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TWO SUSPECTS ARRESTED AS BACOOR POLICE PURSUE OTHERS IN SHOOTING INCIDENT IN BRGY ZAPOTE BEFORE YEAR ENDS

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite

— The Bacoor Police have launched a hot pursuit operation following a fatal shooting that occurred at around 2:30 PM on December 31, 2025, along Aguinaldo Highway,

Barangay Zapote 2, Bacoor City, Cavite.

According to PLTCOL ALEXIE A DESAMITO, Chief of Police, Bacoor CCPS, upon careful review of facts, circumstantial evidence, and physical evidence at hand, the investigation led to the identification of six suspects, all residents of Barangay Zapote 1, Bacoor City, Cavite: alias "NATHAN", arrested on December 31, 2025; alias "OMAR", arrested on January 1, 2026 and four (4) other cohorts. The victim, alias "IAN," a resident of Barangay Maliksi 2, Bacoor City, was declared dead after sustaining multiple gunshot wounds.

Initial investigation revealed that personnel from the City Inspection and Compliance Unit (CICU) / Public Safety Department of the Bacoor City LGU were conducting clearing operations at Zapote Market when a suspect described as a tall, slim male wearing a green hooded jacket was seen trailing the team on foot. The victim, driving a white Mitsubishi L300 FB service vehicle of the Public Safety Department, was stuck in traffic when he was suddenly shot multiple times. The assailant immediately fled southbound.

On January 1, 2026, around 3:00 PM, joint personnel of the Cavite Police Provincial Office Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) and the Bacoor Component City Police Station conducted a hot pursuit operation in Barangay Zapote 1, resulting in the arrest of suspect Omar. Recovered from his possession was one (1) fired bullet, suspected to be linked to the gunman's firearm.

The fired bullet will undergo cross-matching examination against the recovered cartridge from the crime scene by the Cavite Provincial Forensic Unit.

Hot pursuit operations remain ongoing, with police units conducting area canvassing, dragnet operations, and coordination with adjacent police stations, while closely monitoring possible escape routes to identify and arrest the remaining suspects. The crime scene was secured to preserve all possible evidence, with the assistance of Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCO) for technical and forensic examination. Investigators continue interviews, witness locating, backtracking operations, and CCTV review to reconstruct the events and facilitate the swift apprehension of all involved.

In a statement, PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director of the Cavite Provincial Police Office, emphasized the commitment of the police force:

"We assure the public that the Cavite Provincial Police Office is exerting all necessary efforts to swiftly identify, locate, and arrest the perpetrators of this heinous act. We are closely coordinating with concerned units and local government partners to ensure that justice is served and public safety is maintained."

The Cavite Provincial Police Office assures the public that all efforts are being exerted to resolve this incident and bring all perpetrators to justice. Further updates will be provided as the investigation progresses.

CAVITE SEES DROP IN NEW YEAR-RELATED INCIDENTS

CITY OF IMUS, Cavite (PIA)

— The province of Cavite recorded a decline in holiday-related incidents during the New Year celebrations, according to data from the Cavite Police Provincial Office (PPO).

Acting Provincial Director Col. Ariel Red reported a sharp drop in firecracker- and pyrotechnics-related injuries. Data from the Ligtas Paskuhan campaign showed a

75-percent decrease in incidents, from 36 cases in 2024 to just eight in 2025.

All recorded cases involved firecracker- and pyrotechnics-related injuries. The Cavite PPO reported no incidents of indiscriminate firing, stray bullets, road crashes, or fires linked to fireworks and pyrotechnic devices.

Col. Red attributed the peaceful celebration to the combined efforts of law enforcers, local

government units, and the public.

"The remarkable decrease in incidents during the New Year's celebration is proof of the effective implementation of the laws and the cooperation of the people," he said, adding that public discipline played a crucial role in ensuring safety across the province.

The Cavite PPO also cited intensified operations against illegal firecrackers

and loose firearms, heightened police visibility, and close coordination with local government units and the Caviteño community as key factors behind the positive outcome.

The provincial police force extended its gratitude to partner agencies, LGUs, and residents for their continued support in maintaining peace and order. (RBF, PIA Cavite)

BY RUEL FRANCISCO



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PROVINCIAL LEVEL MOST WANTED, ARRESTED BY AMADEO PNP

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite—The warrant personnel of Amadeo Municipal Police Station arrested a Provincial Level Most Wanted Person wanted for the crime of Frustrated Murder on 3:30 PM of January 5, 2026. PMAJ JULIUS R MARQUEZ, Chief of Police of Amadeo MPS, identified the accused as alias Jake, a resident of Amadeo, Cavite.

The Warrant Section of Amadeo Municipal Police Station arrested the accused thru National Police Clearance System verification for the crime of Frustrated Murder issued on July 21, 2025 by the Presiding Judge of Regional Trial Court, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 19, Bacoor City, Cavite with recommended bail of Php 200,000.00 for his provisional liberty. Furthermore, the operation was recorded using an

Alternative Recording Device (ARD)..

The suspect is currently detained at Amadeo MPS, and the warrant of arrest will be formally returned to the issuing court for proper disposition.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director lauded the success of the operation and gave assurance to the public. Our team in Amadeo demonstrated professionalism, patience, and precision, a qualities we expect from every Caviteño police officer. "This arrest is a clear reminder that accountability always finds its way, no matter how long someone tries to evade it. Each successful arrest of a wanted person strengthens public trust and ensures that justice continues to move forward. Cavite PNP remains steadfast in our mission to protect our communities and uphold the law with integrity and compassion" he added.

REGIONAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON ARRESTED BY ROSARIO PNP

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite – In an intensified campaign against wanted person, personnel of Rosario Municipal Police Station arrested a Regional Level Most Wanted Person on January 4, 2026, along Gen. Trias Drive, Rosario, Cavite.

PLTCOL ARDIE O BAGAMAN, Chief of Police of Rosario Municipal Police Station, identified the arrested person as alias PAENG, male and a resident of Rosario, Cavite. The arrest was conducted by virtue of a warrant of arrest for two (2) counts of Violation of Section 12, Article II of Republic Act No. 9165 issued on July 31, 2025 by the Presiding

Judge of the Regional Trial Court, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 88, Cavite City, with no bail recommended (service of sentence).

After his arrest, the accused was brought to the Rosario MPS Custodial Facility for proper detention and documentation. The warrant of arrest will be returned to the court of origin for appropriate disposition.

In his statement, PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director underscored that the arrest is a reminder that justice is pursued patiently and persistently. "Law enforcement is not always about speed, but about consistency and resolve.

INDANG POLICE SERVES WARRANT OF ARREST AGAINST PROVINCIAL-LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite — The Indang Municipal Police Station (MPS) successfully served a Warrant of Arrest against a Provincial-Level Most Wanted Person at about 4:35 PM on January 3, 2026, at the Custodial Facility of Indang MPS, Brgy. Poblacion 3, Indang, Cavite.

PMAJ IAN JASPER M. MONTOYA, Officer-in-Charge of Indang MPS, identified the suspect as alias "GIGI," a resident of Dasmariñas City, Cavite, who is currently detained at the Indang Custodial Facility and facing other charges.

The arrest was carried out in line with the Simultaneous Anti-Criminality Law Enforcement Operations (SACLEO) by personnel of Indang MPS as the lead unit, under the direct supervision of PMAJ Montoya, in coordination with PIU-PSOG and CIDG Cavite.

The accused was lawfully arrested through a duly recorded operation using an Alternative Recording Device (ARD) by virtue of a Warrant of Arrest for Violation of Batas Pambansa Blg. 22, issued

by the Acting Judge of the Metropolitan Trial Court, Branch LXXXVII, National Capital Judicial Region, Parañaque City, dated January 11, 2021, with recommended bail fixed at Php 54,000.00; Php 120,000.00; and Php 12,000.00.

The accused remains under custody at the Indang Custodial Facility for proper disposition, while the served warrant of arrest will be returned to the court of origin.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director of the Cavite Provincial Police Office, commended the operating units, stating: "The arrest of provincial-level most wanted persons reflects the Cavite PPO's unwavering resolve to enforce the law and hold offenders accountable. We will continue to intensify our operations against all wanted individuals to ensure justice, maintain public order, and uphold the safety of our communities." The Cavite PPO remains steadfast in its mission to sustain peace and order through intensified law enforcement operations and strong inter-agency coordination across the province.

TERNATE PNP ARRESTED PROVINCIAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite – A Provincial Level Most Wanted Person was arrested by the personnel of Ternate Municipal Police Station at about 10:15 AM on January 4, 2026, following the service of a warrant of arrest in Ternate, Cavite.

PMAJ HENRY A SALAZAR, Chief of Police of Ternate Municipal Police Station identified the accused as alias ANDOY, male, and a resident of Ternate, Cavite.

Even after time has passed, we make sure that individuals with standing warrants are located and held accountable. This reflects our responsibility to the victims, the community, and the justice system," PCOL RED said.

The arrest was conducted by the personnel of Ternate Municipal Police Station during a focused operation against wanted persons in the area. The operation resulted in the apprehension of the accused for Violation of Section 5(b), Article III of Republic Act No. 7610 (Lascivious Conduct) by virtue of a warrant of arrest issued on May 18, 2023 by the Presiding Judge of the Regional Trial Court, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 15, Naic, Cavite.

Following the service of the warrant, the accused was informed of the nature of the charges against him and of his constitutional rights. He is currently under the custody of the Ternate Municipal Police Station, while the warrant of arrest will be returned to the court of origin for proper disposition.

RANK NO. 10 PROVINCIAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON, ARESTADO NG CIDG CAVITE AT TRECE POLICE

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite — Matagumpay na naaresto ng mga tauhan ng CIDG Cavite Provincial Field Unit (PFU) at Trece Martires City Police Station ang Rank No. 10 Provincial Level Most Wanted Person ng Cavite PPO sa Imus City, Cavite, dakong 11:00 ng umaga ng Enero 3, 2026.

Kinilala ni PLTCOL DENNIS A VILLANUEVA, ACOP TMCCPS, ang akusado na si alias PAUL, residente ng Imus City, Cavite.

Ang pag-aresto ay isinagawa sa ilalim ng

"OPLAN PAGTUGIS" ng Tracker Team ng CIDG Cavite PFU (lead unit) katuwang ang Trece CPS sa bisa ng Warrant of Arrest para sa krimeng ANTI-FENCING LAW OF 1979 (PD 1612) na may kaugnayan sa R.A. 8369.

Sa kanyang pahayag, sinabi ni PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director ng Cavite Police Provincial Office, "Ang pagkakaaresto sa Rank No. 10 Provincial Level Most Wanted Person ay patunay ng pinaigting na operasyon ng Cavite PPO, katuwang ang CIDG, laban sa mga kriminal."

RANK 5 MUNICIPAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON ARRESTED BY NOVELETA POLICE

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite- Police personnel of Noveleta Municipal Police Station arrested a Rank 5 Municipal Level Most Wanted Person at about 2:00 PM January 2, 2026, in General Trias City, Cavite.

PMAJ MARK ANTHONY D SARNO, Officer-in-Charge of Noveleta Municipal Police Station identified the suspect as alias Jay, a resident of General Trias

In his statement, PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director stressed that the arrest highlights the police's continued commitment to protect the community, particularly the vulnerable. "The arrest of wanted persons, regardless of age or status, reflects our commitment to ensure accountability under the law. We will continue to enforce the law firmly yet humanely, while upholding due process and respect for human rights," PCOL RED said.

City, Cavite.

The arrest was conducted through a manhunt charlie operation resulting in the apprehension of the accused for Viol. Of Sec 5 (B) of RA 7610 for lascivious Conduct (2), and Unjust Vexation in Rel. to Ra 7610 (2) with bail recommended of Php 120,000 each for lascivious Conduct(2) and Php 3,000 each for Unjust Vexation(2), as ordered by the RTC Br 111 Bacoor City, Cavite on the 6th day of May 2024 at Bacoor City, Cavite. The suspect is currently detained at the custodial facility of Noveleta MPS.

According to PCOL ARIEL R RED, Acting Provincial Director, "Our police officers remain relentless in serving warrants, especially against individuals who continue to pose a threat to community safety," he said, adding that the Cavite police will sustain focused operations to ensure safer neighborhoods and uphold the rule of law.

DOLE CALABARZON ADVANCES INCLUSIVE LABOR INTERVENTIONS, REACHING OVER 300K BENEFICIARIES

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) —Through sustained investments in employment generation, livelihood development, and emergency response, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)-CALABARZON strengthened labor market resilience in 2025 by extending targeted assistance to over 300,000 workers and families, particularly those affected by displacement, informality, and climate-related disasters.

In line with national labor and employment priorities, the regional office released approximately P2.13 billion in employment, livelihood, and emergency assistance to address both immediate income needs and long-term economic recovery. These interventions were strategically designed to expand access to work opportunities, strengthen self-employment, and protect vulnerable workers across the CALABARZON Region.

DOLE Regional Director Erwin N. Aquino, during the agency's general assembly, underscored that these accomplishments were the result of shared responsibility and institutional collaboration, emphasizing that the region's achievements reflect a commitment to excellence grounded in teamwork, innovation, and integrity.

A cornerstone of the region's livelihood initiatives was the implementation of the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP), which provided P78.50 million in assistance to 4,665 beneficiaries, including 505 parents and guardians of child laborers. The program supported the establishment and enhancement of micro-

enterprises through the provision of starter capital, tools, and production inputs, enabling beneficiaries to pursue sustainable income-generating activities and reduce household vulnerability.

Complementing these livelihood efforts, the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged Workers (TUPAD) program served as the region's primary employment safety net. In 2025, TUPAD provided temporary wage employment to 312,400 displaced, underemployed, and disadvantaged workers, with total wage assistance amounting to approximately P1.78 billion. Beneficiaries were engaged in community-based projects implemented in close coordination with local government units, ensuring that employment interventions also contributed to local development priorities.

DOLE CALABARZON further intensified its emergency employment response to assist workers and families affected by Typhoons Crising, Dante, and Emong. Through TUPAD, nearly P99 million was allocated to provide short-term employment to 12,120 disaster-affected individuals across Batangas, Rizal, Quezon, Cavite, and Laguna. Beneficiaries participated in clean-up, rehabilitation, and recovery activities for a minimum of ten days and received wages based on the region's highest prevailing minimum wage. To support post-disaster recovery efforts, livelihood assistance under the DILP was likewise expanded, with P11.78 million released to benefit 1,168 affected individuals. The provision of livelihood starter kits and tools enabled families

DASMARIÑAS PNP SUCCESSFULLY SERVES WARRANT OF ARREST AGAINST WANTED PERSON

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite — Personnel of the Dasmariñas Component City Police Station successfully served a Warrant of Arrest against a wanted person at around 3:00 PM on January 01, 2026, at the PNP Custodial Facility, Barangay Buro I, Dasmariñas City, Cavite.

PLTCOL REGINO L OÑATE, Chief of Police, identified the accused as alias "WILFRED," a resident of Victoria Reyes, Dasmariñas City, Cavite. The warrant of arrest was issued for Violation of Section 5, Paragraph 1 in relation to Section 26, Article II of Republic Act 9165, and Direct

to restore or establish income-generating activities, reinforcing household resilience and contributing to community-level recovery.

The effective implementation of these programs was anchored on strong coordination with local government units, partner agencies, and community stakeholders, ensuring that assistance was delivered in a timely, targeted, and responsive manner. This collaborative approach enabled DOLE CALABARZON to align emergency interventions with broader, long-term development objectives.

As 2026 ushers in, DOLE CALABARZON reaffirms its steadfast commitment to advancing inclusive labor and employment policies by expanding access to decent work, strengthening sustainable livelihood systems, and enhancing social protection mechanisms that empower workers and their families across the CALABARZON Region. (CCM/PIA4A) **BY CECILIA MALOLES**

Assault (Article 148 of the Revised Penal Code) with Attempted Murder, issued and signed by the Presiding Judge of the Regional Trial Court, Branch 128, Fourth Judicial Region, Dasmariñas City, dated November 27, 2025.

No bail was recommended for the violation of RA9165, while a bail amounting to Php 72,000.00 was recommended for the charge of Direct Assault with Attempted Murder.

The service of the warrant was properly documented through the use of a Body-Worn Camera (BWC) and an Alternative Recording Device (ARD) to ensure transparency and accountability during the police operation.

"The successful service of this warrant of arrest underscores the Cavite PPO's firm commitment to the relentless pursuit of wanted persons, regardless of their status or location. We assure the public that our police units will continue to intensify law enforcement operations to uphold the rule of law and ensure the safety and security of our communities," said PCOL ARIEL R. RED, Provincial Director, Cavite Provincial Police Office.

The accused is currently detained at the PNP Custodial Facility of Dasmariñas City Jail for another offense involving RA 9165. The served warrant of arrest will be returned to the court of origin for proper documentation and legal proceedings.

The Cavite Provincial Police Office reiterates its commitment to sustaining peace and order through proactive law enforcement and the strict implementation of existing laws.

EDITORIAL

Ilang Biktima ng Paputok, Naitala

Sa pagpasok ng bagong taon, isinugod sa hospital ang ilang mga biktima ng paputok.

Sa ilang taong pagkakaroon ng mga balitang nabiktima ng paputok ay hindi pa rin mawawala ang mga taong patuloy na nabibiktima ng mga ito. Mahirap ang mabiktima nito sa araw ng pagsalubong ng bagong taon kaya naman dapat pa ring iseguridad ang kaligtasan ng bawat isa sa gitna ng pagsasaya.

Marami nang mga alituntunin at mga babala ang inilalabas ng nakatataas kung gaano kadelikado ang paglapit sa mga ganitong bagay lalo na ang mga malalakas na paputok. Sana ay patuloy na maging aral ito upang mas maging maingat sa mga ganitong klaseng pampaingay kapag sinasalubong ang bagong taon

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FILIPINO INJURED IN DEADLY SWISS SKI RESORT FIRE

MANILA – The Philippine Embassy in Switzerland on Monday confirmed that a Filipino was injured in the deadly New Year's Eve fire that gutted a ski resort in Crans-Montana, citing information from Swiss authorities.

In a statement, the embassy declined to disclose further details on the victim.

"The Embassy will not be disclosing details at the request of the family. The Embassy has not received information of any other Filipino casualty," it said.

"Our thoughts go out to the injured Filipino, whose recovery we are praying for."

Local media reported that the death toll from the incident has risen to at least 40, all of whom have been identified by police authorities.

The victims' ages range from 14 to 39 years old, and include nationals of Switzerland, Italy, Romania, Türkiye, Portugal, France, and Belgium, as well as citizens

of the United Kingdom, France, and Israel.

Meanwhile, Swiss authorities said 119 others were injured, mostly with severe burns.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) earlier assured that the Philippine Embassy in Berne is closely monitoring developments and coordinating with Swiss authorities.

It also noted that the embassy "stands ready to assist any Filipino national who may be affected in the fire."

Authorities are conducting a probe into the incident, including the French couple who allegedly manage the bar.

Local reports quoted officials as saying the fire may have been triggered by sparklers attached to champagne bottles that came too close to the ceiling.

The Philippine government extended its condolences to Switzerland and its people following the tragedy. **(PNA) BY MARITA MOAJE**

TORRE TO LEAD DAILY MMDA OPERATIONS, ACT AS SPOKESPERSON

MANILA – Newly appointed Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) General Manager Nicolas Torre III will oversee the agency's day-to-day operations and serve as its primary spokesperson following his appointment by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.

In a speech at the MMDA headquarters in Pasig City on Monday, Torre thanked the MMDA for their welcome and Marcos for entrusting him with the post.

"I am excited to join the ranks of the people who keep the metropolis moving and keep the metropolis where we all live, dream, work, and do business, in my new career in government service. I do hope that I will make the contribution expected of me in MMDA," he said.

MMDA Chair Romando "Don" Artes called on personnel to support the

former Philippine National Police (PNP) chief in his duties, such as overall charge of day-to-day operations under the former's direct supervision and guidance.

As general manager, Torre will spearhead initiatives on public safety, flood control, traffic management, and solid waste management across the National Capital Region (NCR).

"Torre will engage in discussions with Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Secretary Vince Dizon to ensure that MMDA, through him, will be actively involved in all flood control projects in Metro Manila from the initial planning stage to completion," Artes said.

With Torre's extensive experience in the police, he will also be tasked to strengthen discipline among traffic enforcers and lead an internal investigation unit against misconduct and irregularities.

On Sunday, Torre led the inspection of the ongoing rehabilitation of

PCG RESCUES 23 FROM SINKING BOAT OFF MASBATE

MANILA – The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) rescued 23 people after a recreational boat began sinking off Sombrero Island in San Pascual, Masbate on Jan. 3.

In a statement Monday, the PCG said the boat Harlyn, carrying 20 passengers and three crew members, struck an unidentified hard object about one to two nautical miles from the shoreline, causing water to enter the vessel and leaving it partially submerged.

All those on board were safely brought to Sombrero

portions of Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) with DPWH and other concerned agencies.

To date, the innermost lanes of EDSA have been repaired, leading to a smoother ride for passenger buses plying the EDSA Busway.

Repairs in other parts of EDSA remain ongoing, with works scheduled from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. beginning Monday. **(PNA) BY RAYMOND CARL DELA CRUZ**

Island, where they received temporary shelter.

Food and clothing were provided by the resort management, local residents, and the San Pascual local government through its Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office.

The PCG Mobile Post in San Andres, Quezon responded to the incident, traveling about 15 nautical miles to reach the area.

The rescue took around three hours due to the distance and limited personnel and equipment.

Medical personnel reported that nine individuals sustained minor scratches while boarding the rescue vessel. They were treated and given anti-tetanus shots, and all were declared in stable condition.

The PCG is coordinating with local authorities for the passengers' transport to San Andres, Quezon, once weather conditions improve, and has launched an investigation to determine the cause of the incident. **(PNA) BY RAYMOND CARL DELA CRUZ**

DMW STARTS 2026 WITH PLEDGE FOR FASTER, COMPASSIONATE OFW SUPPORT

MANILA – The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) has reiterated its commitment to continue providing fast, compassionate, and people-centered services for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and their families this 2026.

At the agency's first flag-raising ceremony for the year in Mandaluyong City on Monday, Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac highlighted the Department's "red carpet, not red tape" approach for migrant workers at every step of their journey.

"The department is the first responder to the needs of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and their families," Cacdac said in his speech.

Guest speaker Rev. Fr. Carmelo "Tito" Caluag, executive director of Caritas Philippines, meanwhile, noted the importance of compassion and mercy, especially in public service, as they step into the "chaos" of another

person's world.

He also urged the DMW community to reflect on the deep desire to meet the needs of every migrant worker and their families, and to address the social costs of labor migration, especially the absence of mothers working abroad.

Cacdac said Caluag's message highlights the DMW's dedication to mission-driven service and sets a tone for the upcoming year, focusing on compassion, responsiveness, and shared responsibility for the well-being and dignity of OFWs and their families.

Also on Monday, Cacdac recognized DMW offices and frontline personnel who demonstrated exemplary work under the Agarang Kalinga at Saklolo para sa mga OFWs na Nangangailangan (AKSYON) Fund.

DMW National Capital Region (NCR) was recognized for distributing the highest amount of AKSYON Fund assistance

at over PHP106 million, followed by Regional Office 6 (Western Visayas) with PHP89.3 million, and Regional Office 3 (Central Luzon) with PHP61 million.

Regional Office 3 also served the highest number of beneficiaries at 5,033, NCR assisted 1,838, and Regional Office 2 (Cagayan Valley) with 1,821.

During the holiday period, NCR helped 4,202 clients, followed by Regional Office 7 (Central Visayas) with 1,762 and DMW-PEGPB (Pre-Employment and Government Placement Bureau) with 1,024.

Cacdac also acknowledged offices and personnel who provided frontline services during the holiday period from Dec. 29, 2025, to Jan. 2, 2026.

"These recognitions emphasize DMW's strong commitment to its role as the government's primary responder for OFWs, ensuring that timely support reaches those most in need," he said. **(PNA) BY MARITA MOAJE**

P80-B SAGIP ALREADY REMOVED BY SENATE BEFORE PBBM VETO

MANILA – A "source of abuse and corruption" under the proposed 2026 national budget was removed by the Senate even before President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. Exercised his veto power, Senator Sherwin Gatchalian said Monday.

In a statement following the signing of the 2026 national budget, Gatchalian said he respects the President's constitutional authority to veto certain provisions but stressed that the PHP80-billion Strengthening Assistance for Government Infrastructure and Social Programs (SAGIP) under the Unprogrammed Appropriations (UA) was already purged by the Senate.

"I would like to highlight that the PHP80-billion SAGIP under the Unprogrammed Appropriations had already been removed by the Senate," Gatchalian, Senate Committee on

Finance chairperson, said.

He said SAGIP had long been identified as a source of abuse and corruption, particularly in flood control projects, noting that lump sum funds for such projects were often parked under the program.

"In 2024, flood control funds under SAGIP amounted to PHP86.93 billion," he said.

Gatchalian underscored that there was no direct veto under the Programmed Appropriations, adding that five of the seven items vetoed under the UA were originally included in the National Expenditure Program, which Congress later acted on and refined.

He further clarified that the inclusion of the Regional Action Center for Excellence program in the UA was for book-entry purposes only.

"Similar to the CARS (Comprehensive Automotive Resurgence

Strategy) Program, it is a non-cash item that merely provides the legal basis for the DTI-BOI (Department of Trade and Industry-Board of Investments) to issue tax payment certificates. Walang aktwal na pondong inilalabas dito (No actual funds are being released)," Gatchalian said.

Gatchalian said the Senate will closely monitor the implementation of the 2026 budget and continue coordinating with the Executive branch to ensure proper and transparent use of public funds.

President Marcos signed into law the PHP6.793-trillion national budget for 2026 at Malacañang in Manila on Monday morning. He vetoed PHP92.5 billion worth of items under the UA to tighten safeguards on public spending and reinforce fiscal discipline. **(PNA) BY WILNARD BACELONIA**

DSWD SERVES OVER 8M FILIPINOS IN CRISIS IN 2025

MANILA – More than 8.2 million Filipinos in crisis nationwide received aid from the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) program from January to November last year.

Assistant Secretary Irene Dumlao said the total number of clients exceeded the DSWD target for 2025.

"In 2024, the target of the AICS program was 4.2 million. For 2025, we increased the target to 6.9 million clients to cater to more Filipinos in difficult circumstances. However, the number of beneficiaries we served still exceeded. Our accomplishment was at 119.48 percent," she said in a news release Monday.

The AICS is a social protection program that offers immediate, short-term support to individuals and families facing crises or difficult circumstances.

Most of the clients who received AICS assistance were from Central Luzon, with more than 800,000, followed by Cagayan Valley Region with over 780,000 clients, and Calabarzon with more than 779,000.

"The types of assistance provided to the clients of the AICS program include medical assistance, transportation assistance, burial or funeral assistance, food assistance, assistive devices and technologies, psychosocial support, family food packs, and cash relief assistance," Dumlao said.

She also welcomed the Congress bicameral conference committee's approval of the PHP63.9 billion budget for the 2026 AICS program.

"The DSWD's original proposed budget for the AICS is PHP26.9 billion under the National Expenditure Program. We thank our legislators for increasing the budget as we expect that the additional funds will cover an estimated eight million more Filipinos experiencing difficult conditions," she said.

She emphasized that

the increase in the AICS budget will guarantee the proper implementation of Republic Act No. 12309 or the Free Funeral Services Act, which lapsed into law on Sept. 28, 2025.

Under the law, the DSWD's AICS program will shoulder the funeral package of poor families who cannot afford a dignified burial for their deceased.

"Rest assured that every peso entrusted to the DSWD will be used judiciously, transparently and with full accountability. All our social protection programs will be carefully implemented and aligned with the Marcos administration's goal of providing responsive, inclusive and genuine service to the Filipino people," Dumlao said. (PNA) **BY JOSE CIELITO REGANIT**

EDSA BUSWAY FULLY REOPENED AFTER ASPHALT OVERLAY

MANILA — The innermost lanes of both the northbound and southbound sections of Epifanio Delos Santos Avenue (EDSA), from Roxas Boulevard to Orense, are now open to authorized passenger buses following the completion of the asphalt overlay as part of the EDSA Rehabilitation project.

The rehabilitation project was completed on schedule in line with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s directive to fast-track improvements to ensure faster and more comfortable travel as commuters return to work and school after the holidays.

Acting Department of Transportation (DOTr) Secretary Giovanni Lopez thanked Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Secretary Vince Dizon for finishing the project on time.

"This is exactly what we need as most passengers are going back to work, and

FIL-AUSTRALIAN YOUTH EXPLORE ROOTS THRU CFO'S 2026 YOULEAD PROGRAM

MANILA – Second-generation Filipino-Australians trace their roots beyond textbooks and family stories as they embark on an 11-day immersion in the Philippines through the 2026 Youth Leaders in the Diaspora (YouLeaD) program of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO).

In a news release Monday, CFO Chairperson Secretary Dante Ang said the program aims to transform second-generation Filipinos born or raised abroad on how they relate to the Philippines, as it engages them to ensure that the global Filipino community remains an active partner in the country's progress.

The program, which runs from Jan. 3 to 13, is

a primary vehicle for the CFO to fulfill its national mandate and permanently link the Filipino diaspora with the Philippines across political, economic, and cultural dimensions.

"The YouLeaD program is not merely a tour; it is a strategic effort to build a bridge between the Motherland and its children overseas," Ang said.

The CFO said the delegates started their immersion in Manila by experiencing the local culture and regional cuisines, before heading to Quezon province for a hands-on encounter with rural life.

The youth joined farmers and indigenous communities in planting trees, repotting hundreds of seedlings, and learning traditional rice farming techniques in Real and Infanta towns.

The visit, in partnership with the Haribon Foundation and framed as a "grassroots encounter," links the diaspora with the people and livelihoods that sustain the country's rural economy.

In the coming days, the CFO said workshops in language, media, and heritage will be conducted to equip the youth to act as long-term ambassadors, fostering enduring ties between the Philippines and its diaspora.

The CFO describes YouLeaD as a strategic effort to empower youth politically, economically, and culturally, ensuring their active role in the nation's progress.

"Our vision is to empower these youth to represent the Philippines politically as ambassadors of goodwill, to contribute economically by supporting local industries, and to remain rooted culturally through a deep understanding of our history and values," the CFO said. (PNA) **BY MARITA MOAJE**

on a limited schedule, from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. daily. (PNA) **BY RAYMOND CARL DELA CRUZ**

100% RISE IN HOLIDAY ROAD CRASH INJURIES; 7 OF 10 MOTORCYCLE-RELATED

MANILA – The Department of Health (DOH) on Monday recorded a 101-percent increase in road crash injuries in its sentinel hospitals during the recent holiday season, prompting renewed calls for stricter enforcement of traffic laws.

In a statement, the DOH said a total of 1,384 road crash injury cases were logged from Dec. 21, 2025 to 5 a.m. of Jan. 5, 2026 – double the 690 cases recorded during the same surveillance period covering the 2024-2025 holidays.

Of the total cases, 647 or 47 percent involved individuals aged 15 to 29 years, highlighting the vulnerability of the youth during peak travel periods.

The DOH also reported that among fatal cases, seven out of 10 deaths involved motorcycle riders, six of whom were not

wearing helmets. Three of the fatalities were pedestrians.

Data further showed that 171 cases involved individuals under the influence of alcohol, while 1,188 patients were not using safety accessories such as helmets or seatbelts. Motorcycle-related crashes accounted for 989 of the total reported cases, or 7 out of 10 cases.

The DOH reiterated its appeal for the stricter implementation of traffic and road safety laws, particularly during the holidays.

Health officials stressed the importance of wearing proper safety gear, avoiding alcohol consumption when driving, and observing traffic regulations to reduce the risk of road crashes and ease the burden on health facilities. (PNA) **BY MA. TERESA MONTEMAYOR**

DOJ RESUMES HEARINGS INTO BULACAN GHOST FLOOD CONTROL PROJECTS

MANILA – Prosecutors on Monday resumed their preliminary investigation into the Bulacan ghost control projects, with two high-profile personalities denying their involvements.

Senador Joel Villanueva and former senator Ramon Revilla Jr., who lost his reelection bid in May appeared before the Department of Justice (DOJ) in Manila for cases involving the projects of WAWAO Builders and Topnotch Catalyst Builders Inc. In Bulacan's First District.

The projects were reported "100% completed" but were found to be either grossly deficient or completely non-existent.

Revilla filed a counter-affidavit in December 2025 in similar charges involving another construction firm, SYMS Construction and Trading.

DOJ spokesperson Polo Martinez said the charges in the preliminary investigation include direct bribery, corruption of public officials, malversation through falsification, as well as violations of Republic Act Nos. 9184 or Government Procurement Act and 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt

Practices Act.

"As previously discussed, iba pa po 'to sa (this different from the) original five cases involving SYMS Construction Trading. Those five cases have all already been referred to the Ombudsman, the records of which have all already been transmitted to said office," Martinez said in an interview.

Detained former Bulacan district engineer Henry Alcantara and subordinates, Bryce Hernandez and Jaypee Mendoza, also attended the hearing resumption.

The engineers previously claimed that they delivered hundreds of millions of pesos in kickbacks for different projects to the lawmakers.

Lawyer Ramon Esguerra, who represents Villanueva and is collaborative co-counsel for Revilla, insisted that "there is absolutely no proof whatsoever" that Villanueva and Revilla received money from flood control projects.

Esguerra said the copy of the complaint furnished to them was incomplete. (PNA) **BY BENJAMIN PULTA**

PRO CAR SEIZES OVER P88M WORTH OF ILLEGAL DRUGS, ARRESTS 34 SUSPECTS IN MONTH-LONG OPERATIONS

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet(PIA) — The Police Regional Office-Cordillera Administrative Region (PRO CAR) concluded 2025 with a significant impact on its anti-illegal drug campaign with the seizure of P88,952,672.00 worth of illegal drugs and arrest of 34 drug personalities in its operations conducted from December 1 to 31, 2025.

The 101 separate operations led to the confiscation of 260.60 grams of shabu, 390,060 fully grown marijuana plants, 67,606.60 grams of dried marijuana leaves and fruiting tops, and 26,320 marijuana seedlings with a total Standard Drug Price of P88,952,672.00.

These operations included 71 marijuana eradication efforts, 14 buy-bust operations, 11 search warrant implementations, three police responses,

and one service of a warrant of arrest.

The Benguet Police Provincial Office (PPO) conducted the most significant operations, confiscating illegal drugs valued at P51,978,252.00. The Kalinga PPO was next, seizing drugs valued at SDP of P35,770,412.00, while Mountain Province PPO confiscated P1,009,732.00 worth of illegal drugs. Most of these involved marijuana.

The Baguio City Police Office and the PPOs of Abra, Apayao, and Ifugao fully grown suspected shabu.

These accomplishments highlight PRO CAR's steadfast dedication to eradicating illegal drugs and safeguarding the community as it continues to strive toward creating a safer, drug-free society. **(PIA CAR with reports from PRO-CAR) By PIA CAR**

CARAGA YOUNG FARMERS LEAD AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION

BUTUAN CITY (PIA) — Young Filipinos are emerging as key drivers of agricultural modernization in Caraga as the Department of Agriculture (DA) in the region recognized 42 young individuals and youth groups for their innovation, entrepreneurship, and commitment to sustainable agriculture during the 2025 Young Farmers Challenge (YFC).

The recognition highlighted the growing role of the youth sector in advancing the national government's agenda of revitalizing Philippine agriculture, in line with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s directive to strengthen food security, modernize farming systems, and encourage agri-entrepreneurship, particularly among young Filipinos.

The awardees were commended for presenting viable and market-oriented agri-based business models in farming, fisheries, and livestock production that contribute to increased productivity, value-adding, and rural economic growth. "We commend the youth for their creativity and dedication in advancing agriculture. Your

innovations are vital in ensuring food security and modernizing our farming systems," said DA Caraga Regional Executive Director Arlan M. Mangelen, underscoring the strong backing of both the DA Central Office and regional field units in nurturing youth-led agricultural enterprises.

The Young Farmers Challenge is a flagship national program of the Department of Agriculture implemented through its regional offices. It provides young farmers aged 18 to 30 with a platform to develop and present innovative, scalable, and sustainable agri-business proposals. Winners receive cash grants ranging between P80,000 and P300,000, complemented by training, mentoring, coaching, and continuous technical assistance to help them expand their enterprises and become competitive agri-entrepreneurs.

Among the awardees, Anthony M. Buntag, an Upscale Category winner, member of the Casiklan Wheels Farmers Association Inc. (CAWFIA), and founder of Anton's Coffee Products Processing from Las

BUCOR SENDS 300 PDLs TO IWAHIG PRISON AND PENAL FARM

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY, Palawan (PIA) — The Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) has transferred about 300 persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) to Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm (IPPF) in a continuous effort to decongest the New Bilibid Prison (NBP).

The PDLs were transferred via sea craft under the escort of commissioned and non-commissioned officers of NBP to ensure proper management.

"(It is) part of an effort to decongest facilities and ensure the proper management of PDL across different Operating Prisons and Penal Farms (OPPFs)," said the bureau. The BuCor focused on security augmentation to ensure the safe and secure transport of PDLs. It has been conducting mass transfers of PDLs to IPPF since 2023 in an effort to decongest the NBP.

BuCor Director-General Gregorio Catapang Jr. envisions transferring out

all PDL from NBP by 2028 and transforming it into BuCor Global City.

Meanwhile, IPPF management expressed commitment to sustained efforts toward effective management, security, and orderly operations of corrections facilities across the country. (RG/JBG/PIA MIMAROPA-Palawan/Photo from BuCor FB page) **BY RACHEL GANANCIAL**

DAR NORTHMIN REPORTS PROGRESS IN LAND DISTRIBUTION, DEBT CONDONATION

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY (PIA) — The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) in Northern Mindanao has reported progress in land distribution, debt condonation, and support services for farmers during the Kapihan sa PIA on Dec. 22, 2025.

DAR Regional Director Zoraida O. Macadindang said that the office has achieved 97.4% of its regular land distribution target, awarding 31,380 hectares to about 188,248 agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) across the region.

The office has also issued 11,908 Certificates of Condonation with Release of Mortgage (COCROM) to 9,768 beneficiaries, relieving them of P619.55 million in agrarian reform debts. An additional P76.2 million in debts was scheduled for condonation at a later distribution activity.

DAR-10 is also implementing the Support to Parcelization

government's commitment to empowering the youth as partners in nation-building. By investing in young agri-innovators, the program supports inclusive rural development, job generation, and the long-term resilience of the country's food systems, while inspiring a new generation to view agriculture as a viable, profitable, and future-ready industry. (NCLM, PIA Agusan del Norte, with a report from DA Caraga) **BY NORA L. MOLDE**

IRRIGATORS' GROUP ASSUMES MANAGEMENT OF IRRIGATION SYSTEM IN ZAMBO SIBUGAY

IPIL, Zamboanga Sibugay (PIA) — In line with the government's food security and irrigation modernization agenda, a farmer-led irrigators' association has formally assumed responsibility for operating and sustaining the Mangawil Pump Irrigation Project in Zamboanga Sibugay.

The Parukians Irrigators

Association (IA) accepted management of the facility during a ceremonial turnover in Barangay Paruk, Siay town. The irrigation system supports 33 farmers and irrigates about 50 hectares of agricultural land, ensuring a reliable water supply for local farm production.

Parukians IA President Ramces Enriquez underscored the group's commitment to proper operation and maintenance of the facility for the benefit of its members and the wider farming community.

"We will take care of this project and work together so that it will continue to support our farmers and improve agricultural production in our community," Enriquez said.

The turnover of the Mangawil Pump Irrigation Project to the Parukians IA in Siay town demonstrates strong cooperation between farmers, NIA, and local government. | Photo: NIA-9

The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) Zamboanga Sibugay led the turnover, together with barangay officials and the local government unit (LGU) of Siay, highlighting national and community efforts.

This initiative marks another milestone in the partnership between NIA and local irrigators' associations to deliver efficient and climate-resilient irrigation services across the province.

It also forms part of broader government efforts to strengthen agricultural productivity and water resource management in support of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s food security and irrigation modernization programs.

By placing operation and maintenance in the hands of local farmer groups, the project promotes the long-term sustainability of irrigation facilities. It also empowers farmers to take ownership of their resources, enhance irrigation efficiency, and actively shape the future of agriculture in their communities. (JPA/ RBI/PIA9-Zamboanga Sibugay) **BY ROMMEL B. IGNACIO**

inclusive development across the region. (Photo: MJAP/PIA-10) **BY JAN ALBERT K. ARAÑA**

DTI EXEC ASSURES CARS ARREARAGES PAYMENT AMID BUDGET VETO

MANILA – Trade and Industry Undersecretary Ceferino Rodolfo on Monday assured investors that measures are now being considered for the payment of arrearages under the Comprehensive Automotive Resurgence Strategy (CARS) program. This, after the fiscal support for this program, amounting to PHP4.32 billion, was vetoed by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. from the PHP6.793-trillion 2026 national budget, which he signed Monday morning.

This item is among those vetoed as the government tightens allocation for unprogrammed appropriations.

Rodolfo, who heads the Board of Investments (BOI), in a statement, said “we fully respect the decision of the President.” “We understand the context of his overall decision

on Unprogrammed Appropriations. And to our investors, we firmly assure that we are already working with other Agencies, principally the DBM (Department of Budget and Management), in identifying a mechanism to ensure payment of CARS arrearages especially as these had been based on validated delivery of performance commitments and on a robust and transparent inter-agency process of vetting claims against the CARS Program,” she said. The government, under the CARS program, provides participating automotive firms with fixed investment support and production volume incentives.

To date, the government has released PHP1.44 billion of the PHP5.43-billion budget. (With a report from **JOANN VILLANUEVA/PNA**)

BOI INVESTMENT APPROVALS BREACH P1.5 TRILLION ANEW IN 2025

MANILA – Energy-related projects topped the approvals of the Board of Investments (BOI) in 2025, with the total for the year breaching PHP1.5 trillion for the second consecutive year.

Data released by the BOI on Monday showed that total investments last year reached PHP1.56 trillion, second highest after the record-high PHP1.62 trillion in 2024 but lower than the agency’s PHP1.75 trillion target.

BOI said the 322 approved projects last year are projected to generate some 40,000 jobs nationwide.

Projects in the energy sectors topped the list, amounting to PHP970.09 billion, “reflecting sustained momentum in power generation and related infrastructure projects,” according to a news release.

Mass housing projects trail with PHP 241.65 billion, followed by transportation and storage, PHP230.06 billion;

manufacturing, PHP 62.16 billion; and information and communication, PHP26.56 billion.

Local investments accounted for the bulk at PHP1.41 trillion while foreign investments amounted to PHP149.45 billion.

Most of the local investments are located in the National Capital Region, amounting to PHP383.71 billion, followed by those in the Cordillera Administrative Region, PHP373.39 billion; Calabarzon, PHP257.83 billion; Bicol Region, PHP123.61 billion; and Central Luzon, PHP105.13 billion.

For foreign investments, those from Singapore are the largest at PHP80.37 billion, followed by those from The Netherlands, PHP33.29 billion; Thailand, PHP7.75 billion; the United States, PHP6.91 billion; and Switzerland, PHP4.33 billion.

Despite the lower approvals in 2025, Trade and Industry Secretary

MANILA – The bid to ensure the availability of clean and sustainable power gained traction this year as the Department of Energy (DOE) pursued programs that encourage more investments into renewable energy (RE).

The share of RE to the total energy mix is already around 32 percent, near the 35 percent goal by 2030. The target is to further increase this to 50 percent by 2040.

DOE earlier said around 956 megawatts (MW) of new power generation capacity have been added to the national grid as of last November, and is complemented by 16 MW of new energy storage capacity in the Luzon and Visayas grids.

Last June, DOE released the Notice of Award (NOA) for the winning bidders for the GEA-3, which are expected to produce around 6,600 MW capacity until 2035, while winners for the GEA-4 were announced last November, with the projects expected to produce over 10,000MW of new capacities until 2029.

Energy Secretary Sharon

Cristina Roque said approvals still breached the PHP1.5 trillion level, which, she said “highlights the Philippines’ growing competitiveness and the sustained trust of both local and foreign investors.” “These investments reinforce our commitment to building a resilient, innovation-driven economy anchored on sustainability and inclusive growth,” she said.

Roque said there were several big-ticket items in the pipeline but they “need more time to complete the evaluation process especially as these precisely are large-scale and very strategic projects.”

“Our focus moving forward is to ensure that these investments translate into quality jobs, technology transfer and sustainable economic growth that benefits Filipinos nationwide,” she said. (With a report from **JOANN VILLANUEVA/PNA**)

DOE UNDERScores RE, BIDS FOR MORE CLEAN ENERGY IN 2026

Garin has expressed confidence in the sustained rise of RE capacity in the country following the two green energy auctions (GEA) held this year, and amidst the termination of eight RE service constraints this year due to proponents’ failure to deliver or submit work program requirements.

Citing measures implemented during the term of former Energy Secretary Rafael Lotilla, who was appointed as Environment and Natural Resources Secretary last May, Garin said the DOE “started with good foundations already, and continuing that, you cannot go wrong.”

A big part of the country suffered from devastating calamities this year and the lessons from these experiences will be strengthened further next year, she said.

“My basic gauge is that there is a quick response of DOE in typhoon-affected areas. I’m not sure if you remember, before, like Masbate or Catanduanes, it would take six months to restore. Now, barely one month, we’re able to finish the tasks,” she said.

Garin attributed this to closer coordination among energy-sector players such as the National Electrification Administration (NEA), the Philippine Rural Electric Cooperatives Association (Philreca), the distribution utilities, power plant operators, National Power Corporation (Napocor), Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation (PSALM), and the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP).

She said the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) is also a major player in the continued improvement of the domestic energy sector.

“Results for this year is good. I’m quite proud of DOE. There are many innovations that we have shown to the country, and we’ve responded to the heed of the President,” she said.

Additional focus for 2026 is “cleaner energy and

energy security.”

“Hopefully, we can scale down on the coal, especially diesel. And most especially in our islands because they only have around 7 percent renewables,” she pointed out. “We just need to find a balance.”

More indigenous sources will be explored, he said, citing the need for additional gas and petroleum potentials.

“The Philippines has lots of potential and I understand it will take years. But at least we start already so that we’re not dependent on the international market,” she added.

Electrification NEA Administrator Antonio Mariano Almeda bids for additional measures to uplift rural communities.

“We need to make our services improved and reliable. That’s all that really matters... And that is one thing I want to inculcate in each and everyone... Let’s shift the paradigm already. We cannot keep doing what is good enough,” he said in a recent yearend gathering.

This year, one of NEA’s achievements is the electrification of geographically isolated

and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs) under the “Digital Bayanihan” campaign of the Marcos government.

Among those that benefited are schools, achieved in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), including the last mile school Datu Saldong Domino Elementary School in Sitio Tagpangi, Barangay Simbalan, in San Buenavista, Agusan del Norte.

NEA also addressed power reliability issues in Zamboanga by establishing the Task Force Metro Zamboanga to institute reforms at the Zamboanga City Electric Cooperative, Inc. (ZAMCELCO), and joined hands with the DOE and the Napocor to roll out concrete measures to address chronic power supply constraints.

It also entered into a memorandum of agreement with the Maharlika Investment Corporation (MIC), the Palawan Electric Cooperative (PALECO), and the provincial government of Palawan to modernize the island’s power distribution system. (PNA) **BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**

PSEI GAINS, PESO WEAKENS VS. US DOLLAR

MANILA – The Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) rose Monday amidst investors’ concerns, especially after the US attack in Venezuela over the weekend, but the peso weakened against the greenback.

The local bourse’s main index rose 0.48 percent to 6,164.53 points, and the broader All Shares by 1.04 percent to 3,553.74 points. Most of the sectoral gauges also gained during the day, namely Mining and Oil, 2.95 percent; Services, 1.59 percent; Industrial, 0.71 percent, and Financials, 0.51 percent.

However, the Holding Firms fell 0.29 percent and the Property by 0.11 percent.

Volume was thin at 948.53 million shares, amounting to PHP5.74 billion.

Advancers led decliners at 133 to 93 while 51 shares were unchanged.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC) chief economist Michael Ricafor said the PSEi sustained its rise, and even posted “an intraday high of 6,237.14, the highest/best in more than 3.5 months or since September 22, 2025.”

However, the local currency depreciated to 59.13 against the US dollar from 58.84 on Friday last week.

It opened the week’s trade sideways at 58.88 and traded between 58.85 and 59.13. The average for the day stood at 58.96.

Volume reached USD929 million, higher than the USD699.13 million in the previous session. (PNA) **BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**



PARIS RUNNER-UP VECIC HEADS PH OPEN ENTRY LIST; EALA AWARDED WILD CARD

MANILA – Paris Olympic silver medalist Donna Vecic of Croatia and German veteran Tatjana Maria, ranked No. 45 in the world, head the list of early entries in the inaugural Philippine Women's Open kicking off Jan. 26 at the newly refurbished Rizal Memorial Tennis Center in Manila.

Both were on the provisional list of 24 players released over the weekend by the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) in the 32-player draw for the country's first WTA 125 tournament.

Vecic, 29, a 2024 Wimbledon semifinalist, is now ranked No. 69 but still remains among the players to watch in the competition sanctioned by the WTA, organized by the Philippine Tennis Association and

supported by the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC). She reached a career-high No. 17 in the WTA rankings last year.

On the other hand, Maria, 38, who posted a career-best No. 36 last year, topped London's Queen's Club in June last year for her fourth WTA crown -- the oldest Tour singles titlist since Serena Williams triumphed at 2020 Auckland also at 38.

The highest rated player in the main draw after Maria is China's Xinyu Wang (No. 57), who teamed up with Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei in clinching the 2023 French Open women's doubles crown.

PSC Chair Patrick Gregorio and Philippine Tennis Association (Philita) officials inspected the progress of the facility's

refurbishment on Jan. 2.

"No Christmas break, no New Year break. No holiday break. Everybody's here, Philita is here, [PSC] Commissioners, PSC people are here," Gregorio said in a news release over the weekend.

"We're all here just to make sure we transform Rizal Tennis [Center] as a showcase for the first-ever hosting of the WTA 125 in Manila."

In the event they are available, hometown favorite and 33rd Thailand Southeast Asian Games gold medalist Alexandra Eala (No. 53) and Indonesia's Janice Tjen (No. 56) were awarded wild cards by Philita.

Eala and Tjen qualified for the main draw of the Australian Open that runs from Jan. 18 to Feb. 1 in Melbourne. **(PSC Media)**

PH TO HOST ASIAN BEACH GAMES IN 2028

MANILA – The Philippines is set to host the Asian Beach Games in 2028.

Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino said that after email correspondence and phone calls with Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) officials, the country will stage the Southeast Asian Plus Youth Games in late 2027 and the Asian Beach Games (ABG) in early 2028.

The POC had announced the creation of the SEA Plus Youth Games and the Philippine hosting last Thursday.

"The Asian Beach Games will have its third edition this April in Sanya (China) so it will be two years after when we host the games in 2028," Tolentino

said on Saturday, adding that the two hostings run in consonance with the Philippine Sports Commission's (PSC) – through its chairman, Patrick "Patò" Gregorio – intensified sports tourism campaign.

"We will submit both letters (of intent) to the OCA before its General Assembly later this month in Tashkent. It's a mere formality. After getting the official approval from the OCA, we'll immediately be proposing to the PSC on hosting both events."

Tashkent is hosting the important OCA activity that will also tackle Uzbekistan's hosting of the 2029 AYG.

The POC and PSC are on the same page on the sports tourism campaign, with President Ferdinand

R. Marcos Jr. setting into motion last year the multi-pronged National Sports Tourism Inter-Agency Committee (NST-IAC) headed by Gregorio.

"These coming international events fit well with the goal of the NST-IAC, we at the POC are remaining proactive on these efforts," said Tolentino, also the president of the national federation for cycling.

PhilCycling will hold the Asian Cycling Confederation Track Championships in March at the brand-new and International Cycling Union-standard Tagaytay CT Velodrome.

Tolentino said expectations are high for Filipino athletes' participation at the Milano-Cortina Winter Olympics on Feb 6-22 and

PH SEA GAMES DELEGATION LEADS PSA TOP ACHIEVERS

MANILA – The 1,200-strong Team Philippines, which produced 50 gold medals at the 33rd Southeast Asian Games in Thailand, topped the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) monthly achievers for December 2025.

The contingent, which also scooped 73 silvers and 154 bronzes, finished sixth overall in the medal tally board behind Thailand (233-154-113), Indonesia (91-112-130), Vietnam (87-81-110), Malaysia (57-57-117), and Singapore (52-61-89).

Filipino-Canadian swimmer Kayla Noelle Sanchez debuted in the biennial meet with eight medals, three golds and five silvers.

Pole vaulter EJ Obiena

won his fourth straight gold medal while 16-year-old Naomi Cesar dominated the 800m event as the athletics team garnered five golds, seven silvers and 19 bronzes to register its second-best performance since winning 32 medals in 1983.

Practical shooters led by world champion Rolly Tecson delivered four golds, five silvers and five bronzes.

Swimming captured three golds, nine silvers and two bronzes, followed by modern pentathlon (3-3-1), triathlon (3-5-2) and gymnastics (3-2-7).

Philippine Men retained the 5-on-5 title, while their female counterparts regained the crown, both at the Thais' expense.

The Philippines won the men's and women's softball titles as well as the men's baseball title.

Tennis sensation Alex Eala ended a 26-year drought in women's singles, Eumir Marcial produced boxing's only gold and Peter Groseclose pocketed the gold (men's 500m short track speed skating) and silver (1,500m) in winter sports' comeback.

In women's football, the Filipinas dethroned eight-time winner Vietnam on penalties, 6-5, after a 0-0 tie at the end of extra time. Alas Pilipinas made history in women's beach volleyball with Sisi Rondina, Bernadeth Pons, Sunnie Villapando and Dij Rodriguez ending Thailand's dynasty. **(PNA)**

BY JEAN MALANUM

PFF PRAISES UNSUNG HEROES OF FIFA FUTSAL WOMEN'S WORLD CUP HOSTING

MANILA – The Philippine Football Federation (PFF) on Monday praised the people whose dedication, passion, and teamwork transformed the 2025 FIFA Futsal Women's World Cup into a triumph not only for the Philippines but for women's futsal worldwide.

The PFF has expressed its deepest gratitude to President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. for the government's invaluable support through the

Philippine Sports Commission (PSC), headed by Chairperson Patrick Gregorio, the dedicated PSC staff, government personnel, and committed and auxiliary personnel.

"We commend and congratulate the 500-strong unsung heroes who made the FIFA Futsal Women's World Cup 2025 a success. With you, we showed the world that Filipinos can host a truly world-class sporting event," said PFF president John Gutierrez in a news release on Monday.

The PFF also acknowledged the support of the Philippine Olympic Committee, led by President Abraham Tolentino and FIFA Council Member Mariano "Nonong" Araneta Jr. "You are the true heroes of this World Cup. Thank you very much for your dedication, hard work, and perseverance," said PFF general secretary Gelix Mercader, who oversaw the Local Organizing Committee (LOC), which included around 300 volunteers, 150 LOC staff, and 100 auxiliary personnel.

other Asian sub-regions for each edition of the Games for the purpose of providing added competition for the region's grassroots. **(PNA)**

BY JEAN MALANUM

"It was very humbling to host the inaugural FIFA Futsal Women's World Cup—and even more humbling to see it succeed. We dedicate this to all the futsal and football players across the country who made this possible," he added.

Gutierrez served as chairperson and Mercader as chief executive officer of the LOC. They were supported by the PFF Executive Committee with female-at-large member Isabella Fernando (government relations head), first vice president Lawrence Fortun (FFWWC2025 preparations committee) and deputy general secretary Kevin Goco (oversight committee), and UAAP Football commissioner Rely San Agustin (tournament director).

"This World Cup was the result of collective leadership and shared accountability, where every decision was guided by our responsibility to deliver an event worthy of the global stage, while ensuring the prudent use of resources afforded to us by the government. The discipline and professionalism shown by the LOC reflect the standards we intend to uphold as Philippine football continues to host and lead major international events," said Gutierrez. **(PNA)**

BY JEAN MALANUM