

# CAVITE GAZETTE

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# ASIAN TRACK CYCLING CHAMPIONSHIPS UNFOLD IN TAGAYTAY CT VELODROME

**MANILA** – Nearly 600 riders from 16 countries are seeing action in the Asian Cycling Confederation

(ACC) Track and Para Track Championships that kicked off at the Tagaytay CT Velodrome in Cavite on

Wednesday.

A total of 44 gold medals is at stake in the Asian championships, featuring

individual and team pursuit, sprint, keirin, elimination

race, omnium, points race, scratch race, Madison, and 1 km. for both men and women categories.



**GAME ON.** The Asian track cycling championships kicked off at the Tagaytay CT Velodrome in Cavite on Wednesday (March 25, 2026). Present during the opening rites were (from left) Tagaytay City Mayor Brent Tolentino, Philippine Paralympic Committee president Michael Barredo, Philippine Sports Commission chairperson John Patrick Gregorio, Philippine Olympic Committee and PhiCycling president Abraham Tolentino, Asian Cycling Confederation president Dato Amarjit Singh Gil, Uzbekistan Cycling Federation secretary-general Khurshid Atakulov Bakhodirjanovich (partly hidden), and Saudi Cycling Federation President Abdulaziz Al-Shahrani. (PhilCycling photo)



#246 Ligas 1 Bacoor City Cavite **CONTACT No. +63 965 497 1413**  
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The events in the para track competitions offering 30 gold medals are individual pursuit, 1,000 meters time trial, sprint, elimination, scratch race, and mixed team and tandem sprints.

Participating countries are Chinese-Taipei, Hong Kong-China, Indonesia, India, Japan, Kazakhstan, Macao-China, Malaysia, China, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and host Philippines.

According to Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino, the country's track program "is starting from scratch" and the Filipino riders are not expected to get any medals.

"I don't expect any medal or podium finish here for our track cycling team. We're starting from scratch... we're still calibrating and adjusting. So, we will learn, little by little, and we will soon learn it," said Tolentino, the president of PhilCycling.

"We finally hosted this event after 31 long years. And it is really a dream come true for Philippines sports. We are thankful to ACC and UCI for helping us."

ACC president Dato Amarjit Singh Gill, Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) chairperson John Patrick

Gregorio, Tagaytay City Mayor Brent Tolentino, Philippine Paralympic Committee president Mike Barredo, Uzbekistan Cycling Federation secretary general Khurshid Atakulov Bakhodirjanovich, and Saudi Cycling Federation president Abdulaziz Al-Shahrani graced the opening ceremony.

Joining them were PSC commissioners Walter Torres and Eduardo Hayco, Vice Mayor Agnes Tolentino, and former Cavite governor Athena Tolentino.

For Gregorio, the championships are a dream come true both for the country and Tolentino.

"It's a dream come true for President Tolentino, and for the country," Gregorio said in his speech during the well-attended, lively, and colorful opening ceremony ahead of the actual races at the velodrome's infield.

The Tagaytay CT Velodrome is a world-class cycling facility that replaced the then-iconic but now demolished Amoranto Velodrome in Quezon City – a facility that served cycling since the 1960s until Tolentino built a UCI-standard track at the heart of Tagaytay City that's now rising to become the country's "Olympic Center." **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**

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## TOP 3 MUNICIPAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON, ARESTADO NG SILANG PULIS

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite** — Naaresto ng mga tauhan ng Silang Municipal Police Station ang isang Top 3 Municipal Level Most Wanted Person sa isinagawang police operation sa Dasmariñas City, Cavite, bandang alas-10:00 ng umaga noong March 26, 2026.

Kinilala ni PLTCOL JOSEPH D MACATANGAY, Acting Chief of Police ng Silang Municipal Police Station, ang inarestong akusada na si alias "Be," at residente ng Silang, Cavite.

Batay sa ulat, nagsagawa ng police operation ang Warrant Personnel ng Silang MPS at isinilbi ang Warrant of Arrest laban sa akusada para sa kasong Qualified Theft (Article 310 of the Revised Penal Code) na inilabas ng Regional Trial Court, Fourth Judicial Region, Branch 135, Tagaytay City, Cavite, na may petsang March 17, 2026, at may

inirekomendang piyansa na Php 120,000.00.

Ipinaalam sa akusada ang kanyang mga karapatang konstitusyonal sa oras ng pagkakaaresto, at naitala ang operasyon sa pamamagitan ng Alternative Recording Device.

Sa kasalukuyan, isasagawa ang pagbabalik ng Warrant of Arrest sa hukuman na nagpalabas nito para sa kaukulang disposisyon.

Sinabi ni PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, "Patuloy ang mas pinaigting na operasyon ng Cavite PNP laban sa mga wanted person sa buong lalawigan. Ang matagumpay na pagkakaaresto sa mga indibidwal na may kinahaharap na kaso ay sumasalamin sa ating walang humpay na pagsisikap na mapanatili ang kaayusan at maitaguyod ang hustisya."

## PROVINCIAL MOST WANTED PERSON ARRESTED FOR MULTIPLE ROBBERY CHARGES IN TANZA

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite** — A Provincial Level Most Wanted Person was apprehended by joint operatives of Rosario Municipal Police Station during a warrant operation conducted on March 25, 2026, at around 5:30 PM in Tanza, Cavite.

PLTCOL ARDIE O BAGAMAN, Chief of Police of Rosario MPS, identified the accused as alias Guiller, 22 years old and a resident of Rosario, Cavite.

The accused was arrested by virtue of a warrant of arrest for three counts of robbery. The warrant was issued on February 18, 2026 by the Presiding Judge of the Regional Trial Court, Branch 116, Pasay City, with bail recommended at PPh100,000.00 for each

count.

The accused was properly informed of his constitutional rights in a language he fully understood. Following his arrest, he was brought to Rosario Municipal Police Station custodial facility for proper documentation and temporary detention.

The warrant of arrest will be returned to the issuing court for appropriate disposition.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, underscored the importance of sustained efforts in tracking down wanted persons and ensuring accountability for crimes committed. "Our police officers remain steadfast in carrying out their duty to serve warrants and bring fugitives before the court. The arrest

## CITY LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON ARRESTED IN BACOR CITY, CAVITE

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite** — A City Level Most Wanted Person was arrested by authorities during a manhunt operation conducted on March 25, 2026, at around 5:00 PM in Bacoor City, Cavite.

PLTCOL ALEXIE A DESAMITO, Chief of Police of Bacoor CCPS, identified the accused as alias Dencio, 39 years old, and presently residing at Pandacan, Manila.

He was apprehended by personnel of Bacoor Component City Police Station by virtue of a warrant of arrest for violation of Section 12, Article II of Republic Act 9165. The warrant was issued by the Presiding Judge of Regional Trial

Court Branch 20, Imus City, Cavite, dated September 24, 2024, with bail recommended at PPh40,000.00.

He is currently detained at the Bacoor Custodial Center, and the warrant will be returned to the issuing court.

Provincial Director, PCOL ARIEL R RED highlighted the continuous efforts of law enforcement in tracking down wanted individuals involved in illegal drugs. "Our intensified manhunt operations remain focused and relentless. Every arrest brings us closer to safer communities, and we will continue to pursue individuals who attempt to evade justice," he emphasized.

## REGIONAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON, ARESTADO SA JOINT OPERATION SA CAVITE CITY

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite** — Naaresto sa isang joint operation ang isang Regional Level Most Wanted Person sa isinagawang police operation sa Cavite City, Cavite, bandang alas-5:30 ng hapon noong March 24, 2026.

Kinilala ni PLTCOL SOCRATES S JACA, Chief of Police ng Cavite Component City Police Station, ang inarestong akusado na si Arnold at residente ng Cavite City, Cavite.

Batay sa ulat, nagsagawa ng joint operation ang Warrant Personnel ng Cavite Component City Police Station, katuwang ang 401st Regional Mobile Force Battalion,

of this provincial most wanted person reflects our continuing commitment to justice and public safety. We will not relent in our efforts to locate and arrest individuals who threaten the peace of our communities," he emphasized.

laban sa Most Wanted Person sa Cavite City, Cavite. Ang operasyon ay isinagawa gamit ang Body Worn Camera at Alternative Recording Device, na nagresulta sa pagkakaaresto ng akusado.

Ang akusado ay inaresto para sa mga kasong Violation of Section 5, Article II of Republic Act 9165 at Violation of Section 11, Article II of Republic Act 9165, sa bisa ng Warrant of Arrest na inilabas ng Regional Trial Court, Branch 16, Cavite City, Cavite, na may petsang March 9, 2026, na may service of sentence.

Sa kasalukuyan, ang akusado ay nakadetina sa Cavite Component City Police Station Custodial Facility at nakatakda ang pagbabalik ng Warrant of Arrest sa hukuman na nagpalabas nito.

Sinabi ni PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, "Patuloy ang pinaigting na kampanya ng Cavite PNP laban sa mga wanted person sa lahat ng antas. Ang matagumpay

## MUNICIPAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON ARRESTED IN DASMARINAS CITY, CAVITE

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite** — A Municipal Level Most Wanted Person was arrested by police authorities on March 25, 2026, at around 4:50 PM in Dasmariñas City, Cavite. PLTCOL LOUIE DC GONZAGA, Officer-in-Charge of Naic Municipal Police Station, identified the accused as alias TIN, 25 years old and a resident of Naic, Cavite.

She was apprehended by the personnel of Naic Municipal Police Station for violation of Section 10(a) of Republic Act 7610. The warrant of arrest was issued by

the Assisting Judge of Regional Trial Court Branch 132, Naic, Cavite, dated June 22, 2021, with bail recommended at PPh 80,000.00.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director reiterated the police force's strong stance in protecting vulnerable sectors, particularly children. "We will continue to stand firm in safeguarding the rights and welfare of children. Cases involving abuse are treated with utmost urgency, and we assure the public that offenders will be pursued and brought before the court," he said.

## PROVINCIAL LEVEL MOST WANTED, ARRESTED BY NOVELETA PNP

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite** — A Provincial Level Most Wanted Person was successfully arrested at about 5:40 in the afternoon of March 23, 2026, in Noveleta, Cavite, through a focused law enforcement operation conducted by personnel of Noveleta Municipal Police Station. PMAJ MARK ANTHONY D SARNO, Chief of Police, Noveleta MPS, identified the arrested accused as "Bert", a resident of Kawit, Cavite.

Personnel of Noveleta MPS, warrant PNCO using Alternative Recording Device (ARD) conducted operation against a Provincial Level Most Wanted Person, which resulted in the arrest of the accused for Slight Physical Injuries issued by Presiding Judge of Municipal Trial Court, 4th Judicial Region, Kawit, Cavite on the

19th day of March 2026 at Kawit, Cavite with no bail recommended for the Service of Sentence.

Upon arrest, the accused was properly apprised of his constitutional rights in a language known and understood by him.

The arrested accused is currently detained at the Custodial Facility of Noveleta Municipal Police Station, while the warrants of arrest shall be returned to the court of origin for proper documentation and disposition.

In his message, PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director, Cavite Police Provincial Office, emphasized that the arrest underscores Cavite PNP's firm commitment to ensuring that convicted offenders are immediately made to face the consequences of their actions. "The Cavite PNP continues its unrelenting campaign against wanted persons, particularly those involved in heinous crimes. Through coordinated operations, we ensure that offenders are brought before the courts and justice is served." PCOL Red stated.

na joint operation na ito ay patunay ng ating matatag na koordinasyon at dedikasyon upang maipatupad ang batas at mapanagot ang mga lumalabag dito."

## P4.56-B DRUGS DESTROYED IN CAVITE; CAVITE PPO JOINS INTENSIFIED ANTI-DRUG DRIVE

**Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite** — Pinangunahan ni DILG Secretary Juanito Victor “Jonvic” Remulla Jr. nitong Martes ang pagsira sa tinatayang ₱4.56 bilyong halaga ng ilegal na droga sa pasilidad ng Integrated Waste Management Inc., bilang bahagi ng pinaigting na kampanya ng pamahalaan laban sa ilegal na droga.

Kabilang sa mga dumalo sina PBGEN HANSEL M MARANTAN, Acting Regional Director, PRO CALABARZON; PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director, Cavite Police Provincial Office; Secretary Oscar Valenzuela ng Dangerous Drugs Board; at mga opisyal ng Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency

Ayon sa mga awtoridad, may kabuuang 1,136.5 kilo ng ilegal na droga at controlled substances ang winasak, kabilang ang 555.2393 kilo ng shabu, 117.4860 kilo ng cocaine, 442.9399 kilo ng marijuana, 15.8149 kilo

ng ephedrine, 1.6651 kilo ng MDMA, at 0.5070 kilo ng ketamine, kasama ang iba pang likidong droga, kemikal na sangkap, at humigit-kumulang 3,000 piraso ng expired drug evidence.

Binigyang-diin ng mga opisyal na ang pagsira sa mga ilegal na droga ay isang mahalagang hakbang upang matiyak na hindi na muling makababalik sa sirkulasyon ang mga ito at makapagdudulot pa ng pinsala sa mga komunidad. Sinabi ni PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director, Cavite Police Provincial Office, “Ang malawakang pagsira sa mga nakumpiskang ilegal na droga ay malinaw na patunay ng ating matatag at tuloy-tuloy na kampanya laban sa ilegal na droga. Patuloy na nakikiisa ang Cavite PNP sa PDEA at iba pang law enforcement agencies upang maprotektahan ang ating mga komunidad at matiyak ang mas ligtas na maayos na pamumuhay para sa bawat Caviteño.”

## CAVITE PPO STRENGTHENS MEDIA TIES AT PRO CALABARZON MEDIA SOLIDARITY NIGHT

Demonstrating its commitment to fostering strong collaboration with the media, the Cavite Police Provincial Office, through its Provincial Public Information Office, actively participated in the Media Solidarity Night hosted by the Police Regional Office CALABARZON under the leadership of PBGEN HANSEL M MARANTAN, Acting Regional Director, PRO4A.

The event gathered members of the PRO 4A Press Corps, Camp Vicente Lim Press Corps, and media practitioners from various provinces across the region, along with the PRO 4A Command Group, members of the Regional Staff, and Public Information Officers from the different Police Provincial Offices.

Representing Cavite, PLT SARAH JANE F DRIO, Chief of Cavite Provincial Information Office, joined the activity alongside members of the

Cavite Press Corps, where they had the opportunity to interact and build camaraderie with fellow media partners and press corps members from across the CALABARZON region. The gathering served as a meaningful platform to further strengthen the partnership between the police and the media in advancing transparency, responsible reporting, and public awareness.

A key highlight of the program was the open forum, which encouraged constructive dialogue and the exchange of ideas, allowing media partners to raise concerns, share valuable insights, and reinforce mutual cooperation in delivering accurate and timely information to the public.

Through activities like this, Cavite PNP continues to recognize the vital role of the media as a partner in community engagement and in promoting peace, order, and public trust.

## EDITORIAL

Ang kumakalam na sikmura ng bayan

Hindi na maikakaila ang bigat ng krisis na pasan ng mga pilipino sa gitna ng walang humpay na pagtaas ng presyo ng mga bilingin. Sa kabila ng mga pangako ng pag-unlad, ang reyalidad sa mga palengke at hapag-kainan ay kabaligtaran, ang dating sapat na badyet ay tila naglalaho na parang bula dahil sa inflation at kakulangan sa suplay ng mga pangunahing pangangailangan. Ang simula ng problemang ito ay hindi lamang dulot ng mga pandaigdigang salik, kundi bunga rin ng mga butas sa ating lokal na sistema ng distribusyon na matagal nang napabayaang. Kung hindi reresolbahin ang ugat ng kakulangang ito, ang krisis ay hindi na lamang magiging isang terminong pang-ekonomiya, kundi isang permanenteng bahagi ng paghihirap ng masa.

Upang makaalpas sa kumunoy na ito, kailangan ng gobyerno ng isang matibay na political will na unahin ang kapakanan ng mga mamayanang pilipino lalo na sa mga nangangailangang. Hindi sapat ang mga panandaliang subsidiya o “ayuda” na nagsisilbi lamang bilang band-aid sa isang malalim na sugat. Ang tunay na solusyon ay nasa pagpapalakas ng ating sariling industriya at pagtiyak na ang bawat Pilipino ay may akses sa abot-kayang pagkain. Bilang pagtatapos, ang krisis na ito ay isang malaking hamon sa ating pagkakaisa at sa liderato ng bansa. Panahon na upang itigil ang mga palamuting salita at simulan ang mga radikal na hakbang na tunay na magpapaginhawa sa buhay ng bawat mamamayan bago pa tuluyang mawalan ng pag-asa ang sambayanan.

## PDLs IN CALABARZON ASSURED OF BETTER TB CARE, FINANCIAL SUPPORT UNDER PHILHEALTH-BJMP PACT

**CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA)** — Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) in CALABARZON are set to benefit from improved tuberculosis (TB) care and enhanced financial support following the signing of a landmark Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between PhilHealth Regional Office IV-A (PRO IV-A) and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) Regional Office CALABARZON.

The agreement, led by Acting Regional Vice President Dr. Edwin M. Oriña and BJMP CALABARZON Regional Director Jail Chief Superintendent (JCSUPT) Isabelo V. Carlin Jr., establishes a strengthened partnership to ensure the effective implementation of the TB-DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course) Package for PDLs across the region.

With almost 20,000 PDLs in CALABARZON, the initiative addresses the heightened risk of TB in jail facilities, where congestion, prolonged close contact, and poor ventilation contribute to the spread of the disease.

Through the MOA, all

TB-diagnosed PDLs—whether bacteriologically or clinically confirmed, including drug-sensitive and drug-resistant cases—will be systematically enrolled in the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP) and provided access to comprehensive TB services.

These services include screening, diagnosis, treatment, monitoring, and reporting, as well as reimbursement of healthcare costs through PhilHealth. The partnership ensures that PDLs undergoing treatment—whether at the BJMP CALABARZON Regional Infirmary TB-DOTS Facility or other PhilHealth-accredited TB-DOTS centers—are covered from start to treatment completion.

Currently, 66 PDLs are undergoing treatment for Pulmonary Tuberculosis (PTB) under the care and custody of the BJMP CALABARZON Regional Infirmary TB-DOTS Facility. In addition, 50 PDLs have been successfully treated and declared cured, all of whom benefited from the recent MOA and are registered with

PhilHealth—highlighting the program’s early gains in improving health outcomes within jail facilities.

A key feature of the agreement is the institutionalization of coordinated processes between PhilHealth and BJMP, enabling faster claims processing and efficient reimbursement of TB-DOTS benefits. This not only strengthens healthcare delivery within detention facilities but also eases the financial burden associated with TB treatment.

The BJMP CALABARZON Regional Infirmary TB-DOTS Facility, established in 2012, plays a central role in the initiative. Recently certified by the Department of Health as a TB service provider valid until May 2028, the facility serves as an isolation and treatment center for TB-affected PDLs, helping prevent further transmission within jail communities.

The MOA also supports the implementation of the Universal Health Care (UHC) Act (Republic Act No. 11223), which guarantees automatic PhilHealth coverage for all Filipinos, including those in

custodial settings. It further reinforces Republic Act No. 7875, as amended, mandating PhilHealth to provide benefit packages for priority diseases such as TB.

During the signing ceremony held on March 3, 2026, Dr. Oriña highlighted key PhilHealth initiatives, including the Yaman ng Kalusugan Program (YAKAP), which aims to enhance healthcare access for PDLs through expanded benefits, streamlined processes, and improved service delivery.

This first-of-its-kind agreement between PhilHealth and BJMP sets a precedent for similar collaborations nationwide, signaling a broader push to extend healthcare access to marginalized and vulnerable sectors.

With this partnership, authorities underscore that access to quality healthcare remains a fundamental right—ensuring that PDLs in CALABARZON receive the care and support they need, in line with the principle that no one is left behind. (CCM-PIA CALABARZON) BY **CECILLE MALOLES**

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## CONVERGENCE KEY TO ADDRESS EMERGING THREATS – DEFENSE CHIEF

**MANILA** – Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. said that recent and ongoing conflicts have highlighted the need for all nations to "work toward convergence to address threats and mitigate vulnerabilities."

In his keynote speech to the Paris Defense and Strategy Forum (PDSF) in France on Wednesday (local time), and provided to Filipino reporters Thursday, Teodoro said there is a need for cross-regional convergence to protect human life, not only to propound state objectives and international order.

"And by convergence, we should interpret convergence in the broad sense, which means unity of purpose, where we both could either interoperate in one area or operate in our respective areas to achieve a common goal, using our unique capabilities, expertise, and areas of influence," he said.

Teodoro said this approach gives countries an "inherent responsibility" to protect the public and preserve global order without the need for a treaty.

"We need no treaties. This is immediately executory and doable," he said.

"Our convergence in goal or objective is necessary to protect human life, uphold international law, and defend the territorial integrity and sovereignty of smaller, and especially archipelagic countries, especially those who are besieged by larger neighbors."

Teodoro cited as an example the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, which has already affected Filipinos even though the Philippines is not directly involved.

"We have felt the consequences, most immediately through direct threats to the safety of Filipinos who are in the Middle East, 2.4 million of them, and immediately through sharp increases in commodity prices, the Philippines being a net

importer of oil," he said.

He also highlighted the fact that one in every three seafarers in the international merchant marine service is a Filipino, and one in three world medical professionals is a Filipino, forming the backbone of healthcare provision in Europe and America.

"And much to our regret, our people have been counted among those who are casualties from attacks both on land and at sea," Teodoro said.

He also emphasized that international law and institutions are essential to the growth and survival of nations like the Philippines, "not only as a matter of principle, but also out of necessity."

"Without an expeditionary armed force, for example, the Philippines has to depend on the international system to protect our nationals, wherever they may be, while we are in the process of strengthening ourselves to enable us to do so in the future, which is an obligation for which we will not shirk, and it is an obligation which we realize," Teodoro said.

Under the leadership of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., the Philippines is now strengthening its capabilities to ensure the safety and well-being of overseas Filipinos, the defense chief said.

"A big part of this is strengthening first our Armed Forces to protect our exclusive economic zone and other areas where we have jurisdiction, and thereafter, to be an expeditionary armed force to protect, in conjunction with all other like-minded partners, our people, and those of others, who are essential to international safety, international trade, and international commerce," he added.

Teodoro also noted that the Philippines' defense and security military partnerships with countries in Europe and beyond help the country in this critical endeavor.

The PDSF, which runs

## VATICAN ELEVATES APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF CALAPAN TO DIOCESE

**MANILA** – The Apostolic Vicariate of Calapan has been elevated to a diocese.

Pope Leo XIV also appointed its current apostolic vicar, Moises Cuevas, 52, as its first bishop, according to an article posted on the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) News website.

It said the announcement was made at the Vatican on Wednesday at noon local time (7 p.m., Manila time).

Cuevas has led the territory since September 2023 and is the youngest bishop in the Philippines.

The new diocese comprises 41 parishes and operates three seminaries and 14 schools serving more than 11,000 students across the province.

It also runs a home for the

aged, the only such facility in the Mimaropa region, alongside various social and pastoral ministries.

The diocese has 60 diocesan priests, all native clergy, five Society of the Divine Word missionaries assisting in parishes, and 57 seminarians in formation.

In July 2025, the CBCP agreed to endorse Cuevas' petition for the canonical elevation of Calapan to a diocese.

The territory was established as the Apostolic Prefecture of Mindoro and remained so for 15 years before becoming an apostolic vicariate in 1951.

The Vatican's approval comes as Calapan marks its 75th anniversary as an apostolic vicariate this year. **(PNA) BY FERDINAND PATINIO**

## LAWMAKERS CALL FOR HOUSE APPROVAL OF BODY CAM BILL

**MANILA** – Solid North Party-list Rep. Ching Bernos and Abra Rep. JB Bernos on Thursday called on their colleagues in the House of Representatives to pass House Bill No. 6530 requiring law enforcement officers to use body-worn cameras during their operations.

This after the Senate, on March 16, approved on final reading its counterpart version, Senate Bill No. 1908, requiring personnel of the Philippine National Police, National Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency

from March 24 to 26 and was organized by the Defence Academy of the École Militaire (ACADEM) of France, is a major international forum that provides a valuable avenue for dialogue among states, institutions, militaries, researchers, and civilian stakeholders on regional and global strategic and geopolitical issues. **(PNA) BY PRIAM NEPOMUCENO**

to wear body cameras during operations.

HB 6530, or the Body Cam bill, seeks to institutionalize and standardize the use of body cams in all anti-illegal drug and other law enforcement operations, ensuring that every action is properly documented and verifiable.

The measure establishes clear protocols for the use, storage, and disclosure of recordings, while also providing strong safeguards to protect the privacy rights of individuals in compliance with the 1987 Constitution and the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Rep. Ching Bernos said the bill is important in helping curb abusive conduct during law enforcement operations while protecting the rights of citizens and law enforcement officers alike.

"This measure is a concrete step to prevent abuses such as illegal searches, unlawful arrests, and extrajudicial killings that undermine the principles of law and justice and erode public confidence in our institutions tasked with upholding peace and

**MANILA** – The Supreme Court (SC) has ruled that the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) certification, declaring a child legally available for adoption, is an indispensable requirement even in cases where the child is voluntarily surrendered by the biological parent.

In a news release on Wednesday, the SC said its Third Division upheld the dismissal of an adoption suit following finding that there had been no compliance with the mandatory DSWD certification requirement after the mother, shortly after giving birth, left her newborn under the care of Eleazar Robiso and his parents.

A year later, Robiso filed a petition for adoption before a lower court, supported by an affidavit of consent executed by the mother, who cited financial inability

to support the child and formally relinquished parental authority.

The Regional Trial Court (RTC) dismissed the petition by ruling that the child was considered voluntarily surrendered and therefore required a DSWD certification under Republic Act (RA) 9523, an act requiring the certification of the DSWD to declare a "Child Legally Available for Adoption" as a prerequisite for adoption proceedings.

On appeal, Robiso argued that the certification requirement applied only to abandoned, neglected, or formally committed children, and not to those voluntarily left in the care of another individual.

The SC rejected this position by holding that surrendered children fall within the scope of the DSWD certification requirement.

The high tribunal said RA 9523 requires a DSWD certification declaring a child legally available for adoption and its implementing rules expressly include surrendered, abandoned, neglected, and dependent children.

Although the law does not explicitly define a "surrendered child," it recognizes the concept of voluntary commitment, where parents or guardians knowingly relinquish parental authority to another person or to a child placement agency.

The Court said this includes situations where a child is entrusted to another individual due to difficult personal circumstances.

The SC also clarified that the requirement does not apply in specific situations such as adoption by a biological parent of an illegitimate child, stepparent adoption, or adoption by close relatives within the fourth degree of consanguinity.

Since the lower court correctly found the child to be voluntarily committed, the SC upheld the dismissal of the petition for lack of the required certification.

The Court said the petitioner may formally adopt through available legal remedies, including the process under RA 11642 or the Domestic Administrative Adoption and Alternative Child Care Act. **(PNA) BY BENJAMIN PULTA**

## NEW REG'L PROSECUTION OFFICE IN CORDILLERA A 'GAME CHANGER'

**MANILA** – Department of Justice (DOJ) Secretary Frederick Vida on Wednesday said the establishment of a new Regional Prosecution Office in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) is a game changer in the department's commitment to a robust justice system in Northern Luzon.

"Establishing this Regional Prosecution Office in CAR is a game-changer," Vida said as quoted in a news release on Wednesday after conducting key meetings in the region for last two days.

"It brings swift, accessible justice right to the doorsteps of Cordillera communities, cuts delays in case resolution, and strengthens our coordination with local leaders and law enforcement for a safer Northern Luzon," he added.

He said the construction of the new prosecution office was anchored on Executive Order No. 220 (1987) or creating CAR and

Republic Act (RA) 10071, known as the Prosecution Service Act of 2010, which strengthens and rationalizes the national prosecution service in the country.

During the two-day meetings, Vida, along with other DOJ and local officials, discussed the permanent prosecution office in Cordillera, strengthening coordination with local governments and law enforcement, improving case management, enhancing witness and victim support, and addressing manpower and resource needs.

Vida, along with DOJ Undersecretary Ian Norman Dato and Assistant Secretary Francis John Tejano, met with Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong, Rep. Mauricio Domogan, newly designated CAR OIC Regional Prosecutor Joy Marie Frances Cortez and other officials of prosecution offices across the region, among others. **(PNA) BY BENJAMIN PULTA**

## PH SEEKS STRONGER DEFENSE COOPERATION WITH NATO, EUROPEAN NATIONS

**MANILA** – Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. called for more cross-regional convergence in the defense and military domains during his meeting with a ranking North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) official.

In a statement Wednesday, the DND said Teodoro met with NATO Chair of the Military Committee Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone at the sidelines of the 2026 Paris Defence and Strategy Forum (PDSF) on Tuesday.

"Secretary Teodoro underscored the need for broader cooperation among countries as challenges to global security and stability continuously evolve," the agency added.

The PDSF is scheduled from March 24 to 26.

"He (Teodoro) shared that the Philippines is presently laying the groundwork for enhanced interoperability

and exchanges with the European Union and NATO countries, underpinned by the country's duty to strengthen its resilience and protect the welfare of Filipinos wherever they may be in the world," the DND stressed.

Likewise, Cavo Dragone affirmed NATO's willingness to pursue cooperation with Manila.

Both officials acknowledged the importance of sharing information and best practices as inter-regional partners converge to mitigate the threats to the prevailing international order.

"Secretary Teodoro and Admiral Cavo Dragone earlier met at the 2025 Seoul Defense Dialogue in September last year, where they shared views during a panel discussion on geopolitical competition and restoring strategic stability," the DND said.

Organized by Defence

## DENR: PH DEER SIGHTINGS IN MARINDUQUE SIGNAL FOREST, WILDLIFE RECOVERY

**MANILA** – The recent sightings of the Philippine deer (*Rusa marianna*) in the province of Marinduque point to a recovering ecosystem and the gains from the sustained efforts of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

During a Bagong Pilipinas interview on Wednesday, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) - Marinduque officer in charge Cesar Odi said there is no concrete study on how many Philippine deer are left in the country.

He, however, said that in the case of Marinduque, the deer species had long been considered locally extinct after not being seen for decades.

"Una po sa lahat, ito po ay magandang indikasyon na may natitira pang species ng Philippine deer na nag-survive. Pangalawa, ipinapakita po nito na iyong ating ecosystem o iyong ating natitirang kagubatan ay nagri-recover na siya. Pangatlo, ito po iyong bunga ng mahabang panahon na conservation effort po natin (First of all, this is a good indication that there are still surviving species of the Philippine deer. Secondly, this shows that our ecosystem or our remaining forests are recovering. Third, this is the result of our long-term conservation efforts)," he said.

To better understand the population, he said, the DENR is coordinating with experts, including the University of the Philippines Los Baños, for a possible scientific study to determine how many deer remain, particularly within the Marinduque Wildlife Sanctuary, a protected area under Republic Act (RA) 11038, or the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas

Academy of the École militaire of France, the PDSF is a major international forum that provides a valuable avenue for dialogue among states, institutions, militaries, researchers and civilian stakeholders on regional and global strategic and geopolitical issues. **(PNA) BY PRIAM NEPOMUCENO**

System (ENIPAS) Act. Odi attributed the animals' reappearance to natural forest regeneration, intensified protection measures, and reduced threats to wildlife.

He noted that reported sightings near communities may be linked to habitat changes and a sense of safety.

"Mapansin ninyo medyo maamo na sila, ibig sabihin po feeling nila secured sila doon sa community na hindi sila threatened, na hindi sila sasaktan (You might notice that they are a bit more docile, which means they feel secure in the community, that they are not threatened, that they will not be harmed)," he said.

Odi urged the public to avoid interacting with the animals and to report sightings to authorities for documentation purposes.

"Kung makita ninyo po ito is huwag ninyo pong lapitan, huwag ninyo na rin pong hawakan at huwag ninyo na rin pong pakainin at lalong-lalo na huwag ninyo pong kakainin kasi under sa ating batas, iyong RA 9147, or Wild Life Protection Act, and iyong RA 11038, may kaukulang parusa po ito at may kulong pa po ito (If you see one, please do not approach it, do not touch it, do not feed it, and especially do not eat it because under our laws, specifically RA 9147, or the Wildlife Protection Act, and RA 11038, there are corresponding penalties and imprisonment for this)," he said.

Keeping the deer as pets is also prohibited, he said, noting that they must remain in their natural habitat.

Odi highlighted the important roles of communities, local government units, and park rangers in wildlife protection, including monitoring, enforcement, and reporting of illegal activities, such as poaching.

"Ang ating kalikasan ay hindi lamang para sa kasalukuyang henerasyon, kung hindi sa mga susunod pang saling-lahi ng mga Pilipino. So, sama-sama nating pong pangalagaan ang ating likas yaman dahil tayo ang kalikasan (Our nature is not only for the current generation but also for the future generations

## URGENT LAW NEEDED AS PREGNANCIES AMONG GIRLS AGED 10 TO 14 RISE

**MANILA** – Commission on Population and Development (CPD) Information Management and Communication Division chief Mylin Mirasol Quiray on Wednesday called for the immediate passage of a proposed bill addressing adolescent pregnancy, noting the rising cases among very young girls, 10 to 14 years old.

"Talagang nararapat na i-pass na natin itong Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Bill para po iyong national program on reducing adolescent pregnancy lalo na sa very young adolescent, ages 10 to 14 ay mas mapalakas (We really need to pass the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Bill so that the national program on reducing adolescent pregnancy, especially among very young adolescents aged 10 to 14, can be strengthened)," Quiray said in a Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon interview over PTV-4.

She emphasized the need to pass the proposed bill, citing new Philippine Statistics Authority's (PSA) data, which shows an 8 percent increase in births among girls aged 10 to 14.

"Kailangan din po mas mapalakas pa iyong (We all need to strengthen the) social protection program for adolescent mothers and their children, mapalakas ang preventive programs natin katulad ng reproductive health education kapag po napasa ang bill na ito (enhance our preventive programs such as reproductive health education once this bill is passed)," she said.

Quiray said the CPD is alarmed by the increase in pregnancy among 10 to 14-year-olds from 3,343 in 2023 to 3,612 in 2024.

She said the absence of a comprehensive and institutionalized framework limits the government's ability to fully address the issue, particularly among the youngest and most vulnerable.

The CPD said pregnancies in this age group may indicate abuse, as the age

of sexual consent in the Philippines is 16 years old.

"Lagi po nating sinasabi sa CPD ang pag-start po ng discussion is really protection, child protection talaga from abuse, lalo na (We always say in the CPD that starting the discussion is really about protection, child protection from abuse, especially) teaching our young kids to protect themselves," she said.

"So, if less than 16 ka nanganak, so ibig sabihin (So, if you gave birth when you were less than 16) it maybe abusive or there is an abuse there that is involved because of the age sexual consent," she added.

The proposed bill seeks to provide a coordinated national response by institutionalizing comprehensive reproductive health education, expanding adolescent-friendly health services, and strengthening social protection for young mothers and their children.

It will also ensure that young boys and girls receive scientifically accurate and age-appropriate information in accordance with the standards of the Department of Education and the Department of Health, while making health services more accessible and non-judgmental.

Quiray said the measure is also crucial in addressing gaps in awareness, as only a small percentage of Filipino parents discuss sexual health with their children, leaving many adolescents to rely on unreliable sources such as social media.

As the CPD supports efforts to fast-track the bill, including moves to harmonize various versions of the measure to speed up passage, she assured that existing programs are in place, including an interagency technical working group among concerned government agencies that aims to address adolescent pregnancy.

The House of Representatives approved its own version (House Bill 8910) of the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Bill in 2023, while the Senate has yet to pass its own version (Senate Bill 1979). **(PNA) BY MARITA MOAJE**

of Filipinos. So, let us all take care of our natural resources because we are nature)," he said. **(PNA) BY MARITA MOAJE**

## WWRRDEC PUSHES FOR MOSSY FOREST, PHILIPPINE OAK CONSERVATION IN CORDILLERA

### BAGUIO CITY (PIA)

— The Watershed and Water Resources Research, Development, and Extension Center (WWRRDEC) is pushing for the conservation and rehabilitation of mossy forests in the Cordillera.

WWRRDEC head Minda Odsey said that they have already discussed with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Cordillera (DENR-CAR) the possible implementation and funding of a project that aims to conserve, restore, and sustainably manage the threatened mossy forests in the region.

Odsey said that they aim to rehabilitate the mossy forests and reintroduce the endangered Philippine oak, a species native to the Cordillera.

“Important kung bakit kailangan nating gawin ito. Gusto ba natin na mawala ang Philippine oak in the landscape of the Cordilleras? Or would you like it to be multiplied in our mossy forest?” Odsey said. Once approved, the project will be implemented in two phases. This includes the profiling and assessment of mossy forests that will also

include the documentation of cultural practices.

“This is important kasi marami tayong good practices, cultural and traditional na puwede nating ma-adopt at dapat, ma-document para later on, may babalikan tayo,” she said.

The activities will also include the rehabilitation of the mossy forest, conservation of the Philippine oak and other threatened mossy forest species, and the conduct of information education campaigns.

Under the proposal, the project will be first implemented in the mossy forests of Mt. Polis, Mt. Pulag, Mt. Sto. Tomas Forest Reserve, Mt. Data National Park, and Mt. Purgatory.

Odsey presented the proposal during the Watershed and Environmental Management Sectoral Committee first quarter meeting on March 17, 2026. She expressed hope that once finalized, the committee will endorse the project for funding and support. (DEG-PIA CAR) **BY DEBBIE E. GASINGAN**

## PH CARABAO CENTER EQUIPS FARMER COOPS THROUGH LEADERSHIP FORUM

### SCIENCE CITY OF MUÑOZ (PIA)

— The Philippine Carabao Center (PCC) launched the first leg of its “Pathways to Excellence: Navigating Compliance and Ethical Governance in the Carabao Industry Cluster Training” to bolster governance and leadership skills among farmer cooperative leaders and Carabao-Based Enterprise Development (CBED) coordinators.

Hosted at PCC Headquarters in Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, the forum drew CBED coordinators, National Carabao Industry Stakeholders Association members, and farmer cooperative board directors.

According to PCC, the forum aims to equip participants with essential knowledge and skills in cooperative governance, ethical leadership, and compliance with industry regulations.

It also readies cooperatives for the operational and financial demands of the expanding Carabao Herd Buildup Project, which ramps up distribution of genetically improved buffaloes to farmer groups.

During the training, Cooperative Development Authority-accredited trainer Adorable Pineda discussed the vital role of good governance and ethical leadership in cooperatives. Committee on

## COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER RAISES MONEY FOR STUDENTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

### DIPOLOG CITY (PIA)

— The City’s Sunset Boulevard became a sea of pink as 890 advocates flooded the area to raise funds to shoulder the clinical diagnosis of the Dipolog City Special Education Center’s (SPED) students through the Run for Autism: Season 2.

Organized by the Dipolog Federated Parent-Teachers Association (PTA) in partnership with Growth Point, proceeds from activities aim to support their official evaluation and intervention needs.

“We’re trying to break barriers to make our community inclusive. We want to give people with autism more chances and opportunities to exist, to live, and to experience being themselves without judgment or stigma,” said Rosary Faith Naquila, Growth Point’s Occupational Therapist.

Most especially, we want families to know that they are not alone—that they have a community where they can strive and live as normally as possible,” she added.

More than individual advocates, establishments, and businesses, not just from this city, but from neighboring towns also joined the event, offering freebies and services at lower prices.

Cooperatives Development legal staff Marc Monterde, on the other hand, covered the salient provisions of Republic Act 9513, also known as the Philippine Cooperative Code of 2008.

PCC said enhanced governance and regulatory knowledge enables farmer cooperatives to operate more efficiently, seize market opportunities, and sustain growth through regulatory compliance.

Succeeding sessions are slated for PCC at Ubay Stock Farm and PCC at Central Mindanao University, extending the training to cooperatives in Mindanao and Visayas. (CLJD/MAEGR, PIA Region 3-Nueva Ecija) **BY MARIA ASUMPTA ESTEFANIE C. REYES**

The program featured an opening ceremony, warm-up exercises, and a special run for SNED learners, followed by race categories for 3-kilometer, 5-kilometer, and 10-kilometer distances, encouraging active community participation.

With strong turnout and community support, the “Run for Autism” highlights a growing commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that children with special needs are given the attention, recognition, and opportunities they deserve. (JPA/PJF/ICO-OJT/PIA9-Zamboanga del Norte) **BY PAMELA FUMERO AND IRENE OMBIANG**

## BIR N. SAMAR SHIFTS TO DIGITAL-FIRST TAX CAMPAIGN, BOOSTS ENFORCEMENT DRIVE

### CATARMAN, Northern Samar (PIA)

— The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) in Northern Samar has ramped up its tax campaign by adopting a digital-first approach and broadening enforcement efforts to increase compliance and revenue collection.

Revenue District Officer Atty. James Balagapo said the agency is using government communication channels, including Kapihan sa PIA, to reach more taxpayers with cost-effective strategies aligned with national guidelines.

A key part of the campaign

is the shift to online services. Balagapo mentioned that income tax filing is now fully digital, allowing taxpayers to file “anywhere at their convenience,” with payments processed through authorized banks.

The BIR also updated compliance requirements for businesses. Balagapo clarified that registration for business owners is no longer needed, and official receipts have been replaced with sales, charge, or service invoices. Apart from digitalization, the BIR has strengthened enforcement to close collection gaps. The agency continues to issue Letters of Authority to examine financial records, implement Oplan Kandado, and conduct inspections of establishments.

These intensified efforts come after a 2 percent shortfall in the region’s 2025 collection target. In response, the BIR has increased compliance monitoring and enforcement activities.

Early signs of progress are emerging in 2026. Balagapo reported that Revenue District Office 85 met its target within the first two months of the year, ranking first in Eastern Visayas.

He emphasized the importance of tax revenues in supporting government operations. “Tax is the lifeblood of the government,” Balagapo said, highlighting its role in funding public services, salaries, and development initiatives.

To improve compliance, Balagapo urged media partners to support information campaigns and to report violations by business establishments so that proper action can be taken.

He also reminded taxpayers that the deadline to file income tax returns for the 2025 taxable year is April 15, 2026. (AND, PIA Northern Samar) **BY AILENE N. DIAZ**

## SSS ROLLS OUT FACIAL AUTHENTICATION, INTRODUCES NEW LOAN PROGRAMS

### DAVAO CITY (PIA)

— The Social Security System (SSS) has introduced a facial authentication with liveness check system as an alternative method for the Annual Confirmation of Pensioners (ACOP), aimed at making services more accessible and convenient for pensioners.

Mona Lorraine Tombo, Regional Communications Officer of SSS Mindanao South Division, said the new system is another option from visiting an SSS branch office.

“Although ang ating traditional na mag visit sa SSS ay still open for our pensioners, but SSS also just added an alternative or other way of reporting ACOP,” Tombo said.

(Even though you can still visit SSS in person, which is our tradition, SSS has just added an alternative way to complete your ACOP.)

The facial authentication system allows pensioners to verify their identity online through the SSS website by using a gadget with a camera. It requires registration with the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) and basic information such as SSS number and date of birth.

The ACOP requirement covers pensioners aged 80 and above, those living abroad, total disability

pensioners, survivor pensioners, and minor pensioners. Traditional proof-of-life methods, such as submitting photos with a newspaper, are still accepted as an alternative.

Tombo also announced an upcoming microloan program that will provide financial assistance of up to P20,000 for qualified members and pensioners, in addition to its existing loan services.

“Ang loan is not a benefit but a privilege. Meron tayong upcoming na micro loan para sa ating mga members with a maximum of P20,000 po na loan amount,” Tombo said.

(Please be reminded that a loan is a privilege, not a benefit. We are launching a micro-loan program for our members, offering a maximum amount of P20,000.)

Meanwhile, the agency continues to offer restructuring or condonation loan programs, allowing members to settle their obligations through flexible payment terms of up to 24 months.

Tombo also reminded the public to remain vigilant against scams, especially those targeting senior citizens.

“Hindi po si SSS; hindi po sila nagbibigay ng unsolicited text and calls—

hindi rin sila nag-house-to-house,” she said.

(SSS does not send unsolicited texts or make unsolicited calls—they also do not conduct house-to-house visits.) (SSK/PIA Davao) **BY SALMAN KANEGA**

## BIZ GROUPS BACK STATE OF NATIONAL ENERGY EMERGENCY DECLARATION

**MANILA** – Business groups on Wednesday expressed appreciation for Malacañang’s declaration of a state of national energy emergency, and the measures targeted to help cushion the impact of the Middle East conflict on the domestic economy.

In a statement, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) said the declaration, as contained in Executive Order (EO) 110, “is timely and necessary to mitigate the economic impact of the global energy supply disruption driven by the escalating tensions in the Middle East.”

“The PCCI supports any measures of the government to absorb and stabilize the increasing prices of fuel and basic commodities. It has been three weeks since the war started and several increases have already been implemented – now we are seeing its effect – higher costs of logistics, transportation, and goods,” Ferrer said.

Ferrer said the Philippine economy, especially the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), will be greatly impacted if the ongoing conflict extends beyond three months.

“The longer it (conflict) takes, the lesser the chances for our MSMEs to bounce back. We have to understand our MSMEs are the backbone of our economy, comprising of 1.2 million enterprises,” he said.

He also underscored the need to ensure domestic fuel supply for more than 90 days, thus, the call for “consultative and transparent implementation of EO 110 and the Unified Package for Livelihoods, Industry, Food, and Transport (UPLIFT).

“We should rethink and reset our priorities locally so that our country will not panic in times of crisis. We should learn from our neighboring countries in Asia, like Japan, which has reserves sufficient for eight months,” he said. Coordinated effort

Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) Chairperson Elizabeth Lee, in turn, said issuance of the EO is “timely and necessary” and that the UPLIFT framework “provides a coordinated approach to cushion industries and communities from global energy shocks.”

She said the current challenges provide a multi-layered pressure for manufacturers, “hitting energy, transport, imported input materials, and production timelines.”

“These pressures are expected under current conditions. Manufacturers are responding with a strong focus on continuity, cost discipline, and resilience. Businesses are built for the long term, and operations are being actively managed to withstand volatility,” she said.

“Firms are prioritizing uninterrupted production while safeguarding workforce stability, even as margins tighten. Mitigation measures are being intensified across operations. These include optimizing production schedules to off-peak energy hours, enhancing workforce flexibility where cross-trained team members adopt flexible roles and responsibilities, and adopting remote work arrangements for non-production functions where feasible,” she added.

Lee said “companies are renegotiating supplier contracts, tightening

## SEC TO PUSH REGIONAL CAPITAL MARKET INTEGRATION AT ASEAN MEETING

**BORACAY, Aklan** – The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Philippines will host the 44th ASEAN Capital Markets Forum (ACMF) Chairs’ Meeting in Boracay Island on Thursday, reaffirming its commitment to driving regional capital market integration, inclusivity, and stronger enforcement, thereby advancing the growth of Southeast Asia’s capital markets.

As ACMF Chair, the SEC Philippines will convene chief securities regulators from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Timor

energy efficiency across production lines through lean manufacturing, and streamlining logistics—such as consolidating shipments and maximizing load efficiency to reduce fuel consumption (co-loading) where applicable.” This is being one while “accelerating supply chain diversification and deepening local sourcing where viable,” she said. She said renewable energy adaption “is also gaining ground, with more facilities integrating solutions such as rooftop solar.”

“This crisis magnified our country’s vulnerabilities. Reforms that will deepen and expand local manufacturing as a national imperative will help the Philippines secure resilience, drive job creation, and help better shield the Philippine economy from global energy shocks. Industrial growth at scale—anchored on job creation, innovation, and sustainability—is no longer optional; it is the foundation of a more secure and competitive economy moving forward,” she added. **(PNA) BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**

Leste, and Vietnam. Building on the discussions from the previous ACMF Deputies’ Meeting held in Coron last January, the Chairs’ Meeting will deliberate on and provide strategic guidance on key issues raised by the Forum’s working groups to advance market connectivity, sustainable finance, corporate governance and digital assets, among others, in support of the continued development of ASEAN capital markets. “ASEAN Member States share the common goal of delivering innovative and expanded investment opportunities that empower every business and investor in the region. However, achieving this requires ensuring the security and protection of investors’ money amid the ever-evolving financial landscape,” SEC Philippines Chairperson Francis Lim said in a news release Wednesday. “The ACMF Chairs’ Meeting provides an opportunity to collaborate with our regional peers in crafting tangible measures that advance our capital markets, including cross-border investor protection mechanisms to combat fraud. This will contribute significantly to reinforcing public trust and confidence in the region’s business sector, further promoting ASEAN’s position globally as an attractive hub for investments.”

Anchored on the “RISE” agenda, the Chairship of the SEC Philippines places premium on Regional integration, Inclusivity, Sustainable finance and collaborative Enforcement, in line with the Philippines’ ASEAN 2026 Chairship theme, “Navigating Our Future, Together” and the ACMF Action Plan 2026 to 2030.

Following this, the SEC Philippines aims to fulfill the Priority Economic

## PH SECURES P1.9-B AUSTRALIAN GRANT TO BOOST JOBS, STRENGTHEN ECONOMY

**MANILA** – The Philippines is set to boost formal employment and economic resilience as the country successfully secured a 45 million Australian dollar (PHP1.88 billion) grant through the Department of Finance (DOF).

The DOF said the fund would support a program to improve the country’s policy and business environment.

“When businesses grow, jobs are created. When systems improve, services become faster and more accessible. When growth reaches more people, lives and communities are transformed,” the DOF said as quoted in a news release Wednesday.

It said the funding will back the Promoting Growth, Resilience, Economic Stability, and Sustainability

Deliverable on Sustainable and Resilient Capital Markets through high-impact initiatives, including the establishment of the ASEAN Knowledge Network of Supervisory and Enforcement Directors, the publication of an ASEAN Code of Conduct for External Verifiers in Sustainable Finance, and the expansion of the ASEAN Corporate Governance Scorecard Regional Assessment.

The Commission also targets to complete the next phase of the mitigation co-benefit and Adaptation for Resilience (mARs) Guide and promote ASEAN as an asset class.

Formed in 2004 under the guidance of ASEAN finance ministers, the ACMF is mandated to develop a “deep, liquid, and integrated regional capital market” by implementing initiatives that allow its member states to participate in regional activities based on their market readiness, recognizing the diversity of development across ASEAN markets. **(PR)**

in the Philippines Program (PROGRESS), signed by Finance Secretary Frederick Go and Australian Ambassador Marc Innes-Brown PSM.

The program, Australia’s flagship initiative, aimed to help the Philippines achieve economic growth to benefit Filipinos and help the country achieve economic resiliency.

PROGRESS aims to make the economy more inclusive by addressing barriers to formal job creation, income inequality, and obstacles faced by women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups.

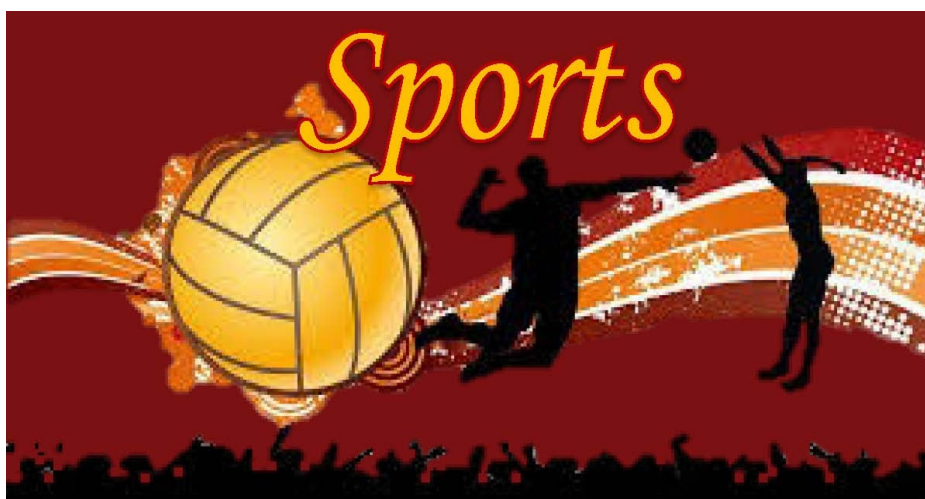
The program will focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and help them invest in clean energy, climate mitigation, and growth-enhancing sectors.

“The program will also strengthen government institutions and advance policy and regulatory reforms in strategic areas that enable sustainable growth, like energy transition and critical mineral resources,” the agency said.

The DOF will supervise and manage the program implementation to be undertaken by an Implementing Managing Contractor, with oversight from Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The program will provide technical assistance, climate finance for SME investments, and a Strategic Activities Fund for research and innovation.

The DOF will coordinate with the Anti-Red Tape Authority, the Department of Energy, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development, and the Australian Embassy in the Philippines to ensure results-oriented implementation. **(PNA) BY MARITA MOAJE**



## ALUDO TO FACE NOCOS IN PHILTA VISAYAS WOMEN'S OPEN SEMIS

**MANILA** – Second seed Stefi Marithe Aludo outplayed Mica Eman, 7-5, 6-4, on Wednesday to reach the semifinal round of the inaugural Philippine Tennis Association (Philta) Women's National Open at the San Carlos Tennis Center in Negros Occidental.

Aludo, a member of the Philippine Tennis Academy, will meet third seed Tiffany Nocos, who scored a 6-4, 6-1 victory over sixth seed Nina Angeline Alcala.

In the doubles category, Dayo Laguda and Sindette Elentores downed Jamie Carmona and Laika Delima, 6-3, 6-3, to forge a quarterfinal showdown with top seeds Tennielle

Madis and Aludo.

Isobel Alipoon and Alexia Virgo also secured a quarterfinal berth after defeating Loujje Mongcal and Alexa Empalmado, 6-4, 6-3.

Alipoon and Virgo will face

the second-seeded pair of siblings Kaye Ann and Mica Eman.

Madis-Aludo and the Eman sisters drew first-round byes. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**



Philippine Tennis Academy player Stefi Marithe Aludo (Contributed photo)

## FILIPINO RUNNERS MAKE PRESENCE FELT IN ROME MARATHON

**ROME** – The Filipino runners made their presence felt again at the Run Rome The Marathon 2026 on Sunday, with Lorenzo Castro Jr. finishing inside the top 35 and placing 6th in his age category.

Castro, a 43-year-old marathoner based in Florence, emerged as the fastest Filipino finisher in 2 hours, 29 minutes, and 41 seconds, followed by Milan-based Mark Robin Salas, who clocked 2:54.11.

About 20 Filipino running clubs and organizations participated in the event, with supporters from the local Filipino community lining the streets to cheer them on.

A highlight was the vibrant Filipino cheer station at the 31-km. mark in

Piazza Apollodoro, where cultural group Pinoy Teens Salinlahi performed the traditional Filipino dance Tinikling, drawing applause from international spectators and adding a festive Filipino touch to the global event.

Run Rome The Marathon broke the Guinness World Record for the largest pacemaker team, with 252 pacers from different countries, including three Filipinos – JC, Jeanette, and Ashley Santa Teresa.

Mark Jason Flores, a first-time marathoner, nearly gave up at the 35-km. mark, but “my mind kept me pushing.”

“My cheerers are my family, excited na umuwi

sa bahay at pakita ang medal na pinaghirapan ko (Excited to go home and show off the [finisher] medal I worked so hard for),” Flores said.

Before joining the Rome Marathon, which drew 36,000 participants, the Filipino runners paid a courtesy call at the Philippine Embassy in Rome on Friday.

As expected, Kenyan athletes dominated the 31st edition of the Rome Marathon with Asebel Rutto winning the men's race for the second time in 2:07.32 and Pascaline Kibiwot Jelagat claiming

the women's category with a new record time of 2:22.44. (Alona Cochon/**PNA**)

## CABSTARS BEAT PROTECTORS, GAIN SOLO THIRD

**MANILA** – AEP-Cabstars recovered from a third-set loss to prevail over Alpha Insurance, 25-17, 25-21, 19-25, 25-21, and gain solo third place in the Spikers' Turf Open Conference Tuesday at the Paco Arena in Manila.

Jayrack De La Noche finished with 21 points on 20 attacks, while Jared Schnake chipped in 17 points and 12 excellent reception as the Cabstars avenged their first-round Feb. 25 loss.

Mfena Gwaza contributed 11 points on nine attacks and two blocks, and Michael Doria had 10 points.

AFP-Cabstars, which

improved to a 5-4 record, will face the Savouge Spin Doctors (6-2) to close the preliminaries on Friday at the same Manila venue.

“Our standing is better because today was a good win, the composure of the kids is also good so we can carry it into our next game against Savouge... I think the kids can still come out better because it seems like we only formed two weeks ago. Our preparation for our upcoming games, and especially the chemistry, is better because the players are bonded,” Cabstars head coach Kitty Antiporta said after the one-hour-and-37-minute match.

Former national team

setter EJ Casana orchestrated the offense with 29 excellent sets and a game-high four blocks, while Vince Lorenzo anchored the defense with 17 digs and 21 receptions.

Ranz Cajolo scored 16 points on 12 attacks, three blocks, and one ace as the Protectors took their second straight loss and slid to fourth at 4-5.

Edward Camposano added 14 points and 11 excellent receptions, JJ Javelona had nine points, and Nat del Pilar scored seven points for Alpha Insurance, which will meet VNS Always Bright Laticrete in its last elimination round match. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**

## BISERA WINS ICTSI LAKEWOOD CROWN

**MANILA** – Florence Bisera drained a clutch four-foot birdie putt to outlast Lois Kaye Go in a gripping three-way, four-hole playoff to capture the ICTSI Lakewood Championship crown Thursday in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija.

Earlier, Sarah Ababa ignited the drama in regulation with a fearless assault on the water-guarded 18th, going for the green in two and converting a stunning birdie for a 68. Go shot a 69, while Bisera faltered late with a 72. The trio finished deadlocked at 210, setting the stage for a sudden-death showdown.

All three birdied the par-4 10th in the opening playoff hole. But on their return, Ababa made a costly bogey, leaving Bisera and Go locked in a duel. Matching pars again, they

pressed on to a third trip down the same hole.

Back again on No. 10, from 120 yards, Bisera unleashed a near-flawless wedge – crisp, controlled and fearless – watching the ball land softly and roll to within four feet of the cup.

Go, who had earlier kept her hopes alive with a clutch long birdie conversion, left her approach about 24 feet to the right of the pin. Her birdie attempt slid past the hole and she settled for par.

Bisera stood over her putt with quiet resolve. One smooth stroke later, the ball dropped. She thrust her fist into the air.

“I'm so happy because I won the first tournament in LPGT. It's a big confidence boost as I focus on my upcoming campaign in China,” said Bisera in news release.

Bisera entered the final round with a three-shot lead over Go but struggled with her putting, settling for a 72 in regulation.

“In the playoffs, my putting got better. I was thinking a lot about regulation – what if I don't win this?” added Bisera, who pocketed P146,400 for her sixth career victory, including a breakthrough in Thailand last year.

Go received P98,400, while Ababa settled PHP78,000.

Tiffany Lee slipped to joint fourth at 216 alongside Harmie Constantino and Martina Miñoza, who carded 71 and 72, respectively. Chanelle Avaricio matched the tournament-best 68 to finish seventh at 218, while Daniella Uy placed eighth at 219 after a 73. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**

## EALA EXITS MIAMI OPEN AFTER LOSING TO WORLD NO. 14 MUCHOVA

**MANILA** – Filipino Alexandra Eala bowed out of the WTA 1000 Miami Open following a 6-0, 6-2 loss to world No. 14 Czech Karolina Muchova on Monday.

No. 31 Eala, a semifinalist last year, did her best, but it was not good enough against the former world No. 8, who claimed victory after one hour.

The 5-foot-11 Muchova, who won the WTA 1000 Qatar Open last month, will face the winner between No. 8 Mirra Andreeva and No. 10 Canadian Victoria Mboko.

Andreeva defeated No. 32 Czech Marie Bouzkova, 7-6 (4), 6-2, while Mboko conquered Anastasia

Zakharova, 6-1, 7-5.

Meanwhile, top seed Aryna Sabalenka outplayed American Caty McNally, 6-4, 6-3, to forge a fourth-round duel with No. 23 Chinese Qinweng Zheng, who ousted No. 16 American Madison Keys, 4-6, 6-2, 6-4.

Third seed Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan downed No. 27 Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine, 6-3, 6-4, to advance against Talia Gibson of Australia, who stunned No. 18 Iva Jovic of USA, 6-2, 6-2.

Americans Coco Gauff, Jessica Pegula, Amanda Anisimova, and Hailey Baptiste also secured round-of-16 slots. No. 4 Gauff prevailed over

compatriot Alycia Parks, 3-6, 6-0, 6-1; No. 5 Pegula clobbered No. 26 Canadian Leylah Fernandez, 6-2, 6-2; No. 6 Anisimova beat Ukrainian Yulia Starodubtseva, 6-4, 6-2; and unseeded Baptiste shocked No. 9 Ukrainian Elina Svitolina, 6-3, 7-5.

Other winners were No. 12 Swiss Belinda Bencic over Diana Shnaider, 6-3, 6-3; No. 20 Romanian Sorana Cirstea over No. 21 Belgian Elise Mertens, 6-3, 6-2; No. 25 Latvian Jelena Ostapenko over No. 7 Italian Jasmine Paolini, 5-7, 6-2, 7-5; and Romanian Jaqueline Cristian over No. 11 Ekaterina Alexandrova, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (5). **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**