

DBM CHIEF: VETERANS' HEROISM FOUNDATION OF PH GROWTH, DEV'T

MANILA – Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman joined Filipinos in paying tribute to the courage and sacrifices of Filipino veterans, emphasizing their role as the cornerstone of the Philippines' growth and development.

In her statement for the 83rd Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor) commemoration on Wednesday,

Pangandaman said the heroism of the nation's veterans is "not just a chapter in our history but the foundation of our nation's growth and development."

"The valor, dedication, and patriotism of our forebears remain the core of the Philippines, showing us that true strength lies in our commitment to peace, solidarity, and progress," Pangandaman said.

The budget chief also extended the honor to other modern-day heroes, including overseas Filipino workers, health professionals, uniformed personnel, teachers, and public servants,

recognizing their contributions to nation-building.

In line with the commemoration, Pangandaman reaffirmed the DBM's commitment to carry forward the heroes' legacy by ensuring transparency, fiscal responsibility, and people-centered governance.

Through responsible resource management and inclusive public service, we aim to empower communities and create a brighter future for generations to come," she said.

The Day of Valor remembers the heroism and sacrifice of Filipinos during World War II and recalls the 1942 Fall of Bataan when Filipino and American forces surrendered to the Japanese Imperial Army after resisting for months with limited weapons, ammunition and supplies. **(PNA) By Darryl John Esguerra**



NEVER FORGOTTEN. Soldiers join the commemoration of the 83rd Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor) at the Mt. Samat National Shrine in Pilar, Bataan on Wednesday (April 9, 2025). The occasion remembers the heroism and sacrifice of Filipinos during World War II and recalls the 1942 Fall of Bataan to Japanese forces. (Photo courtesy of Bongbong Marcos Facebook page)

PPA PREPARES FOR OVER 1.7M EXPECTED PORT PASSENGERS FOR HOLY WEEK

MANILA – The Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) is expecting the number of port passengers for this year's Holy Week to reach over 1.73 million from April 14 to 20.

In a statement on Tuesday, PPA General Manager Jay Santiago said the expected total this year is a 3.5 percent increase from the

1.67 million passengers during the same period last year.

"We are prepared for the increased number of passengers this Holy Week 2025, especially as the Lenten season coincides with summer. Most of our local travelers are really taking advantage of this long days of day-off and for some tourists, it is also a great time to explore our islands via sea travel," he said.

To accommodate the increased number of passengers, Santiago ordered the deployment of additional personnel and enhanced terminal operations in key ports.

"Measures include optimizing passenger terminal facilities, ensuring the functionality of security and safety equipment, and deploying port police for crowd control and assistance," he said.

In addition, the PPA has conducted maintenance checks on critical infrastructure in preparation for the expected surge in travelers.

"With the adequate manpower, appropriate facilities, and back-up systems placed in ports, we can assure the public that we are ready for the influx but then again, it is the peak season so we appeal to our passengers to book their tickets ahead of time and allot extra hours for travel going to the ports."

To further assist commuters, help desks have been placed in major ports nationwide to provide immediate information and to address concerns of travelers to the port police or Philippine Coast Guard personnel.

According to PPA data, the top five ports this Lenten season will be Port Management Office (PMO) Batangas, PMO Mindoro, PMO Panay/Guimaras, PMO Negros Oriental/Siquijor, and PMO Bohol.

In the first three weeks of March, passenger numbers have reached 3,027,881, averaging 1,009,294 passengers per week. **(PNA) By Raymond Carl Dela Cruz**

PGH TO SERVE MORE FILIPINOS WITH INCREASED MANPOWER – PALACE

MANILA – The Philippine General Hospital (PGH) is set to improve its medical services and serve more Filipinos with the addition of more personnel, Malacañang said Tuesday.

PGH, the country's premiere government hospital, is set to receive a major staffing boost with 1,200 additional positions approved by the Department of Budget and Management.

The move, according to Palace Press Officer Claire Castro, is the government's response to the PGH's request to enhance its organizational and manpower capacity in order to deliver quality and affordable healthcare services.

"Alam naman po natin na napakarami pong mga Pilipino ang talagang

pumupunta sa PGH dahil po ito'y nakakapagbigay ng magandang serbisyo at maaari pong napakaliit na kanilang babayaran kapag po sila ay pumunta sa PGH (We know that many Filipinos actually go to PGH because it provides good and affordable services)," Castro said, emphasizing the hospital's crucial role in providing accessible healthcare.

She explained that the decision to expand the hospital's staff was made to improve patient care and ensure quicker medical attention for those seeking treatment.

The creation of additional positions will be pursued in four tranches, starting in the first quarter of 2025, the fourth quarter of 2025, and in 2026 and 2027. **(PNA) By Darryl John Esguerra**

CALABARZON POLICE ARREST ALLEGED GUN RUNNER IN BAGOOR CAVITE

Camp BGen Vicente P Lim – A joint operation led by personnel of the Regional Intelligence Division 4A Special Team, with support from the Technical Support Company, Regional Mobile Force Battalion 4A, and Bacoor Component City Police Station, conducted a buy-bust operation against loose firearms, resulting in the arrest of an alleged gun runner on April 7, 2025, in Brgy. Molino 2, Bacoor City. The suspect was identified as alias "Jay," 52, of Brgy. Molino 2, Bacoor City, Cavite.

During the operation, police officers utilizing an Alternative Recording Device (ARD), seized several pieces of evidence, including high-powered firearms and live ammunition. The confiscated items were as follows:

1. One (1) KG9 long firearm
2. Three (3) KG9 long firearms
3. Two (2) AR15 long firearms
4. One (1) caliber .45 pistol
5. One (1) caliber .22 pistol
6. Six (6) 9mm long double magazines
7. One (1) lower frame of a caliber .45 pistol
8. Three (3) caliber .45 magazines

9. One (1) box of caliber .45 live ammunition
10. One (1) ziplock plastic bag of 9mm live ammunition
PBGEN Paul Kenneth T. Lucas, Regional Director of PRO CALABARZON, commended the joint operatives for the successful police operation against loose firearms especially during the election period. He also reminds the public to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity to local authorities.

"PRO 4A remains committed to ridding the streets of illegal firearms and ammunition. Puspusan parin ang ating operasyon upang masiguro nating hindi magagamit ang mga armas na ito sa ilegal na gawain lalo na at nasa panahon tayo ng eleksyon at patuloy nating paiigtingin ang pag-implimenta ng COMELEC Gun Ban

Meanwhile, the arrested suspect is under the custody of Bacoor CCPS, where he will face charges for violating Republic Act No. 10591 (Comprehensive Firearms and Ammunition Regulation Act) and the Omnibus Election Code's Gun Ban provisions. **(RPIO4A)**

LAGUNA TOWN ENHANCES CHILDCARE SERVICES

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna (PIA) – In a bid to support solo parents and their children, the local government of Los Baños, Laguna continues to provide safe and inclusive spaces for children through its newly-improved Child Care Center. This Child Care Center is designed as a safe and nurturing space where parents can leave their children while they attend to their everyday responsibilities. It offers a child-friendly environment equipped with play areas, learning materials, and professional caregivers, ensuring the holistic well-being of the children.

"Parents who wish to enroll their children in the Child Care Center can do so through the Municipal Social Welfare

and Development (MSWD) office. Upon registration, they are required to specify the duration of their child's stay. The center operates from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, aligning with the typical work hours of parents to accommodate their schedules," municipal information officer John Marvin Canaria said in a statement.

The LB government reveals the modern amenities in the center include designated play areas equipped with child-safe playground structures, shade canopies, a nap room, and dedicated seating for guardians. The educational and recreational center also offers storytelling sessions, arts and crafts activities, and early childhood development programs. To ensure the highest level

ILLEGAL DRUGS WORTH 102K CONFISCATED IN BAGOOR

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite — In a significant blow to the local drug trade, operatives of the Bacoor Component City Police Station Drug Enforcement Unit successfully apprehended three street-level drug personalities during a buy-bust operation conducted at around 11:00 PM on April 7, 2025, in Sorrento, Barangay Panapaan 4, Bacoor City, Cavite.

PLTCOL JOHN PAOLO V CARRACEDO, COP, BACOOR CCPS, identified the three (3) suspects as alias "Jokjok" and alias "HAJIE", both resident of B15 L48 Viola Street, Sorrento, Brgy. Panapaan 4, Bacoor City; and alias "JAYSON", and a resident of B9 L20, Brgy. Panapaan 4, Bacoor City.

The operation, in coordination with PDEA, led to the confiscation of the following items: Four (4) heat-sealed transparent plastic sachets containing a white crystalline substance suspected to be shabu, with an estimated total weight of 15 grams and a Standard Drug Price of approximately Php 102,000.00.

of care and supervision, the personnel at the Child Care Center underwent a careful selection process. Caregivers must be registered nurses, while teachers are not strictly required to have an education degree, as long as they have completed a four-year college course. Moreso, the facility will help solo parents by offering parenting workshops, job placement programs, and mental health support services, ensuring they have the necessary resources to balance work and childcare effectively. "It is one of the programs he really did for solo parents? Because, aside from the subsidies that they get from the government, this is one of the things that can really help our solo parents in different ways," Canaria stated. Unlike traditional daycare

All suspects are currently under police custody and will be facing charges for violation of Republic Act 9165, otherwise known as the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

PCol Alegre expressed his gratitude to the City Drug Enforcement team of the Bacoor Component City Police Station for their prompt and decisive action to combat illegal drugs activities in Cavite.

"I want to commend our drug operations team for successfully apprehending the high-value individuals engaged in illicit drug activities. Let us keep collaborating closely to eradicate the dangers presented by illegal drugs and to capture everyone engaged in the illicit drug trade", he added.

Cavite PNP encouraged the community to be a part of the PNP's efforts. This significant accomplishment is the result of the collective efforts of the Cavite PNP and the community.

Magtulong-tulong tayo, at magpatuloy sa ating mas pinaigting na kampanya laban sa iligal na droga sa ating lalawigan.

REGIONAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON ARRESTED BY CARMONA PNP

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite—The warrant personnel of the Carmona Component City Police Station arrested the Regional Level Most Wanted Person on April 8, 2025, in Brgy. Bancal, Carmona City, Cavite.

According to the report of PLTCOL Jack E Angog, ACOP, Carmona CCPS, identified the suspect as alias "Joebert," 24 years old, and a resident of Brgy. Anahaw 2, Silang, Cavite.

The arrest was made by virtue of a warrant of arrest for the crime of Statutory Rape with Criminal Case number CRM-2025-119. The Warrant of Arrest issued and signed by Hon. Niven Redillas Canlapan, Presiding Judge, Regional Trial Court, Carmona City, Cavite, dated March 24, 2025 with no recommended

bail. The accused is currently detained at the Custodial Facility of Carmona CCPS.

This successful operation underscores the police force's dedication to maintaining law and order and reinforces their commitment to the safety and security of the community.

PCOL DWIGHT E ALEGRE, Acting Provincial Director, Cavite PPO, urges the community, "Patuloy na pinaigting ng ating mga kapulisan ang kanilang pagtugis sa mga taong nagtatago sa batas. Nararapat lamang na makamit ng mga biktima ang nararapat na hustisya. Kaya't kami ay patuloy na humihingi ng tulong at suporta mula sa ating komunidad sapagkat sa Bagong Pilipinas, ang gusto ng pulis ligtas ka!"

CAVITE GOV'T BRINGS FREE MEDICAL SERVICES TO COMMUNITIES

TRECE MARTIRES CITY, Cavite (PIA) — Around 300 individuals benefited from free medical and dental services during the recent medical mission organized by the Cavite provincial government in Brgy. Navarro, City of General Trias.

According to the Cavite Provincial Information Office, 196 individuals received free medical consultations, while 107 people took advantage of dental check-ups and tooth extractions.

The event was made possible through the efforts of medical professionals from the General Emilio Aguinaldo Memorial Hospital (GEAMH) and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, along with the support of the Cavite Dental Chapter, ensuring quality services for the community.

In addition to consultations, the medical team distributed free prescribed medications and multivitamins to the residents.

The Cavite PIO added that the collaborative effort underscores the provincial

government's commitment to providing accessible healthcare services and promoting a healthier community.

Meanwhile, in observance of World Tuberculosis Day, Barangay Tua in Magallanes served as the latest venue for the Department of Health's (DOH) PuroKalusugan services. This community-based initiative aims to deliver essential healthcare directly to underserved areas, ensuring that everyone has access to quality medical care.

A total of 137 residents benefited from various services offered by the PuroKalusugan initiative, such as chest X-ray screenings, HIV testing and counseling, and prenatal check-ups.

The initiative also focused on rabies prevention, providing anti-rabies vaccinations for pets and offering an educational Rabies Awareness Lecture to inform pet owners about responsible care and disease prevention. **(RBF/R. Tanael) By Ruel Francisco**

DOLE: LOWER UNEMPLOYMENT FRUIT OF ROBUST GOV'T, LGUS PARTNERSHIP

MANILA – The strong partnership between the government and local government units (LGUs) in providing job opportunities led to the improvement in employment figures, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) said Tuesday.

“In our unwavering commitment to promoting employment and livelihood opportunities for all and following the President's directive to boost the conduct of job fairs across the country, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), in partnership with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Agriculture (DA), and Department of Health (DOH), is actively spearheading the “Trabaho sa Bagong Pilipinas” and has evolved into “Trabaho at Serbisyong Pangkalusugan sa Bagong Pilipinas” which effectively converge national government initiatives with LGU participation through the Public Employment Service Offices (PESO) and serving a wide array of individuals,” Labor Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma in a statement. The Philippine Statistics Authority said preliminary results of the latest Labor Force Survey (LFS) showed that the unemployment rate further declined to 3.8 percent in February this year from 4.3 percent the previous month.

It was the lowest rate since the 3.1 percent recorded in December last year.

It also said the number of unemployed Filipinos declined to 1.94 million from 2.16 million in January this year. “Through targeted job fairs, we are directly connecting those graduating from the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) with meaningful employment prospects. This collaborative endeavor mirrors our dedication to

empowering our groups in vulnerable situations towards self-sufficiency and a stable future,” Laguesma added.

He, meanwhile, said the DOLE is now preparing for the holding of the annual Labor Day job fairs.

“In direct response to the President's resolute call for poverty reduction and inclusive growth, the Department will once again be conducting our annual Labor Day Job Fair with a theme ‘Mangagawang Pilipino, Kaagapay sa Pag-unlad, Sandigan ng Mas Matatag na Bagong Pilipinas’. This vital initiative in partnership with the private sector will bring thousands of local and overseas job opportunities directly to our Filipino jobseekers, reaffirming our dedication to connecting available talent with opportunities in the labor market,” he said.

He added that the DOLE is also bolstering its efforts to empower the youth through various programs such as the JobStart Program, Special Program for Employment of Students, and Government Internship Program.

The labor chief also noted the February 2025 LFS manifested the government's firm commitment to creating more jobs as it maintained a positive outlook and an encouraging trajectory for the local labor market.

He noted that the robust services sector continues to remain a primary driver of job creation, contributing 61.6 percent to total employment.

“We are equally encouraged by the significant employment growth witnessed in both our agriculture and industry sectors. This balanced growth across key economic pillars strengthens the resilience and diversity of our employment and livelihood landscape,” Laguesma said.

BATANGAS BLOOD COUNCIL LAUDED FOR SUPPORT TO NAT'L BLOOD DONATION PROGRAM

BATANGAS CITY (PIA) — The Department of Health (DOH) Calabarzon has commended the Batangas Provincial Blood Council for its contributions to the National Voluntary Blood Services Program.

Recognizing the province's consistent efforts in promoting safe and sufficient blood supply, the regional health office highlighted Batangas' remarkable blood collection performance, which reached 170.2 percent in 2024 — a notable rise from 137 percent in 2023.

According to DOH Calabarzon, the council has played a vital role in blood donation advocacy, benefiting not only Batangas but the entire Calabarzon Region. The World Health Organization recommends that blood collection must reach at least 1 percent of a population to meet regional needs — a benchmark that Batangas has far exceeded.

Composed of various government agencies, local offices, and institutions from the health and academic sectors, the Batangas Provincial Blood Council has been instrumental in

Meanwhile, the DOLE also recognized the need to adapt to emerging digital transformations in the labor market and prioritize upskilling and reskilling, with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) at the forefront performing a significant role.

“Convergence with other departments like NEDA (National Economic and Development Authority), DICT (Department of Information and Communications

mobilizing support across the province.

Several local government units (LGUs) were also recognized for their strong backing of the blood donation drive. The Red Category Award, granted to LGUs that met the 1 percent target, was awarded to the municipalities of San Nicolas, Malvar, Balayan, and Nasugbu.

The Bronze Category Award, for LGUs that exceeded the 1 percent requirement, was conferred on the cities of Sto. Tomas, Lipa, Calaca, and Tanauan, along with the towns of Calatagan, Taysan, and Mabini.

Meanwhile, Batangas City and Cuenca received the Silver Category Award, while Alitagtag emerged as the top-performing LGU, earning the Gold Award for its exceptional performance in the blood services program.

Special recognition was also given to the town of Tingloy under Project ISLA (Inter-Island Save Lives Assistance) — an initiative dedicated to sustaining mobile blood donation activities in island municipalities. (MPDC, PIA Batangas) By Bhaby De Castro

Technology), and DOST (Department of Science and Technology) will be very critical in pursuing initiatives under the Digital Workforce Competitiveness Act such as recently-developed training regulations on cybersecurity and related digital skills. We are determined to proactively address this with a firm commitment to safeguarding our workers' rights and welfare,” he added. (PNA) By Ferdinand Patinio

EDITORIAL

Pag-iingat sa pagkonsumo ng processed na pagkain, kinakailangan

Bistado kamakailan lamang ang P600-M halaga ng expired imported meat products sa Meycauayan, Bulacan kung saan pinoproseso muli ito sa cold storage warehouse upang ibenta. Nahuli na ang mga nabistong inuudod at inaamag na mga karne ay muling pinoproseso upang gawing siomai at hotdog ng kompanya. Sinasabi rin na ang mga karneng ito ay matagal nang nabubulok at mula pa noong taong 2021 ang iba sa mga ito.

Ang mga ganitong bagay ay hindi malabong mangyari lalo pa sa panahon ngayong mataas ang mga bilihan, mataas ang tyansang maraming pagkain ang maaaring masayang. Sa panahon ngayon ay ang pagtitipid lamang ang naiisip na solusyon ng mga Pilipino sa patuloy na pagtaas ng iba't-ibang bilihan at mabagal na pagtaas sa kabilang banda. Kaya naman kadalasan sa mga tindang mahal sa paningin at badyet ng mga mamamayan ay ipinasasawalang bahala at nabubulok na lamang.

Dahil sa pagkatuklas ng ganitong kalakaran sa pagproseso ng pagkain, kung saan maaaring makunsumo ng mga mamamayan ang mga pagkaing tinuturing na pangmasa at abot-kaya ay nararapat na higpitan ang pagtanggap ng mga ganitong uwi ng pagkain sa market. Sa panahon ngayon ay mas mahalagang maging maingat sa mga bagay na ating kinakain upang makaiwas sa mas malaking problema na kakaharapang dahil dito.

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DFA: 1 FILIPINO CONFIRMED DEAD IN MYANMAR QUAKE

MANILA – The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on Wednesday confirmed the death of one Filipino in Myanmar following the 7.7 magnitude earthquake that struck the Southeast Asian country last month.

DFA Undersecretary Eduardo Jose de Vega, in a statement, said the remains of one of the four missing Filipinos "have been positively identified" in Myanmar's central city of Mandalay.

"The family of the deceased Filipino has been so informed. Out of respect for their privacy in this time of grief, we are withholding further information on the matter," he said.

The Philippine government, he said, continues to work and hopes for the best for the remaining three Filipinos who are still unaccounted in the city.

Alvin Aragon initially confirmed on Wednesday morning that the body of his brother Francis, one of the four missing Filipinos, has been found.

"Ipinapaalam po [naming] na nakita na po [yong] kapatid namin at masakit

man sa amin tangapin [kasama na siya] ni Lord ngayon (We would like to inform that our brother has been found and while it hurts to accept, he is now with the Lord)," he wrote on a Facebook post.

"We are currently mourning and grieving for the [loss] of our youngest brother... we thank God for all the grace, comfort, encouragement and strength He has given this past weeks sa aming (to our) family," he added.

De Vega on Tuesday said a team from the National Bureau of Investigation is helping in the identification of remains in Mandalay and had been checking DNA samples taken from remains with those provided by the next of kin.

The violent magnitude 7.7 tremor hit Sagaing in central Myanmar last March 28, devastating the country and neighboring Thailand.

More than a week after the powerful tremors, a United Nations situational report said death toll has risen to over 3,500 while more than 200 remain missing nationwide. (PNA) *By Joyce Ann L. Rocamora*

PH, US TROOPS BEEF UP INTEROPERABILITY WITH WARFIGHTING DRILLS

MANILA – Participants of the "Salaknib" exercises from the Philippine Army (PA) and the US Army Pacific (USARPAC) have conducted a series of drills that would increase interoperability between Filipino and American military units.

Army spokesperson Col. Louie Dema-ala, in a media statement Wednesday, said these drills, under the first phase of the exercises, include radio communication, field artillery live fire, sling load operations using helicopters, and medical evacuation.

He added that these "subject matter expert exchanges" (SMEEs), crucial in warfighting functions, took place in Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija.

Dema-ala also said PA and USARPAC signalers have

trained to familiarize and operate each other's radio equipment. Participating Filipino and American units constructed an antenna in two separate locations to establish a line of communication between both systems.

On the field artillery live-fire training, Dema-ala said PA and USARPAC cannoners exchanged tactics, techniques, and procedures, deepening their understanding of each other's operational approaches.

"The said training simulated the integration of both forces to enhance the overall effectiveness of ground operations, providing critical fire support to infantry and armored units," he added. PA and USARPAC troops likewise conducted sling load operations to improve their skills in airlift and

DSWD ENJOINS COMMUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN PROTECTION FOR ELDERLY

MANILA – The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) on Wednesday appealed for stronger community structures to protect the elderly following the recent incident in Antipolo, Rizal where an elderly person with disability was mocked by four men.

"Let this incident be a reminder to all that our senior citizens have rights that are protected by the State. Hindi pwede yung bibiru-biruin at parang pinaglalaruan sila porke hindi na sila malakas physically para umangal (It is unacceptable for them to be made fun of or mocked just because they cannot defend themselves anymore)," Assistant Secretary Irene Dumlaog said in a news release.

Dumlaog encouraged local government units (LGUs) to replicate the agency's Reporting System and Prevention Program for Elderly Abuse Cases (ReSPPEC) to safeguard the elderly and address cases of abuse.

The ReSPPEC is a community-based program that aims to protect the rights and safety of older persons by strengthening partnerships and networks among the senior citizens' sector, stakeholders, and LGUs.

Although not prevalent, there are reported situations wherein older persons suffer greatly

logistics.

Dema-ala said sling load operations could provide rapid movement of heavy, outsized equipment or emergency supplies directly to forces on the ground by bypassing surface obstacles and allowing for rapid relocation.

Aside from this, PA medics and their counterparts teamed up for a medical evacuation or MEDEVAC-focused SMEE.

"Both forces gained practical knowledge in MEDEVAC procedures, equipment handling, and patient transport techniques designed for combined operations in

either from family members or from strangers, Dumlaog said.

Under the ReSPPEC, a holistic system is put into place at the community level, which provides for the reporting, investigating, intervening, and monitoring of the elderly, especially in cases of abuse.

Dumlaog said ReSPPEC was pilot-tested in San Carlos, Pangasinan; Lambunao, Iloilo; Maco, Davao de Oro; and Valenzuela City, the National Capital Region. The pilot areas established a Protective Committee for Senior Citizens and an Elderly Help Desk.

Other components of the program include the creation of a referral network for services, the development of a reporting mechanism for elder abuse; the conduct of an elder abuse awareness advocacy program; and capability building of stakeholders.

Dumlaog said the DSWD is willing to provide guidance and technical assistance to the LGUs wanting to replicate the ReSPPEC in their communities to prevent abuse of the elderly and provide adequate interventions to those at risk.

"We need to give due respect to the elderly and prevent the Rizal incident from happening again," she said. (PNA)

austere environments," Dema-ala said.

"Salaknib," which means "shield" in Ilocano, reflects the historical bond between the two nations dating back to World War II when Filipino and American troops fought side-by-side to defend freedom and democracy.

"Salaknib" Phase 1, scheduled from March 24 to April 11, is the 10th iteration of the annual military maneuvers between Filipino and American troops.

"Salaknib" Phase 2 is scheduled from May 19 to July 20. (PNA) *By Priam Nepomuceno*

ROMUALDEZ HONORS 'UNBREAKABLE' COURAGE OF FILIPINO WAR HEROES

MANILA – In commemoration of the 83rd Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor) on Wednesday, Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez honored the nation's war heroes and urged Filipinos to reflect not only on the battle of Bataan but also on the silent sacrifices and human cost that came with it.

"Eighty-three years ago in Bataan, thousands of Filipinos stood their ground. They were tired. They were hungry. They were outnumbered. But they kept on fighting --not because they knew they'd win, but because they couldn't give up their dignity as Filipinos," Romualdez said in a statement.

He described the annual Day of Valor as a solemn occasion that goes beyond history books and ceremonies.

"Today, we remember more than just a battle. We

remember the young lives lost too soon. The families who waited for loved ones who never came home. The quiet acts of courage that never made the headlines. Their bravery wasn't loud --but it was firm, unshakable, and true."

The leader of the House of Representatives said Araw ng Kagitingan is not only about looking back, but also about honoring the enduring spirit of service and sacrifice that continues to define the Filipino people. "Araw ng Kagitingan is a time to reflect on what courage really means. It's not always about medals or ceremonies. Most of the time, it looks like ordinary people doing extraordinary things," he said.

"To our Filipino veterans and their families, thank you. What you gave up can never be repaid -- but we honor you by building a country you can be proud of." (PNA)

2 NABBED FOR ILLEGAL SALE OF AGRI-CHEMICAL INPUTS IN ISABELA

MANILA – Police arrested two suspects involved in the unauthorized sale of agricultural chemical products intended for free distribution to farmer beneficiaries in Isabela province.

In a statement on Wednesday, Philippine National Police - Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG) Director, Maj. Gen. Nicolas Torre III, said the suspects, with aliases Rowena and Dennis, were arrested by members of CIDG-Isabela and the Department of Agriculture (DA) 2 (Cagayan Valley) in a buy-bust in Barangay San Fermin, Cauayan City on April 5.

Seized from the suspects were 43 sacks of DA-marked agricultural chemical inputs worth PHP1.75 million and a white L300 van used for transporting the items.

The DA distributes these products to farmers to protect crops from pests and enhance crop yields,

aimed at increasing their productivity.

The operation stemmed from reports that reached the DA-2 that these products were being sold by unscrupulous individuals.

These products, labeled "Not For Sale," are supposed to be given for free to farmer-beneficiaries under the government's agricultural support program.

The suspects were charged before the National Prosecution Service with violations of Section 8 of Presidential Decree 1144 (Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority) for selling agricultural chemicals without license from the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority; and Republic Act 7394, or the Consumer Act of the Philippines, for the unlawful sale, distribution, and possession of government-provided agricultural products. (PNA) *By Christopher Lloyd Calihan*

TEODORO URGES FILIPINOS TO UNITE IN NATION-BUILDING

MANILA – As the nation observes the 83rd anniversary of the Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor) on Wednesday, Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. called on all Filipinos to rise to the challenge of nation-building.

Teodoro made the call as he extended his sincere gratitude and respect to all veterans, soldiers, and every Filipino who continues to show courage and patriotism.

"Yet beyond remembrance, this day calls upon each of us to rise to the challenge of nation-building – to contribute to the continued progress, peace, and security of our beloved country," he said in a

statement.

Teodoro urged the public to draw strength from the legacy of bravery and heroism exemplified by all Filipino veterans in these uncertain times.

He likewise reminded all Filipinos to "stand united in purpose and resolve."

As we commemorate Araw ng Kagitingan, we remember the bravery of those who fought and sacrificed their lives for our country. Their heroism is etched in our nation's history, a powerful reminder of what it means to be truly Filipino," he said, noting that the DND remains committed to honoring the legacy of Filipino veterans and protecting the country's future. **(PNA) By Priam Nepomuceno**

DILG TO LAUNCH INFRA AUDIT TOOL TO ASSESS BUILDINGS' QUAKE RESILIENCE

MANILA – The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) is set to launch an infrastructure audit tool to assess the structural integrity of buildings in preparation for a massive earthquake, called the "Big One," in the metropolis and nearby areas.

DILG Undersecretary for Local Government Marlo Iringan, in a news release Wednesday, said the Harmonized Infrastructure Audit tool would be used to ensure the resilience of buildings in the country against earthquakes.

He said the tool, which would help local government units (LGUs) identify the priority structures for infrastructure audits, will be pilot-tested in the National Capital Region, Central Luzon, and Calabarzon.

He said the DILG also partnered with the academe to tap 4th- and 5th-year engineering students to help assess the infrastructures.

"This tool will establish a national standard for assessing local public infrastructures, particularly

their vulnerability to high-magnitude earthquakes," Iringan said as he represented Interior Secretary Jonvic Remulla during the 2nd Earthquake Preparedness Summit organized by the Office of Civil Defense in Quezon City on Tuesday.

During the event, the DILG also discussed its programs to enhance LGU earthquake preparedness and resilience, such as Operation L!sto and the Basic Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation for barangays.

The DILG secretary sits as the vice chairperson for disaster preparedness of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

According to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, about 3,200 structures are along the West Valley Fault, while 12 percent to 13 percent of residential buildings are forecast to sustain heavy damage when the "Big One" strikes. **(PNA) By Christopher Lloyd Caliwan**

LARGE NPA ARMS CACHE SEIZED IN CAMARINES NORTE

MANILA – The Tanay-headquartered 2nd Infantry Division (2ID) of the Philippine Army on Thursday announced that its troops had seized a large New People's Army (NPA) arms cache in Labo town, Camarines Norte late Wednesday.

In a media statement on Thursday, 2ID spokesperson Lt. Col. Jeffrex Molina said soldiers from the 16th Infantry Battalion under the 201st Infantry Brigade, managed to seize the NPA arms cache in Barangay Exciba with the help of a former rebel.

"The discovered cache contains one Ultimex light machine gun, one M-653 rifle, one M-14 rifle, seven M-16 A1 rifles, 14 magazines, 16 hand grenades, two rolls of detonating cord,

4,211 rounds of 5.56mm live ammunition, and 715 rounds of 7.62mm live ammunition," he said.

Molina also said the local police helped with the operation.

Meanwhile, 2ID commander Maj. Gen. Cerilo Balaoro Jr. said the seizure shows that the cooperation between government forces, former rebels and the local community is working very well.

"The continued recoveries of the terrorists' war items are steadily weakening the operational capability of the terrorist NPA in Southern Luzon," he added.

It can be recalled that dozens of NPA war materiel were recovered in the same barangay last Jan. 9, and in Barangays Baay on Feb. 13 and Malatap on March 9. **(PNA) By Priam Nepomuceno**

BJMP FETES 4 OFFICERS IN FOILED EXTRACTION OF CHINESE SYNDICATE BOSS

MANILA – The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) has recognized four personnel who foiled the attempt of six suspects to snatch an alleged Chinese criminal syndicate leader in Parañaque City.

BJMP Chief, Jail Director Ruel Rivera, awarded the Medalya ng Sugatang Magiting at Medalya ng Kagalingan on Wednesday to the four jail officers who prevented armed men from snatching Hu Yang inside the bureau's vehicle as it traversed a service road of the Cavite Expressway (Cavite) on April 7, according to a news release on Thursday.

The incident occurred while Hu was being transported back to his detention facility after attending a hearing at the Makati Regional Trial Court.

The suspects fired upon the BJMP transport vehicle, prompting the jail personnel to retaliate and forcing the armed men to retreat.

Hu was brought back to the jail facility.

"Ang kanilang mabilis at mahusay na tugon

ay sumasalamin ng kanilang katapangan, propesjonalismo, at tunay na serbisyo-publiko (Their quick and prompt response reflects their courage, professionalism, and genuine public service)," Rivera said.

One of the fleeing vehicles collided with a tree and the suspects fled on foot toward the mangrove forest at the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park, where six of them were arrested with the assistance of the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) forces.

Arrested were Filipinos James Bales Lasam, 28; Jerom Pascua Salvador, 31; Jerry Calino Escalde, 30; and John Paul Chua, 51; and Chinese nationals Yang Yang Shin and Wang Hongjie.

Recovered from the suspects were a replica grenade, several US dollar bills, a .357 Magnum revolver containing live ammunition, one fired cartridge case, and suspected illegal drugs and drug-related paraphernalia.

Jail Officer 2 Leif Joseph Talanquines sustained a

SAPIEA GO OFF TO US FOR TARIFF NEGOTIATIONS, EYES FTA

MANILA – Special Assistant to the President for Investment and Economic Affairs (SAPIEA) Frederick Go will be going to the United States (US) to negotiate the 17-percent tariff imposed by the Trump administration on certain Philippine goods entering the American market.

Speaking to Palace reporters, Go said the Philippine government had received a "positive response" from the US Trade Representative (USTR) on its request for a dialogue to discuss the new tariff.

"We have reached out to the USTR and we have communicated with them our desire to engage in a meeting or dialogue with them and they have positively responded. So, I will be scheduling a trip to the United States to meet with the USTR soon," Go said.

Go said President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. met with the country's economic managers on Tuesday to discuss the US' reciprocal tariffs and its effects on exports of countries, especially Asian countries, slapped with new tariff rates.

He said Marcos and the economic team also weighed up the risks and the next move, considering that there are industries in the Philippines that would be affected by the US' reciprocal tariff policy.

"The keywords are probably not appeal. This is a negotiation. And of course, in my opinion the best possible outcome is a free trade agreement.

Free trade agreement means zero tariffs on their side, zero tariffs on our side. That's probably the

best possible outcome of that meeting. But again, it's open communication, dialogue, cooperation and let's see what we can negotiate," Go said.

Go acknowledged that Washington D.C.'s latest move may have a "0.1 percent effect" on the country's gross domestic product in the next two years, based on the National Economic and Development Authority estimates.

He, however, said the Philippines still has an "advantage" because of the lower tariff imposed compared to tariff rates set for other countries.

"I think there are two things that we have to do now. Clearly, one is to engage with our exports to discuss with them what are the possible measures that they can take and that the government can assist them in this current situation. That's the first thing. That's the most important thing," Go said.

"Secondly, we have to monitor kung anong ginagawa ng mga ibang neighbors po natin 'no, ano iyong mga reaction nila dito sa taripa at ano po ang reaksiyon din ng Estados Unidos sa kanilang mga request (what are our other neighbors are doing, what are their reactions to this tariff and what is the United States' reaction to their requests)," he added.

US goods trade with the Philippines totaled an estimated USD23.5 billion in 2024, latest data from the US government showed.

Imports from the Philippines to the US amounted to USD14.2 billion in 2024, up by 6.9 percent or USD912 million from 2023. **(PNA) By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos**

gunshot wound to the left shoulder and was taken to the Ospital ng Parañaque.

The other BJMP officers involved in the incident were unharmed and are receiving appropriate support from authorities.

NCRPO Director, Maj. Gen. Anthony Aberin, commended the Parañaque police and SWAT teams for helping foil the attempt to take away the Chinese

suspect.

Aberin said Hu is an alleged leader of a criminal syndicate engaged in kidnapping, car theft, extortion, and gun-running activities.

Hu was arrested in Parañaque City last year and is reportedly wanted in China for kidnapping charges. **(PNA) By Christopher Lloyd Caliwan**

KANLAON ASHFALL ALERT UP, CLASSES SUSPENDED IN NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

BACOLOD CITY – Some local government units (LGUs) in Negros Occidental urged residents to wear masks and declared the suspension of classes as ashfall hit various areas after another explosive eruption of Mt. Kanlaon on Tuesday morning.

The explosive eruption started at 5:51 a.m. and lasted for 56 minutes, according to the report of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

It came four months after a similar event took place on Dec. 9, affecting thousands of residents in central and southern Negros, with about 5,600 individuals still staying in evacuation centers as Alert Level 3 remains hoisted over the volcano.

In La Carlota City, ashfall mainly affected the villages of Ara-al, Yubo, San Miguel, Haguimit, La Granja, Cubay, Nagasi, Balabag, and Roberto S. Benedicto, based on the report of the city government.

Light ashfall was felt in the Poblacion barangays, it added.

In a statement, Mayor Rex Jalando-on said he ordered the suspension of face-to-face classes at all levels in both public and private schools until further notice.

Work is also suspended in all government offices located within the city except for offices and agencies involved in disaster and emergency response.

"Authorities reiterate the strict prohibition of human activity within the six-kilometer permanent danger zone due to the risk of further volcanic activity," he said.

In its advisory, the city government said affected barangays need drinking water and face masks as it urged residents to "remain indoors, stay updated through official channels, and follow all safety advisories issued by local authorities."

The Bureau of Fire Protection is conducting road flushing in affected

barangays and will provide potable water to residents in Barangay Ara-al, it added.

Initial report of the Office of Civil Defense indicated that ashfall was also felt in Barangay Sag-ang, La Castellana and Barangay Ilijan, Bago City.

In La Castellana, Mayor Rhummyla Nicor-Mangilimutan also declared the suspension of classes in all levels until further notice.

The LGU's Incident Management Team also strictly prohibited any entry to the six-kilometer permanent danger zone.

"The window time for evacuees to visit their farms is suspended for the safety of everyone," it said. In Pontevedra, the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office also announced the suspension of classes.

Personnel of the Bureau of Fire Protection conducted flushing operations in areas affected by the ashfall while the municipal government distributed face masks in public markets, government offices, and schools.

In Himamaylan City, Mayor Rogelio Raymund Tongson Jr. told residents to wear masks when going outdoors and limit outdoor activities, especially for children, senior citizens, and those with respiratory conditions, after hazy conditions have been observed across the city.

"Report any health concerns to your nearest health center. This is a precautionary measure to protect your health and well-being," the mayor said. In San Carlos City, all activities within the 8-km. radius of the volcano summit have been suspended due to the possibility of alert escalation.

"Barangays near the affected areas are enjoined to constantly monitor and must preposition all community warning, evacuation and response assets," the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office said in its advisory. **(PNA) By Nanette Guadalquiver**

PALACE: MISOGYNIST CANDIDATES SHOULD NO LONGER BE ADMIRER

MANILA – Malacañang on Thursday condemned misogynistic and degrading remarks made by certain election candidates, particularly at the local level, emphasizing that such behavior should no longer be admired or tolerated by the public.

In a press briefing, Palace Press Officer Claire Castro expressed concern over how past political narratives often celebrated disrespectful statements, especially those targeting women.

Castro questioned why candidates or public figures who made offensive remarks were often cheered on in the past despite the degrading nature of their statements.

"Paano nga ba ang mga ganitong klaseng pananalita noon ay pinapalangkapan? Parang ipinagbubunyi ang mga kandidato o mga lider na nagsasalita ng walang karespe-respeto lalong-lalo na sa mga kababaihan (How could these kinds of statements be applauded before? It's as if candidates or leaders who speak disrespectfully, especially to women, are being celebrated)," Castro said.

"Ipinagmamalaki, pinagtagawanan, ginagawang joke ng mga pambababae ng mga kalalakihan. Ginagawa ring issue at katatanganan ang mga rape na sitwasyon (Womanizing is celebrated, ridiculed, and made into a joke. Rape situations are also made into a joke)."

Recently, a Pasig congressional candidate became controversial for brazenly inviting single mothers to "sleep with

him," while a gubernatorial candidate in Mindanao claimed that only "beautiful women" deserved nursing scholarships.

Castro said such behavior – which trivializes serious issues like women's rights and sexual violence—should no longer be accepted.

"Hindi na po ito dapat na gawing idolo ang mga ganitong klaseng ng mga tao. Hindi na ito dapat pamarisan. Hindi na ito dapat pinapalangkapan (These kinds of people should no longer be idolized. They should no longer be followed as examples. They should no longer be applauded)," the Palace official said.

Castro made it clear that unlike in the past, such narratives no longer have a place under President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.

"Kung nagawa ito dati at pinapalangkapan, hindi na po sa panahon ng administrasyon ni Pangulong Marcos na dapat itong manyari (If this was done before and was applauded, not anymore under the administration of President Marcos)," she said.

Castro said Marcos is pleased with the response of the Commission on Elections (Comelec), which recently called out the concerned candidates and asked them to explain their misogynistic and degrading remarks during their campaigns.

The Palace also appealed to candidates to elevate the level of discourse and keep their campaigns free of offensive statements. **(PNA) By Darryl John Esguerra**

MARCOS: LESSONS OF PAST MUST GUIDE THE FUTURE

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. led the commemoration of the 83rd Day of Valor (Araw ng Kagitingan) at the Mt. Samat National Shrine in Pilar, Bataan on Wednesday, urging the nation to learn from the lessons of the past and apply them to build a brighter future.

In his speech before Filipino war veterans, Marcos highlighted the heroism displayed during the 1942 Battle of Bataan, remembering the Filipino and American forces who fought and ultimately surrendered to the Japanese Imperial Army after months of resistance under dire conditions.

He also extended his tribute to soldiers from other nations who joined the fight for freedom.

The President reflected on the lessons learned from the hardships of war, emphasizing the importance of peace over further conflict.

"The solution to war is not more war, and that the solution to war is only peace. And honorable peace that is arrived at by the different parties involved and having a hand and a voice in achieving that peace," he said.

Marcos stressed that peace cannot be achieved by any one nation alone, underscoring the need for collaboration among all parties involved.

"Peace cannot be attained by one person, by one country alone. And that we have to bring together all the parties that are involved. These are the lessons that we hope to

have learned," he said. Marcos, however, expressed disappointment as "parts of the world have yet to learn that lesson." "And we hope that that peace will be brought to us soon," he added.

The annual gathering, the highlight of the commemoration, seeks to recognize the sacrifices of Filipino and American veterans who fought the Japanese invaders during World War II, which lasted four years in the Philippines.

Marcos said the concept of valor goes beyond the battlefield, recognizing the everyday courage demonstrated by Filipinos in times of crisis.

He reaffirmed the country's commitment to a peaceful and prosperous future, shaped by the hard-earned lessons of history.

"These are the things that we celebrate today. These are the lessons that were hard-earned. And these are the lessons that we now apply to our lives. And these in hand, these will bring us to a brighter future," Marcos said.

"And that is why, once again, we celebrate today Araw ng Kagitingan, the Day of Valor, for the valor that was demonstrated here in these sacred mountains. The valor that was demonstrated here. But also the valor, the courage, and the sacrifice that is demonstrated by every single Filipino every single day because of their love for Filipinos, because of their love of the Philippines." **(PNA) By Darryl John Esguerra**

OUT-PATIENT EMERGENCY CASES NOW COVERED BY PHILHEALTH – PALACE

MANILA – The Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) will now pay for emergency procedures and other services for patients who do not need to be confined in hospitals, according to Malacañang. This as the state insurer introduced the Outpatient Emergency Care Benefit (OECB) package, expanding its coverage to include outpatient emergency services and providing immediate financial assistance and healthcare support to its members.

In a press briefing Thursday, Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said the OECB, which took effect last Feb. 14, covers various emergency cases common health issues like dizziness and diarrhea. "Ito'y package sa lahat ng mga PhilHealth-accredited hospitals mula Level 1 hanggang Level 3 simula pa noong Feb. 14, 2025," she said.

Castro highlighted that this initiative is in line with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive to enhance and expand the benefits available to Filipinos through PhilHealth.

She pointed out that, according to the latest advisory from PhilHealth, separate accreditation for the OECB is no longer required, as it is now automatically included in the accreditation process for all PhilHealth facilities.

"Ayon sa PhilHealth Advisory No. 2025-0009, hindi na kailangan ng mga hiwalay na accreditation para sa OECB dahil bahagi na ito ng pagsusuri sa mga PhilHealth facilities noong sila ay na-accredited," Castro said. Established under the National Health Insurance Act (Republic Act 7875), PhilHealth provides sustainable and affordable health insurance to Filipinos since 1995. **(PNA) By Darryl John Esguerra**

PH GROSS INT'L RESERVES AT \$106.2-B AS OF END-MARCH

MANILA – The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said preliminary data showed that the country's gross international reserves (GIR) settled at USD106.2 billion as of end-March this year.

Data released late Monday showed that the GIR level during the month was slightly lower than the USD107.4 billion recorded in February this year.

International reserves, also referred to as GIR, are foreign assets of the BSP held mostly as investments in foreign-issued securities, monetary gold, and foreign exchange.

"The month-on-month decrease in the GIR level reflected mainly the drawdowns by the national government on its foreign currency deposits with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to meet its external debt obligations and BSP's net foreign exchange operations," said the BSP.

The BSP said net international reserves or the difference between the BSP's reserve assets (GIR) and reserve liabilities (short-term foreign debt and credit and loans from the International Monetary Fund), also decreased to USD106.2 billion from USD107.4 billion in February.

Despite the decline, the BSP said the latest GIR provides a robust external liquidity buffer, equivalent to 7.3 months' worth of imports of goods and payments of services and primary income.

It also covers about 3.7 times the country's short-term external debt based on residual maturity.

By convention, GIR is viewed to be adequate if it can finance at least three months' worth of the country's imports of goods and payments of services and primary income. **(PNA) By Anna Leah Gonzales**

PPPI, CIAC EYE INVESTORS FOR P2-B PHARMA HUB IN CLARK

MANILA – Government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) Philippine Pharma Procurement, Inc. (PPPI) and Clark International Airport Corp. (CIAC) are eyeing for investors for their joint project, a pharmaceutical logistics and distribution center, in Clark Freeport Zone.

PPPI President Maria Bianca Kim Lokin told the Philippine News Agency Tuesday that development of the pharmaceutical hub will require an initial investment of around PHP2 billion.

"PPPI Pharma Hub will need an initial investment of about USD35.25 million (PHP2 billion) for development. Total area being earmarked is 15 hectares, with an initial development for five to 10 hectares," she said. "We will also explore investment options, joint ventures and public private partnerships."

On Monday, PPPI and CIAC signed a memorandum of

understanding (MOU) to develop a pharmaceutical logistics hub within the Clark Aviation Capital.

Under the MOU, CIAC will be providing the viable land for the project while PPPI will identify operational requirements, including warehousing, cold chain requirements, and air freight handling capabilities needed for the proposed logistics and distribution hub.

CIAC President Jojit Alcazar, in statement Monday, said that since "Clark hosts global cargo leaders FedEX, UPS, and DHL" the team-up with the country's sole government-run pharmaceutical company "further positions CIAC to be the premier global civil aviation logistics hub of the Philippines."

He said the project aligns with the Marcos administration's eight-point agenda on providing Filipinos affordable and accessible healthcare for all. **(PNA) By Kris Crismundo**

BTR FULLY AWARDS REISSUED TREASURY BOND

MANILA – The Bureau of the Treasury (BTr) fully awarded on Tuesday the reissued seven-year Treasury bond (T-bond). With a remaining term of six years and three months, the reissued T-bond fetched an average yield of 5.986 percent, lower than the 6.143 percent when it was last reissued on March 11, 2025.

Commercial Banking Corporation chief economist Michael Ricafort said the T-bond's average auction yield eased after the latest inflation fell to 1.8 percent in March, increasing further the odds of a Bangko Sentral ng

Pilipinas (BSP) rate cut.

"The 7-year T-bond auction yield also eased after the recent decline in the comparable 7-year U.S. Treasury yield also to among 3.5-month lows or since December 18, 2024, now at 3.98 percent," Ricafort said.

The auction was 1.8 times oversubscribed with total tenders reaching PHP53.4 billion.

With its decision, the Auction Committee raised the full program of PHP30 billion, bringing the total outstanding volume for the series to PHP413.3 billion. **(PNA) By Anna Leah Gonzales**

ADB MAINTAINS PH GROWTH OUTLOOK, LOWERS INFLATION FORECAST FOR 2025

MANILA – The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has retained its 2025 economic growth forecast of 6 percent for gross domestic product (GDP) while lowering its inflation projection.

In its Asian Development Outlook (ADO) April 2025, the ADB kept its GDP forecast from the December 2024 report, which was higher than the 5.6 percent growth recorded in 2024.

However, the growth outlook for 2026 was slightly trimmed to 6.1 percent from 6.2 percent.

"The Philippines remains a bright spot in the Southeast Asian region, with robust private consumption and sustained investments, particularly on infrastructure, continuing to fuel growth," ADB country director for the Philippines Pavit Ramachandran said. The ADB expects the Philippine economy to be driven by the improvement in employment data, noting that between January 2024 and January 2025, 2.6 million fresh jobs were added to the market.

"Higher household incomes supported by minimum wage hikes in several regions, remittance inflows from Filipinos overseas, as well as election-related spending ahead of the mid-term elections in May will all help bolster domestic consumption," it said.

Government spending is also seen to support economic expansion as public expenditure is expected to increase by 9.7 percent this year.

"A third of the budget will fund social services, including national health insurance, education, skills training and livelihood programs, conditional cash transfers, and food vouchers to low-income families," it added.

The ADB supports social protection efforts, such as the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, and is preparing to help finance the Walang Gutom (Zero Hunger) Food Voucher Program.

However, it noted that the GDP forecast has yet to include the potential economic impact of the 17 percent reciprocal tariff imposed by the United States government on April 9.

The ADB outlook on developing Asia, which includes the Philippines, is at 4.9 percent in 2025 and 4.7 percent in 2026.

In the ADB's special analysis on the impact of US tariffs, the effect of reciprocal tariffs in developing Asia is estimated to cut the region's GDP by 0.2 percentage points and another 0.1 percentage point for retaliations, for a total of 0.3 percentage points.

Trump's tariff order is seen

DTI OPEN TO DISCUSS STEELMAKERS' PLEA TO BAN INDUCTION FURNACES

MANILA – The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has expressed openness to discussing a proposal from the steelmakers' group to ban the use of induction furnaces in local steel production.

Bureau of Philippine Standards (BPS) Senior Trade Industry Development Specialist John Steven Magboo said although there is no current policy on the prohibition of the use of induction furnaces for steel production, the DTI is "definitely open to discuss regarding that issue and the so-called process of manufacturing the steel parts".

During the Kapihan sa Manila Bay in Malate, Manila on Wednesday, Magboo invited industry stakeholders to submit data supporting their claims that induction furnaces are incapable of producing steel that consistently meets Philippine National Standards (PNS).

He said the BPS issues Philippine Standard (PS) licenses for those who use induction furnaces and electric arc furnaces as long as these products comply with the PNS.

He clarified that the BPS continues to issue Philippine Standard (PS) licenses to manufacturers using both induction and electric arc furnaces, provided their products meet the national standards.

During the same event, Philippine Iron and Steel Institute (PISI) president Ronald Magsajo and Roberto Cola, member of the Department of Science and Technology-Metals Industry Research and Development Center (MIRDC) Governing Council, reiterated their call for a nationwide ban on induction furnace use in steelmaking.

Cola said countries like China, Japan, and Indonesia have already outlawed this technology due to concerns over steel quality.

"The main drawback of induction furnace facilities is that there is no process of removing the harmful elements in the liquid steel, thus resulting in inconsistent quality of products produced. This results to a safety hazard since these steel products are used in construction of buildings and infrastructure," Cola, who is also a former PISI president, said.

He said that since China began the crackdown on steel manufacturers using induction furnaces, their operations were relocated to ASEAN countries, including the Philippines.

"For the Philippines, induction furnace steelmaking capacity increased from less than 150,000 metric tons per year in 2017 to around 3 million metric tons today. These facilities are the main source of substandard reinforcing steel bars and angle bars in the market," Cola said.

Magsajo echoed these concerns, linking poor-quality steel to recent incidents such as the collapse of the Cabagan-Santa Maria Bridge in Isabela and infrastructure damage caused by earthquakes in Myanmar and Thailand.

He attributed part of the damage to substandard construction materials and engineering flaws.

Magsajo said PISI conducts regular test-buy activities across the country, particularly samples from hardware stores, to monitor if those steel products in the market comply with the industry standards.

He said they can trace the machine used to produce these steel that fell below the industry standards, most of which are using induction furnaces.

Magsajo said that of the around 40 steelmakers in the Philippines, 15 to 20 manufacturers are using induction furnaces. **(PNA) By Kris Crismundo**

to further cut the growth of developing Asia next year to 0.8 percentage points and another 0.1 percentage point for retaliations, for a total of 0.9 percentage points.

Meanwhile, the ADB revised its inflation forecast for the Philippines to 3 percent

for both 2025 and 2026, down from the previous 3.2 percent estimate.

"This reflects stable global commodity prices, particularly oil, and a slowdown in rice inflation," the ADB said. **(PNA) By Kris Crismundo**

CAVITE GAZETTE

P U B L I S H I N G

ILOCOS REGION'S CELESTE WINS THREE GOLDS IN PRISAA NATIONAL GAMES

TUGUEGARAO CITY, Cagayan – Kent Brian Celeste of Ilocos Region became the first triple-gold medalist in the Private Schools Athletic Association (PRISAA) National Games after defending the men's triple jump title Wednesday at the Cagayan Sports Complex track and field stadium here.

The 23-year-old from Anda, Pangasinan whose personal best is 14.75 meters, registered 14.70m to beat Rick Angelo Sotto of Central Visayas (14.00) and Cjay Eulin of Western Visayas (13.67).

He also triumphed in long jump and high jump.

"I'm very happy that I was able to defend the three titles I won in Legazpi City," said Celeste, a third-year physical education student at Virgen Milagrosa University Foundation.

Last year, he earned the Most Valuable Player award for winning three gold medals in Legazpi City, Albay.

Meanwhile, Mark Mahinay and Michelle Zamora dominated the 1,500m event as Central Visayas remained on top of the senior medal tally board with 30 golds, 10 silvers and 13 bronzes.

Mahinay, a third-year information technology student at the University of Cebu main campus, clocked 3:59.5 to defend the title over teammate Oswaldo Arcelo Jr. (4:06.3)

BITUIN SHINES AS FEU GAINS SEMIS INCENTIVE IN UAAP MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

MANILA – Far Eastern University downed Ateneo de Manila University, 25-21, 19-25, 25-23, 25-23, Wednesday in the UAAP Season 87 men's volleyball tournament at the Philsports Arena in Pasig City to secure a twice-to-beat incentive in the Final Four.

Amet Samuel Bituin finished with 17 points on 16 attacks and one ace, and had nine receptions as the Tamaraws stayed on top of the standings at 11-1.

"Yesterday during practice, coach tried to have me start. Even though I was a bit confused, I just trusted the coaching staff and my teammates who supported me even when I was feeling down," Bituin, a product of FEU-Diliman High School, said after the match.

Dryx Saavedra had two attacks, Congolese middle blocker Doula Ndongala scored on a block and Bituin fired an ace to give the Tamaraws a 17-10 lead in the fourth set.

Ateneo rallied behind Jian Matthew Salarzon and MVP frontrunner Kennedy Batas to move within 20-22, but FEU won the next three points, the last one coming from Bituin.

and Mark Rennel Hubag of Socccsargen (4:10.1).

Mahinay now has two gold medals after winning the 5,000m last Monday. He will try to win a third gold in the 10,000m on Friday. Zamora, on the other hand, captured the women's gold medal in 4:57.1, beating Mary Rose Frias of Ilocos Region (5:03.8) and Angel May Saysay of Cordillera Administrative Region (5:06.4).

Socccsargen ranked

"This season is different from the previous one. We just need to trust again. The moment from Season 86, we've already surpassed that. This season, there's a different level of expectation from our team because of our mindset. We've moved forward from that, we're onto the next," head coach Eddieson Orcullo said after the one hour and 55-minute match.

Lirick Mendoza chipped in 12 points, including a season-high eight blocks, Saavedra had 11 points on 10 attacks, and top rookie Mikko Espartero added 10 points and six receptions.

Ariel Cacao made 26 sets while rookie libero Vennie Ceballos had 23 receptions and six digs for FEU, which will face Adamson University on April 12 at the Smart Araneta Coliseum.

Amil Pacinio scored 21 points on 18 attacks and three aces while Batas contributed 12 points and 16 receptions for Ateneo, which is now on the brink of elimination with a 6-6 slate.

National University is at second at 10-2 followed by De La Salle University and University of Santo Tomas, which have similar 7-4 records. **(PNA) By Jean Malanum**

second with 24 golds, 30 silvers and 14 bronzes followed by CAR (17-17-18), Ilocos Region (7-3-7) and Western Visayas (5-13-8).

In the youth category, Bicol Region has collected 31 golds, 23 silvers and 17 bronzes to keep the top spot, followed by Central Visayas (11-3-1), CAR (9-2-2), Cagayan Valley (7-4-10), and Central Luzon (6-6-10). **(PNA) By Jean Malanum**

LADY BULLDOGS NEAR UAAP TENNIS CROWN

MANILA – The National University (NU) downed the University of Santo Tomas (UST), 3-1, in Game 1 of the UAAP Season 87 women's tennis best-of-three finals series at the Felicisimo Ampon Tennis Center in Malate, Manila on Wednesday.

Rovie Baulete and Adeline Abadia clobbered Judy Padilla and Debbie Gom-os, 6-2, 6-2 in the first doubles match as the Lady Bulldogs moved to within a victory of claiming their fourth consecutive and eighth overall crown. "Winning Game 1 is very important for our team, as it eases the pressure for the next game," Baulete said after the match.

"It's also crucial that we remain united and trust each other. The key is to stay focused on the game and trust that we can handle every match we face."

Jasmin Jaran outplayed Patricia Lim, 6-3, 6-3, as NU took a 1-0 lead in the best-of-five tie.

UST tied the score after Kaye Emaná recovered a first-set loss to prevail over Danna Abad 4-6, 6-2, 6-3.

The Lady Bulldogs made it 2-1 when Elsie Abarquez triumphed over Mica Emaná 6-3, 6-1.

"Our game plan was for each player to just play their game. We also emphasized winning at least two singles matches. We told them not to put too much pressure on themselves. They're used to being in the finals, so with their experience, they have the upper hand. I told them to just play their game," said NU head coach Ronard Joven.

"It's different when you win Game 1, because last year we lost it, and the pressure really builds after that. But now, winning Game 1 gives them higher confidence going into Game 2." Game 2 will be played at 7 a.m. on Saturday. **(PNA) By Jean Malanum**

DEPED: PH FIRST IN ASIA P ACIFIC TO ADVANCE INCLUSIVE SPECIAL SPORTS

MANILA – The Philippines became the first country in the Asia Pacific region to advance inclusive special sports in schools as the Department of Education (DepEd) partnered with the Special Olympics Pilipinas on Tuesday.

Special Olympics, a global movement, aims to secure the inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities through sports.

"We are making history today... We proudly become the first country in the Asia Pacific to join the Special Olympics Global Coalition for Inclusion," DepEd Secretary Sonny Angara said in his speech during the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Special Olympics Pilipinas at the Philippine School for the Deaf in Pasay City.

The MOU is in line with the directives of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to ensure quality and inclusive education among Filipinos in the country.

Angara said the initiative will help introduce the new culture of "unified sports" among learners with intellectual disabilities and those without; and help prevent challenges like aggression, bullying, and discrimination.

"Here, learners, of all kinds, can train, play, and grow together. Sa unified sports, magkasamang maglalaro sa regular key sports ang lahat ng learners, wala pong diskriminasyon, walang panghuhusga (all learners will play in regular key sports without discrimination and

judgment)," he said. More than 30,000 learners with intellectual disabilities may benefit from the expected progress moving forward, Angara said.

Special Olympics Pilipinas Chairperson and National President Akiko Thomson-Guevarra lauded the DepEd's move to prioritize the initiative benefiting learners with intellectual disabilities.

"It's our dream in Special Olympics Pilipinas to bring our programs nationwide and with this MOU, we are now finally able to go. The task is both exciting and daunting," she said.

Under the MOU, the Special Olympics Pilipinas will train around 2,000 DepEd teachers and staff in handling special sports; sponsor events fostering the unified sports culture in pilot public schools; and handle the engagement of at least 50,000 learners with and without intellectual disabilities nationwide.

"I am confident and hopeful that we will see the benefits in a very concrete way for all our youth... Studies have shown that benefits are both ways," Thomson-Guevarra said.

She earlier urged participating school division offices (SDOs) to share best practices applied in their earlier participation in "unified sports" for its national implementation.

Schools that implemented unified sports include select areas in Pasay, Las Piñas, and Parañaque; as well as in Sta. Rosa and Biñan in Laguna. **(PNA)**

By Stephanie Sevillano



INCLUSIVE SPECIAL OLYMPICS. Education Secretary Sonny Angara (3rd from left) and Special Olympics Pilipinas Chairperson and National President Akiko Thomson-Guevarra sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) at the Philippine School for the Deaf in Pasay City on Tuesday (April 8, 2025). The MOU aims to advance inclusive special sports, making the country the first country in the Asia Pacific region to join the Special Olympics Global Coalition. (PNA photo by Avito Dalan)