



# BACCOOR CITY STEPS UP RELIEF EFFORTS FOR FIRE VICTIMS

**BACCOOR CITY, Cavite (PIA)** — The Bacoor City government has continued its relief efforts for families displaced by recent fires

in Sitio Bulate, Barangay Dulong Bayan, and Camella East, Barangay San Nicolas 2. Under the leadership of

Mayor Strike B. Revilla and in partnership with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Region IV-A,

Family Food Boxes were distributed on Monday, December 15, 2025, to ensure that affected residents have sufficient

The Provincial Government of Cavite conducted a Top Management Review on December 11, 2025, bringing together department heads and key personnel to reinforce the province's commitment to efficient, transparent, and

food while staying in evacuation centers.

A total of 88 families, comprising 298 individuals from Sitio Bulate, along with one family of three from Camella East, received assistance. Each Family Food Box contains six kilos of rice, 10 cans of assorted canned goods, and 10 sachets of drink mix or soup, providing essential sustenance during their displacement.

The distribution was attended by DSWD Region IV-A representatives Marlden Tongson and Ric Vertudez, along with personnel from the City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD) Office.

According to the city government, this activity forms part of the city's broader relief efforts, which have already included the provision of hot meals, hygiene kits, clothing, kitchen sets, and sleeping kits for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

City officials emphasized that relief operations will continue as monitoring and verification activities remain ongoing in the affected communities, assuring fire victims of sustained support and assistance throughout their recovery. **(RBF) BY RUEL FRANCISCO**

quality public service. The program opened with an invocation, followed by a presentation of the province's Quality Policy and an audio-visual overview highlighting ongoing quality initiatives. Participants were formally acknowledged by Ms. Anne Minnette M. Dastas, Unit Head of the Office of the Provincial Governor—Office of the Provincial Internal Audit Services. Messages of support and direction were delivered by Provincial Administrator Engr. Gilbert V. Gandia, underscoring the importance of institutionalizing quality standards across provincial offices.

A Top Management Meeting, led by Ms. Michelle F. Alcid, Provincial Board Secretary and Quality Management Representative, served as a key platform to assess performance and align strategies.

The program concluded with closing remarks from the Chief of Staff Mr. Ferdinand A. Belamide, emphasizing continuous improvement and accountability in governance.

The activity reaffirmed the provincial government's dedication to strengthening systems and delivering responsive services to the public. — **A. Sarte / Cavite- PIO**



## RANK NO.2 CITY LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON FALLS IN CAVITE POLICE OPS

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite-** In an intensified campaign against wanted persons, the warrant personnel of Cavite Component City Police Station arrested a City Level Most Wanted Person in an anti-criminality operation at around 7:00 PM on December 27, 2025 in Tanza, Cavite.

PLTCOL SOCRATES S JACA, Chief of Police of Cavite CCPS, identified the accused as alias "Jann", a resident of Dasmariñas, Cavite who was wanted for Violation of Section 10(A), Article VI of Republic Act 7610. The warrant of arrest was issued by the Presiding Judge of Family Court, Fifth Judicial Region, Branch 12, Sorsogon

dated December 17, 2025 with Php80,000.00 bail recommended.

In a statement, PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director of Cavite PPO, expressed appreciation for the dedication of the operating unit and stressed the importance of community protection. This is another step forward in our duty to safeguard the youth and hold offenders accountable. Our operations are driven not just by obligation, but by our genuine desire to keep communities safe. Every arrest of a wanted individual means one less threat to our families. We will continue to work tirelessly, guided by professionalism and the trust of the people we serve. He added.

## CITY LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON SERVED WITH WARRANT OF ARREST IN BACOR CITY

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite** – A City Level Most Wanted Person was formally served with a warrant of arrest by personnel of the Bacoor Custodial Center, Bacoor City, Cavite. Following the service, the warrant will be returned to the court of origin for proper disposition. The accused remains under detention at the Bacoor Custodial Center, Bacoor City, Cavite.

In his statement, PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, emphasized the importance of ensuring that all warrants of arrest are properly served, regardless of the location of the accused. "Serving warrants, even inside custodial facilities, ensures that accountability is complete. Our police officers remain committed to upholding due process and enforcing the law fairly and consistently, especially in cases involving illegal drugs," PCOL RED said. He further assured the public of the Cavite police's continued dedication to maintaining peace, order, and public safety across the province.

The accused is facing charges for Violation of Section 14, in relation to Section 12, Article II of Republic Act No. 9165 (Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002) under Criminal Case No. B-2020-710, with no bail recommended. The warrant of arrest was issued on May 26, 2023 by the Presiding Judge of the Regional Trial Court, Branch 113, Bacoor

City, Cavite. Following the service, the warrant will be returned to the court of origin for proper disposition. The accused remains under detention at the Bacoor Custodial Center, Bacoor City, Cavite.

In his statement, PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, emphasized the importance of ensuring that all warrants of arrest are properly served, regardless of the location of the accused. "Serving warrants, even inside custodial facilities, ensures that accountability is complete. Our police officers remain committed to upholding due process and enforcing the law fairly and consistently, especially in cases involving illegal drugs," PCOL RED said. He further assured the public of the Cavite police's continued dedication to maintaining peace, order, and public safety across the province.

## REGIONAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON NABBED BY ROSARIO POLICE

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite** — Personnel of Rosario Municipal Police Station successfully arrested a Regional Level Most Wanted Person during a police operation conducted in Brgy Wawa 3, Rosario, Cavite at about 6:10 PM on December 27, 2025.

The arrested individual, known by the alias "Aries," is a resident of Rosario, Cavite.

The arrest was carried out by the Warrant and Tracker Team of Rosario MPS, under the direct supervision of PLTCOL ARDIE O BAGAMAN, Chief of Police of Rosario MPS, by virtue of a Warrant of Arrest for two (2) counts of Rape in relation to Republic Act No. 7610, issued by the Presiding Judge of the Regional Trial Court Branch 17, Cavite City, with no bail recommended.

Upon arrest, the accused was duly informed of his constitutional rights in a language best understood by him. The conduct of the operation was recorded using an Alternative Recording Device (ARD) in

compliance with standard operational procedures.

The arrested wanted person was brought to the Rosario MPS Jail Facility for proper documentation and detention. The warrant of arrest will be returned to the court of origin for appropriate action.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, commended the operating unit and emphasized the importance of sustained law enforcement efforts, stating:

"This successful arrest reflects the Cavite PNP's unwavering commitment to bring wanted persons to justice. We will continue to intensify our manhunt operations to ensure the safety of our communities and to uphold the rule of law."

The Cavite Police Provincial Office reiterates its commitment to strengthening law enforcement operations to ensure that wanted persons are held accountable and that peace and order are maintained throughout the province.

## JOINT POLICE OPERATION LEADS TO THE ARREST OF CAVITE'S MOST WANTED PERSON

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite-** A joint police operation conducted by the personnel of Amadeo Municipal Police Station and personnel of Cavite Provincial Mobile Force Company resulted in the arrest of a Provincial Level Most Wanted Person for the crime of Lascivious Conduct under Sec 5 (B) of RA No. 7610, in Bacoor, Cavite on December 26, 2025 at around 12:50 in the afternoon.

PMAJ JULIUS R MARQUEZ, Chief of Police of Amadeo Municipal Police Station, identified the accused as alias Elmer and a resident of Bacoor, Cavite.

The accused was apprehended by the personnel of Amadeo Municipal Police Station

and personnel of Cavite Provincial Mobile Force Company by virtue of a warrant of arrest issued by the Presiding Judge of the Family Court, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 3, Tagaytay City, Cavite, dated September 15, 2025, with recommended bail amounting Php 200,000.00.

The arrested individual is currently detained at the Custodial Facility of Amadeo MPS, pending the return of the warrant to the court of origin.

In a statement, PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director, underscored the significance of the operation, saying that the arrest reflects the police force's unwavering commitment to the rule of law and accountability.

## TWO STREET-LEVEL DRUG PERSONALITIES ARRESTED IN DASMARIÑAS BUY-BUST OPERATION; FIREARM AND ILLEGAL DRUGS SEIZED

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite** — Personnel of Dasmariñas City Police Station, in coordination with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), successfully arrested two (2) street-level drug personalities during an anti-illegal drugs operation conducted at about 8:40 AM on December 27, 2025, at Sitio Pintong Gubat, Barangay Paliparan 3, Dasmariñas City, Cavite.

PLTCOL REGINO L ONATE, Chief of Police, Dasmariñas CCPS, identified the arrested suspects as alias "JOMARIE," a resident of San Pedro, Laguna, and alias "JUAN," a resident of Dasmariñas City, Cavite.

The suspects were arrested during a buy-bust operation after selling one (1) heat-sealed transparent plastic sachet containing suspected shabu to a police officer acting as poseur-buyer in exchange for one (1) genuine Five Hundred Peso (Php 500.00) bill with serial number CM440883, used as marked money.

The operation was conducted using an Alternative Recording Device (ARD), which resulted in the recovery from the possession and control of the suspects

He emphasized that justice, no matter how long delayed, will always be pursued with diligence and professionalism.

PCOL RED added that the Cavite Police remain steadfast in their mission to locate and arrest wanted persons, reminding the public that the law applies to everyone equally. He also expressed gratitude to the operating units for their coordinated efforts and assured the community that the police will continue to work hand in hand with partner agencies and the public to maintain peace, order, and trust in the justice system.

of four (4) heat-sealed transparent plastic sachets containing white crystalline substance suspected to be shabu with a total weight of approximately 20 grams and an estimated Standard Drug Price of Php 136,000.00; one (1) genuine Php 500.00 bill with serial number CM440883 used as marked money; one (1) unit Ingram M11, Caliber 9mm, Military Armament Corporation, Marietta, GA, USA, bearing Serial Number 301102; one (1) caliber 9mm Ingram magazine; two (2) pieces of caliber 9mm live ammunition; and one (1) black body bag.

The suspects were duly informed of their constitutional rights (Miranda Rights) and their Anti-Torture Rights at the time of arrest.

The arrested individuals will face charges for Violation of Sections 5, 11, and 26, Article II of Republic Act No. 9165 (Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002) and Violation of Republic Act No. 10591 (Comprehensive Firearms and Ammunition Regulation Act).

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, commended the operating unit and emphasized the importance of sustained anti-criminality efforts, stating:

"This successful anti-illegal drug operation underscores the Cavite PNP's relentless efforts to curb the proliferation of illegal drugs and loose firearms in the province. We commend the Dasmariñas City Police Station and our partner agency, PDEA, for their coordinated and professional conduct of the operation. We assure the public that Cavite Police will remain steadfast in protecting our communities and in bringing those who violate the law to justice."

The Cavite Police Provincial Office remains committed to intensifying anti-illegal drugs operations and strengthening inter-agency partnerships to ensure peace, order, and public safety throughout the province.

# CAVITE CELEBRATES PEACEFUL NEW YEAR UNDER LIGTAS PASKUHAN CAMPAIGN

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City** — The Cavite Police Provincial Office, under the leadership of the Acting Provincial Director PCOL ARIEL R RED, confirms a safe and orderly New Year celebration in the Province of Cavite.

Based on comparative data under the Ligtas Paskuhan campaign, total incidents dropped by 75 percent, from 36 cases in 2024 to only 8 cases in 2025. All recorded incidents were limited to firecracker and pyrotechnics-related injuries, while zero incidents were recorded involving indiscriminate firing, stray bullets, road crash accidents, and fires caused by firecrackers or pyrotechnic devices.

PCOL ARIEL R RED emphasized the importance of discipline and cooperation, stating: "Ang malaking pagbababa ng mga insidente

ngayong Bagong Taon ay patunay ng epektibong pagpapatupad ng batas at ng kooperasyon ng ating mga mamamayan. Sa tulong ng ating mga LGU at ng disiplina ng publiko, naging ligtas at mapayapa ang pagdiriwang ng Bagong Taon sa Cavite."

The Cavite PPO attributes this positive outcome to intensified operations against illegal firecrackers and loose firearms, heightened police visibility, and the strong cooperation of local government units and the Caviteño community.

The Cavite Police Provincial Office extends its appreciation to the public, partner agencies, and local government units for their continued support in maintaining peace and order as Cavite safely welcomed the New Year. With Cavite PNP, your safety is our priority. **(Cavite PPO)**

# GEN. TRIAS FARMERS GRADUATE FROM SUSTAINABLE PIG FARMING PROGRAM

The City Government of General Trias marked a milestone in local agriculture with the graduation ceremony of the Farmers Field School on Sustainable Pig Farming (FFS-SPF) held on December 19, 2025, at the Animal Pound Center in Bagong Kalsada, Brgy. Pasong Kawayan II.

The program celebrated the completion of learning-by-doing training by local farmers aimed at promoting environmentally sound, safe, and profitable pig farming practices. Participants were equipped with practical knowledge on animal health, biosecurity, and sustainable livestock management to strengthen food security and livelihood opportunities in the city.

The ceremony featured messages from key officials and partner agencies, including Dr. May M. Magno, Provincial Veterinarian, Ms. Marian Lovella,

Learning Specialist, ATI CALABARZON, Hon. Mario C. Amante, Barangay Captain and the City Government, highlighting the importance of empowering farmers through education and innovation.

Graduates were formally recognized during the event, underscoring their commitment to adopting sustainable practices that benefit both the community and the environment. The activity reaffirmed General Trias' dedication to developing resilient farmers and advancing responsible livestock production.

The program concluded with a closing message from Dr. Gloria C. Digma, the City Veterinarian, who expressed her sincere gratitude to all the dedicated graduates for their hard work and commitment throughout the program. — **A. Sarte / Cavite- PIO**

# EDITORIAL

## Pagpapamalas ng Talento ng mga Kabataan sa Paghabi, Tampok sa Isang Patimpalak

Ilang kabataan mula sa iba't-ibang unibersidad, ipinamalas ang talento sa paghabi ng Filipiniana gamit ang mga Philippine tropical fabrics.

Lubhang nakakatuwa na naipapamalas ng mga estudyante ang kanilang mga talento sa sining at art. Hindi naman natin maikakaila na mayamang ang Pilipinas sa mga natural fibers gaya ng abaca, pinya at marami pang iba. Kaya naman, ang paglinang at pagpapaunlad sa mga nakasanayan ay isang gawi upang maipamalas ang kagalingan ng mga kabataang Pilipino habang hindi nakakalimutan ang mga nakaraan.

Mula sa paghahabk ng mga Filipiniana gamit ang mga tropical fabrics, nabubuhay natin muli ang ating pinagmulan at lubos pa natin itong pinapaunlad. Isang bagay na dapat lamang nating gawin nang hindi makalimutan ang ating nakaraan at kasaysayan.

# BACOOR POLICE LAUNCH NEW ALERT SYSTEM TO STRENGTHEN CRIME PREVENTION

**CITY OF BACOOR, Cavite (PIA)** — To further enhance public safety and protect businesses, the Bacoor Component City Police Station has launched Project SOS: 'Strike One SMS,' a new crime-prevention and rapid alert system designed to improve police response during emergencies.

The initiative was formally introduced during a recent coordination meeting held at the Strike Multipurpose Hall in the Bacoor Government Center, Barangay Bayanan. P/Lt. Chief Alexie A. Desamito led the meeting attended by local officials, police officers,

program developers, and representatives from major convenience store chains operating in the city.

Among those present were Provincial Board Member Hon. Alde Pagulayan, City Councilor Hon. Manolo "Noly" Galvez, P/Lt. Chief Basman A. Macarangal Jr., P/Maj. Kris Albin B. Gonzales, Project SOS programmer, Yvan Mercado, and various business stakeholders.

Participants reviewed crime data covering calendar years 2023 to 2025 and discussed ways to strengthen preventive measures in commercial establishments. These measures included the

enforcement of window transaction and clear-face policies, the use of advanced CCTV systems, door-clamping mechanisms, and intercom integration to improve security and monitoring.

A highlight of the meeting was the demonstration of the OR-MS-ART, a rapid-response device capable of instantly sending alerts to law enforcement during robbery incidents. PLT Chief Macarangal suggested incorporating an acknowledgment feature to confirm that responding police units receive alerts in real time.

Local officials expressed strong support for the

project. Board Member Pagulayan and Councilor Galvez both committed to backing the initiative and exploring the passage of a local ordinance to institutionalize its implementation throughout Bacoor.

P/Lt. Desamito thanked all stakeholders and the Bacoor local government unit for their cooperation, underscoring the city's continued commitment to public safety and ensuring the protection of convenience store employees and customers. (RBF/Bacoor Component City Police Station) **BY RUEL FRANCISCO**



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## SENATE ADVANCES LEDAC AGENDA, RATIFIES 2026 BUDGET

**MANILA** — Legislative work aligned with priority policy areas under the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) shaped the agenda of the Philippine Senate in 2025, as the chamber filed more than 1,600 measures during the First Regular Session of the 20th Congress and capped the year by ratifying the PHP6.793-trillion national budget for 2026.

Official legislative data as of Dec. 17 showed that the Senate filed 1,625 Senate bills, covering governance reforms, social protection, health, education, agriculture, energy and digital services — policy areas requiring coordinated executive-legislative action.

During the first full LEDAC meeting of the 20th Congress, Senate President Vicente Sotto III agreed to focus on aligning executive and congressional priority bills and adopting the Common Legislative Agenda, with discussions centering on healthcare, education, agriculture, energy security and governance and digital reforms aimed at improving public service delivery.

"These priorities reflect our collective effort to ensure that policies are both responsive to the immediate needs of the people and consistent with our long-term development goals," Sotto said.

On the legislative front, proposals filed and deliberated during the year include measures to support farmers and fisherfolk, expanded social protection and health services for vulnerable sectors, education and nutrition programs, and secure energy, water and digital infrastructure.

On the plenary floor, three measures were approved on second reading — the Classroom-Building Acceleration Program (CAP) Act, the Comprehensive Lupus Prevention Act, and the Health Outreach for Seniors and Indigents Program

— while dozens of other LEDAC-aligned proposals advanced through committee hearings and consolidation.

The Senate also acted on 206 resolutions, adopting 31, and approved all seven Senate concurrent resolutions filed during the session, reinforcing legislative procedures and transparency.

Capping the year's work, the Senate ratified the bicameral conference committee report on House Bill No. 4058, the proposed PHP6.793-trillion General Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2026, following the first livestreamed bicameral conference proceedings in Philippine legislative history.

The Senate is set to resume its regular session on Jan. 26, 2026. **(PNA) BY WILNARD BACELONIA**

## AFP: \$2.5-B US AID TO BOOST PH DEFENSE, SECURITY POSTURE

**MANILA** — The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on Monday welcomed the United States Senate's approval of a bill authorizing the allocation of a USD2.5-billion five-year grant to the Philippine military.

"The AFP welcomes developments that strengthen the country's defense and security posture, particularly initiatives that support the modernization, capability development and readiness of our forces," AFP spokesperson Col. Francel Margareth Padilla said in a message to the media.

She assured that any support received by the AFP is "utilized transparently, responsibly, and in accordance with existing laws, policies, and alliances."

Padilla said details, policy implications and the official position on the proposed US military assistance,

## SENATE OKS 2026 BUDGET WITH FOCUS ON EDUCATION, HEALTH, AGRICULTURE

**MANILA** — Investments in education, health and agriculture are the highlights of the proposed PHP6.793-trillion national budget for 2026 ratified by the Senate on Monday, according to Senator Sherwin Gatchalian.

Delivering the ratification speech for the bicameral conference committee report on House Bill No. 4058, Gatchalian said the overall direction of the 2026 General Appropriations Bill is anchored on human development, with priority funding directed to sectors seen as critical to long-term national growth.

"We will see that the funds that we have invested in education, health, and agriculture are big because we believe that these three sectors are very important for the development of our country and for

including its scope, timelines and alignment with national priorities, are best addressed by the Department of National Defense, which is "the primary civilian authority overseeing defense policy and international defense cooperation."

Under the proposed Philippines Enhanced Resilience Act, which is now up for US President Donald Trump's signature, the US will earmark up to USD500 million annually to help develop the capabilities of the Philippine military from 2026 to 2030.

The bill was passed by the US Senate on Dec. 17 as part of the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act and is seen to deepen US-Philippines defense cooperation while strengthening interoperability to meet growing threats in the Indo-Pacific. **(PNA) BY PRIAM NEPOMUCENO**

the development of our economy," Gatchalian, chairperson of the Committee on Finance, said.

He said education remains the single largest investment in the 2026 budget, with total funding reaching PHP1.35 trillion, equivalent to 4.4 percent of gross domestic product.

Gatchalian said the "historic" education allocation would fund efforts to reduce classroom shortages, expand the School-Based Feeding Program to address malnutrition among learners, and ensure that students are provided with textbooks.

On health, he said the sector's budget was increased to PHP447.6 billion, including a PHP129.78-billion allocation for the Philippine Health Insurance Corp., representing a 15-percent increase compared with the House-approved level. He added that funding was also boosted for Zero Balance Billing in Department of Health hospitals and for specialty hospitals.

He highlighted the proposed PHP214.39-billion agriculture budget, which he said is the highest allocation for the sector in more than a decade and is intended to support farm incomes and strengthen food security.

Gatchalian said the bicameral conference committee incorporated safeguards to protect public funds, citing livestreamed bicameral deliberations, public access to budget documents, and the requirement for infrastructure projects to carry station numbers and geographic coordinates to allow on-the-ground verification.

The Senate approval cleared the 2026 national budget for transmittal to Malacañang for President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s signature. **(PNA) BY WILNARD BACELONIA**

## DHSUD, DTI-BOI EYE TAX-EXEMPT STATUS FOR ECONOMIC HOUSING

**MANILA** — The government is looking into the possible classification of economic housing as corporate income tax-exempt mass housing under Batas Pambansa Bilang 220.

The review is being conducted by the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry-Board of Investments (DTI-BOI).

According to DHSUD Secretary Jose Ramon Ailing on Monday, the proposed review aims to provide economic housing developments with a clearer and more predictable tax incentive framework, similar to the system already applied to socialized housing.

He noted that aligning incentives for economic housing supports the government's push to expand access to affordable homes and simplify regulations affecting priority sectors, especially the working class.

"Hangad natin ang isang malinaw at maayos na sistema para sa economic housing (We aim for a clear and orderly system for economic housing)," Ailing said in a statement.

"Kapag malinaw ang mga patakaran at pantay ang pagpapatupad, mas nagiging mabilis ang pagtugon sa pangangailangan sa pabahay at mas pinapalakas ang tiwala ng pribadong sektor (When policies are clear and implementation is fair, the response to housing needs becomes faster and the trust of the private sector is strengthened)," he added.

Ailing said the initiative is consistent with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s directive for a whole-of-government approach in promoting dignified, safe

and affordable housing for Filipino families.

The policy exploration follows the issuance of Revenue Memorandum Order 48-2025 by the Department of Finance-Bureau of Internal Revenue, which streamlined tax exemption processes for socialized and economic housing projects to ease real estate procedures.

The DHSUD and Department of Economy, Planning, and Development earlier released Joint Memorandum Circular 2025-001 adjusting the price ceiling for socialized housing under the Expanded Pambansang Pabahay para sa Pilipino (4PH) Program.

"These efforts aim to sustain vibrancy in the housing sector and further improve policies for the benefit of stakeholders, especially homebuyers," Ailing said.

To move the proposal forward, Ailing recommended the creation of a technical working group to conduct evaluations and craft policy recommendations for the DHSUD and DTI-BOI.

Ailing expressed confidence that the initiative would help accelerate housing development, strengthen interagency coordination, and establish a transparent and consistent incentive framework for projects compliant with Batas Pambansa Bilang 220, the that sets standards for economic and socialized housing.

He emphasized that the move is not merely a tax issue but a matter of ensuring clear direction, strengthening trust in government, and mobilizing collective action to meet the country's need for affordable housing. **(PNA) BY MA. TERESA MONTEMAYOR**

## PALACE: CABINET NOT EXEMPTED FROM GRAFT PROBE IF EVIDENCE EXISTS

**MANILA** – Cabinet officials would not be exempted from anti-graft and corruption investigation if evidence links them to alleged budget irregularities, Malacañang said Sunday, stressing that accountability applies to all public officials regardless of rank.

Palace Press Officer and Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro made the statement in response to claims that several Cabinet members were behind billions of pesos worth of alleged budget insertions for 2025, an allegation earlier raised by Senator Panfilo Lacson based on the so-called “Cabral files.”

Castro said President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. Has been firm that anyone proven to be involved in wrongdoings must be held accountable.

“Anyone among the Cabinet members who may be involved and for whom there is evidence should continue to be investigated

## COMELEC TO HOLD TECHNOLOGY FAIR ON NEW ELECTION SYSTEM

**MANILA**–The Commission on Elections (Comelec) is planning to hold another technology fair early next year to be able to know the latest automated election systems (AES) available in the market.

Comelec Spokesperson John Rex Laudiangco said the holding of such event will give them an idea of the newest technologies for the holding of electoral exercises.

“As early as next year, you will see that the Comelec will conduct a more in-depth research where we will have a technology fair again,” he said at the Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon public briefing Friday.

“We will look at what is new in the world when it comes to election technology and that is what the Comelec wants.”

The poll body chief said they will be looking at several components in

to identify the real culprit,” Castro said in a text message to reporters.

She added that the President won’t shield anyone if found truly involved.

“The President has said that whoever it may be must be held accountable if they are truly involved,” Castro added.

However, Castro noted that the matter is already under the jurisdiction of proper investigative bodies, such as the Office of the Ombudsman and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

She also urged individuals claiming to have evidence to formally submit it to the Independent Commission for Infrastructure, Ombudsman or DOJ.

Lacson earlier alleged that at least five Cabinet officials had “allocables” (allocations) worth billions of pesos in the proposed 2025 national budget. **(PNA) BY DARRYL JOHN ESGUERRA**

the new election system which include easy to use, produce accurate results, among others.

“(The) technology must not be complicated. To make the process easy, it must be safe, it must be accurate and above all, easy to audit and understand by our countrymen,” Laudiangco said.

“Because of this, we will intensify our efforts in auditing ability, in accuracy, in transparency and again, people’s participation in all parts and stages of preparation.”

In the last May 2025 polls, Comelec utilized automated counting machines (ACMs) provided by Miru Systems, a Korean-based company.

It was in 2019 when the poll body, together with the Department of Information Communication Technology (DICT) and the Comelec Advisory

## DEPED CHIEF FETES ‘HERO TEACHERS,’ COMMUNITY PARTNERS

**MANILA** – Education Secretary Sonny Angara on Friday recognized teachers and community partners who have played key roles in advancing quality education in the country.

The year-end recognition was held under the Department of Education (DepEd) Heroes Awards, which honored selected teachers and education stakeholders whose contributions often take place behind the scenes.

In a statement, Angara highlighted the far-reaching impact of their dedication, saying their efforts create a “ripple effect” across public schools and communities nationwide.

“With every story we honor, we hope more acts of kindness and dedication will follow. The ripple effects of these heroes will continue into the new year, touching even more lives and communities,” he said. Among those recognized were seven teachers—Grace Bohol, Marivic Villacampa, Elmer Sugarol, Lorlda Lubao, Ma. Lourdes Rola, Mary Jane Reodica, and Erik Jims Bongon—whose stories reflect an extraordinary commitment to education.

Some of them have been travelling for hours through mud and floodwaters just to reach school and advance literacy programs, scholarship opportunities, and secure safe learning and play spaces; continued teaching while undergoing chemotherapy; and braved natural calamities such as earthquakes and flooding just to uphold learners’ safety and prevent learning disruption.

Others have also advanced the Philippine education on the international stage by leading initiatives, launching practical training for Alternative Learning System (ALS) students for future employment or

Council (CAC), last held an AES Technology Fair, where several technology providers participated. **(PNA) BY FERDINAND PATINIO**

entrepreneurship, as well as pushing for sustainable agriculture efforts to help boost school-based feeding programs.

The agency also honored “young heroes” who showed courage by helping rescue classmates during earthquakes and typhoons. These included Mark Borila, Marco Alegro, Jared Allcaya, John Vincent Teñido, and Christian Jay Maglasang of the Davao del Norte Regional Sports Academy, as well as Jayboy Magdadaro of Jubay Integrated School in Cebu.

Private stakeholders were also recognized for their contributions to the education sector, including parent-volunteers Dea Solayao, lawyer Blake Feken, and Master Mariner Capt. Edcel Viraque. Their efforts ranged from supporting storytelling programs and providing pro bono legal services to secure land titles for public schools, to building classrooms and upgrading school facilities. **(PNA) BY STEPHANIE SEVILLANO**

## DOJ VOWS STRONGER SAFEGUARDS AFTER PAYROLL OFFICER NABBED FOR FRAUD

**MANILA**–The Department of Justice (DOJ) on Monday said it would implement more stringent internal financial safeguard mechanisms after an entrapment operation uncovered a scheme by one of its employees to siphon PHP12 million in payroll funds.

“The DOJ takes very seriously the arrest of a DOJ payroll officer in connection with an alleged diversion of public funds,” DOJ spokesperson Polo Martinez said in a statement.

“We extend full cooperation to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and other authorities as they pursue the investigation.

The DOJ remains committed to transparency, accountability, and the protection of public resources, and will continue to strengthen internal controls to ensure that a similar situation does not occur in the future,” he added.

NBI spokesperson

Palmer Mallari said the DOJ referred the case to the bureau after payroll irregularities were discovered involving benefits intended for regional prosecutors.

Initial investigation showed the suspect reactivated payroll accounts of retired, resigned and inactive prosecutors and redirected the benefits to accounts linked to him.

The NBI conducted an entrapment operation on Dec. 22 at the DOJ Payroll Section in Manila after confirming that government bonuses, including the Productivity Enhancement Incentive (PEI) and Service Recognition Incentive (SRI), had been credited to the accounts linked to the suspect.

The suspect and several alleged accomplices were charged with malversation of public funds, graft, qualified theft and multiple cybercrime-related offenses. **(PNA) BY BENJAMIN PULTA**

## DOLE CITES REGION 12 LGUS’ ASSISTANCE TO 27K JOBSEEKERS, 81 JOB FAIRS

**MANILA** – The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)-Region 12 has assisted over 27,000 jobseekers at the 81 job fairs held in the region this year.

In a statement Friday, the Regional Office 12 reported that employment access across Soccsksargen in 2025 has been strengthened through the conduct of 81 job fairs, where 27,160 jobseekers were assisted, including 1,680 who were hired-on-the-spot (HOTS).

The job fairs were held in partnership with local government units (LGUs) through their Public Employment Service Offices (PESOs).

It added that a total of 1,529 employers from various industries participated, offering diverse opportunities across the region.

Officer-in-charge Regional Director Raymond Fel Sajor said job fairs held throughout the year in key cities and municipalities in the region served as a direct labor market intervention that connected jobseekers to employers from various industries, reduced job search costs, and supported faster hiring processes.

He also credited the close coordination with LGUs and PESOs for bringing employment services closer to communities, ensuring that job fairs respond to local labor market needs while promoting inclusive growth.

“Through strong partnerships with LGUs, PESOs, and government agencies, we are making employment facilitation more inclusive, accessible, and impactful,” the DOLE regional official said.

The job fairs also featured one-stop shop services in collaboration with partner government agencies, providing on-site assistance for government programs such as social protection, livelihood support, and labor rights information.

Complementing on-site job fairs, DOLE 12 continued to maximize PhilJobNet, the government’s official online labor market information portal, to expand employment reach beyond physical events.

Through PhilJobNet, jobseekers were able to search and apply for vacancies anytime, while employers efficiently posted job openings and screened applicants, strengthening year-round employment facilitation in the region. **(PNA) BY FERDINAND PATINIO**

## MOLE-BARMM GIVES AID TO COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

**COTABATO CITY** – The Ministry of Labor and Employment in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (MOLE-BARMM) has empowered eight community-based organizations by providing seed money to fund their income-generating projects, a labor official said Friday.

"The livelihood assistance was aimed at strengthening rural enterprises," MOLE-BARMM Minister Muslimin Sema said in a statement. Sema said the intervention under the Bangsamoro Rural Employment through Entrepreneurial Development (BREED) program was distributed during a recent ceremonial program at the MOLE regional office here.

Recipient groups include farmers, women, and youth associations involved in food production from the municipalities of Datu Odin Sinsuat, Talitay,

Guindulungan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, and South Upi. Each workers' association received PHP50,000 to help improve production capacity, product development, and generate additional income opportunities for their members.

Sema said the livelihood intervention was supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO-UN), represented by Helen Rojas, as part of multi-stakeholder partnerships advancing inclusive rural development in the Bangsamoro region.

"Through the BREED program, MOLE continues to support small-scale enterprises in creating decent work and contributing to inclusive economic growth, particularly in underserved areas of the region," he said. **(PNA) BY EDWIN FERNANDEZ**

## PARKING SPACE FOR PWDS IN LAOAG NOT FOR SENIORS

**LAOAG CITY** – The Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) in this city is urging commercial establishments here to observe the proper use of parking spaces for persons with disabilities (PWDs).

"A reserved PWD parking space is meant for PWDs only and not for senior citizens," Christopher King Medina, head of the PDAO, said in a media interview on Thursday after observing that there are some commercial establishments, particularly in downtown Laoag, that are not observing the PWD parking law.

Under the law's implementing rules and regulations (IRR), the accessible parking slots shall be for vehicles driven by persons with disabilities or vehicles with passengers with disabilities.

Medina said senior

citizens with mobility issues may use the parking space only if they have PWD ID.

He said PDAO is issuing a car pass or parking permit for PWDs for easier identification on the use of PWD parking spaces.

With the support of public and private stakeholders, Medina has urged more establishments to ensure that non-discriminatory parking policies are in place to provide reasonable accommodation and accessibility to all vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors.

Meanwhile, the Federated Association of PWDs in the province has reiterated the call to the public to honor the benefits and privileges for PWDs accorded to them by law, regardless of the type of disability, or whether the disability is apparent or non-apparent. **(PNA) BY LEILANIE ADRIANO**

## BACOLOD CITY DISTRIBUTES P2.4-M ALLOWANCE TO COLLEGE SCHOLARS

**BACOLOD CITY** – The city government here distributed PHP2.44 million worth of financial assistance to its college scholars under the Public Employment Service Office (PESO) on Wednesday.

The beneficiaries, who are students of various private colleges and universities in the city, each received PHP3,000 for the first semester of the School Year 2025-2026.

In a statement on Thursday, PESO-Bacolod coordinator Jovelyn Canoy, who supervised the payout, reminded the scholars to show appreciation for the city's assistance by following the scholarship program guidelines and continuing to serve the community.

"This is a privilege and a responsibility," she added. Starting this school year, each PESO scholar is entitled to receive an allowance of PHP3,000 per semester to supplement the tuition subsidy released by the city government to their respective schools.

Mayor Greg Gasataya said he hopes the financial aid could provide for the immediate academic and personal needs of the scholars during the Christmas holidays.

"By supporting education more, we choose a future where no Bacolodnon child's potential is held hostage by social status or circumstance," he added. **(PNA) BY NANETTE GUADALQUIVER**

## GOV'T CONDONES P87.5-M DEBT OF CLOSE TO 1.8K ARBS IN GUIMARAS

**ILOILO CITY** – The government's condonation program freed from debt 1,762 agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) in Guimaras this year.

The 1,803 Certificates of Condonation with Release of Mortgage (COCROMs) for 1,762 ARBs will be distributed in a major ceremony, together with the turnover of 1,050 electronic titles under the Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titles Project, on Jan. 11, 2026.

The condoned amount totalling PHP87.51 million covers an area of 2,161.92 hectares.

Guimaras Agrarian Reform Program Officer Lourdes Novilla, in an interview on Wednesday, said that a ceremonial distribution for certificates of land ownership award (CLOAs), electronic titles and COCROMs, was held on Monday as a prelude to the major event next month.

"Upon the directive of Secretary Conrado Estrella III, we have to do the ceremonial distribution to show our agrarian reform beneficiaries that we are serious in delivering our

2025 targets," she said. Novilla said that part of their commitment in 2025 was to deliver 1,050 electronic titles, covering the area of 1,310 hectares and 680 agrarian reform beneficiaries.

During the ceremonial distribution at their provincial office on Dec. 22, they only released 10 titles, covering more or less 20 hectares, and three certificates of condonation, amounting to PHP149,223.65.

"It was only ceremonial because it is part of the portion of the titles which we will distribute come this January. We would like to tell the beneficiaries that, eventually, for this year, your certificates of land ownership award will be distributed to you," Novilla said.

The distribution was graced by DAR Assistant Secretary Quintin Magsico Jr.

Novilla also said that right now, they are already distributing individual titles, instead of the CLOAs for ARBs to enjoy ownership of their land. **(PNA) BY PERLA LENA**

## CDO FINALIZES PLANS FOR 2026 BLACK NAZARENE TRASLACION

**CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY** – City officials have finalized traffic and security plans for the annual Black Nazarene "Traslacion" observance next month, anticipating large crowds.

Nonito Oclarit, head of the Roads and Traffic Administration, said Thursday that routing schemes are crucial to prevent traffic problems during the Jan. 9, 2026, religious procession.

"The vigils at night (Jan. 8) will be continuous this year, unlike in the previous year, which had a curfew," Oclarit said in a radio interview.

The Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro, city departments and police coordinated on the plans this week. The local government expects an influx of devotees from the city and neighboring provinces.

Last year's event drew an estimated 13,000 people to the city's major streets.

Less garbage, firecracker use

Meanwhile, city officials

reported less garbage and reduced firecracker activity Thursday morning following Christmas celebrations.

Elvisa Mabelin, officer-in-charge of the City Local Environment and Natural Resources Office, said early garbage collection starting at 3 a.m. helped keep major roads and markets clear.

"It is less messy now, unlike the previous years, but we are still hoping that vendors will also cooperate by properly gathering the garbage before collection," Mabelin said in a radio interview. She credited public awareness from sustained information campaigns.

Nick Jabagat, head of the City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Department, said firecracker use was also down, though he warned it could increase for New Year's celebrations.

"We are still urging the public to avoid using illegal fireworks," he said. **(PNA) BY NEF LUCZON**

## MARITIME TRAINING CENTER OPENS ENROLLMENT FOR 56 COURSES IN 2026

**TACLOBAN CITY** – The National Maritime Polytechnic (NMP) has opened enrollment for 56 maritime training courses scheduled for the first half of 2026 to strengthen Filipino seafarers' competencies.

The lineup includes 22 mandatory Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Convention courses and 34 non-mandatory programs, with 32 courses offered free to qualified trainees.

"NMP reiterates its attendance policy, stressing that trainees who fail to attend the first session of any paid course will be delisted and may apply for re-enrollment in a later schedule," the agency said in a statement Wednesday.

Participants in free

programs who miss the first session will be barred from re-enrolling for one year.

Trainees can enroll online or at NMP offices in Tacloban City and Makati City.

The NMP said it trained 22,741 seafarers this year as of Dec. 5, its highest annual total since its 1983 founding. It attributed the increase to larger class sizes, additional training batches, and expanded partnerships.

About 87 percent of its trainees secure maritime jobs, with 97 percent of those working in the international seafaring industry, it said. The Philippines supplies an estimated 25 percent to 30 percent of the global maritime workforce. **(PNA) BY ROEL AMAZONA**

## BOI ENDORSES P125B WORTH OF INVESTMENT PROJECTS

**MANILA** – The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has endorsed 29 investment projects worth PHP124.81 billion through the Board of Investments (BOI).

BOI, in a press release Thursday, said these projects are expected to generate around 4,444 jobs around the country, which are in various industries such as renewable energy (RE), infrastructure, transport and logistics, information technology-business process management (IT-BPM), housing, manufacturing and tourism-related developments.

DTI Secretary Cristina Roque said these endorsements show the agency's "commitment to delivering tangible economic outcomes for Filipinos, even as the year comes to a close."

"The steady flow of investments endorsed by the BOI shows that we remain fully engaged in creating jobs and sustaining economic momentum. We are working relentlessly to

ensure that investments translate into opportunities for Filipino workers and communities," she said as quoted in a press release.

Roque noted that although the approvals for the year has reached around PHP977 billion, the BOI is still evaluating several big-ticket items, which are now "undergoing due diligence and are expected to further boost the country's overall investment performance as the year ends and into the next."

"The DTI-BOI remains unwavering in ensuring that investment commitments translate into real impact such as more jobs, stronger industries, and expanded opportunities for Filipinos. Through sustained reforms and proactive investment facilitation, the agency continues to 'Make It Happen in the Philippines' by driving a steady flow of high-impact and strategic investments," the DTI said referring to the government's international campaign to attract investments. (With a report from **JOANN VILLANUEVA/PNA**) **BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**

## FOREIGN CURRENCY DEPOSIT UNITS LOANS DROP 5% IN Q3

**MANILA** – Loans extended by banks' foreign currency deposit units (FCDUs) slipped by 5 percent in the third quarter of 2025, slowdown an economist attributed to growing risk aversion among borrowers.

Data released by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) on Monday showed that FCDU loans totaled USD13.13 billion from July to September, down from USD15.93 billion in the previous quarter.

Around 63.4 percent of the funds were extended to Philippine borrowers at USD9.59 billion while the remaining was extended to non-residents.

Of the funds extended to local borrowers, 26.2 percent or USD2.51 billion

went to merchandise and service exporters, 21.4 percent or about USD2.05 billion to towing, tanker, trucking, forwarding, personal and other industries, and 17.8 percent or USD1.71 billion to power generation firms.

The BSP said nearly 79.8 percent of the loans were medium- to long-term, with maturities exceeding one year.

"As of end-September 2025, outstanding loans reflected USD9.77 billion in new loans and USD10.56 billion in loan payments made during the reference quarter," it said.

As of end-September this year, FCDU loans fell 3.9 percent "despite the 5.7 percent growth in deposits in foreign currencies, which

## PEZA SURPASSES 2025 TARGET, EYES P300-B FOR 2026

**MANILA** – The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) surpassed its PHP250 billion investment target this year after hitting PHP260.89 billion, up 21.91 percent from the previous year's PHP214.18 billion, and the highest since 2016.

PEZA Director General Tereso Panga, as quoted in a press release on Wednesday, said their 2025 approvals are now the sixth highest for the agency, achieved "despite global headwinds and economic challenges."

"PEZA has defied the odds as it sustained its upward investment growth trajectory, anchored on the continued trust and confidence of investors in the Philippines, and most especially, in our ecozones," he said.

With this, Panga said they now aim for PHP300 billion worth of investment approvals next year.

The approvals this year covered 314 new and expansion projects, up by 23.14 percent compared to the 255 projects in 2024, and are into manufacturing, information

technology – business process management (IT-BPM), logistics, utilities, facilities, domestic market enterprises, tourism, and economic zone development.

Of the total, 41 big-ticket items are worth PHP210.9 billion, PEZA data show.

All these projects are projected to produce up to USD11.52 billion worth of export revenues and 78,741 direct jobs.

During the PEZA Board's last meeting for the year on Dec. 22, it approved seven new and expansion projects worth PHP23.69 billion, which are expected to create 3,821 direct jobs and produce USD1.304 billion worth of exports.

Three of these projects are big-ticket investments worth PHP23.12 billion, including an ultra-luxury hotel brand.

Aside from the PEZA-approved projects, the press release said, the PEZA Board, headed by Trade and Industry Secretary Cristina Roque, also okayed PHP29.62 billion worth of investments during the meeting.

"Building on this momentum, we remain focused on strengthening our ecozone ecosystem, expanding high-quality investments, and creating more jobs for Filipinos, as we position PEZA for sustained growth and greater opportunities in the years ahead," Panga said. New ecozones Panga also thanked the Marcos administration for its approval of the creation of 10 new and expanded ecozones this year.

"There are still 14 ecozones in the pipeline, ready for proclamation. And, as more ecozones are proclaimed by the President, like that of the first Mega Ecozone in Iwahig, Palawan and a Pacific gateway in Pantao, Albay, we are confident that the influx of investments and expansion of projects at PEZA will continue. Locators are seeing the value of expanding and consolidating their supply chains in the Philippines," he added. (With a report from **JOANN VILLANUEVA/PNA**)

## BSP FORECASTS BOP DEFICIT UNTIL 2026

**MANILA** – Weaker trade-in-goods is attributed to the forecast deficit in the Philippines' balance of payments (BOP) position until 2026, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said Friday.

Data released by the central bank showed that as of end-September this year, the country's overall BOP position, which is the sum of its total trade with the rest of the world, stood at a deficit of USD5.3 billion, or about -1.5 percent of domestic output.

The actual figure is lower than the projection of the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board (MB) of a USD6.9 billion deficit. For the whole of this year, the projected deficit is seen to reach USD6.2 billion, while it is a deficit of around USD5.9 billion for 2026.

The deficit in the country's BOP position is a reversal of the situation in the past, which the BSP, in a statement, traces to "continued current account shortfall arising from a sustained trade-in-goods gap and weaker services receipts."

It also said that "foreign direct investments and external loans have also moderated amid lingering global policy uncertainty." "Goods trade is expected to remain soft, shaped by weaker global demand, easing commodity prices, and slower domestic growth momentum. Frontloading in anticipation of the US tariffs in the first half of the year has helped provide a temporary boost to merchandise exports in 2025," it said, but noted that "structural constraints—including logistical bottlenecks, skills mismatches, and high input costs — also continue to weigh on export competitiveness."

BSP said growth of services exports is seen to post slower growth due to higher costs for the business process outsourcing (BPO) and the tourism sectors.

"Meanwhile, overseas Filipino (OF) remittances are expected to remain resilient, supported by strong global labor demand and the sustained use of formal transfer channels, with the impending US tax on remittances expected to pose minimal impact," it noted.

Slower growth is also expected for foreign

direct investments (FDIs) "reflecting cautious market sentiment and heightened global financial volatility."

In the medium term, FDIs are expected to be bolstered by the passage of the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises to Maximize Opportunities for Reinvigorating the Economy (CREATE MORE) Act, the Capital Markets Efficiency Promotion Act (CMEPA), the Investors' Lease Act, Enhanced Fiscal Regime for Large-Scale Metallic Mining Act and new initiatives on digital connectivity such as the Konektadong Pinoy Act.

"This underscores the importance for the national government (NG) to implement these laws in a timely and effective manner," the BSP said.

The country's US dollar reserves, or the gross international reserves (GIR), are, in turn, forecast to "remain adequate, providing a strong buffer against external liquidity risks."

Citing initial results from the early warning systems (EWS) on currency crisis and debt sustainability, BSP said the country "remains resilient to external shocks as of Q4 2025."

"Manageable external financing needs and ample level of reserves continue to support external sector resilience," it said, as it assures the public that the central bank "will continue to engage proactively with external stakeholders and promote macroeconomic stability, closely monitoring emerging risks that impact the external sector."

Amidst the outlook for BOP deficit until next year, Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC) chief economist Michael Ricafort said this situation "could still support relatively stable peso exchange rate."

"Important market lead: If anti-corruption measures/reform and policy priority of further improvement in governance standards are taken seriously, as these remain the missing link to boost confidence by investors on the economy and financial markets, especially FDIs and foreign portfolio investments," he told the Philippines News Agency. (PNA) **BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**



## POC CHIEF: TEAM PH'S OLYMPIC RISE JUST GETTING STARTED

**MANILA** – The Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) is ending 2025 on a high and heading into 2026 with even bigger ambitions.

POC president Abraham “Bambol” Tolentino said Filipino athletes delivered more than enough reason for optimism, pointing to a year defined not just by medals, but by wins in sports that truly matter on the global stage.

“There will be more competitions overseas and more historic achievements to come for Team Philippines in 2026,” Tolentino said, fresh from a campaign that underscored the country’s growing strength in Olympic disciplines.

Tolentino drew particular pride from Team Philippines’ performance in the recently-concluded 33rd Southeast Asian Games in Thailand.

While the country finished sixth overall with 50 gold medals, he stressed that the medals came largely from Olympic sports, an indicator, he said, of long-term international competitiveness.

“Those are what mattered the most, the gold medals from Olympic sports,” Tolentino said.

A Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) analysis, citing Vietnamese outlet vnexpress.net, showed that the Philippines tied Singapore for the highest percentage of gold medals won in Olympic sports among the 11 participating nations.

Singapore placed fifth overall with 52 golds, 20 of them from aquatics, while the Philippines collected Olympic golds in athletics (five), swimming (three), gymnastics (three), triathlon (three), and modern pentathlon (three).

Filipino athletes also struck gold in women’s football, men’s baseball, tennis through Alex Eala, beach

volleyball, basketball (two), judo (two), skateboarding (two), softball (two), taekwondo (two), rowing, sailing, short-track speed skating, weightlifting, and wrestling.

Thailand topped the medal table with 233 golds, but in Olympic events, it ranked fifth with a 64-percent share, behind Indonesia and Singapore at 65 percent.

“And that’s where many of the points are—the Olympic goal,” Tolentino said.

Behind the momentum, Tolentino credited improved coordination with government sports agencies.

“Now, we’re working together with the PSC [Philippine Sports Commission] in a harmonious way,” he said.

The upward trajectory, he added, extends beyond the SEA Games.

Team Philippines bagged seven gold medals at the Bahrain Asian Youth Games, two silvers and two bronzes at the Chengdu World Games and made history at the Ninth Asian Winter Games in Harbin with a men’s curling gold.

“That made us,” Tolentino said, referring to the Harbin triumph, “the first in an international winter sports competition not only by the Philippines but for Southeast Asia.”

Looking ahead, Tolentino acknowledged a packed and demanding calendar: the Milano Cortina Winter Olympics from Feb. 6 to 22, Sanya Asian Beach Games from April 22 to 30 and Aichi-Nagoya 20th Asian Games in Japan from Sept. 19 to Oct. 4 next year.

“It will be challenging this time as we will be competing in three Asian multi-sports events and we have also the Milano Winter Games and then the Youth Olympic Games,” he said.

“Our athletes and national sports associations are improving every year and I’m so happy to see that.”

The schedule also includes the Dakar Youth Olympic Games from Oct. 31 to Nov. 13, the first Olympic Games to be staged in Africa, and the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in Riyadh.

For Tolentino, the mission is clear and unwavering.

“All for the Filipino athlete, all for Philippine sports,” he said. **(PNA) BY DARRYL JOHN ESGUERRA**

## PH TO HOST KARATE ONE-YOUTH LEAGUE IN 2026

**MANILA** – The Philippines will host the third leg of the Karate One-Youth League on May 14-17, 2026 at the SM Mall of Asia Arena.

The Karate One-Youth League, a tournament for athletes 14-17 years old, will kick off in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates (Feb. 12-15) followed by the Harare (Zimbabwe) leg on March 27-29.

The other legs are in Porec, Croatia (July 2-5), Guadalajara, Mexico (Sept. 17-21), and Venice, Italy (Dec. 10-13).

A National Championships will be staged in Tagaytay, Cavite in March to select the athletes for the world-class competition.

“We can’t say for now since most of them will be competing for the first in a high-caliber championships,” Karate Pilipinas president Richard Lim said in an interview Thursday when asked about the medal chances of Filipino athletes.

An estimated 100 countries are expected to join the Karate One-Youth League,

## DILAO TWINS MARCH TO QUARTERFINALS OF MAC’S CRANK IT TENNIS

**MANILA** – Dilao twins Frank Nhiele and France Vhiele scored contrasting wins Sunday to reach the boys’ U18 quarterfinal round in the MAC’s Crank It junior tennis at Olivarez Sports Center in Paranaque City.

The top-ranked Frank Nhiele blanked Jaren Joachim Quintana, 6-0, 6-0, to advance against No. 8 Jaime Reyes, who prevailed over Nathan Ezekiel Andal, 4-6, 6-1, 10-2.

The second-seeded France Vhiele, on the other hand, survived Elijah Okano, 6-1, 4-6, 10-8, to arrange a quarterfinal duel

with Miguel Ricardo Lagac III, who eliminated No. 5 Rafa Monte De Ramos, 6-2, 2-6, 12-10.

Fourth seed Julio Yñigo Naredo demolished Shinglee Cai, 6-0, 6-0, to advance against No. 7 Fitzmichael Karl, a 6-4, 6-3 winner over Luri Cua.

Meanwhile, Monte De Ramos bounced back in the U16 category where he is the No. 2 seed, beating Rafaello Munozco, 6-3, 3-6, 13-11, to likewise reach the quarterfinal round of the Group 2 event sanctioned by the Philippine Tennis Association.

Other winners were fourth seed Naredo over Tristan

Araneta, 6-1, 6-2; fifth seed Anthony Castigador over Andal, 6-0, 6-2; and Jan Caleb Villeno over John Enzo Fernand Masaga, 6-4, 6-3.

In the girls’ division, second seed Cadee Jan Dagoon conquered Kate Louise Violet Dee, 4-6, 6-3, 13-11, to reach the U16 quarterfinals with No. 3 Maria Astrid Cablitas, No. 4 Catrice Natasha Gabriel, No. 5 Leanne Amanda Barrido, No. 6 Talitha Lopez, No. 7 Jasmine Xyrl Solis, Julieanne Kylie Cautivo, and Ella Mhae Paglalunan. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**

## DISCUS THROWER RICAFORTE EYES BETTER PERFORMANCE IN 2026

**MANILA** – Ateneo de Manila University student Russel Je Ricaforte has proven why he deserves to be a part of the national team.

The 5-foot-10 discus thrower bagged a bronze medal at the 33rd Southeast Asian Games where he registered 53.54 meters, behind Malaysia’s Muhammad Irfan Shamshuddin (60.23)

and Thailand’s Kiadpradid Srisai (53.82).

“It was amazing, I’m really happy that I took home the bronze medal. It was an honor standing on the podium and seeing the Philippine flag on the screen. It was a surreal moment,” the 25-year-old Ricaforte said in an interview Thursday.

At the ICTSI Philippine Athletics Championships, one of the qualifiers for the country’s representatives to the SEA Games, he won the gold medal with a throw of 47.17 meters to beat national athlete Ed Delaña (47.07) and Malaysia University’s Kamal Farhan bin Abdul Rahman (46.42).

Three months later, Ricaforte made headlines after setting a new national record of 54.14 meters in the Philippine Athletics Track and Field Association (PATAFA) Weekly Relays at the PhilSports in Pasig City.

He broke the 34-year-old record of Fidel Repizo (52.10m) established at the

the Karate One-Youth League.

Under Administrative Order No. 38, which was signed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. On Oct. 29, PSC chief Patrick “Pato” Gregorio will serve as chairman of the NST-IAC with his counterparts from the Department of Tourism as vice-chairperson.

Members are the Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Budget and Management, Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority and Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**

1991 Manila SEA Games.

“My plan for 2026 is to continue the momentum we got from this year. The next target is to break the record once again and also reach 60 meters,” said the Davao City-born Ricaforte, who is taking up a master’s degree in business administration.

He is a physical education graduate from the University of Perpetual Help in Las Piñas.

Coach Arniel Ferrera was satisfied with Ricaforte’s performance.

“I’m happy, as expected, he won a medal in his first SEA Games. Our target was 55m target but in the second round, Russel had muscle cramps, so we lost. It would have been an easy silver but we are all good with his performance,” commented the four-time gold medalist and three-time record-holder in hammer throw at the SEA Games.

“We’ll work harder and smarter for the 60 meters. We’re looking forward to the Asian Games and the Asian Throwing Championships in Korea,” Ferrera, who has been monitoring Ricaforte’s training since 2023, added.

Overall, the Philippines ranked fourth with five gold, seven silver and 19 bronze medals, behind Thailand (13-13-4), Vietnam (12-12-11), and Indonesia (9-5-7). Malaysia was fifth (5-4-6) in Thailand SEA Games.

The Philippines improved its 4-10-8 tally in Cambodia (2023) and 5-7-14 haul in Vietnam (2021). When it hosted the SEA Games in 2019, the Philippines had an impressive 11-8-8 medal tally. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**