

CAVITE GAZETTE

P U B L I S H I N G

VOL.2 NO.1

March 24-30, 2026

P20.00

CPD PUTS EDUCATION FIRST AMID RISING TEEN PREGNANCY CASES

TAGAYTAY CITY, Cavite (PIA) — The Commission on Population and Development (CPD) is strengthening ties with the education sector to provide age-appropriate, comprehensive sexual health education, as adolescent pregnancy remains a critical health issue for Filipino girls.

Speaking at a seminar on Adolescent Health last March 16, CPD Information Officer Jasmine Osias emphasized that the Department of Education

(DepEd) is a key partner providing information and education campaigns targeting the youth.

“POPCOM reaches out to the youth by conducting the National Population Quiz under the Department of Education’s National Festival of Talents, where the youth are educated on population and development concepts and issues.”

In Biñan City, Laguna, the City Population Office partnered with DepEd to develop the Sexually

Healthy and Personally Empowered (SHAPE) Adolescents module that enabled Araling Panlipunan, Health, and Science teachers to integrate fertility awareness, sexual health, and life skills into their lessons.

“We are learning, gaining, and sharing our experiences in localizing and owning adolescent health and development.”

The CPD also launched its Adolescent Pregnancy Symposia to provide

consequences of teen pregnancy.

Citing the 2020 report on Filipino family planning awareness and the work of the CPD, Osias emphasized the rising number of girls not even aged 15 who are giving birth.

“Ang mas nakakaalarna ay bumabata ang mga maagang nangananak. There is an upward trend of girls aged 14 and younger ang dumadami sa buong Pilipinas.”

Osias also highlighted a sobering reality: in 2024 alone, 3,612 live births were recorded among girls as young as 10, averaging about 10 births to child mothers every day.

“At ang mas nakaalarna na naitala natin, repeated pregnancies or yung nagbubuntis ulit are becoming more common. Bahagya man ang pagbaba, pero meron pa rin.”

Based on the 2024 data from local Health Offices in the region, Antipolo City, Rizal reported the highest rate of adolescent pregnancy in 2024, with 1,172 cases. The CPD also noted that high pregnancy rates in Calamba City, Laguna, 948 cases; Santa Rosa City, Laguna, 631 cases; and San Pablo City, Laguna, 504 cases.

“Good news, the numbers are declining. But one pregnant girl is still one

P20 BBM RICE PROGRAM NOW SERVING MORE GROUPS IN BACOOR CITY



CITY OF BACOOR, Cavite (PIA) — More residents in Bacoor City are set to benefit from the government’s P20 rice program as the Department of Agriculture (DA) Calabarzon and the Bacoor City government rolled out the expanded “Benteng Bigas, Meron Na!” initiative.

data-driven discussions on adolescent sex education and the

Around 2,500 Bacooreños were able to purchase P20-per-kilo rice during the ceremonial selling held on March 6, which also signaled the start of regular rice distribution by the Bacoor local government unit for qualified residents.

Residents were also registered in the P20 Benteng Bigas Masterlist Registry System (PBBMRS), a web-based application developed by the Information and Communications Technology Service of the Department of Agriculture (DA-ICTS) to facilitate the registration of program beneficiaries.

According to the city government, around 200,000 Bacooreños are expected to benefit from the P20 rice program, which prioritizes vulnerable sectors such as senior citizens, persons with disabilities (PWDs), 4Ps beneficiaries, solo parents,

pregnant teenager.”

The 2021 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study of the University of the Philippines Population Institute revealed that social media has become a primary source of sex education for 31 percent of Filipino boys. An even larger group – 39 percent – obtains information from peers or lacks access to sexual health education entirely.

Girls fared even worse, with 26 percent getting their information on sex from social media. Meanwhile, 44 percent do not have any degree of exposure to any information on sex education.

“These children tend to use social media to search for information on sex, both boys and girls. In fact, there is content showing girls getting pregnant in their teens that is trending on these platforms. In these trends alone, we can see that there are early pregnancies and repeated

farmers, fisherfolk, public transport drivers, minimum wage earners, and public school teachers and non-teaching staff.

Other groups, including teachers, jeepney drivers, students, house helpers, and the city government’s job order workers, will also be included among the beneficiaries as endorsed by Bacoor City Mayor Strike Revilla.

According to Assistant Secretary for Agribusiness, Marketing, and Consumer Affairs Atty. Genevieve E. Velicaria-Guevarra, the program’s scope has been expanded in its second rollout in Bacoor City to allow more residents to benefit.

Meanwhile, Efrén Capacite, a resident of Barangay Niog III, expressed gratitude after purchasing 10 kilograms of rice at the subsidized price. He said that as a senior citizen whose wife is currently ill, the program greatly helps reduce their household expenses.

Farmers’ groups in Cavite were also allowed to sell their products through KADIWA, which was part of the activity.

DA Calabarzon reaffirmed its commitment to assist local government units in the region in rolling out the Benteng Bigas, Meron Na! program to benefit more residents and help ensure food affordability for vulnerable sectors. (FC, PIA) **By PIA CALABARZON**

pregnancies.”

Aside from Laguna and Rizal, other cities and municipalities including Tanza, Cavite (501 cases); Lipa City, Batangas (479 cases); Bacoor City, Cavite (462 cases); Taytay, Rizal (452 cases); General Trias City, Cavite (450 cases); and Batangas City, Batangas (446 cases) also reported the highest number of reported adolescent pregnancies in the region. (PB-PIA CALABARZON) **BY PATRICIA BERMUDEZ**



ACCEPTING ADS, PLEASE CALL : 09954361217/cavitegazette@gmail.com

CITY LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON ARRESTED IN GENERAL TRIAS CITY

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite — A City Level Most Wanted Person was arrested by personnel of General Trias Component City Police Station in a police operation conducted at General Trias City, Cavite at about 10:00 in the evening on March 18, 2026.

PLTCOL BISMARCK S MENDOZA, Chief of General Trias Component City Police Station, identified the arrested accused as alias Evan, a resident of General Trias City, Cavite.

Warrant personnel of the station conducted a police operation against the Most Wanted Person, which was recorded through the use of an Alternative Recording Device. The accused was arrested by virtue of a Warrant of

Arrest for Violation of R.A. 9262 issued by the Family Court, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 5, Trece Martires City, Cavite dated February 20, 2026, with recommended bail fixed at Php36,000.00.

The accused is temporarily under the custody of General Trias City Custodial Facility, Brgy. Bagumbayan, General Trias City, Cavite, pending the return of the Warrant to the Court of Origin and the subsequent issuance of the Commitment Order. PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, stated, "The Cavite PNP remains steadfast in its campaign against wanted persons. We continue to ensure that individuals facing criminal charges are apprehended and brought to justice."

CITY LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON ARRESTED IN TRECE MARTIRES CITY

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite — A City Level Most Wanted Person was arrested by personnel of Trece Martires Component City Police Station in a police operation conducted at the Trece Martires City, Cavite, at about 3:20 in the afternoon on March 17, 2026.

PLTCOL BRYIAN D MERINO, Officer-in-Charge of Trece Martires Component City Police Station, identified the arrested accused as David, and a resident of Trece Martires City, Cavite. The accused was arrested by virtue of a Warrant of Arrest for Reckless Imprudence Resulting in Homicide under Article 365 of the Revised Penal Code, issued by the Municipal Trial Court in Cities, Fourth Judicial Region, General Trias City, Cavite dated March 16, 2026, with recommended bail fixed at

Php60,000.00.

The operation was recorded through the use of an alternative recording device in the absence of a body worn camera. The accused was likewise apprised of his constitutional rights in a dialect known and understood by him.

The arrested person is now under the custody of Trece Martires Component City Police Station for proper disposition, and the warrant of arrest will be returned to the court of origin.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, stated, "The Cavite PNP remains resolute in its campaign against wanted persons. We will continue to intensify our operations to ensure that individuals facing criminal charges are brought before the bar of justice and that peace and order are maintained in our communities."

IMUS CCPS NABS REGIONAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite — A Regional Level Most Wanted Person was arrested by operatives of Imus Component City Police Station in a police operation conducted at Brgy. Toolong 1-A, Imus City, Cavite at about 2:30 in the afternoon on March 18, 2026.

PLTCOL CHEY CHEY I SAULOG, Chief of Police of Imus CCPS, identified the arrested individual as alias "Chel," a resident of Imus City, Cavite.

According to the report, elements of the Warrant Section of Imus CCPS, serving as the lead unit and equipped with Body Worn Camera (BWC) and Alternative Recording Device, conducted a police operation against the accused under the direct supervision of PLTCOL CHEY CHEY I SAULOG. The operation was carried out in coordination with personnel of WCPD Imus CCPS, RIU 4A, PIU Cavite PPO, and 401st A Maneuver Company, RMFB 4A.

The operation resulted in the successful arrest of the accused by virtue of a Warrant of Arrest for Violation of Section 5(a) of R.A. 7610 and Qualified Human Trafficking.

The warrant was issued

and signed by the Presiding Judge of the Fourth Judicial Region, Family Court, Branch 4, Imus City, Cavite, dated March 16, 2026. Bail was recommended at Php 200,000.00 for the charge of Violation of Section 5(a) of R.A. 7610, while the charge for Qualified Human Trafficking is non-bailable.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director of Cavite PPO, commended the operating personnel for the successful arrest and emphasized the importance of relentless efforts in tracking down wanted persons, especially those facing serious criminal charges.

"This successful operation demonstrates the firm resolve of the Cavite Police Provincial Office and our partner units in ensuring that wanted persons are brought before the bar of justice. We remain steadfast in our commitment to protect the vulnerable, uphold the law, and sustain our intensified campaign against fugitives across the province," PCOL RED stated.

The accused is now under the custody of Imus CCPS for proper documentation and disposition, while the warrant of arrest will be returned to the issuing

TOP 5 PROVINCIAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON NABBED IN MARAGONDON, CAVITE

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite - A Top 5 Provincial Level Most Wanted Person was successfully arrested in a joint police operation conducted on March 17, 2026, at about 2:00 PM in Brgy. Pinagsanhan B, Maragondon, Cavite.

PMAJ MELVIN B ISIDRO, Chief of Police of Maragondon MPS, identified the accused as alias "WIN", 32 and presently residing in General Trias City, Cavite. He was apprehended by virtue of a warrant of arrest for the crime of Rape under Article 266-A (1)(D) of the Revised Penal Code issued by the Presiding Judge of RTC Branch 19, Catarman, Northern Samar, with no bail recommended.

The operation was conducted by personnel

court.

Cavite Police Provincial Office remains resolute in its intensified campaign against wanted persons and in its continuing commitment to preserve peace, order, and public safety throughout the province.

of Maragondon Municipal Police Station, in coordination with the Regional Intelligence Unit 4A, PIT Cavite, CIDG Northern Samar, and Bobon Municipal Police Station, Northern Samar PPO.

The accused is now under police custody and detained pending further legal proceedings. The warrant of arrest will be returned to the issuing court.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director highlighted that the arrest of a Top 5 Provincial Level Most Wanted Person underscores the strong collaboration and coordination among various law enforcement units across regions. He stressed that crimes involving serious offenses will always be given priority, and that no wanted person will be allowed to evade justice. He also commended the operating units for their dedication and vigilance, and reaffirmed Cavite PPO's commitment to ensuring the safety and security of every community in the province.



#246 Ligas 1 Bacoor City Cavite

Mon - Fri 12nn -10pm / Sat - Sun 1pm - 10pm

CONTACT No. +63 965 497 1413

DOST CAVITE JOINS PARTNERSHIP MEETING FOR THE UPCOMING LAUNCH OF FARM BUSINESS SCHOOL 2.0

LOOK: The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Cavite took part in a partnership meeting on March 19 at the DAR Office in Trece Martires City, Cavite, together with the Daine 1 & 2 Farmers Association, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), and other partner agencies. The meeting aimed to strengthen collaboration and finalize preparations for the upcoming implementation of the Farm Business School (FBS) 2.0.

The initiative seeks to empower farmers by equipping them with essential knowledge and skills in financial management, marketing, and value-adding—helping them transition

into successful agripreneurs. Through this collaborative effort, partner agencies reaffirm their commitment to providing science-based solutions, innovative approaches, and sustainable opportunities for the farming communities.

Provincial Agrarian Reform Program Officer and Cavite Director III James Arthur Dubungco highlighted the importance of strong partnerships in driving inclusive growth in the agriculture sector. With DOST Cavite's continued support, the Farm Business School 2.0 is set to open new opportunities and contribute to the development of resilient and progressive farming communities. (DOST-CAVITE)

CAVITE PPO PERSONNEL PARTICIPATE IN ONE-DAY MEDICAL RESPONSE TRAINING IN PREPARATION FOR ASEAN SUMMIT 2026

CAMP BGEN PANTALEON GARCIA, Imus City, Cavite – In line with the preparations for the ASEAN Summit 2026, the Cavite Police Provincial Office participated in a One-Day Medical Response Training (MRT) Seminar conducted on March 17, 2026, at about 8:30 AM onwards at the Covered Court, Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite.

The training was conducted under the leadership of PCOL MICHELLE A ARBAN, Chief, Regional Medical and Dental Unit (RMDU) CALABARZON. The activity was spearheaded by Cavite PMDT personnel led by PCPT RHEA H DIENTE, Team Leader, in coordination with the RMDU Region IV-A

Training Section headed by PCPT ABBEY JANE MALLINLLIN, Training Officer.

The Medical Response Training (MRT) Seminar was attended by fifty (50) Cavite PPO personnel, aimed at enhancing the participants' capability in providing immediate and appropriate medical response during emergencies and critical incidents, particularly in support of security and public safety operations for the upcoming ASEAN Summit 2026.

The event was graced by the Police Provincial Director of Cavite, PCOL ARIEL R RED, who was duly represented by PLTCOL WILLY B SALAZAR, Deputy Police Provincial Director for Administration, as the

WELLNESS WITH A PURPOSE: CAVITE PPO CONDUCTS ZUMBA FOR A CAUSE

In celebration of National Women's Month, the Cavite Police Provincial Office successfully conducted a "Zumba for a Cause" on March 18, 2026, at the covered court of Camp BGen. Pantaleon Garcia.

The activity aimed not only to promote health and wellness among police personnel but also to extend support to policewomen with medical needs, who were the beneficiaries of the event.

Participants included policewomen from various units of the Cavite PPO, such as Police Commissioned Officers, Police Non-Commissioned Officers, and Non-Uniformed Personnel from the Provincial Headquarters, as well as different City and Municipal

Police Stations across the province.

The event showcased unity, camaraderie, and solidarity among women in the police service.

Adding significance to the activity was the special participation of Mrs. Catherine Red, Provincial Adviser of the OLC-Cavite Chapter, whose presence further inspired the participants in advancing women empowerment and community support.

The "Zumba for a Cause" reflects the Cavite PPO's continuing commitment to uphold the welfare of its personnel while actively supporting initiatives aligned with the Women's Month celebration, highlighting the strength, resilience, and compassion of women in uniform.

DOST CAVITE STRENGTHENS PARTNERSHIP WITH SILANG-BASED FURNITURE COOPERATIVE

Silang, Cavite — The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Cavite has reinforced its support for local industries through a recent on-site engagement with the HAGIYO IFU-CAV Producers Cooperative (HICPC) in Barangay Lumil. The visit came in response to the cooperative's request for assistance, highlighting the agency's commitment to providing timely and responsive technical support to grassroots enterprises.

Guest of Honor and Speaker.

The activity underscores the commitment of the Cavite PPO in ensuring that its personnel are equipped not only with law enforcement skills but also with essential life-saving competencies necessary in responding to emergencies and safeguarding the public.

During the activity, DOST Cavite worked closely with cooperative members to assess their operations and identify practical, science-based interventions that could enhance productivity and sustainability. Among the concerns raised was the growing volume of wood waste materials such as cut-offs and sawdust, prompting discussions on potential solutions that could improve waste utilization and overall efficiency.

The collaboration marks a significant step in empowering HICPC to overcome operational challenges while opening opportunities for innovation and growth. Through continued coordination, DOST Cavite aims to help the cooperative transition toward more sustainable practices, strengthening its role as a competitive and environmentally responsible local enterprise. (DOST-CAVITE)

EDITORIAL

Krisis sa krudo: ang pait sa hapag-kainan

Ang sunud-sunod na pagtaas ng presyo ng gasolina ay nagsisilbing mabigat na pasanin sa balikat ng bawat pamilyang Pilipino, lalo na sa mga kumikita lamang ng minimum na sahod. Dahil sa pagmamahal ng krudo, malulugi ang ilang sa mga tsuper ng jeep, bus, at tricycle sa kanilang kinikita upang mabawi ang kanilang puhunan at may maiuwi pa ring sapat na kita para sa kanilang mga pamilya. Nagreresulta sa mas masikip na sinturon para sa mga kumakayod.

Hindi lamang sa usapin ng pagbibiyahen nararamdaman ang hagupit ng mahal na langis, kundi pati na rin sa iba pang mga gastusin. Ang pagtaas ng gastos sa produksyon at distribusyon ay direktang ipinapasa sa mga mamimili. Ang ganitong sitwasyon ay nagdudulot ng matinding pangamba at stress sa mga indibidwal sa gitna ng nagtataasang presyo, na sa kalaunan ay nagpapababa sa kalidad ng pamumuhay o isa sa pagbagal ng usad.

CAVITE
GAZETTE
PUBLISHING

ANABELLE K. DUMALI
Publisher / Editor in Chief

JOHN RENNIEL K. DUMALI
Circulation Manager

BRYAN V. DE LUNA
Editor Consultant

JO-ANN K. ALCANTARA
Lay Out Artist/Special Project Coordinator

Ang CAVITE GAZETTE PUBLISHING ay inilalathala tuwing araw ng Martes na may tanggapan sa 217 Ligas 1, Bacoor City Cavite.

Contact #: 09954361217

Email: cavitegazette@gmail.com

PAUNAWA: Ang dyaryong ito ay natanggap ng kontribusyon na balita, artikulo sariling pananaw o opinyon ng mga kolumnista ang nilalaman ng kanilang mga artikulo ay wala pong kinalaman at pananagutan dito ang pamunuan ng publishing

ADVERTISING RATES
COMMERCIAL - - - - - P200/col.cm
LEGAL NOTICES - - - P160/col.cm

PH FACING 'WATER BANKRUPTCY' – DENR CHIEF

MANILA – Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Juan Miguel Cuna said Thursday that the Philippines is at risk of “water bankruptcy” as demand continues to outpace natural replenishment.

In a press briefing during the 2026 World Water Day event in Manila, Cuna highlighted the call to conserve water as the government ramps up efforts to address water gaps.

“The Philippines is facing a challenge of water bankruptcy, where national consumption outpaces nature’s ability to replenish,” he said.

“We are meeting this challenge with science and a clear tactical roadmap. Today, we are sharing with you what we have done, the results of our PHP485 million investment, which is set to benefit over 440,000 individuals by the end of 2026.”

In his presentation, DENR Undersecretary Carlos Primo David underscored the agency’s programs to bring potable water to the country’s remote provinces, targeting 250 small islands where drinking water is scarce.

Most of these areas, David said, are in Mindanao and the Visayas.

He, however, also noted areas in Luzon where residents have very little to no access to safe drinking water.

The DENR, he said, is implementing a mix of desalination systems, water refilling stations, and subsurface water extraction technologies.

He said that interventions are concentrated in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, particularly small islands with little or no freshwater sources.

“The situation is dire,” David said, describing communities that still depend on unsafe sources.

“It is unacceptable that we are now in the year 2026 when there are still Filipinos who fetch water from unsafe sources, such as shallow wells like this.”

Among the key solutions being deployed are modular desalination systems, which convert seawater into potable water, eliminating the need for residents to travel to the mainland to fetch water.

Programs reach only a fraction

David, however, acknowledged that despite ongoing interventions in more than 400 locations, the scale remains insufficient compared to the country’s total need.

He noted that the 405,000 Filipinos who have already been served or targeted by current projects are only 1 percent of the 40 million people who still lack adequate access to safe water.

The department estimates that PHP200 billion is needed to fully address water scarcity nationwide.

David, however, said limited fiscal space is the biggest barrier to expanding water access.

“The biggest challenge is funding,” he said.

Still, he emphasized the long-term value of its investments.

“We are investing about PHP1,000 per person, and that goes a long way because almost forever, they will have access to water,” he added.

David said the current program’s cost is equivalent to only a handful of large infrastructure projects but already delivers significant social impact, noting that the budget given to the department is “money well spent.”

Meanwhile, Cuna underscored the need for conservation and inter-agency coordination, especially with the possibility of dry conditions later this year.

He also called on the public to take part in water conservation efforts.

“We hope to remind the public that every drop matters. Water is really something our country should treasure. This is a gift, but we must protect and conserve it,” he said.

“As an ordinary Filipino citizen, in terms of helping conserve water, I mean as simple as not allowing

PROPOSED RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT GAINS MOMENTUM IN CONGRESS

MANILA – The House Committee on Public Information, chaired by Rep. Lordan Suan, has approved the substitute bill on the proposed Right to Information (RTI) Act of 2026.

Also known as the Act Enabling the People’s Constitutional Right of Access to Information and the State Policy of Full Public Disclosure of all its transactions involving public interest, the measure, which the panel approved on March 16, seeks to institutionalize and operationalize the people’s right to information across all branches of government.

In his opening statement, Suan said the committee has “remained committed to the goal we have set: to craft a measure that promotes transparency and invites healthy public scrutiny while responsibly safeguarding legitimate concerns such as privacy and national security.”

The approved substitute bill was the result of three technical working group (TWG) sessions that consolidated all RTI-related bills.

Led by the Committee on Public Information Vice Chairperson Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan, the TWG included representatives from government and non-government stakeholders—among them the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), which currently oversees the implementation of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Program in the Executive branch.

Through a line-by-line review of the bill’s provisions, the TWG

your water to run while you’re taking a shower or brushing your teeth.”

He also urged the public to immediately report leakage due to busted water pipes as their social responsibility. **(PNA) BY MARITA MOAJE**

produced a measure that is both administratively workable and faithful to the constitutional policy of transparency in government. These efforts were also complemented by a series of formal and informal consultations.

Yamsuan presented the substitute bill before the Committee reflecting consensus among participating agencies and stakeholders, as well as refinements introduced during the TWG process.

He noted that the measure enables citizens to make informed decisions and participate in governance.

“We also give our people something even more important: hope or pag-asa. Hope that their rights matter, hope that their voices count, and hope that their government is truly working for them,” he said.

The panel approved the bill following a motion by Akbayan Rep. Perci Cendaña.

On March 17, the Senate approved Senate Bill (SB) 1432, sponsored by Senator Robinhood Padilla, entitled “An Act Implementing the People’s Right to Information and the Constitutional Policies of Full Public Disclosure and Honesty in the Public Service, and for Other Purposes.”

The measure follows three decades of legislative efforts to pass a national access-to-information law.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has certified the RTI Act as a priority legislative measure and is expected to be passed by June 2026, as reiterated during the 3rd Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) full meeting of the 20th Congress.

This development is a significant step toward establishing a national framework for public access to information, reaffirming that information held by the government is held in trust for the people. **(PR)**

ASEAN, US BIZ COUNCILS PUSH FOR SE ASIA SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE

MANILA – Two leading United States and Southeast Asian business groups are pushing to advance the supply chain resilience agenda under the Philippines’ chairship of the 2026 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

At a high-level roundtable gathering of senior officials and industry leaders on Wednesday, the US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC) and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council Philippines (ASEAN-BAC Philippines) highlighted the mounting pressures on Southeast Asian supply chains arising from geopolitical tensions, climate disruptions and structural inefficiencies in trade and logistics systems.

“ASEAN’s supply chains are being tested by a convergence of external shocks and structural constraints. Like the COVID-19 pandemic, current geopolitical tensions underscore how quickly disruptions can ripple across trade, energy, and logistics systems,” USABC Philippine Chief Representative Herminio Bagro said.

Bagro said as a leading investors group in the region, USABC wants to see practical solutions, greater policy transparency, stronger public-private coordination and more efficient customs systems elevated by ASEAN this year.

During the discussions, illicit trade emerged as a key concern, with business leaders noting that fragmented enforcement regimes and uneven regulatory capacity continue to enable the proliferation of counterfeit and smuggled goods.

Among the recommendations outlined were regulatory guidance to reduce uncertainty for investors and operators,

and deeper public-private coordination to mitigate energy price volatility and supply chain disruptions.

Also pushed were streamlined customs, logistics and regulatory approvals to improve efficiency and reduce trade frictions; and the removal of unnecessary cross-border bans to ease regional supply chains.

“Supply chain resilience and sustainability are central to ASEAN’s long-term competitiveness,” ASEAN-BAC Philippines senior adviser Gil Gonzales said.

“This roundtable reflects our commitment to ensuring that private sector solutions are translated into concrete chairship deliverables that strengthen regional integration and economic stability,” he added.

The roundtable is the third of its kind, following the convening of USABC and ASEAN-BAC dialogues centered on health care, and sustainability and food security.

The USABC and ASEAN-BAC Philippines said these meetings will shape a coherent private sector agenda designed to support the Philippines’ 2026 ASEAN chairship.

At a separate forum on Thursday, Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro said the Philippines is committed to driving an ambitious ASEAN economic agenda to secure policies that will assist the bloc achieve its goal of becoming the fourth largest economy despite global economic shocks affecting the region.

“Resilience is not just about weathering the storm; it is about building the capacity to thrive within it. It is about being agile enough to pivot when traditional markets close, and bold enough to innovate when the status quo is dampened,” she said. **(PNA) BY JOYCE ANN L. ROCAMORA**

YULO-LOYZAGA NAMED SPECIAL ENVOY FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has appointed former Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga as Special Envoy for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM), the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) announced Thursday.

In a statement, the PCO said Yulo-Loyzaga took her oath before Marcos in a ceremony at Malacañan Palace in Manila on Wednesday.

Marcos congratulated Yulo-Loyzaga on her appointment and expressed appreciation for her acceptance of the role, citing her extensive expertise in disaster resilience management.

“The President also conveyed his full support for the new special envoy as she advances the administration’s agenda on climate action, renewable energy integration, and disaster risk reduction,” the PCO said.

Marcos expressed confidence that Yulo-Loyzaga will champion sound environmental governance and help build a more resilient Philippines.

In May 2025, Marcos accepted Yulo-Loyzaga’s resignation as secretary of the Department of

Environment and National Resources (DENR), a position she had held since 2022.

Yulo-Loyzaga stepped down from her post at the time Marcos was conducting an extensive review of his Cabinet’s performance.

At that time, Malacañan said Yulo-Loyzaga opted to resign for the time being but “may be given a Cabinet post in the future.”

Before her previous designation as DENR chief, Yulo-Loyzaga served as a director at the United Nations International Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies for two years.

She also worked as president of the National Resilience Council and was a member of the UNDRR Asia Pacific Science and Technology Advisory Group.

She also served as executive director of the Manila Observatory from 2007 to 2016.

Yulo-Loyzaga earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Ateneo de Manila University and a Master of Arts in Government from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. (PNA)

BY RUTH ABBEY GITA-CARLOS

PH FOOD SUPPLY STABLE UNTIL JULY DESPITE MID-EAST CONFLICT – DA

MANILA – The country’s food supply will remain sufficient until July despite uncertainties caused by the conflict in the Middle East, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said Thursday, easing fears of price increases.

“Definitely, walang issue sa supply. I can safely say hanggang June or even July, walang issue sa supply of almost everything (there’s no issue in supply. I can safely say that until June or July, there will be no issue in the supply of almost everything),” DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in an interview.

“So, in general, prices should remain stable at this time.”

Stable supply, backed by sufficient inventories, is assured for rice, corn, sugar, vegetables, and livestock.

The country is at the peak harvest season for rice and onions, alongside the dry-season harvest and planting of vegetables.

Tiu Laurel also disclosed plans to expand sales of the cheaper “Binhi” rice in select public markets under Food Terminal, Inc. (FTI).

The initiative aims to provide cheaper

rice options and curb profiteering by unscrupulous traders.

“That’s why we have launched the Planters Product, Inc. (PPI) rice and Binhi. It’s being sold now at PHP48 per kilo, the Binhi, while the PPI rice is at PHP45 per kilo in 36 markets in Metro Manila,” Tiu Laurel said in mixed English and Filipino.

Beyond the 36 Metro Manila markets, the DA plans to expand availability to Metro Cebu, Cebu province, Cavite, and Bulacan, among others.

“It’s just an option for the people, and para makita nila na ito imported din, maganda din, ito lang ang dapat na presyo (so that they can see that these are imported and of good quality and are only sold at these price levels),” Tiu Laurel said.

Retail rice prices are being closely monitored amid rising logistics costs.

“Of course, may konting taas na nakikita almost PHP2 per kilo dahil sa freight, transport cost ng lahat tumaas naman (there’s a minimal increase of almost PHP2 per kg. due to freight and transport cost, everything has increased), as we all know,” Tiu Laurel said.

According to DA Bantay Presyo, as of Wednesday, premium imported rice in Metro Manila sells for PHP55 to PHP63 per kilo.

Imported well-milled rice ranges from PHP45 to PHP49 per kilo, while regular-milled rice is priced at PHP42 to PHP45.

Local premium rice ranges from PHP46 to PHP60 per kg., while well-milled and regular-milled rice are priced at PHP45 and PHP40 per kg., respectively.

“Dapat ang imported nasa PHP45 to PHP50 iyan, anything above that is, tingin ko, is profiteering talaga and taking advantage (Imported rice must only range from PHP45 to PHP50. Anything above that, for me, is profiteering and taking advantage),” he said.

He added that the landed

45 BFP EXECS FACE RAPS OVER 'ANOMALOUS' FIRETRUCK DEALS

MANILA – Interior Secretary Jonvic Remulla on Thursday said 45 current and former Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) officials will face complaints before the Office of the Ombudsman over alleged anomalous firetruck procurement from 2018 to 2024.

Those named include former BFP chiefs Leonardo Bañago and Louie Puracan, suspended Fire Director Jesus Fernandez, and members of the Bids and Awards Committee, Technical Working Group, and Technical Specifications Committee.

Two private suppliers, along with other individuals, were also implicated.

“Ngayong araw pinuputol na natin ang isang malawakang sistema ng panlalamang sa (Today we are cutting off the widespread system of corruption in the) Bureau of Fire Protection,” Remulla said in a press briefing announcing the filing of a complaint.

He added that the move underscores the government’s push for accountability in public safety programs and follows President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.’s directive to intensify anti-corruption efforts, especially in high-value procurements.

The complaint accused the officials of tailoring technical specifications to favor two suppliers, limiting

cost of imported rice is about PHP35 per kg., with a projected PHP10 margin for importers, traders, and retailers.

On the proposed PHP50 per kg. price cap for imported rice, Tiu Laurel said the DA submitted its report to the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) on Wednesday.

He said progress on the proposal is expected after Holy Week, from March 29 to April 5. (PNA) **BY STEPHANIE SEVILLANO**

competition.

It also cited a sharp rise in the cost of 1,000-gallon firetrucks — from PHP5.975 million in 2014 to nearly PHP15 million in 2024 — without documented market studies or justification.

Among the alleged procurement lapses mentioned in the complaint were a lack of proper deliberations and records, failure of oversight bodies to review specifications independently, and ineffective pre-bid conferences.

The Bureau of Customs has also flagged the respondent-suppliers for undervaluing import declarations by over 30 percent and failing to submit key financial documents during audits.

Respondents face administrative and criminal charges, including grave misconduct, serious dishonesty, gross neglect of duty, conduct prejudicial to the service, and violation of Section 3(e) of Republic Act No. 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

“Hindi dapat nalalagay sa alanganin ang buhay ng ating mga kababayan dahil sa iregularidad (The lives of the people should not be jeopardized due to irregularities). Every procurement must be aboveboard, transparent, and anchored on the public interest,” Remulla said as he reaffirmed efforts to strengthen internal controls and safeguards across attached agencies of the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

Fire Chief Supt. Wilberto Rico Neil Kwan Tiu has been designated officer-in-charge of the BFP following the removal of Fernandez.

Remulla said a panel has begun interviewing candidates for the next BFP chief.

“We’ve interviewed three candidates so far, and we have four more lined up,” he said. (PNA) **BY CHRISTOPHER LLOYD CALIWAN**

DND REJECTS CHINA'S 'FARCE' TAG ON PH OPS IN BAJO DE MASINLOC

MANILA – The Department of National Defense (DND) on Thursday rejected China’s claim that legitimate Philippine maritime operations near Bajo de Masinloc (also known as Scarborough Shoal) are a “self-directed farce.”

The agency maintained that Philippine operations in these waters are lawful, routine and conducted in the exercise of the country’s sovereign rights and jurisdiction under international law.

“The real farce is the act of calling for peaceful engagement, while the fully armed and heftily funded People’s Liberation Army (Navy) is harassing

our fisherfolk who are merely trying to make a living in their traditional fishing grounds,” it said in a statement.

A Philippine Coast Guard air patrol over Bajo de Masinloc received radio challenges from the PLAN and People’s Liberation Army Air Force units while conducting its mission on Wednesday.

The DND also said it was not surprised that the Chinese government is assailing the Philippines’ transparency strategy, saying such moves are disliked by those who do not want the truth to come out.

“After all, transparency is abhorred by those

who twist the truth and manipulate narratives to legitimize their unlawful acts and baseless claims,” it stressed.

The DND also said China’s continued illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive activities in the West Philippine Sea are accurately documented and communicated to the public.

“The PRC (People’s Republic of China) is to blame for the world’s growing awareness of the cognitive illusion that it is trying to create in order to cover up the reputational damage it is inflicting upon itself,” it concluded.

(PNA) **BY PRIAM NEPOMUCENO**

DICT MIMAROPA ELGU BPLS PROJECT FINALIST FOR GLOBAL DIGITAL SOCIETY AWARD

CALAPAN CITY, Oriental Mindoro (PIA) — The regional office of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) in MIMAROPA has been named a finalist for the Digital Society Award at the Festival of Innovation Awards.

DICT MIMAROPA received the recognition for its electronic Local Government Unit-Business Permits and Licensing System (eLGU-BPLS) project, which was rolled out in the province of Occidental Mindoro in 2025. The awards ceremony was held on March 4 at the Sand Box Expo and Convention Center in Marina Bay Sands in Singapore.

Out of 270 entries from 120 government agencies worldwide across multiple categories, DICT MIMAROPA's initiative was shortlisted as a finalist, placing the region among global innovators recognized for advancing digital public services.

The eLGU-BPLS project digitizes and streamlines the processing of business permits and licenses in local government units. Through the platform, permit applications that previously took weeks to process can now be completed in minutes. In an earlier interview with PIA, Sablayan LGU License Inspector III Felsie Belamide said the adoption of the new iBPLS system has encouraged more applicants to apply for business permits. "Napakalaki ng naging ambag o epekto ng paggamit namin

ng bagong system na iBPLS [kasi] naging mas marami ang aming mga aplikante na kumukuha ng business permit dahil sa bagong features para sa online application, assessment at payment. Mas napagaan nito ang proseso na kung saan makakapag-apply na lang sa bahay o di kaya'y nasa lugar ng kani-kanilang mga pinaghahanapbuhayan," Belamide said.

Meanwhile, DICT MIMAROPA Regional Director Emmy Lou V. Delfin said the initiative aligns with the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018, which aims to simplify government procedures and reduce bureaucratic red tape. "The project enhances transparency, speeds up service delivery, and improves accessibility for citizens and businesses by shifting to an online system," she said.

The Digital Society Awards, presented as part of the Festival of Innovation Awards, recognize programs and initiatives that harness digital technologies to improve governance, promote innovation, and deliver better services to the public.

Delfin said that DICT MIMAROPA is committed to advancing digital transformation in local governments and empowering communities through technology-driven solutions. (AS/JBG/PIA MIMAROPA-Oriental Mindoro) **BY ACE SAPIT**

NEGOC TIGHTENS FUEL PRICE MONITORING VS PROFITEERS

NEGROS OCCIDENTAL (PIA) — Local government units and national government agencies here have intensified monitoring of fuel supply and prices to stop profiteers from manipulating petroleum prices amid the ongoing tension in the oil-rich Middle East.

This move echoed President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s warning against profiteers exploiting Filipinos amid the economic strain, stressing that violators may face legal charges and possible business closure.

In the City of Bacolod, a fuel monitoring and inspection team is overseeing operations of the 164 registered gasoline stations in the city.

The teams are composed of personnel from the City Mayor's Office, the City Treasurer's Office, the Business Permits and Licensing Office, the City Legal Office, the Bacolod City Police Office (BCPO), and the Bacolod City Communications Office-Public Information Office (PIO).

Bacolod Mayor Greg Gasataya said the measure aims to address fuel price increases linked to the international crisis and ensure compliance with the Department of Energy's fair pricing guidelines.

"PNP [Bacolod Police] and the Local Government Unit (LGU) will monitor possible

complaints and violations in gas stations based on what the DOE allows for their price adjustment," Gasataya said.

Secretary to the mayor, lawyer Marty Go, clarified the extent of the city's constitutional power over the initiative.

"The authority of our inspection team is to check its prices and inventory. As to the penalty and issuance of a cease-and-desist order (CDO) or any violations, only the DOE has the authority to do so," Go said.

For Jinos Antonio, who has been earning a living as a tricycle driver for two years now, the efforts of the Bacolod LGU elicited assurance despite the economic uncertainty.

"Mas maayo [nga may monitoring and inspection teams] para ang iban nga gasoline stations hindi magpatama sang ila presyo. Makabulig ini biskan nga taas ang presyo para may ara sila guide nga gina sunod kag hindi lang sila magpinagusto," Antonio said.

[It is better to have monitoring and inspection teams so that some gasoline stations will not arbitrarily increase their prices. This helps, even when prices are high, because it gives them a guide to follow and avoid profiteering.]

Meanwhile, Police Colonel Eugene Rebadomia, officer-in-charge of the BCPO,

NGO PARTNERS BACK CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM IN BAGUIO

BAGUIO CITY (PIA) — The Baguio City Government has strengthened its child nutrition program through a new partnership with private and non-government organizations.

The local government unit through the City Health Services Office (HSO) represented by Dr. Celia Flor Brillantes, Open Heart Foundation Worldwide Inc. (OHFWI), represented by Executive Director Rosalinda Perez, and Sunshine Supermarket, represented by Michael Del Rosario signed a memorandum of agreement on March 17, 2026 for the "Nourish to Flourish – Adopt a Child Program."

This aims to support 10 child beneficiaries, aged 15 to 30 months, from barangays Irisan and East Quirino Hill, focusing on improving and maintaining their health and well-being.

CHSO Nutritionist-Dietitian III Lealyn Catiyan said this agreement aims to help local children through a holistic approach that addresses their needs, which will run for

directed all station and unit commanders to inspect gasoline stations within their respective areas of responsibility.

The inspections aim not only to prevent overpricing and other irregularities from fuel retailers, but also to maintain order in fuel supply operations.

To help augment public order and safety operations in the Metro, the BCPO is set to receive 10 electric vehicles (EVs) from the city government by early April, with each police station receiving one unit.

As an eco-friendlier alternative, Mayor Gasataya emphasized that using EVs is a responsible initiative to mitigate the impact of the oil shock.

Furthermore, on March 12, the La Carlota City Government, through its Public Information Office (PIO), also launched its daily fuel price monitoring initiative to keep residents informed about pump price movements.

This effort seeks to help motorists, transport operators, and residents make informed decisions and better manage their daily transportation expenses. (BPS/PSP/PIA NEGROS OCCIDENTAL/Photos from Bacolod City Communications Office-Public Information Office) **BY PAULO PAJARILLO**

six months, from April to September 2026.

"Ang partnership na ito ay under ng Nourish to Flourish. Ito ay isang program natin na mag-provide ng holistic approach para sa mga identified undernourished [na bata]," Catiyan said.

Under the agreement, OHFWI will provide ₱1,500 per beneficiary each month for essential food purchases. This fund will be used at Sunshine Supermarket to procure essential commodities to meet the children's nutritional needs. Among these needs are rice and nutritional supplements.

Beneficiaries will obtain the required commodities using a coupon system. The nutrition unit will issue a list to ensure the commodities will be helpful to the child.

"For the span of six months, actually, is 'yong mga needed na commodities. So, nandoon na 'yong rice para po sa source ng kanilang carbohydrates. Nandoon na rin po 'yong meat if available po ang meat para sa source nila ng protein, and fruits and vegetables," Catiyan said.

According to Perez, the initiative aligns with OHFWI goal of improving the health and nutrition of children and youth.

"It's one of our programs [to help the children and youth have a healthy lifestyle]. Ang Open Heart ay para sa mga children at youth. This is part of the survival program na tumutulong kami sa nga bata at kabataan na dapat silang lumaki na tama ang nutrition at nabibigyan din namin sila ng medical support, like vaccination programs, medical missions, dental missions," she said.

To ensure the success of this six-month program, the City Nutrition Unit will conduct monitoring activities to track the children's health progress.

"Meron namang regular na conduct ng growth monitoring para sa [mga bata] para makita rin ang improvement. Then, may interview. Sinuggest din ng OHFWI para ma-monitor, tatanungin kung nagkasakit ba [ang bata] within the span ng one month," Catiyan said. (JDP/DEG-PIA-CAR w/ SLU intern Melvin Paloten) **BY PIA-CAR**

DSWD-XI BOOSTS SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS IN DAVAO CITY

DAVAO CITY (PIA) — The Department of Social Welfare and Development Field Office XI (DSWD-XI), through its Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), is strengthening partnerships to promote convergence and sustainable community development in Davao City.

During the Kapehan sa Dabaw media forum on March 9, 2026, Rosamar Provide, Project Development Officer of DSWD's Sustainable Livelihood Program, highlighted ongoing collaborations with national government agencies, the local government of Davao, academic institutions, the private sector, and the hotel industry.

In 2025, the SLP implemented projects serving around 900 beneficiaries in Davao City. Several associations show strong potential for sustainability, with some proceeding into their second year.

One success story is the Kabalik sa Kabuhayan

Davao International Airport (KSK DIA) association, which received a P100,000 incentive fund from DSWD for expanding lettuce production. KSK DIA also benefited from the Kabuhayan program through a partnership with SM Foundation, involving TESDA, the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and DSWD. These inter-agency efforts provided capital funding, capacity-building training, and guidance on farm management.

"Maoy si KSK DIA isa sila sa nakadawat og 100,000 as incentive fund para sa expansion or additional funding para sa ilahang lettuce production," Provide said.

(KSK DIA is one of the recipients of a P100,000 incentive fund for expansion or additional funding for their lettuce production.)

Provide noted that 80% to 90% of 2025 associations remain active and eligible for 2026 funding, which remains

open.

To address internal conflicts, DSWD-XI conducts rigorous monitoring. Implementing Project Development Officers (PDOs) oversee projects for the first three months, followed by dedicated monitoring PDOs who guide and facilitate resolutions. Issues are troubleshooted with partner agencies to ensure continuity.

"Sila mismo ang naga-guide ug naga-facilitate constantly with the association. Kung naa silay makita nga problema sa association, i-troubleshoot dayon," Provide explained.

(They themselves guide and constantly facilitate with the association. If problems are seen, they troubleshoot immediately.)

She thanked the City Government of Davao for its continued support.

Provide also invited the public to visit the SLP exhibit featuring association products, held on the first Fridays of the month inside the regional office and on

third Fridays outside.

For Consuela Somera, president of KSK DIA SLP Association, the training and technical assistance provided by partner institutions greatly helped them in strengthening their agricultural livelihood.

They grow vegetables and fruits in a property beside the airport runway, and currently their lettuce harvests are being purchased by Davao City-based partners such as Ritz Hotel, Garden by the Bay restaurant, and Abuhan Grill.

"Karon naga-andam mi sa umaabot na partnership magpaabot ta sa accreditation sa Waterfront Hotel, Regal Hotel ug Acacia Hotel," Somera said.

(Now, we are preparing for an upcoming partnership. We are waiting for the accreditation from Waterfront Hotel, Regal Hotel, and Acacia Hotel.) (DHB, ADG-Interns/PIA Davao) **BY DANNIELLA HANNAH P. BALDONADO & ARIANNA D. GUIANI, USM INTERNS**

PESO HITS RECORD LOW, STOCKS SLIDE

MANILA – The peso closed at an all-time low of 60.10 against the U.S. dollar on Thursday after the U.S. Federal Reserve kept interest rates steady, while the local stock barometer snapped its two-day winning streak.

"The Philippine market ended in the red following strong selling pressure early in the session, driven by the peso's drop to a record low against the US dollar after the Fed kept interest rates unchanged," Regina Capital Development Corporation head of sales Luis Limlingan said.

Limlingan said the ongoing uncertainty in the Middle East, which continues to impact oil prices, further weighed on market sentiment.

The peso closed at 60.1, down from the previous day's 59.52 finish.

"[This was] a reaction to retaliation by Iran. Knee jerk reaction," Reyes Tacandong & Co. senior adviser Jonathan Ravelas in Viber message.

Iran recently hit Qatar's

energy hub.

"If this escalates, we could see it [peso] staying above 60," Ravelas said.

The local currency opened at 59.9 from its 59.68 start on Wednesday.

It ranged between 59.9 and 60.4, bringing the day's average to 60.12.

Volume of trade rose to USD2.43 billion from previous day's USD1.77 billion.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) fell by 0.56 percent to 6,018.62 while the All Shares index also declined by 0.56 percent to 3,344.87.

Except for Industrial which rose by 0.14 percent, all the sectoral gauges closed in the negative territory.

Mining and Oil recorded the biggest decline of 6.70 percent.

Volume of trade reached 1.87 billion.

Decliners led advancers at 133 to 61, while 55 shares were unchanged.

(PNA) BY ANNA LEAH GONZALES

MANUFACTURERS: NO PRICE INCREASES IN NEXT 30 TO 60 DAYS

MANILA – Manufacturers of basic and prime commodities have committed to keep prices at current levels for the next 30 days, amidst the impact of higher oil prices.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in a news release issued Tuesday night, said Trade and Industry Secretary Ma. Cristina Roque had a meeting with 21 manufacturers on Monday.

It said the meeting was attended by those who are into the production of canned sardines, bread, bottled water, instant noodles, coffee, canned meat, toilet soap and candles.

"Within the next 30 days,

prices are expected to remain stable, with no increase anticipated for canned sardines such as Unipak, 555, Ligo, Lucky 7, Fresca, Morjon, Golden Town, and Mega; bread products such as Pinoy Tasty and Pinoy Pandesal; bottled water such as Wilkins and Nature's Spring; toilet and laundry soaps such as Safeguard Pure White, Tide Bar Original Scent, and Green Cross Pure White; condiments such as Datu Puti's soy sauce and vinegar, and Lorins' Patis; processed canned meat of CDO; and candles from Liwanag," the DTI said.

It also announced that "prices of brands such

PDIC FILES ASSET DISTRIBUTION PLANS FOR 46 CLOSED BANKS IN 2025

MANILA – The Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) said it completed the filing of 46 asset distribution plans (ADPs) with various liquidation courts nationwide last year, achieving its full-year target and accelerating the release of payments to creditors of closed banks.

In a statement Thursday, PDIC said the filings include 20 final ADPs and 26 partial ADPs, each representing a concrete step toward court-approved payouts.

ADPs are the primary legal mechanism through which assets of closed banks are distributed.

Each plan details how assets will be allocated based on their estimated realizable value as of a defined cut-off date.

PDIC said all distributions strictly follow the Rules on Concurrence and Preference of Credits under the Philippine Civil Code, along with other applicable banking and liquidation laws.

Depending on the stage

of liquidation, the PDIC files either partial ADPs, covering specific assets already realized or liquidated, or final ADPs, which account for all remaining assets and pave the way for closing the bank's liquidation.

Once approved by the liquidation courts, these ADPs will authorize the PDIC, as statutory liquidator of closed banks, to distribute liquidation proceeds and recovered bank assets to creditors in accordance with the law and will bring long-awaited payments closer to release.

"Every ADP we file brings creditors and uninsured depositors closer to receiving what is lawfully due to them. This is at the heart of the mandate of the PDIC —ensuring that closed bank stakeholders are paid in a timely, transparent, and orderly manner. Meeting our ADP target for 2025 reflects the Corporation's strong momentum in advancing liquidation proceedings and settlement of claims of creditors and uninsured depositors," PDIC President and Chief Executive Officer Roberto Tan said.

As of the end 2025, there are 303 closed banks, for a total of 1,245 banking units, under PDIC liquidation.

These include 64 closed banks whose final ADPs are pending with their respective liquidation courts. **(PNA) BY ANNA LEAH GONZALES**

the cost pressures confronting manufacturers. Our priority remains to ensure fair and reasonable pricing. We thank our manufacturing partners for their commitment and shared concern for Filipino consumers," Roque said. **(PNA) BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**

PHILGUARANTEE, STERLING BANK OF ASIA INK HOUSING RETAIL GUARANTEE

MANILA – The Philippine Guarantee Corporation (PHILGUARANTEE) and Sterling Bank of Asia Inc. recently signed a PHP5-billion housing retail guarantee facility to expand access to home financing for Filipinos.

In a statement late Wednesday, PHILGUARANTEE said the contract was signed by PHILGUARANTEE President and CEO Alberto Pascual and SVP Teresito Cayo Butardo, Group Head of the Housing Guarantee Group at the Sterling Bank of Asia Head Office in San Juan City on March 17.

They were joined by Sterling Bank of Asia President and CEO Cecilio San Pedro and Real Estate Loans 1 Head Candice Quianzon.

Pascual said the partnership with Sterling Bank shows the shared commitment to expanding housing opportunities for Filipino families.

"For PHILGUARANTEE, our partnership with Sterling Bank of Asia plays an important role in fulfilling our mandate of strengthening the country's

credit delivery system," he said.

Butardo for his part, cited the importance of expanding housing opportunities for Filipinos amid global uncertainties.

"As a GOCC (government-owned and controlled corporation) attached to the Department of Finance, PHILGUARANTEE provides credit guarantees that reduce the risks of lending to sectors vital to economic growth, particularly housing, which is often underserved," he said.

Meanwhile, San Pedro underscored the importance of collaboration in the financial sector.

"PHILGUARANTEE provides an important mechanism that enables banks like Sterling Bank of Asia to extend housing loans with greater confidence and reach more deserving borrowers. In simple terms, this partnership allows us to do what the banks are meant to do. Support aspirations while ensuring that lending remains prudent and sustainable," San Pedro said. **(PNA) BY ANNA LEAH GONZALES**

CAR SALES CLIMB 6.4% MONTH-ON-MONTH IN FEBRUARY

MANILA – Vehicle sales rose 6.5 percent month-on-month in February 2026, which an industry official attributed to improved supply.

Data from the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines, Inc. (CAMPI) and the Truck Manufacturers Association (TMA) released on Wednesday showed sales reached 35,842 units, up from 33,696 in January.

However, this was 8.5 percent lower than the 39,164 units sold in February 2025.

Commercial vehicles led sales with 56,313, followed by light commercial vehicles, 40,676; Asian Utility Vehicles (AUVs), 13,906; passenger cars, 13,225; light-duty trucks and buses, 1,114; medium-duty trucks and buses, 537; and heavy-duty trucks, 80.

CAMPI president Jose Maria Atienza said most brands met higher demand.

"We experienced an expected drop in January, partly caused by the leaner supply as an effect of the strong buyer demand we saw in December," he said.

He added February sales "give a more stable outlook, and is a welcome development after the market drop during the second half of last year."

He, however, cited risks from the Middle East conflict that could affect consumer demand.

CAMPI said members are expanding offerings of energy-efficient and electrified vehicles to provide more economical options.

"This aligns with the ongoing trend highlighting growing customer preference for electrified vehicles month on month," it said.

CAMPI-TMA members sold 3,098 electrified vehicles in February, up 18.7 percent from 2,610 in January. **(JOANN SANTIAGO-VILLANUEVA/PNA)**



UE FENCERS SECURE UAAP WOMEN'S TITLE, DALMACIO CLAIMS 4TH MVP AWARD

MANILA – University of the East pocketed two more gold medals Monday night to rule the women's division in the UAAP Season 88 fencing tournament at the Makati Coliseum.

UE defeated De La Salle University, 44-40, in the team epee final, and University of Santo Tomas, 46-42, in the team sabre final.

"It's both happy and sad; happy because we got the championship back, but sad because it's my last. So, I hope that in the next seasons, my teammates, I hope they don't let go of this championship that we won," said UE's Queenie Dalmacio, who beat Kim Shaznee Tuy in their sabre duel.

UE settled for second to University of Santo Tomas in the girls division.

"They should still train; they shouldn't give up. They shouldn't let the championship go away again. I feel sorry for the girls, but I know they can get it back. Just fight," commented Dalmacio, who also earned a fourth MVP title.

Lia Gillana powered UST to a 45-39 victory in the sabre team final over UE, which was spearheaded by MVP Opao Cantantan.

"I felt overwhelmed, because all my hard work and effort paid off. Sometimes I even travel two hours after school, and back home, I'm doing my

assignments. It was very hectic," said Gillana.

The whole team was left in awe after achieving a first-ever title.

"It still hadn't sunk in; it still feels unreal. Even though we already have the trophy," said Gillana.

UE had won gold medals in the foil events last Sunday to dominate the men's and boys' divisions.

Winning three titles was a fitting tribute to program head Amat Canlas in his final season with UE.

"They should take care of the dynasty we started because this is not something that can be done lightly. We started from nothing, the roots of UE are deep and this is not something that can be done lightly as a champion," said Canlas, who also serve as national team coach.

"From me until the present, our dynasty has continued.

So when I leave, whoever replaces me, they should just continue," he added.

Meanwhile, UP finished as runner-up in the women's division with three gold, one silver and two bronze medals. Nana Carbonell won two golds in foil.

UST was third (0-2-2) followed by La Salle (0-2-1).

In the men's division, La Salle finished second with a 1-2-3 record followed by UP (1-2-2).

UE ranked second in the girls division with a 3-1-3 card, while Ateneo made it to the podium for the first time with one silver and four bronzes.

Guest team PAREF Southridge had a runner-up finish in the boys' division with a 1-0-2 slate followed by De La Salle Zobel (1-0-1). **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**

FEU ROLLS TO 8TH WIN IN UAAP MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

MANILA – Far Eastern University recovered from a first-set loss to prevail over University of the East, 19-25, 25-19, 26-24, 25-11 on Wednesday in the UAAP Season 88 volleyball tournament at the Smart Araneta Coliseum.

Amet Samuel Bituin finished with 15 points and 11 excellent receptions, while Dryx Saavedra also scored 15 points along with four digs as the Tamaraws stayed perfect after eight outings.

In the other game, defending champion National University defeated University of the Philippines, 25-19, 25-14, 25-19.

Leo Ordiales and Buds Buddin scored 14 points each, while Jade Disquitado added 13 points for NU, which improved to a 6-2 record for second place.

University of Santo Tomas (5-2) is third, while Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University share third place at 3-4 followed by Adamson University (2-5), UP (2-6), and UE (1-7).

FEU and NU will square off at 11 a.m. on Sunday at the Big Dome.

"Not that we were

surprised, but we expected UE to really compete. We know those seven teams, none of them will come to the UAAP and think they won't compete, right?" said FEU head coach Eddieson Orculo.

"Everyone stepping on the hard court, hard game. Maybe that's what I'm telling the team that the brain and the emotions, don't see how the day is today. But the skills, you can overload, and you can repeat until you get the right process," he added.

Lirick Mendoza scored 12 points (nine attacks, two blocks, and one ace) while Mikko Espartero had 10 points and nine receptions in the one hour and 52-minute match.

Charles David Absin chipped in nine points (six attacks and three blocks), Ariel Cacao dished out 25 excellent sets and three points, while sophomore libero Vennie Ceballos had 18 receptions and 11 digs.

Raquim Aeron delivered 21 points, 14 receptions, and six excellent digs while Roy Piojo added 15 points with 17 excellent receptions for the Red Warriors. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**

FILIPINAS ADVANCE TO 2027 WORLD CUP

MANILA – Filipino-Australians Angela Beard and Jacklyn Sawicki scored in the second half, leading the Philippines to a 2-0 victory over Uzbekistan in Thursday in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Women's Asian Cup at the Cbus Super Stadium in Queensland, Australia.

Beard sank a long cross from the left side from German-born Filipina midfielder Jael Guy in the 47th minute.

Another cross from Guy from the left side found Sawicki in the good spot on the right side in the 52nd minute.

National coach Mark Torcaso gave credit to Guy, who plays for the Brown University Bears on Rhode Island.

"We came here with a young squad, aged between 18 and 24. To have future stars to start at the world stage, and play well in big games, and for the World Cup is a testament to her and her family," Torcaso said.

The win earned for the

Philippines a second trip to the World Cup, joining Japan, Australia, China, Chinese-Taipei and South Korea.

The Philippines finally beat Uzbekistan in four matches since 1997, while a friendly game last October at the Rizal Memorial Stadium ended in a 2-all draw.

The 28-year-old Beard's

goal was her third attempt, after two tries of four attempts of the Philippines in the closing minutes of the first half.

In the 38th minute, Guy went for a volley to Beard on her first attempt, but goalie Maftuna Jonimqulova was just around to kick it away from her. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**



VICTORY. Jacklyn Sawicki reacts after the Philippines defeated Uzbekistan, 2-0, in the AFC Women's Asian Cup in Australia on Thursday (March 19, 2026). Sawicki and Angela Beard delivered the goals in the second half. (AFC Pool photo)

FEU ROLLS TO 8TH WIN IN UAAP MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

MANILA – Far Eastern University recovered from a first-set loss to prevail over University of the East, 19-25, 25-19, 26-24, 25-11 on Wednesday in the UAAP Season 88 volleyball tournament at the Smart Araneta Coliseum.

Amet Samuel Bituin finished with 15 points and 11 excellent receptions, while Dryx Saavedra also scored 15 points along with four digs as the Tamaraws stayed perfect after eight outings.

In the other game, defending champion National University defeated University of the

Philippines, 25-19, 25-14, 25-19.

Leo Ordiales and Buds Buddin scored 14 points each, while Jade Disquitado added 13 points for NU, which improved to a 6-2 record for second place.

University of Santo Tomas (5-2) is third, while Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University share third place at 3-4 followed by Adamson University (2-5), UP (2-6), and UE (1-7).

FEU and NU will square off at 11 a.m. on Sunday at the Big Dome.

"Not that we were

surprised, but we expected UE to really compete. We know those seven teams, none of them will come to the UAAP and think they won't compete, right?" said FEU head coach Eddieson Orculo.

"Everyone stepping on the hard court, hard game. Maybe that's what I'm telling the team that the brain and the emotions, don't see how the day is today. But the skills, you can overload, and you can repeat until you get the right process," he added.

Lirick Mendoza scored 12 points (nine attacks, two blocks, and one ace)