regional Level Arrested by Noveleta PNP

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite – Warrant Team of Noveleta Municipal Police Station together with RID/RSOU conducted joint and successfully apprehended a Most Wanted Person Regional Level, at about 10:00 AM on March 21, 2025 in Barangay San Rafael III, Noveleta, Cavite. PMAJ Sandie Del Finado Caparrosa, Acting Chief of Police identified the accused as alias OMAN, 53 years old, and presently resided at Bry. San Rafael III, Noveleta, Cavite.

The Warrant Team of Noveleta Municipal Police Station together with RID/RSOU conducted joint operation against Most Wanted Person Regional Level which resulted in the arrest of the accused for Violation of Sec. 12, Art. II of R. A. 9165 (2 counts) with criminal case numbers

896-2024 and 897-2024 dated March 14, 2025, issued by Honorable Judge Franco Paulo Resurreccion Arago, Presiding Judge, Regional Trial Court, Branch 88, Cavite City, Cavite.

The Cavite PPO commends its officers for their dedication and hard work in enforcing the law and ensuring the safety and security of the community.

We assure the public that the Cavite PNP remains steadfast in its mission to uphold justice and safeguard the well-being of every Caviteño. We always count on your support and active participation in ensuring a safe and secure environment for everyone. Together, let us work hand in hand to build a community rooted in trust and mutual respect.

PBBM VETOES BILL DECLARING PAMPANGA AS PH CULINARY CAPITAL

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has vetoed a bill that sought to declare Pampanga as the "Culinary Capital of the Philippines."

In a letter to the House of Representatives dated March 12, Marcos explained that while Pampanga's culinary contributions are widely recognized, officially designating it as the country's culinary capital could undermine the diversity of Philippine cuisine.

"It cannot be denied that Pampanga is celebrated for its diverse and flavorful dishes, traditional cooking methods, and a strong culture of food innovation," Marcos said in his veto message.

"This is consistent with the policy of the government to conserve, promote, and popularize the nation's historical and cultural heritage and resources, as well as artistic creations," he added.

The President, however, noted that the bill lacked a historical basis and key performance indicators to justify such declaration, warning that it could offend other provinces with similarly rich culinary traditions.

"I cannot ignore the concerns regarding the declaration's lack of historical basis, the absence of a thorough study that shows key performance indicators for such designation, and the possibility that the bill may offend sensibilities in other provinces that are equally proud of their culinary contributions," Marcos said.

Marcos stressed that Filipino cuisine reflects the country's cultural and geographic diversity, shaped by the distinct culinary traditions of its regions.

"Our regions contribute their indigenous dishes with certain recipes that are best done in the areas of origin of their ingredients. All our culinary variations reflect the rich cultural diversity of a group of people scattered among the Philippine islands," he

said as he underscored the importance of preserving this diversity.

At a Palace briefing on Thursday, Palace Press Officer and Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro confirmed that Marcos vetoed Senate Bill No. 2797 and House Bill No. 10634 titled "An act declaring the province of Pampanga as the culinary capital of the Philippines."

"Maganda kasi po 'yung bill, pero magke-create ito ng discrimination (The bill is good, but it may create discrimination)," Castro said.

The bill, authored by Pampanga lawmakers including former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, aimed to recognize Pampanga's culinary heritage.

Arroyo earlier said the declaration would benefit local communities by attracting more visitors and creating economic opportunities.

Despite the veto, Ivan Henares, Secretary-General of the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines and Commissioner of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, said the decision does not diminish Pampanga's culinary significance but recognizes that the country's strength lies in its regional diversity.

"I hope our kabalens understand the wisdom behind this veto. It is not saying that Kapampangan cuisine is not good. It just acknowledges that in a nation as diverse as ours, no one region can claim to have the best food," Henares wrote in a Facebook post.

"We should not be competing with each other for bragging rights and empty titles. Focus on sustainable programs (such as policies on geographical indication), not just trivial things. Let's determine 'key performance indicators' and work towards those," he added. **(PNA) By Filane Mikee Cervantes and Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos**

DOST-PCHRD celebrates 43 years of advancing health research in PH

MANILA, (PIA) — The Department of Science and Technology's Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (DOST-PCHRD) commemorates its 43rd anniversary with a renewed commitment to translating research into tangible benefits for Filipino citizens, in an event held in Pasay City, Monday. Dr. Jaime C. Montoya, Executive Director of DOST-PCHRD, emphasized the organization's dedication to ensuring research initiatives improve healthcare, inform policies and drive sustainable development. "Today we reflect on how far we have come and recognize the achievements and partnerships that have brought ideas to life, turning aspirations to solutions. that can improve and lift the lives of the Filipino people through health research and development," Montoya said. "Our theme, 'Building a healthier and wealthier future: Advancing research utilization for greater impact,' underscores our collective commitment to transforming health research into meaningful solutions that uplift lives and drives economic progress," he added.

Montoya said the theme also underlines DOST-PCHRD's commitment to ensuring that research leads to real-world applications that enhance public health and economic well-being. The anniversary event, graced by DOST Secretary Renato Solidum Jr. and Department of Health Secretary Ted Herbosa (virtually), aims to bridge the gap between scientific research and practical applications. Discussions focus on intellectual property management, research-to-policy translation and strategies to improve health research utilization. Montoya highlighted the crucial role of researchers, policymakers, healthcare professionals and industry leaders in transforming research findings into meaningful change.

"We are honored to hold discussions that highlight the importance of research utilization in setting the directions, policies and programs for sustainable health improvements and innovations," he said. In his message delivered partly in Filipino, Montoya reaffirmed the council's commitment to making health research an instrument for national development. "Let us unite in continuing to use science and technology for a more vibrant and progressive future, where the benefits of health research are felt by every Filipino," he said. Established on March 17, 1982, through Executive Order No. 784, DOST-PCHRD serves as the national coordinating body for health research by virtue of Republic Act 10053, also known as the Philippine National Health Research System (PNHRS) Act. The council describes itself as a forward-looking, partnership-based national body responsible for coordinating and monitoring health research activities throughout the country. **(JCO/PIA-NCR)**

GMA PNP NABS THREE STREET-LEVEL DRUG SUSPECTS, SEIZES 15 GRAMS OF SHABU WORTH PHP 102K

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite — In a successful anti-drug operation, Station Drug Enforcement Team of GMA MPS arrested three street-level individuals and confiscated shabu at around 3:00 PM on March 20, 2025, in Barangay San Gabriel, GMA, Cavite. PLTCOL RANDY C OLIQUINO, Chief of Police, GMA Municipal Police Station, identified the suspects as: alias RAP RAP, resident of Sunshine Homes, Brgy. F. De Castro, GMA, Cavite; alias KULAS, resident of Brgy. Olaes, GMA, Cavite; and alias CED, resident of Blk 5 Lot

DOST Region 02 Brings STARBOOKS to DOH Treatment and Rehabilitation Center: A New Chapter in Patient Rehabilitation

In a groundbreaking move, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Region 02, led by Dr. Virginia G. Bilgera, has installed STARBOOKS at the Department of Health Treatment and Rehabilitation Center (DOH TRC) in San Antonio, City of Ilagan, Isabela. This innovative digital library is set to revolutionize patient rehabilitation by offering healthcare professionals and patients access to a treasure trove of science and technology resources. By integrating STARBOOKS into the center, DOST aims to empower patients with educational materials on livelihood skills, entrepreneurship, and job readiness. This strategic move not only aids in patient reintegration into society but also keeps them mentally engaged and informed throughout their recovery journey. The event drew 15 staff members from DOH TRC II, who were treated to a

comprehensive discussion on STARBOOKS by Mr. Carl Joshua Reyes. He delved into the platform's objectives, mandates, and key features, leaving attendees eager to explore its potential. In an exclusive interview, Atty. Abigail M. Ancheta, Attorney III at DOH TRC 2, revealed the center's motivation behind embracing this technology. "STARBOOKS is a game-

changer for our patients," she emphasized. "It complements our existing library with engaging content that enriches their educational experience during recovery." This initiative is part of DOST's broader mission to democratize access to science, technology, and innovation (STI). By deploying digital learning tools in healthcare and rehabilitation settings,

STARBOOKS is bridging knowledge gaps for both medical staff and patients, catering to the diverse needs of everyone within the facility. With STARBOOKS on board, the DOH TRC is poised to redefine patient care and rehabilitation, proving that technology can indeed be a powerful catalyst for healing and growth.

Regional Level Most Wanted Person Arrested by Magallanes PNP

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite — In a successful operation, the Intel and Warrant Operatives of Magallanes Municipal Police Station apprehended A Regional-Level Most Wanted Person at 1:40 AM on March 21, 2025, in Barangay Daang Amaya 1, Tanza, Cavite. PMAJ Raymond T Balbuena, Chief of Police, Magallanes MPS, identified the accused as "Bulldog," an 18-year-old resident of Barangay Bucana, Ternate, Cavite.

The operation was spearheaded by the Intelligence Officer, in coordination with the Warrant PNCO of Magallanes MPS. The team utilized an Alternative Recording Device during the arrest, which was carried out based on a warrant issued by Hon. Ralph S. Arellano, Presiding Judge of RTC, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 132, Naic, Cavite. The accused was taken into custody under a warrant dated January 6, 2025, for Violation of Section 5, Article II of RA 9165 (Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002), with no bail recommended, and Violation of Section 11,

Article II of RA 9165, with a bail bond set at Php 200,000.00. These cases are docketed under Criminal Case Nos. NC-500-24 and NC-501-24. The successful arrest is part of the Philippine National Police intensified efforts to bring high-profile fugitives to justice, reinforcing their commitment to public safety and maintaining peace and order in the community. Cavite PPO Acting Provincial Director, PCOL DWIGHT E ALEGRE, commended the personnel of Magallanes Municipal Police Station for their swift and resolute efforts in apprehending individuals with active arrest warrants. "I commended the Intel and Warrant Operatives for their unwavering commitment to bringing those with pending warrants to justice. We will continue to strengthen our efforts against wanted persons to ensure they face the charges filed against them in court", he stated. PCOL Alegre also called on the community to support the Cavite PNP by providing information and staying vigilant against threats to peace and order. "Crime prevention is a shared responsibility, and by working together and remaining alert, we can create a safer and more secure future for everyone", he added.

steadfast in its commitment to eradicating illegal drugs in the community and ensuring the safety of its residents.

"I commend the Station Drug Enforcement Team of GMA MPS for their relentless dedication in apprehending individuals with pending warrants. We remain steadfast in intensifying our campaign against illegal drugs to safeguard the safety and security of the community," said PCOL Dwight E. Alegre, Acting Provincial Director of Cavite PPO.

1, Brgy. Calimag, GMA, Cavite. The Station Drug Enforcement Team of GMA MPS, in coordination with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), conducted a buy-bust that led to the successful arrest of the suspects and the confiscation of the following pieces of evidence: Seventeen (17) heat-sealed transparent plastic sachets containing suspected shabu, weighing more or less 15.00 grams, with a Standard Drug Price of PHP 102,000.00. While using an Alternative Recording Device during

the operation, the physical inventory of the seized evidence was also conducted at the place of arrest in the presence of the arrested suspects, media representative and Barangay Chairman of Barangay San Gabriel, GMA, Cavite. The arrested suspects are now facing criminal charges for violations of Republic Act No. 9165, otherwise known as the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, and have been referred for inquest proceedings. The Cavite Police Provincial Office remains

DOH: ROAD SAFETY A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE, ESSENTIAL IN SUSTAINABLE DEV'T

MANILA – The Department of Health (DOH) on Wednesday said road safety is a public health issue that must be addressed as it is essential to the country's sustainable development.

According to the World Health Organization, road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death among children and young adults aged five to 29 years.

DOH Secretary Teodoro Herbosa cited that a total of 12,241 deaths due to road crashes have been recorded by the Philippine Statistics Authority in 2022. "This is a death rate of 11 per 100,000 individuals, which is moving us further from the target of four (deaths) per 100,000 (individuals)," he said at the 2025 Philippine Road Safety Summit in Quezon City.

"The regression is unacceptable, and we must strengthen our efforts to reverse this trend."

In the past 10 years, Herbosa said road crashes nationwide increased by 25.6 percent every year. He said about 25,000 of the 296,000 injuries per year are related to drunk driving.

About 72 percent of them involved males (young children and young adults)

and happened mostly at night.

The DOH has prioritized road safety as one of its health outcomes list to ensure safe roads for children who need to go to school, and to gain access to healthcare without fear.

"Our strategy includes strengthening multi-sectoral collaboration with government agencies, local government units, and civil society organizations; integrating road safety policies into national and local frameworks; enhancing health promotion to instill a culture of safety; and equipping local government units with the capacity to respond effectively to road crashes," Herbosa said.

He said the department also strengthened healthcare facilities for trauma services and implemented a trauma registry in all health facilities to ensure real-time monitoring and data-driven interventions.

Herbosa also urged all concerned agencies and stakeholders to take part in the government's efforts to make roads nationwide safer, especially for children, to strengthen the country's economy, reduce burdens, and build stronger communities. **(PNA) By Ma. Teresa Montemayor**

MORE CORDILLERA VILLAGES SEE GAINS FROM TOURISM

BAGUIO CITY – La Diyang Haven in Tuba, Benguet used to be a stand-alone eco-tourism destination that had been collaborating with nearby attractions for a holistic tourism experience. But thanks to a search spearheaded by the Department of Tourism-Cordillera, more villages have become destinations, drawing visitors who want to experience tranquility from nature.

"We offer loop tourism service so that there will be more activities for the visitors and there will be more of us to benefit aside from sharing our practices," Cristina Tolero, who heads the La Diyang Haven eco-tourism village, said in a conversation with the Philippine News Agency.

The collective destination now gives visitors an experience where they can commune with nature by walking through a virgin forest, munching on food growing from the ground and enjoy a "slow food" meal of fruits, vegetables, fish and livestock that are naturally grown.

"We can serve 'watwat' and the pinuneg (blood sausage) of the Ibaloi tribe of Benguet," Tolero said.

Cultural presentations are also prepared for tourists whose visits are scheduled, showing the Ibaloi dancers garbed in their traditional attires.

Tolero said, "We always vie for the Best Tourism Village search because it makes us strive to continue to improve what we offer to tourists and by vying, we continue to sustain what we have started. If we win, we also have additional funds for development and improvement of our destination."

DOT-CAR Regional Director Jovita Ganongan, meanwhile, said in a private message to the PNA: "We are happy that our villagers are accepting tourism and opening their places for the appreciation of tourists."

She noted that DOT-CAR's search for "The Best Tourism Village" is making even the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) more open to promoting the beauty of their places and their unique culture to the outside world.

She said that while there are several beautiful attractions in the six provinces and two cities of the region, inviting tourists to visit these places requires the readiness of the local residents.

She noted that sustainability requires community acceptance and willingness.

"The issue of acceptance and opening up is already addressed in the search because it is the community members themselves that come out and say they are ready to accept outsiders and show the beauty of their places," Ganongan said.

She said that the DOT-CAR spearheaded and organized the "Best Tourism Village" award to help the communities make their areas tourist destinations.

"Aside from technical assistance, the prize money of PHP1 million for the first place will be used for programs, projects and activities geared towards an environmentally sound, sustainable and complete with community participation," Ganongan said.

From about 12 villages during the first year in 2023, the 2024 search generated 19 competing villages.

"We have announced the 2025 search with the deadline in June 2025 hoping to receive more participation of village destinations," the official said.

Standard for excellence The judges spend time to visit each participating village, look into their operation, the offering, sustainability, and community benefits, which account for 25 percentage points each.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism villages as rural tourism destinations with recognized cultural and natural assets that preserve and promote rural and community-based values, products and lifestyles and have a clear commitment to innovation and sustainability in all aspects of economic, social and environment.

(PNA) By Liza Agoot

PHILHEALTH ANIMAL BITE PACKAGE COVERS P5.8-K IN SERVICES

MANILA – The Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) on Tuesday reminded the public to avail of its increased animal bite treatment (ABT) package as the Department of Health (DOH) reported a 100 percent fatality rate for rabies cases.

According to the DOH, the country recorded 426 rabies cases, which resulted in deaths in 2024. About 193 or 45 percent of these were bites from domestic pets, and of that tally, more than half were of unknown vaccination status.

From 2020 to 2024, a total of 1,750 patients died due to rabies.

"Hinihikayat natin ang ating mga miyembro na huwag mag-atubiling magpatingin kung sila ay kinagat o di kaya'y kinalmot ng hayop, alaga man o hindi (We encourage our members to consult a doctor when bitten or scratched by their pets or other animals)," PhilHealth President and Chief Executive Officer Edwin Mercado said.

"Ang rabies ay isang lubhang nakamamatay na sakit ngunit maaari itong maiwasan kung agarang mabibigyan ng bakuna (Rabies is a deadly disease but it can be prevented through vaccination)," he added.

PhilHealth's ABT package has been raised from PHP3,000 to PHP5,850.

It covers essential post-exposure prophylaxis, including rabies vaccine and rabies immune globulin for immediate protection, local wound care, tetanus

toxoid and anti-tetanus serum, and antibiotics. It also covers supplies, such as syringes, alcohol, and antiseptics.

Rabies is a viral disease that comes from the saliva of infected animals and spreads through bites, scratches, or other contact (eyes, mouth, nose, and wound) with the saliva of an infected animal.

Its symptoms include fever, weakness, swelling of wound, fear of air and water, confusion, paralysis, and swelling of the brain and spinal cord.

Symptoms may show two to three months after exposure to rabies. In some cases, symptoms may arise in a few weeks or as long as one year after exposure, depending on the amount of virus that entered the individual's body.

Rabies causes 60,000 to 70,000 reported deaths annually. The Philippines ranks sixth among countries with the highest rabies incidence.

"Ang ABT Package ay maaaring makuha sa higit 700 accredited ABT Package Providers sa bansa, at patuloy pa natin itong dinadagdagan (The ABT package may be availed of from more than 700 accredited ABT providers nationwide, and we're continuing to increase their number)," Mercado said.

He urged everyone to be responsible by having their pets vaccinated against rabies. **(PNA) By Ma. Teresa Montemayor**

PSEI REBOUNDS, PESO FLAT MID-WEEK

MANILA – Bargain hunting helped the local bourse rebound on Wednesday while the peso continued to move sideways against the US dollar.

The Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) rose 0.45 percent to 6,313.12 points, along with All Shares, which increased by 0.71 percent to 3,749.35.

"The local market bounced back as investors hunted for bargains supported by appreciation for corporate fundamentals," Philstock Financials research manager Japhet Tantiangco said.

Four sectors closed in the green with the highest gains from Financials, up

1.35 percent.

Industrial inched up by 1 percent, along with Property, 0.41 percent, and Holding Firms, 0.01 percent.

Mining and Oil, as well as Services, meanwhile, declined by 1.26 and 0.81 percent, respectively. Gainers led losers at 93 to 88, leaving 63 unchanged. Meanwhile, the peso closed flat at 57.30 to the US dollar.

It opened at 57.25 and traded between 57.17 and 57.32 to the greenback, averaging 57.24.

Trade volume increased to USD1.72 billion from USD1.11 billion on Tuesday. **(PNA) By Kris Crismundo**



ROAD MISHAP. A rescuer attends to a delivery rider who got into an accident along Road 10 in Tondo, Manila. Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa on Wednesday (March 19, 2025) said road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death among children and young adults aged 5 to 29 years old, per World Health Organization data.

(PNA file photo by Yancy Lim)

CAVITE GAZETTE

P U B L I S H I N G

CHOCO MUCHO, AKARI EYE SEMIS BERTHS

MANILA – Choco Mucho and Akari resume their best-of-three quarterfinal series Thursday at the Philsports Arena in Pasig City.

The Flying Titans take on the PLDT High Speed Hitters at 4 p.m. while the Chargers battle the Galeries Tower Highrisers at 6:30 p.m.

A win would send them straight to the Final Four, while a loss puts them at risk of elimination.

Choco Mucho pulled off a 20-25, 19-25, 25-15, 25-20, 18-16 win in Game 1 last March 15.

Skipper Sisi Rondina exploded with 31 points on 29 attacks and two aces, while Honey Rose Tubiano and Ma. Lina Molde added 20 and 11 points, respectively.

Rondina is expected to lead her team against the Savi Davison-led High Speed Hitters.

"I had some errors, especially in the fourth and third sets, that I need to clean up," Davison said. "Hopefully, in Game 2, more players step up and put points on the board."

Lending support to Davison are Erika Santos, Fiola

Ceballos and Majoy Baron. Meanwhile, Akari hopes to sustain its form to survive Galeries Tower.

Former National University standout Ivy Lacsina registered a career-high 28 points on 22 attacks and six kill blocks in their 21-25, 25-19, 20-25, 25-16, 15-11 victory in Game 1.

"We can't afford to slow down just because we won Game 1. The job's not done until we achieve our ultimate goal," said Lacsina, who will be supported by Eli Soyud, Grethcel Soltones, Fifi Sharma, Ezra Madrigal, Faith Nisperos, Camille Victoria and Steph Bustrillo.

Jewel Encarnacion, on the other hand, will banner Galeries Tower, which stunned third-seed Signal in the qualifying round.

"Our coaches reminded us that despite the loss, we still pushed the game to five sets. We can't let disappointment take over.

"We need to focus on the next game and fight for another chance," said Encarnacion, who had 18 points, 18 receptions and 10 digs in Game 1. **(PNA)**

By Jean Malanum

UST FORCES WINNER-TAKE-ALL IN UAAP BASKETBALL

MANILA – The University of Santo Tomas banked on Sandra Abrantes to claim the UAAP Season 87 girls' basketball title over the National University Nazareth School (NUNS) at the Filoil EcoOil Center in San Juan City on Thursday.

The 17-year-old center from Imus, Cavite scored nine points in an 11-0 run as the Junior Growing Tigresses beat the Lady Bullpups, 63-57, in Game 2 of their best-of-three championship series.

Marie Mae Sales scored on a jumper to give NU a 57-52 advantage, 4:32 remaining, before Abrantes came up with back-to-back baskets.

The Lady Bullpups tried to rally behind Gilas Youth guard Aubrey Lapasaran, Zaydhen Rosano, and KJ Badajos, whose attempts to score from the three-point line failed.

"Coach Sen (Dysangco) always tells us to be ready when we're called upon. I just did my best to help the team, and as coach told me, do whatever it takes to win the game. I just did what I could contribute because we've sacrificed so much for this, and we truly deserve it," said Abrantes, who finished with 14 points and five rebounds.

Barby Dajao, who was named Finals MVP, led UST with 22 points, 15 rebounds, two assists, two steals, and one block.

"I'm really grateful to my teammates who stepped up, especially Sandra. We didn't expect the game to be this close, but we just gave our best so that all our hard work wouldn't go to waste," said Dajao, who is also the Season 87 MVP.

Kassandra Tambawan and Jannah Wenceslao chipped in six points each for UST, which took Game 1 (85-57) on March 13.

Katrina Insoy and Lea Pinuela contributed five points apiece while Season 87 Rookie of the Year Rhiane Perez had three points, 10 rebounds, six steals, four assists, and two blocks.

"They really worked hard for this. They played through the adversity. I'm very, very proud of them that they really fought hard. Nothing to take away from NUNS, they really played well, it just so happened that we had a few breaks at the end and we're just happy to get it," UST head coach Sen Dysangco said.

UST finally lifted its first title after being named co-champion with Adamson University in Season 82 due to the pandemic.

Lapasaran finished with 22 points, eight rebounds, four steals, three assists, and one block for NU, which posted its biggest lead at 53-46.

Rosano delivered 12 points, 14 rebounds, and three steals; Ashlyn Abong had six points and 14 rebounds; and Rebekkah Pascua added five points, five rebounds, one assist, and one block. **(PNA)**

By Jean Malanum

FILIPINO RUNNER PLACES 18TH IN 30TH ROME MARATHON

ROME – Italy-based runner Lorenzo Castro Jr. emerged the best Filipino runner after securing 18th place in the 30th Acea Run Rome the Marathon dominated by the elite Kenyans over the weekend.

Castro bucked slippery roads and crossed the finish line of the men's 42.195-kilometer race in two hours, 31 minutes, and 13 seconds on Sunday.

Among some 28,000 participants were at least 100 Filipinos, many of them based in Europe.

Rome Mayor Roberto Gualtieri waved the Italian flag to kick off the race at 8:15 a.m. at Fori Imperiali, passing through famous landmarks such as the Colosseum, Arc of Constantine and St. Peter's Basilica.

The marathon ended at Circo Massimo, an ancient Roman chariot-racing stadium and mass entertainment venue.

As expected, the Kenyan runners swept the men's and women's categories, with Robert Ngeno claiming his first marathon victory with a personal best 2:07.35 while Betty Chepkwony won her second Rome Marathon title in 2:26.16, two years after her initial success.



BEST FILIPINO. Italy-based Lorenzo Castro Jr. emerges as the best Filipino runner after finishing 18th in the 30th Acea Run Rome the Marathon on Sunday (March 16, 2025). Some 28,000 runners joined the annual marathon. **(Contributed photo)**

NUNS SEEKS GLORY IN GAME 2 SHOWDOWN WITH UST

MANILA – National University Nazareth School (NUNS) will try to wrap up the UAAP boys basketball best-of-three finals series against the University of Santo Tomas on Thursday at the Filoil EcoOil Centre in San Juan City.

The Bullpups won Game 1, 77-70, last March 13 and another win will allow them to reclaim the crown they last held in Season 82 (2020).

NUNS failed to get an outright finals berth after losing to the Tiger Cubs, 56-76, at the end of the elimination round. Grade 12 standouts Collins Akowe, Macmac Alfanta, and Chad Cartel will banner the Bullpups, who are eyeing their eighth overall title.

Akowe, winner of the Best Foreign Student-Athlete award, had 24 points and 22 rebounds while Alfanta and Cartel chipped in 14 points each in Game 1.

NUNS head coach Kevin de Castro said his team would be cautious, knowing UST will try to bounce back.

"Perhaps it's about having the right mindset. Heading into Game 2, it's zero-zero — the job's not done yet until we secure that second win and the championship," said de Castro.

"We'll be ready. We know UST will make big adjustments, they'll prepare for us, and for

sure they won't just give in during Game 2. But we'll be ready — we'll double, even triple, the effort we put in today," he added.

Leading the Tiger Cubs are Racine Kane, Koji Buenafior, Carl Manding and Kirk Canete.

Meanwhile, UST seeks to claim the girls title over NUNS at 10 a.m.

The Tigresses will be spearheaded by MVP leader Barby Dajao, who finished with 25 points, 14 rebounds, five assists, and five steals in their 85-57 Game 1 victory.

Rhiane Perez had 16 points and 12 rebounds followed by Lea Pinuela and Sandra Abrantes, who chipped in 14 points each.

"We need to maintain the hunger and consistency we've had throughout the season if we want to finish this in Game 2," said UST assistant coach Allana Lim.

"Nothing will change for us; we'll just continue what we've been doing, and hopefully, we can finish the job. What Coach Sen [Dysangco] started here — which is winning the championship — is what we aim to complete. We know NUNS will make adjustments against us, but we'll be ready. We're determined to claim what we've been working hard for," she added.

Leading the Lady Bullpups are Gilas Girls standouts Aubrey Lapasaran and Ashlyn Abong. **(PNA)** **By Jean Malanum**



STANDOUT. Choco Mucho's Sisi Rondina (No. 18) tries to score against PLDT's Fiola Mae Ceballos (No. 17) and Mika Reyes (No. 3) during the Premier Volleyball League All-Filipino Conference at the Philsports Arena in Pasig City on March 15, 2025. Rondina sizzled with 31 points as the Flying Titans won, 20-25, 19-25, 25-15, 25-20, 18-16. **(PVL photo)**



INTO THE BASKET. Racine Kane (No. 45) of UST tries to stop Collins Akowe (No. 3) of National University Nazareth School from scoring in Game 1 of the UAAP Season 87 boys' basketball best-of-three finals series at the Filoil EcoOil Centre in San Juan on March 13, 2025. The Bullpups won, 77-70. **(UAAP photo)**