

**BRINGING HEALTHCARE CLOSER: MEDICAL AND DENTAL MISSION HELD IN BRGY.SAN RAFAEL II NOVELETA**



With the goal of promoting community wellness and preventive care, a medical and dental mission was successfully conducted in Barangay San Rafael II, Noveleta on July 29, 2025, serving a total of 387 beneficiaries.

The activity was made possible through the collaborative efforts of the Provincial Government of Cavite through the Medical Mission Team of the Office of the Governor and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, and the local government of Noveleta. A range of free healthcare services were provided, including medical and dental consultations, X-ray examinations, and blood sugar testing.

The health mission was warmly welcomed by the residents, who took the opportunity to consult with medical professionals and avail of basic diagnostic services, especially those who rarely have access to routine check-ups.

Gracing the event were Noveleta Mayor Davey Chua, Cavite 1st District Board Member Romel Enriquez, and Board Member Juan Ismael Gandia, who expressed their appreciation to the medical team for bringing essential services closer to the community.

The initiative reflects the province's ongoing efforts to ensure that no Caviteño is left behind when it comes to healthcare, especially in grassroots communities.--  
**-JDP**

projects are part of the administration's broader efforts to enhance regional connectivity, boost local economies, and improve the overall quality of life for Filipinos towards Bagong Pilipinas. (FC, PIA4A)  
**BY FREDMOORE CAVAN**

with co-financing from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). President Marcos also announced the partial opening next year of the South Luzon Expressway Toll Road 4 (SLEX TR4), which spans from Sto. Tomas City in Batangas to Tiaong, Quezon.

The President directed the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to ensure strict monitoring of the ongoing projects to guarantee high-quality construction and timely completion.

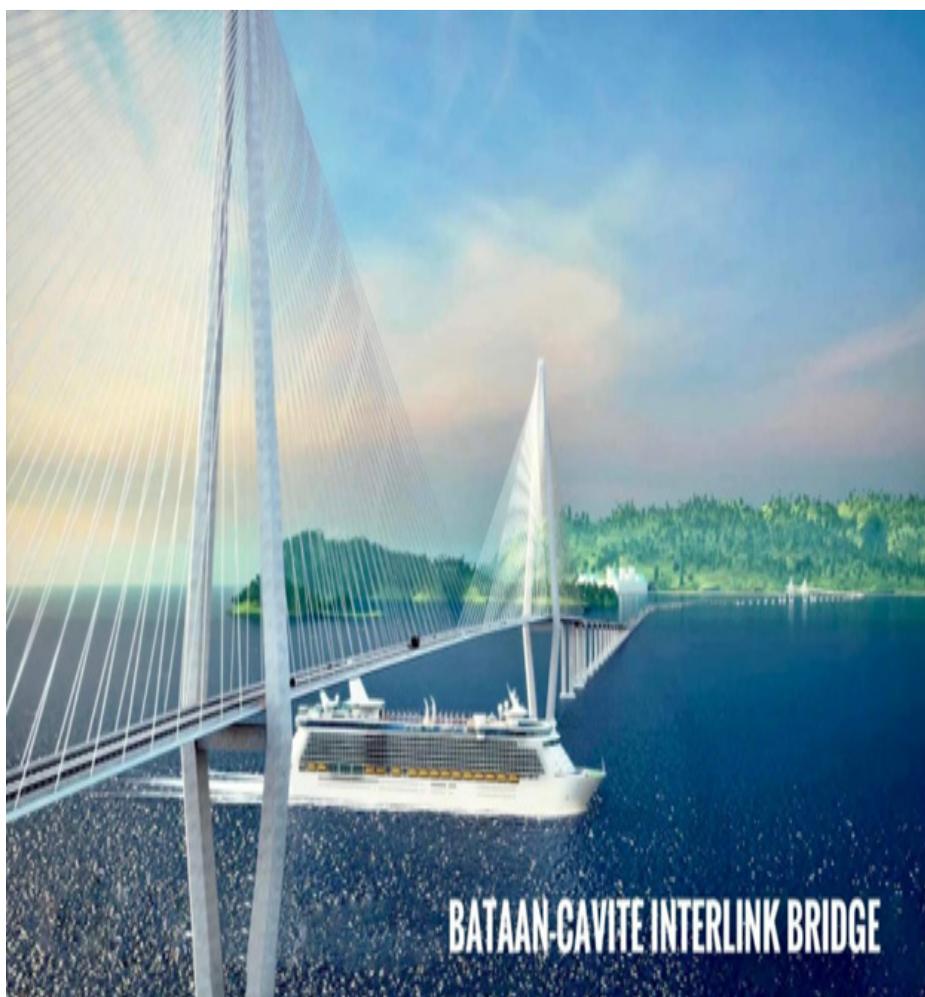
"Sa 2026, inaasahang magbubukas na sa motorista ang bahagi ng extension ng SLEX mula Sto. Tomas, Batanga hanggang Tiaong, Quezon. Kapag natapos itong buong proyekto ang dating apat na oras na biyahe, magiging isang oras na lang," President Marcos said.

"Kaya inatasan ko na ang DOTr at DPWH na bantayang mabuti ang mga proyekto sa kahabaan ng Quezon patulak ng Bicol at tiyaking tama ang kalidad, matibay, at nasa takdang oras ang pagtatapos," the President added.

The SLEX TR4 is a 67-kilometer toll road that will connect the provinces of Batangas, Laguna, and Quezon, reducing current travel time from four hours to just one.

These infrastructure

**SONA 2025: CONSTRUCTION ALL SET FOR COUNTRY'S LONGEST BRIDGE CONNECTING BATAAN CAVITE**



**CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA)** — President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. said construction of the 32 kilometer Bataan-Cavite interlink bridge – touted to be the country's longest bridge once completed – will begin before 2025 ends.

"Bago matapos ang taon, magsisimula na ang Bataan-Cavite Interlink Bridge. Ang tulay na ito ay 32 kilometro ang haba at tumatawid sa Manila Bay. Kung ang biyahe ngayon mula Mariveles hanggang Naic ay umaabot ng limang oras, balang araw ito ay magiging 45 minuto na lamang," the President said in his fourth State of the Nation Address (SONA) yesterday.

The 32.15-kilometer, four-lane, inter-island bridge will connect Brgy. Alas-asin in Mariveles, Bataan, to Brgy. Timalan Concepcion in Naic, Cavite.

It is expected to shorten travel time and generate economic opportunities in Bataan, Cavite, and neighboring provinces by improving access and connectivity.

The project is primarily funded through Official Development Assistance (ODA) loans from the Asian Development Bank (ADB),

## FIREARMS SEIZED IN SEARCH WARRANT OPERATION; SUSPECT ARRESTED IN MENDEZ, CAVITE

### Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite

– Personnel of the Mendez Municipal Police Station, under the supervision of PMAJ IAN JASPER M MONTOYA, Acting Chief of Police, successfully implemented a search warrant operation that led to the arrest of a suspect for illegal possession of firearms at around 8:05 PM on July 30, 2025 in Brgy. Asis 3, Mendez, Cavite.

The subject of the operation was identified as alias ARILD and resident of Brgy. Asis 3, Mendez, Cavite. He was arrested for violation of Republic Act No. 10591, also known as the Comprehensive Firearms and Ammunition Regulation Act.

The search was carried out by virtue of Search Warrant issued on the same date by RTC Branch 132, Naic, Cavite. The operation was conducted in the presence of the required barangay officials. The said operation is recorded using Body-Worn Cameras (BWCs) and Alternative Recording

Devices (ARDs) to ensure transparency.

Recovered during the operation were the following items: one (1) unit Colt Automatic Cal. .45 pistol; one (1) unit Cal. .357 revolver (unknown make/model, no serial number); one (1) magazine for Cal. .45; five (5) live rounds of Cal. .45 ammunition; thirty-five (35) live rounds of Cal. .357 ammunition and three (3) spent shells of Cal. .45. The arrested suspect and confiscated items are now under the custody of Mendez MPS for documentation and proper disposition. A report will be submitted to the court of origin in accordance with legal procedures.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director of Cavite PPO, lauded the swift and coordinated effort of the operating unit and emphasized the PNP's unwavering dedication to enforcing the law, especially in removing unlicensed firearms from communities to ensure public safety and peace.

## REGIONAL MOST WANTED CYBERCRIME OFFENDER CAPTURED IN JOINT POLICE OPERATION

### Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite

– In a joint law enforcement operation, the Cavite Component City Police Station (Lead Unit) under the supervision of PLTCOL SOCRATES SOLINAP JACA, Officer-in-Charge, in coordination with the San Pedro City Component Police Station and the 401st Regional Mobile Force Battalion, successfully arrested a Regional Level Most Wanted Person at Barangay 10-A, Cavite City at around 2:15 PM on July 30, 2025.

The accused, known by the alias "JOSHUA", a resident of Pasong Kawayan II, General Trias City, Cavite, was apprehended by virtue of a Warrant of Arrest for violation of Section 4(b) (2)(ii) of Republic Act No. 10175 or the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, covering ten (10) criminal cases.

The arrest was made under the authority of the Warrant of Arrest issued by Presiding Judge of

Regional Trial Court Branch 31, Fourth Judicial Region, San Pedro City, Laguna, dated August 20, 2024, with a recommended bail of Php120,000.00 for each count.

The operation was conducted in accordance with legal protocols and with the use of Body-Worn Cameras and Alternative Recording Devices to ensure transparency and adherence to procedural standards.

The arrested individual was properly documented and temporarily placed under the custody of the Cavite Component City Police Station for booking and processing. Following standard legal procedures, the case will be returned to the court of origin for further judicial proceedings, including arraignment and trial. The arresting unit will ensure the timely turnover of all necessary documents and coordinate with the court regarding the next steps of the case.

The Cavite Police Provincial Office, under the leadership of PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director, commends the successful coordination

## JOINT OPERATION LEADS TO ARREST OF REGIONAL MOST WANTED FOR RAPE

### Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite

– In line with the intensified campaign under the Simultaneous Anti-Criminality Law Enforcement Operations (SACLEO), operatives from the Warrant Section of Imus Component City Police Station, under the direct supervision of PLTCOL Chey Chey Ilano Saulog, Chief of Police, in coordination with personnel from the PNP-CIDG Women and Children Complaints Unit (WCCU) led by PCOL Marissa R Bruno, successfully arrested a Regional Level Most Wanted Person on July 29, 2025, at around 8:30 PM in Brgy. Molino, Naic, Cavite.

The operation was carried out using Body-Worn Cameras and Alternative Recording Devices to ensure transparency and proper documentation throughout the procedure. The arrested suspect, identified as alias "Junry,"

of all operating units and reiterates its unwavering commitment to bringing fugitives to justice and maintaining peace and order across the province.

a resident of Brgy. Malagasang 1-B, Imus City, Cavite, was apprehended by virtue of a Warrant of Arrest for Statutory Rape, as defined under Article 266-A, Paragraph 1 of the Revised Penal Code, as amended by Republic Act No. 8353.

The warrant, docketed under Criminal Case Nos. 29678-25 and 29679-25, was issued by Presiding Judge of the Family Court, Branch 4, Fourth Judicial Region, Imus City, Cavite, dated June 4, 2025, with no bail recommended.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director of Cavite PPO, commended the operatives for their swift and coordinated action. He emphasized that the Cavite PNP remains firm in its resolve to pursue justice, particularly in cases involving heinous crimes.

This successful operation underscores the PNP's unwavering commitment to ensuring justice and protecting the rights of women and children against heinous crimes. The PNP Cavite continues to pursue and apprehend individuals who pose a serious threat to public safety, particularly those involved in crimes of violence and abuse.

## 43 KATAO ARESTADO SA 34 ANTI-ILLEGAL DRUGS OPERATIONS NG PULIS CALABARZON SA LOOB NG 24 ORAS

### Camp BGen Vicente P Lim

— Apatnapu't tatlong (43) katao ang naaresto sa isinagawang 34 anti-illegal drugs operations ng kapulisan ng CALABARZON mula 6:00 AM ng Hulyo 28, 2025 hanggang 6:00 AM ng Hulyo 29, 2025.

Sa bilang ng mga naaresto, dalawa (2) ang itinuring na High-Value Individuals (HVI) habang apatnapu't isa (41) naman ay mga Street-Level Individuals (SLI). Sa kasalukuyan, nasa kustodiya na ng ating kapulisan ang mga suspek at sasampahan ng kasong paglabag sa Republic Act 9165 o Comprehensive

Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

Nakompiska sa mga operasyon ang kabuuang 157.54 gramo ng shabu at 50.30 gramo ng marijuana na may tinatayang standard drug price na Php1,077,308.00.

Samantala, pinuri rin ni PBGEN Jack L Wanky, Regional Director ng PRO CALABARZON ang kasipagan at mabilis na aksyon ng mga operatiba sa iba't ibang police units sa rehiyon, na aniya'y patunay ng epektibong pagpapatupad ng kanilang tungkulin para sa kapayapaan at kaayusan sa CALABARZON.

"Ang pagkakaaresto ng

43 katao sa loob lamang ng isang araw ay patunay ng ating determinasyon na sugpuin ang ilegal na droga sa rehiyon. Hindi natin bibigyan ng puwang ang mga kriminal na nagpapakalat ng kapahamakan sa ating mga komunidad," saad ni PBGEN Wanky.

Dagdag pa ni RD Wanky, patuloy ang pinaigting na kampanya ng PRO CALABARZON katuwang ang iba't ibang law enforcement agencies at mga lokal na pamahalaan sa ilalim ng adbokasyang Bagong Pilipinas, isang ligtas at maayos na bansa para sa bawat mamamayan. **(RPIO4A)**

## PULIS LAGUNA, NAARESTO ANG MOST WANTED PERSON NG CALABARZON SA PAMPANGA

### Camp BGen Vicente P Lim

— Naaresto ng mga operatiba mula sa 1st Laguna Provincial Mobile Force Company (PMFC), katuwang ang San Pedro City Component Police Station (CCPS), si alyas "Dante", isang Regional Most Wanted Person sa CALABARZON dakong 4:50 ng umaga noong Hulyo 30, 2025, sa Phase 2, Barangay Camachiles, Lungsod ng Mabalacat, Pampanga.

Batay sa ulat, isinagawa ang operasyon upang ipatupad ang Warrant of Arrest laban sa akusado kaugnay sa apat na bilang ng kaso ng panggagahasa. Ang akusado, 37 anyos ay nagtatrabaho bilang club entertainer at residente ng Purok 4, Barangay Anonas,

Lungsod ng Angeles, Pampanga.

Naaresto ang suspek sa bisa ng warrant of arrest na inisyu ng Branch 31, Regional Trial Court, Fourth Judicial Region ng San Pedro City, Laguna, na may kaugnayan sa mga kasong kriminal na may rekomendasyong hindi maaaring piyansahan.

Sa kanyang mensahe, pinuri ni PBGen Jack L. Wanky, Regional Director ng PRO CALABARZON, ang matagumpay na operasyon laban sa mga most wanted person. Binigyang-diin niya ang kahalagahan ng maayos na koordinasyon ng mga otoridad at ang aktibong partisipasyon ng mga mamamayan sa mabilis at matagumpay na pagdakip

sa mga lumalabag sa batas.

"Ang matagumpay na operasyon laban sa mga most wanted persons ay nagpapakita ng mahusay na koordinasyon sa pagitan ng ating kapulisan at ng suporta mula sa ating mga mamamayan. Nawa'y patuloy nating pagtibatibayin ang sama-samang pagkilos upang mapanatili ang kapayapaan at kaayusan sa ating rehiyon." ani PBGen Wanky.

Sa kasalukuyan, ang akusado ay nasa kustodiya ng San Pedro CCPS habang ang warrant of arrest ay isusumit na sa korteng pinagmulán para sa nararapat na proseso at disposisyon. **(RPIO)**

## NAKATAKAS NA PDLs SA BATANGAS PROV'L JAIL, NAIBALIK NA

**CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA)** – Naibalik na sa kulungan ang walo sa sampung Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) na nakatakas mula sa Batangas Provincial Rehabilitation Center sa Ibaan, Batangas kahapon, July 28.

Ayon sa Philippine National Police, nakatakas ang mga PDL bandang 9:30 ng umaga sa pamamagitan ng pagtutok ng ice pick ng isang preso sa isang prison guard na nagdulot ng kalituhan at tuluyang pagtakas ng siyam na preso. Agad nagsagawa ng hot pursuit operation ang Santo Tomas at Ibaan Police Station upang habulin ang mga preso.

Nilinaw ni Lt. Col. Marlon Cabataña, Chief of Police ng Sto. Tomas PNP, na hindi hostage-taking ang naganap na insidente sa Batangas.

Ayon sa kapulisan, sumakay ng pampasaherong bus ang limang preso at nagpanggap din bilang pasahero upang tumakas at makalayo sa lugar subalit agad ding nahuli sa STAR Tollway sa boundary ng Tanauan City at Sto. Tomas City sa Batangas. Bagamat umabot ng halos 30 minuto ang pakikipag-uusap sa mga preso bago tuluyang napasuko ng pulisya, wala naman naiulat na sinaktan o nasaktang mga pasahero sa nasabing insidente.

“Gusto lang makausap ang pamilya, hindi naman daw sila lalaban, ang ginawa po namin para makasiguro na wala silang armas ay kinumbinse po natin sila na ilabas yung baril, pinalagay namin sa isang bag ng pasahero, nung ma-confirm namin na yun nan ga yung baril na hawak nila, in a safe distance ay nagkaroon po kami ng pag-uusap,” pahayag ni Cabataña.

Pinahubad lang anila ang mga damit pang-itaas upang masiguro na wala

nang armas na itinatago ang mga tumakas na preso.

Nakuha sa mga preso ang isang 9mm Llama pistol, mga bala, magazine, balisong, ilang piraso ng susi at pera na nagkakahalaga ng P59,673.

Sa kasalukuyan, nasa kustodiya na ng mga kapulisan ang limang preso habang ang tatlo pang preso na tumakas din ay nahuli naman kaagad sa Sitio Buro, Barangay Coliat, Ibaan, Batangas matapos ang isinagawang hot pursuit operation ng kapulisan.

Nanawagan naman si Police Regional Office 4A, Police Brigadier General Jack L Wanky sa publiko na ipagbigay alam sa mga awtoridad kung may mga kahina-hinalang tao sa kanilang lugar habang tinutugis pa ng pulisya ang dalawa pang pugante na nakatakas.

Patuloy ang isinasagawang hot pursuit operations ng kapulisan upang madakip na ang dalawa pang tumakas na bilanggo, nagtalaga na rin ng checkpoint sa buong probinsya para sa kaligtasan ng publiko.

Ang mga naarestong PDL ay sangkot sa iba't ibang krimen tulad ng paglabag sa Republic Act 9165 o Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, robbery, homicide, direct assault, kidnapping, at murder.

Samantala, ayon sa Batangas Provincial Information Office, agad na ipinag-utos ni Governor Vilma Santos-Recto ang malawakang imbestigasyon ukol sa nasabing insidente.

Matatandaan na nito lamang Hunyo 24 nang pinasinayaan ang pasilidad kung saan inilipat ang 792 na mga lalaking PDL. | via CO/RBF/MDC with reports from Sto Tomas Ccps Bppo, RPIO **BY CHARMAINE ODONG**

## GOVERNMENT AID FOR WEST PHILIPPINE SEA FISHERFOLK CONTINUES

**LOS BAÑOS, Laguna (PIA)** — Fishing communities affected by the ongoing tension in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) continue to receive livelihood support from the government.

Sammy Malvas, Regional Director of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) IV-A, said local fisherfolk are incurring higher production costs as they are forced to avoid areas in the West Philippine Sea where tensions remain high.

“Here in CALABARZON, although we are not facing the West Philippine Sea directly, we still have fishermen who go there. They are among those affected by the tension [in the area].”

In 2021, the DA-BFAR Fisherfolk Registration System (FishR) reported that an estimated 66,842 CALABARZON fisherfolk venture at the West Philippine Sea. They comprise 21 percent of the 318,297 Filipinos whose livelihoods rely on these waters. However, continuous tensions caused production from regional fisherfolk to dwindle by six to seven percent in 2024.

“We cannot blame them [the fisherfolk] if they choose to find other areas to fish and have to go far. And because they had to fish farther, so did their operation costs.”

Malvas said some fisherfolk reported shelling out up to Php 100,000 in operation costs, which previously could only reach Php 8,000.00.

In his 2024 State of the nation Address (SONA),

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. reaffirmed the government's commitment to safeguarding the country's sovereignty over the West Philippine Sea. Citing laws on Maritime Zones and Archipelagic Sea Lanes, the President outlined a strategy that focuses on ingraining the sense of ownership among Filipinos through education and information campaigns.

That same year, BFAR launched the LAYAG-WPS, or Livelihood Activities to Enhance Fisheries Yields and Economic Gains from the West Philippine Sea, to provide fishing communities facing the WPS with livelihood opportunities related to fisheries.

“Through this latest initiative [LAYAG-WPS], we provide livelihood assistance and fuel assistance. We also deploy vessels to collect our fisherfolk's catch, so they will not need to go to the port. Our food boat will go directly to these fishing vessels, saving their operation costs by almost half.”

BFAR also provides the affected fisherfolk with fuel assistance to support their food boat initiative. While providing alternative livelihood and market access for local fisherfolk remains crucial, BFAR remains steadfast in reminding Filipino fisherfolk of their rightful claim to the West Philippine Sea.

“We always remind our fisherfolk, and our kababayans, that the West Philippine Sea is ours. Our presence should always be felt in this area.” (PB/PIA 4A) **BY PATRICIA BERMUDEZ**

## EDITORIAL Suliranin sa Silid-Aralan, tatagal ng limampu't limang taon?

Isa sa pinakamalaking suliranin ng bansa sa edukasyon ang pagkakaroon ng kakulangan sa mga classroom kaya naman ayon sa kalkula ng DepEd ay maaaring abutin ng limampu't-limang taon bago masolusyunan ang suliraning ito.

Bakit nga ba kailangang abutin ng ganito katagal na panahon upang masolusyunan ang ganitong klaseng suliranin? Bawat taon na lumilipas ay dumadami ang populasyon ng mga batang mag-aaral. Kaya naman, kailangan bang dumanas ang bawat estudyante ng ganito katagal na paghihirap? Dapat na tutukan ang ganitong problema at maglaan ng maayos at sapat na badyet para sa edukasyon.

Marami ang nais matuto at karapat-dapat na magkaroon ng maayos na mga silid-aralan. Isa ang sektor ng edukasyon sa nararapat na bigyang importansya kaya kung maaari'y pag-aralan nang maayos kung pa'no maiiwasan na huwag nang tumagal ng limampu't-limang taon bago maisaayos ang mga kakailanganin ng bawat eskuwelahan.

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## GATCHALIAN, AQUINO COMMEND PBBM PUSH TO PRIORITIZE EDUCATION REFORMS

**MANILA** – Senators Sherwin Gatchalian and Bam Aquino on Monday welcomed President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s renewed commitment to prioritize education reforms, describing it as a major step toward addressing learning system gaps. Gatchalian said the President's remarks during his fourth State of the Nation Address (SONA) highlighted the need to strengthen foundational education and ensure the full implementation of existing laws. "Nakita ko kanina sa SONA speech ni Presidente na malaking time ang dinevote niya sa education na dapat palakasin, ayusin ang senior high school, iimplement yung mga batas na naipasa natin lalo na yung ARAL law, ECCD law (I saw that the President devoted significant time in his SONA to education, emphasizing the need to strengthen it, fix senior high school, and implement the laws we've passed, especially the ARAL law and ECCD law)," Gatchalian said in an interview.

Aquino, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, said he would ensure that the promised reforms are carried out.

"Natutuwa kami na gagawing priority ang education for the next 3 years (We are glad that education will be a priority for the next three years)," Aquino said.

"Sisiguraduhin natin na ang mga repormang ito masasagawa at babantayan natin yung mga pangakong ito—yung mga napangako sa mga classrooms, connectivity, tulong sa mga guro natin—iisahin po natin yan at sisiguraduhin nating naipatupad (We will make sure these reforms are implemented and the promises—on classrooms, connectivity, and support for teachers—are fulfilled)," he added.

Both senators said sustained collaboration between the executive and legislative branches would be crucial in ensuring that long-delayed education reforms are institutionalized.

In his SONA, Marcos reaffirmed that education remains a top priority of his administration, citing a series of ongoing reforms to address learning gaps, improve teacher welfare, and strengthen foundational learning.

He highlighted the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program and the expansion of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) initiatives—both anchored on laws passed by Congress.

He also committed to the construction of over 300 Barangay Child Development Centers and Bullit Centers, with a PHP1-billion initial funding, to address the backlog in daycare facilities dating back to the 1990s.

To support the mental and physical well-being of students and teachers, Marcos launched the YAKAP Caravan, offering free medical checkups, laboratory tests, and medicines.

He likewise vowed to hire more school counselors to address mental health concerns and announced accelerated efforts to complete children's routine vaccinations.

On infrastructure, the President reported the opening of 22,000 classrooms over three years and vowed to build 40,000 more with support from Congress and the private sector.

He also assured proper procurement of laptops, digital tools, and connectivity support for teachers and students.

For educators, Marcos pledged compensation for teaching overloads and overtime, as well as streamlined paperwork

## DOT TO TARGET 'GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE, JOB-GENERATING' TOURISM: FRASCO

**MANILA** – The Department of Tourism (DOT) will focus on building a "globally competitive" tourism industry that generates more jobs for Filipinos, Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco said Monday.

She made the reaffirmation in response to President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s directive to boost efforts to bring jobs to the four percent of Filipinos who remain unemployed.

"As the President mentioned, the task ahead is to find opportunities for the remaining four percent of our labor force—and tourism stands ready to help meet that challenge," she said in a statement.

"We remain committed to building a tourism industry that is not only globally competitive, but also grounded on our shared mission to uplift the lives of every Filipino through dignified and sustainable livelihood," she added.

through digitalization.

He said 60,000 teaching positions have already been added, and unnecessary documentation requirements removed.

He also pushed for TVET integration in Senior High School, giving students early access to TESDA-aligned skills training and certification.

In higher education, he promised continued funding for free college tuition in state universities and increased scholarships for TESDA and college students, especially those in Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) households.

With over 2 million students currently enrolled in free college programs and the Philippines ranking second in ASEAN in tertiary and tech-voc enrollment, Marcos urged families to maximize the opportunities provided by government education programs.

"Sa lahat ng mga pinahalalagahan ng Administrasyon, ito pa rin ang nasa rurok (Among all the priorities of this administration, education remains at the top)," he said. (PNA) **BY WILNARD BACELONIA**

Frasco touted that tourism has grown into a "major economic pillar that empowers communities and creates jobs" under the Marcos administration. To date, tourism employs 6.75 million Filipinos, a share of 13.83 percent to the country's total employment.

On top of this, Frasco said more than 10 million more benefit from the industry through indirect employment.

The DOT, she said, would also continue alongside other agencies, including the Department of Trade and Industry and the Small Business Corporation, to provide loans for micro, small, and medium enterprises in tourism, and the Department of Migrant Workers for the reintegration of overseas Filipino workers into the tourism workforce.

Meanwhile, she welcomed Marcos' call to develop the Halal industry, the

## DA: ELEVATED VEGGIE PRICES MAY BE TAMED IN 2 WEEKS

**MANILA** – The elevated prices of vegetables may be tamed within two weeks, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said Monday.

This came after the DA's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Operations Center reported that damage to agriculture rose to

tourism segment of which is already included in the tourism portfolio DOT is working to strengthen.

Frasco also highlighted Marcos' directive to enhance tourist experience through infrastructure projects.

"The President's dedication to addressing critical issues such as infrastructure development, climate change, and, most importantly, peace and security, will significantly bolster the collective aspirations of the tourism industry," she said. (PNA)

**BY JOYCE ANN L. ROCAMORA**

## DBM: GOV'T TO DOUBLE TEACHER HIRING TO CUT BACKLOG

**MANILA** – The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) on Tuesday said it would double the creation of new teaching positions in 2026 to address the persistent shortage of educators in public schools.

In a post-State of the Nation Address (SONA) briefing, Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman said the government has created a total of 60,000 new teaching positions and some 5,000 non-teaching posts to relieve teachers of their administrative work.

"Sa administrasyon po ni Pangulong Bongbong Marcos Jr., sisikapin po natin na matapos yung backlog na 'yan... Sa susunod na taon dodoblehin natin 'yan (Under President Bongbong Marcos Jr.'s administration, we will strive to eliminate that backlog... Next year, we will double it)," Pangandaman said.

The Budget chief said the increase would also include the hiring of more guidance counselors to

strengthen student support services.

The hiring of new educators is part of the Marcos administration's broader push to improve the quality of education through better teacher-to-student ratios and support systems.

The Education Commission 2 (EDCOM II), which is tasked with studying reforms in the education sector, has also flagged teacher shortages as a key barrier to effective learning.

In his fourth SONA on Monday, Marcos said teachers remain at the heart of the education system as he vowed that starting this school year, public school teachers will receive payment for teaching overload and overtime hours.

He also touted the reduced administrative tasks of teachers under his leadership.

The DepEd earlier reported that teachers' workload was cut by 57 percent.

To further reduce

53,356 metric tons (MT), amounting to PHP2.34 billion due to the combined effects of the enhanced southwest monsoon and tropical cyclones Emong (international name Co-May), Dante (Francisco), and Crising (Wipha).

This includes PHP421.95 million worth of losses in high-value crops, including lowland and upland vegetables, spices, legumes, watermelons, bananas, pineapples, papayas, and root crops. In a phone interview, DA spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said prices of vegetables may easily adjust with the expected improvement in weather.

"Hopefully, wala nang darating pa na mga bagyo (there will be no more incoming storms) for the moment. Makaka-recover din naman iyan (It will eventually recover) again, in one week to two weeks," he told the Philippine News Agency.

"Ang gulay kasi mabilis ang paggalaw niyan. So last week, wala pa halos paggalaw. Ngayon, nag-start na mga gumalaw (There's an immediate movement in prices of vegetables. So, last week, there's almost no movement. Now, it's starting to move)."

As of July 25, the prevailing prices of bitter melon rose to PHP140 per kg., higher than PHP127 on July 21; string beans, up to PHP120 per kg. from PHP114 per kg.; pechay tagalog, now at PHP100 per kg. from PHP88; squash, PHP60 per kg. from PHP51; eggplant, PHP140 per kg. from PHP123.86 per kg.; bell pepper, PHP200 per kg. from PHP192.18 per kg.; and cabbage, now up to PHP80 per kg., from 74.22 per kg., among others, according to the DA-Bantay Presyo (price watch).

De Mesa said reasonable price spikes may range from a 10 to 15 percent increase, which he said is now seen in some highland and lowland vegetables. (PNA) **BY STEPHANIE SEVILLANO**

paperwork, Marcos said remaining forms would be digitized for online submission through the teachers' new laptops. (PNA) **BY DARRYL JOHN ESGUERRA**

## MARCOS: WORLD BANK TO BOOST PH AGENDA ON HEALTH, JOBS, RESILIENCE

**MANILA** – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Tuesday hailed the launch of the World Bank Group's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for the Philippines for fiscal years 2025 to 2031, saying it would help bring the government's development agenda closer to ordinary Filipinos through targeted investments in health, education, job creation, and disaster resilience.

Speaking at the ceremonial turnover of the CPF at the Malacañan Palace in Manila, Marcos said the partnership reflects the priorities he laid out in his fourth State of the Nation Address and aligns with the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028.

"The Philippines has accomplished much over the past two decades... However, we are well cognizant of the fact that much more needs to be done to ensure that the progress is truly felt by every Filipino, wherever they may be," the President said.

Marcos outlined three major outcome areas supported by the CPF: improving access to quality health care and education, opening more private sector jobs, and strengthening the country's disaster resilience in the face of climate change.

"We are improving the delivery of public health services, especially in underserved areas, including the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao," he added.

He cited the ongoing Phase One of the Philippine Health Systems Resilience Project as a key initiative in building capacity to respond to health emergencies and improving equitable access to care.

"With more equitable health care, we are giving our people not only longer lives, but hope, security,

and dignity," Marcos said.

On education, he stressed the need to address learning gaps and align student skills with market demands.

"We are also focused on addressing students' learning gaps... to ensure that our students will grow into future leaders, innovators and visionaries," he added.

To drive job creation, Marcos said the government will continue simplifying business regulations, enhancing infrastructure, and attracting more investments.

"Binubuksan natin ang mas maraming dekalidad na trabaho sa pribadong sektor (We are opening more quality jobs in the private sector)... By raising every Filipino household's productivity and income, we fuel growth in our key sectors," he said.

He also emphasized the need for climate adaptation and disaster preparedness. "Pinapalakas natin ang kakayahan ng bansa na harapin ang mga sakuna at epekto ng nagbabagong klima (We are strengthening our capacity to face calamities and the effects of climate change)... We are redefining resilience to mean learning from our shortcomings and preparing the way ahead, way ahead of time," Marcos said, adding that this includes building evacuation centers, early warning systems, and social protection mechanisms.

The CPF will contribute to eight of the World Bank Group's 15 target outcomes, including healthier lives, digital connectivity, learning, climate resilience, and improved private investment.

Marcos thanked the World Bank for nearly 80 years of partnership, citing its financial and technical assistance in

## DBM SEEKS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN 2026 BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

**MANILA** – The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) on Tuesday urged the public to take some time to monitor the budget deliberations.

This, as DBM Secretary Amenah Pangandaman backed calls to make the bicameral budget deliberations open to the public to ensure transparency.

"Ang gusto po sana natin ay makibahagi ang ating mga kababayan lalo na po ang ating mga kabataan para malaman po nila kung paano ang mag-gawa ng budget at kung paano ito matatapos (What we would like is for our countrymen, especially our youth, to participate so that they know how to make a budget and how it will be completed)," Pangandaman said during the post-State of the Nation Address conference in San Juan City.

"Sinimulan natin na ito ay bukas sa tao. Hanggang sa matapos po ito, ito po ay bukas sa tao (We started this being open to the people. Until it is completed, it will be open to the people)," she added. Pangandaman said the executive branch has been vocal in making the budget process transparent, from the time the 2026 budget plan was crafted until it is enacted as the General Appropriations Act.

She said a copy of the 2026 National Expenditure Program (NEP), also called as the President's budget, will be uploaded on the DBM's official

website, once transmitted to Congress.

infrastructure, climate action, and governance reforms.

To Filipinos affected by recent flooding and disasters, the President assured continued aid and rehabilitation efforts.

"Patuloy po kaming maghahatid ng tulong upang muli tayong makabangon at makapagsimula (We will continue to provide assistance so that we can rise and start again)," he said. (PNA) **BY DARRYL JOHN ESGUERRA**

website, once transmitted to Congress.

"Sa ngayon po, ini-impenta na po ang ating budget. In two weeks, ibibigay na po natin ito sa House of Representatives at saka sa Senado (Right now, our budget is being printed. In two weeks, we will submit it to the House of Representatives and then to the Senate)," she added.

She said there will be a series of consultations and budget deliberations in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Pangandaman said the DBM, in coordination with other government agencies, will make sure that the proposed 2026 budget is "responsive" to the people's needs.

"Kung ano po ang kinakailangan ng ating mga tao, makikinig po kami diyan, magi-invest po kami diyan (What our people need, we will listen to, we will invest in). We will make sure na kung ano ang budget na nakalaan sa atin ay makarating ng mas mabilis sa mga tao (that what our budget provides reaches the people faster)," she said.

"We will be more

## LTO WAIVES PENALTIES FOR LATE REGISTRATION, FINES IN CALAMITY AREAS

**MANILA** – The Land Transportation Office (LTO) has waived the fines for the late registration of vehicles and renewal of driver's license, and extended the settlement of traffic apprehensions in calamity-stricken areas.

In a statement on Tuesday, LTO acting Assistant Secretary Greg Pua Jr. said the move aligns with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s order to maximize assistance to Filipinos affected by the successive storms and enhanced southwest monsoon or "habagat" that brought heavy rains and floods last week.

In a memorandum signed by Pua, the waiving of fines covers late motor vehicle registration and driver's license renewal from July 21 to 25.

"Validity of the vehicle registration and driver's license within that period is likewise extended to Aug.

transparent and we will be more accountable sa mga kababayan natin (to our countrymen)." (PNA) **BY RUTH ABBEY GITA-CARLOS**

8, 2025," he said.

The memorandum was issued to LTO regional directors and other agency officials nationwide.

On the other hand, the penalty for motor vehicles, including motorcycles, bought from July 21 to 25 but are yet to be registered will also be waived.

He said all vehicles bought within this period will have their registration deadline count begin on Aug. 8 to avoid the penalty for late registration.

The 15 days for settling all traffic apprehension cases from July 21 to 25 will also be extended.

"Hence, the last day of the settlement of fines on said apprehensions without penalty shall be on Aug. 8, 2025," he said.

The memo cited three successive weather disturbances – Severe Tropical Storm Crising, Tropical Storm Dante, and Typhoon Emong.

An estimated 2.7 million people were affected by the flooding, strong winds, and heavy rains, in addition to massive property damage. (PNA) **BY RAYMOND CARL DELA CRUZ**

## PBBM OMISSION OF ONLINE GAMBLING IN SONA NOT MISSED OPPORTUNITY: CHIZ

**MANILA** – Senate President Francis Escudero on Tuesday said President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s decision to exclude online gambling and other controversial topics from his fourth State of the Nation Address (SONA) should not be seen as a missed opportunity.

"Minabuti ng Pangulo na tutukan lamang 'yung social services. 'Yun ang tila tema ng kanyang talumpati (The President chose to focus solely on social services. That seemed to be the theme of his speech)," Escudero said during a press briefing.

He explained that with so many legislators pushing different advocacies, it would be unrealistic to expect the President to address all of them in one sitting.

"Gusto ba natin tatlong

oras 'yung SONA ng Presidente? Siguro may ibang pagkakataon na pwedeng matalakay pa ng Pangulo 'yan pero hindi siya missed opportunity (Do we want a three-hour SONA? There will be other chances for the President to talk about those issues—it's not a missed opportunity)," he said.

Escudero said issues like online gambling could still be tackled through other platforms, such as interviews or press briefings, and stressed that the President's choice to focus the SONA prevents it from becoming a "chopsuey" of unrelated topics.

On the legislative side, Escudero clarified he is not among the authors of any bills seeking to ban online gambling, but said the matter is expected to be discussed in their

upcoming caucus.

"Hindi ako isa sa mga author nun, so dapat 'yung mga author ang magpanukala nun (I'm not one of the authors, so it's up to them to push the proposal)," he said.

He added that any move to include the proposed ban among priority measures would need consensus from the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC), which includes representatives from the Senate, House of Representatives, and the Executive branch.

"If that is the decision of the Senate, 'yun ang isusulong ko naming mga miyembro ng LEDAC (If that's the Senate's position, we in LEDAC will push for it as a priority measure)," Escudero said. (PNA) **BY WILNARD BACELONIA**

## FIRE-AFFECTED VENDORS IN IRIGA CITY GET CASH AID

**LEGAZPI CITY** – The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) 5 (Bicol) has extended financial assistance to 10 vendors affected by a fire that razed a public market in Iriga City, Camarines Sur on July 11. DSWD-5 Director Norman Laurio said nine vendors whose stores were destroyed received PHP10,000 cash each, while the owner of a store that sustained damage was given PHP5,000.

Family food packs were also given to the fire victims.

Laurio said the assistance is aimed at helping the vendors recover from the financial burden of losing

their primary source of income.

Domingo Lamud Jr., a 40-year-old store owner, thanked the DSWD, noting that he received much more than just financial support.

"I am very grateful to the DSWD for the financial assistance I received. This help is invaluable for the fire victims, especially for my family. We can use this support to start over and get back on our feet," he said.

Laurio added that all 10 affected vendors would be assessed for potential livelihood assistance under the agency's Sustainable Livelihood Program. (PNA) **BY CONNIE CALIPAY**

## NEARLY 500 SENIOR CITIZENS IN ABRA RECEIVE CASH GIFTS

**BAGUIO CITY** – A total of 468 senior citizens from Abra province have received cash gifts under Republic Act (RA) 11982 or the Expanded Centenarian Act of 2024, the National Commission on Senior Citizens (NCSC) announced Thursday.

Among the recipients was Demetria 'Demi' Valeros, a recent centenarian who received PHP100,000, along with four others.

They received their cash gifts either personally or through a legal representative, during a ceremonial distribution at the Abra Provincial Capitol in Bangued on Wednesday. "We thank the government for the benefits our relatives received. This will greatly help my mother's needs," Valeros' daughter said in Ilocano as relayed by NCSC to the Philippine News Agency.

Signed into law by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. last year, RA 11982 grants PHP10,000 to senior citizens upon reaching the ages of 80,

85, 90, and 95. The law also maintains the PHP 100,000 cash gift for centenarians, as stipulated under the Centenarians Act of 2016 (RA 10868).

Seniors aged 80 and 90 received PHP10,000 each and a special citation from the President, recognizing their contributions to society.

The distribution, conducted in partnership with the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO), covered senior citizens from 25 municipalities who reached the ages of 80, 90, or 100 between March 2024 and June 2025.

Catherine Lejos of NCSC-Abra confirmed the successful distribution of the benefits in two batches. Meanwhile, 83-year-old Felicidad Aquino from Baguio City expressed her eagerness to be among the future beneficiaries.

"I am waiting for it. I also look forward to receiving it," she said in Ilocano. (PNA) **BY LIZA AGOOT**

## LEYTE LOW-INCOME EARNERS AVAIL OF P20/KG. RICE

**TACLOBAN CITY** – About 3,500 minimum wage earners in Leyte province have already availed of the PHP20 per kg. rice under the "Benteng Bigas Meron (BBM) Na" program as part of the nationwide rollout to make the staple food more accessible to low-income workers.

National Food Authority (NFA) 8 (Eastern Visayas) manager May Ann Sabarre said on Thursday that the initiative has already benefited minimum wage earners of the Philippine Associated Smelting and Refinery (PASAR) Corp. in Isabel, Leyte and the Energy Development Corp. (EDC) in Kananga, Leyte.

"In partnership with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), we are ensuring that our minimum wage earners have access to quality and affordable rice," Sabarre told the Philippine News Agency.

"With sufficient stocks in our warehouses, we are ready to provide the requirement of DOLE for

our low-income workers."

About 2,000 minimum wage earners of the EDC have benefited from the rice-selling activity of the regional labor office under the BBM Na program at the Keitech Educational Foundation in Kananga, Leyte on July 21.

The labor department launched the program in Isabel, Leyte on June 13, where 1,500 minimum wage earners of PASAR bought 15,000 kg. of rice. DOLE-8 head Dax Villaruel said each worker was able to purchase 10 kg. of rice during the one-day selling activity held in their workplaces.

"The DOLE is committed to helping the Filipinos cope with rising prices of goods, particularly rice," Villaruel said in a statement.

The NFA in the region has 275,064 bags of rice stored in 19 warehouses.

The inventory will last a week if the government is the only source of their staple food. (PNA) **BY SARWELL MENIANO**

## VIGAN OPENS COMPLAINT DESK VS. ERRING TRICYCLE DRIVERS, OPERATORS

**VIGAN CITY** – The city government here has set up a help desk where commuters can lodge their complaints against abusive tricycle drivers and operators.

The complaint desk, established by the Public Safety and Traffic Management Office, is located at the Vigan City Hall Legislative Building. It also has a dedicated hotline number, 0917-103-2784, for easier access.

Briana Fenis, a student, and Glenn de Peralta, a tour guide, welcomed the initiative.

"Maraming tricycle driver na namimili ng pasahero. Di ka pa nakasakay ay tatanungin kung magkano ang ibabayad mo kahit meron namang ordinansa kung magkano lang dapat ang pamasaha. May iba naman na hindi nagbibigay ng sukli lalo na sa mga turista, grabe kung singilin nila (A lot of

tricycle drivers selectively pick passengers. They ask how much you'll pay even if there is already a fare guide. Others don't give change, especially to tourists)," she said in an interview on Thursday.

De Peralta confirmed this, saying some tricycle drivers take advantage of visitors by not following the standard fare set by the city government.

"The city's initiative to address these concerns is a welcome step in ensuring that tricycle services remain reliable, trustworthy, and beneficial to all," he said.

The establishment of a complaint desk to address issues of overcharging and to improve customer service is among the provisions under City Ordinance 24-55, which enacts the Vigan City Tricycle Management Code.

"I hope this will help address

## BAGUIO DRRM URGES BARANGAYS TO FIND LOTS FOR EVAC CENTER

**BAGUIO CITY** – The City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (CDRRMO) has renewed its call for barangay councils to identify and secure lots that can be developed into evacuation centers as part of Baguio's drive for disaster resilience.

"Our office and even the mayor are continuing to encourage our barangays to look for lots for their multipurpose hall, which will double as an evacuation center," Charles Carama, chief of the CDRRMO, said in an interview on Thursday.

He said that part of the resiliency effort of the city is to ensure the existence of model evacuation centers where people can be safe and comfortable if they need to evacuate.

He cited Outlook Drive barangay as an example, where local officials identified a lot to build a multipurpose hall despite having a small barangay hall.

Carama also mentioned Bakakeng Central and Irsan as model barangays with functioning evacuation facilities.

However, he admitted that Baguio's limited land area poses a significant challenge in achieving the goal of having more evacuation centers.

"We definitely discourage the use of schools as evacuation sites. The barangays are listening, and many are already avoiding using schools for this purpose," he said.

In recent years, barangay halls have served as the primary shelter for families affected by calamities.

According to Carama, many barangays are now renovating their halls to include multipurpose spaces that double as evacuation centers.

"We endeavor to have more evacuation centers that are comfortable and will ease the hardships of the displaced families," he added. (PNA) **BY LIZA AGOOT**

## CDO SOLON TO TACKLE 'FAKE NEWS' IN 20TH CONGRESS

**CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY** – This city's 1st District Rep. Lordan Suan is keen on tackling disinformation in aid of legislation, making it one of his top priorities in the 20th Congress.

In an interview Thursday, Suan said that after being appointed to lead the Committee on Public Information, he recognized the urgent need to revisit the issue of disinformation, which can make the public gullible.

all concerns regarding our tricycle drivers for the safety and protection of commuters, as well as for tricycle drivers to defend themselves," Councilor Glendale Benzon said in an earlier interview.

Vigan City, a key tourist destination in the Ilocos Region, has 3,488 tricycles grouped under 42 tricycle operators and drivers associations. (PNA) **BY LEILANIE ADRIANO**

"One of the challenges of leading this committee is figuring out how to combat 'fake news,' disinformation, and misinformation, especially on social media," he said.

During the 19th Congress, Suan highlighted the problem of disinformation in a committee hearing after being targeted by a local disinformation campaign that persisted through the midterm elections.

The Committee on Public Information oversees all matters related to public information and mass communication. This includes various media types like print, broadcast, movies, television, videos, advertising, cable, internet, and the roles of industry workers.

Suan, who is also a lawyer, noted that efforts to curb disinformation will not infringe on the Constitutional rights to freedom of expression and of the press. (PNA) **BY ERCAL MAANDIG**

## BCDA OKAYS BSP COMPLEX'S DEV'T PLAN IN NEW CLARK CITY

**MANILA** – The construction of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (BSP) 31.3-hectare security complex in New Clark City will push through after its detailed development plan has been approved by the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA).

In a statement Thursday, the BCDA said the construction of the central bank's complex in Tarlac not only supports the government's bid to decongest Metro Manila but will also boost development and the economy of Central Luzon. "We commend BSP for leading this bold and forward-looking move. By transferring critical operations of the central bank to New Clark City, we're accelerating countryside development, stimulating job creation, and strengthening our institutions for generations to come," BCDA President and Chief Executive Officer Joshua Bingcang said.

The statement noted that the construction of the complex would benefit

workers in Tarlac, who will be given priority, and those from neighboring areas.

"This movement of skilled workers and their families will invigorate the local economy, generating new demand for housing, retail, transport, and public services in Tarlac and nearby provinces," Bingcang said.

The BCDA said the BSP Complex, which is on a 50-year lease, "will be secure and self-sufficient for the central bank's essential functions" because "it will feature open spaces aligned with New Clark City's smart and green city design."

"At the heart of this development is a commitment to sustainability. The BSP Complex is being designed for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, ensuring world-class standards in energy efficiency, climate resilience, and environmental performance," it added. (PNA) **BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**

## BPI CHIEF SEES STRONG 2025 PERFORMANCE AFTER H1 OUTPUT

**MANILA** – The strong performance of consumer lending in the first half of 2025 makes officials of the Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) optimistic for sustained income growth till the end of the year.

In the first half of this year, the bank registered a 7.8 percent increase in net income to PHP33 billion, driven by the rise in consumer lending and net interest income.

In a briefing on Friday, BPI president and chief executive officer TG Limcaoco noted the performance of both corporate and consumer lending in the first six months of the

year, saying this would continue to power full-year performance.

"We believe all of the factors exist and for those to continue into the end of the year," he said.

Limcaoco said the drop in interest rates, as a result of the leeway given by the manageable domestic inflation rate, has an impact on net interest margins (NIMs), but he sees little change in their overall performance.

With the projected additional cuts in the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' key rates in the remaining months of the year, he said that they

## PSEI, PHP SUSTAIN SLIDE ON EVE OF NEW US TARIFF RATES

**MANILA** – The wait-and-see stance vis-à-vis the implementation of the 19 percent tariff on Philippine exports to the US starting Friday resulted in a further drop in the Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) and the peso Thursday. The main equities index shed 1.04 percent to 6,252.73 points, and the broader All Shares by 1.05 percent to 3,736.91 points. All the sectoral indices also ended in the red, led by the Mining and Oil after it fell 3.01 percent.

Trailing behind were Holding Firms, down by 1.61 percent; Financials, 1.49 percent; Industrial, 1.32 percent; Services, 1.23 percent; and Property, 0.94 percent.

Volume reached 902.65 million, amounting to PHP7.85 billion.

Decliners again surpassed advancers at 134 to 61 while 56 shares were unchanged.

Luis Limlingan, Regina Capital Development Corp. head of sales, said, "Investors are already cautious in their positions about the potential impact and how it might affect

stock market movements ahead of tomorrow's tariff deadline."

"Moreover, days of continuous depreciation of PHP (Philippine peso) against USD (US dollar) take a toll on the overall market sentiment," he said, citing also the mixed results on Wall Street on Wednesday.

The local currency also ended the day at its almost six-month low of 58.32, or since Feb. 4, which Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC) chief economist Michael Ricafort traced to tariff issues, the decline of the PSEi, a more cautious stance by the Federal Reserve as it kept anew its key rates after a two-day meeting ending July 30, and the improvement in exports.

The local currency opened the day weaker at 57.86 from its 57.2 start in the previous session. It traded between 57.85 and 58.4, resulting in an average of 58.18.

Volume surged to USD2.6 billion from the previous day's USD1.86 billion.

Ricafort forecast the currency to trade between 58.20 and 58.45 on Friday. (PNA) **BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**

## GOV'T COMMITS TO SUSTAIN INCLUSIVE GROWTH – BALISACAN

**MANILA** – The Marcos administration made progress in strengthening the country's macroeconomic fundamentals but the government remains committed to sustaining economic growth, Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said.

In a briefing in Mandaluyong City on Thursday, Balisacan said that from 2023 to the first quarter of 2025, the Philippines remained among Asia's fastest-growing economies.

Balisacan said unemployment also fell below pre-pandemic levels, while underemployment declined in 2023 and 2024. Poverty incidence went down to 15.5 percent in 2023, lifting an estimated 2.4 million Filipinos above the poverty line.

Balisacan said inflation likewise significantly eased from a high of 8.7 percent in January 2023 to just 1.4 percent in June

2025.

According to Balisacan, the Philippines is also poised to achieve upper-middle income status in the near term.

"In the World Bank's estimates of GNI (gross national income) per capita for 2024, we were short of just 26 dollars to become an upper middle-income country," he said.

Despite these gains, Balisacan noted that not all development objectives have been met yet.

"As the President (Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.) rightly pointed out, improvements in our economic indicators mean little if they do not translate into better lives for the ordinary Filipino. While we have made meaningful progress, the second half of the administration will be crucial in addressing persistent challenges and accelerating service delivery, especially in areas that matter most to our people," he said.

Balisacan said that from 2025 to 2028, the Marcos administration is committed to sustaining rapid and inclusive economic growth.

"We do this by promoting economic diversification, maintaining sound macroeconomic fundamentals, strengthening competitiveness and innovation, and reducing poverty to single-digit levels by the end of the term," he said.

"Transformation for all requires transformation by all. Better coordination and partnerships between the national and local governments, between the executive and legislative branches, and among the public and private sectors and our development partners will be crucial," he added. (PNA) **BY ANNA LEAH GONZALES**

## BSP PROJECTS JULY INFLATION TO SETTLE WITHIN 0.5 TO 1.3%

**MANILA** – The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said inflation likely fell to as low as less than 1 percent in July.

In a statement Thursday, the BSP said inflation is projected to settle within the range of 0.5 percent to 1.3 percent during the month.

"Upward price pressures for the month are likely to be driven by higher meat and vegetable prices partly due to unfavorable weather conditions, increased electricity rates, elevated domestic fuel costs, and the depreciation of the peso," the BSP said.

The BSP, however, said that these price pressures could be partially offset by the continued decline in rice prices.

"Going forward, the BSP will continue to monitor developments affecting the outlook for inflation and growth in line with its data-dependent approach to monetary policy decision-making," it said.

Headline inflation settled at 1.4 percent in June.

The Philippine Statistics Authority is scheduled to release the July inflation data on Aug. 5. (PNA)

**BY ANNA LEAH GONZALES**



## PH PETANQUE TEAM EYES BETTER SHOWING IN 2025 SEA GAMES

**MANILA** – The Philippine petanque team eyes a better performance in the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games scheduled in Thailand from Dec. 9 to 20. In the 2023 SEA Games in Cambodia, the team only got one medal, a bronze from the women's doubles pair of April Alarcon and Maria Corazon Soberre.

"I can say that we have a stronger team this year," head coach Ambrocio Gontinas Jr. said in an interview Thursday.

"A Malaysian coach is helping our team prepare for the SEA Games. I am optimistic that we can win more medals."

Zani Lisa Mohamed, who served as head coach

of the Malaysian team, has been supervising the training of the Filipinos at the Lawn Bowls and Petanque National Training Center in Clark, Pampanga since July 1.

"Our athletes are determined to win, so they are working really hard to improve. Techniques must be polished," said the 44-year-old Gontinas, who competed in the 2005 Manila SEA Games.

Gontinas was also a member of the national dragon boat team from 2006 to 2013.

A total of 11 gold medals are at stake in petanque in the 2025 SEA Games, coming from the men's and women's singles; men's,

women's, and mixed doubles; men's, women's, and mixed (2 men+1 woman and 2 women+1 man) triples; and men's and women's shooting.

"There are 22 athletes (12 men and 10 women) going to the SEA Games. All are fighters. They will be ready for the tough challenge ahead," Gontinas said.

The Philippine team is also scheduled to leave for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in September for two invitational tournaments and a training camp.

Petanque is a form of lawn bowling originating in France, usually played on rough ground using steel balls. (PNA) **BY JEAN MALANUM**

## SHAKEY'S SUPER LEAGUE NATIONAL INVITATIONALS KICK OFF IN DAVAO

**MANILA** – Notre Dame of Dadiangas University (NDDU) is eager to show its best form in the Shakey's Super League (SSL) National Invitationals, which unfold at the University of Southeastern Philippines Gym in Davao City on Friday.

The Lady Kingfishers, who last competed in 2023, kick off their title campaign against defending champion National University in the 5 p.m. opener of the three-day Davao leg.

"Our mindset is that since NU is a very stellar team, we can give them a good fight and not intimidate the kids," Lady Kingfishers head coach Alvin Ambe said during the press conference at Shakey's Gaisano Mall on Thursday.

"We're happy and pressured at the same time because our supporters are here to see us play. But whatever the result is, it will benefit NDDU because we'll learn a lot not only from NU but from all our opponents," he added.

Despite the exit of three-time University Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) MVP Bella Belen and Alyssa Solomon, who both turned pro, the reigning UAAP champion Lady Bulldogs remain formidable.

NU, a three-time SSL Collegiate Pre-Season Championship titlist, still has decorated setter Lams Lamina, Vange Alinsug, libero Shaira Jardio, and Arah Panique.

Also in the roster are Shakey's Girls V-League MVP Sam Cantada, Harlyn Serneche, and Denesse Daylisan.

The Davao Selection, comprising standouts from Ateneo de Davao University, Holy Cross of Davao College, and University of Mindanao, battles University of the Philippines (UP) in the main game at 7 p.m.

"We're going up against the best in the region and, of course, NU, the best of all. It's gonna be interesting because every time I travel the country, I see great potential in players. So, it's gonna be interesting to see how we're gonna react to different styles (of teams)," said UP head coach Fabio Menta.

Veterans Niña Ytang, Irah Jaboneta, and Joan Monares will lead the Fighting Maroons, while Casiey Dongallo, Jelai Gajero, setter Kizzie Madriaga, and libero Shamel Fernandez are also expected to deliver.

The team with the best win-loss record or match points earned, if necessary, in the

single round-robin format, will be declared champion. The SSL, in partnership with the City of Davao, Sports Development Division-City Mayor's Office, Mindanao Development Authority, Apo View Hotel, Commission on Higher Education 11 (Davao), and the University of Southeastern Philippines, came up with a tour-style format to showcase the talents of provincial squads in front of their home crowd.

"Of course, because this is also the 50th anniversary of Shakey's, which has been synonymous with local volleyball and the catalyst to development and promotion of the sport, we want to come up with something special," said Athletic Events and Sports Management Inc. (ACES) president Dr. Ian Laurel.

"We want to bring the excitement closer to our Mindanao, Visayas, and Luzon fans. We want the provincial teams to be able to play in front of their families, friends, classmates, kababayans (compatriots). For them to be inspired to play," he added.

Cebu and Batangas will host the next two legs. (PNA) **BY JEAN MALANUM**

## DUNGCA, EDOC TRIUMPH IN JPGT RIVIERA

**MANILA** – Ronee Dungca had a memorable debut at the ICTSI Junior PGT Series, winning the girls' 7-10 division title at the Riviera Golf Club, Inc. in Silang, Cavite on Wednesday.

After a solid opening-round 73, Dungca carded an 80 to claim victory with a 36-hole total of 153.

Tyra Garingalao, who scored a 78 for a 160 total, finished second followed by Penelope Sy (85-175) and Ziyu Liu (91-175).

"I feel good, happy. I feel a lot of things. But what I liked most was meeting new people and not getting a bad score," said the nine-year-old Dungca, a student of OB Montessori in Angeles, Pampanga.

If Dungca sweeps the final two legs at Pradera Verde and Pinewoods, she could tally a maximum of

45 points and still crack the Top 4 to qualify for the finals, set at The Country Club on Oct. 7-10.

"Yes, I will play at Pradera Verde and Pinewoods," she said.

Only the Top 4 in the seven-leg Luzon series will advance to the Finals, where they will face the top performers from the Visayas-Mindanao series in a Ryder Cup-style showdown.

In the boys' division, Zoji Edoc won by 12 strokes to earn a spot in the finals. He carded a 76 for a two-day total of 155.

Asher Abad and Halo Pangilinan registered identical 167s following rounds of 80 and 81, respectively.

Abad placed second via countback after closing with five straight pars. James Padron had an 83

to finish fourth at 168.

"I just kept my cool and focused on my shot management – it really came down to mindset," said Edoc, who previously won at Sherwood Hills and placed runner-up at Eagle Ridge and Splendido Taal. He now leads the division rankings with 54 points. Zach Guico has 45 points. Abad gained 12 points for his runner-up finish for a total of 42, while Pangilinan got 10 points to raise his total to 40. Both remained in the hunt for a Finals berth.

Meanwhile, Zianbeau Edoc bagged his first JPGT title after topping the boys' 11-14 division. He scored back-to-back 78s for a 156 total.

Race Manhit matched Zianbeau's final round with a 78 for a 163 total and beat Jacob Casuga, who

## TAMBALQUE, SISON SECURE JPGT RIVIERA 15-18 TITLES

**MANILA** – Patrick Tambalque and Gabriela Sison ruled their respective divisions in the 15-18 category of the ICTSI Riviera Golf Junior PGT Championship in Silang, Cavite Thursday.

Tambalque carded a final round 78 and 226 total in the boys' division to secure his third title after Sherwood Hills and Caliraya Springs

had an 81, in the countback for runner-up honors.

Mona Sarines dominated the girls' 11-14 division to secure her third title after Splendido Taal and Caliraya Springs. She leads the division with 57 points, ahead of twin sister Lisa with 54. (PNA) **BY JEAN MALANUM**

in the series organized by Pilipinas Golf Tournaments, Inc.

Shinichi Suzuki, the Splendido leg winner and runner-up at Eagle Ridge, tallied 227 after a 76 to finish second.

Kristoffer Nadales placed third after a 75 and 233 total, followed by Zachary Villaroman with a 79-237.

Tambalque now leads in the overall rankings with 45 points, assuring him a slot in the Elite Junior Finals set at The Country Club in Laguna on Oct. 7-10. Villaroman is at No. 2 with 40 points, followed by Suzuki (39) and Nadales (22).

Meanwhile, Sison closed out with an 85 to dominate the girls' division with a 266 aggregate.

Chloe Rada carded an 89

but still secured second place with a 276 total after Angelica Bañez and Tiffany Bernardino skipped the final round. Ayesha Salino was third with a 365 after a 123.

Tambalque and Sison joined the Edoc siblings – Zoji (7-10) and Zianbeau (11-14) – along with Ronee Dungca (7-10) and Mona Sarines (11-14) on the winners' podium.

The last two legs of the Luzon series will be held at Pradera Verde in Pampanga (Aug. 12-14) and Pinewoods in Baguio (Aug. 19-21).

The top four performers from each Luzon age-group category will face the best from the Visayas-Mindanao series. (PNA) **BY JEAN MALANUM**