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BACOOR CITY LGU FOR COMMUNITY CARPOOLING TO SAVE ON FUEL COSTS

BACOOR CITY, Cavite (PIA) — The City Government of Bacoor is pushing for a community-based carpooling arrangement for its travelling residents to help reduce traffic congestion and save fuel.

In an interview last March 31, Mayor Strike Revilla said he signed city ordinances regulating community-based

carpooling arrangements as part of their bid to promote the use of private and city government-owned vehicles to help save energy and reduce traffic, especially in major thoroughfares.

To ensure the safety of car owners and passengers, the ordinance requires that vehicles to be used in the carpooling initiative must secure insurance.

“Kapag naaprubahan ito, ipapatupad natin ang carpooling system. Pero of course, i-re-require natin na mayroong insurance [ang mga sasakyan].”

Revilla added that through the ordinance, residents will adopt a carpooling scheme when travelling to help minimize expenses.

“Para makatulong tayo sa pagtitipid ng gasolina at diesel, ipu-pool natin ‘yung

OVER 600 BENEFICIARIES SERVED IN MEDICAL AND DENTAL MISSION IN ALFONSO, CAVITE



MEDICAL AND DENTAL MISSION
26 MARCH 2026
BRGY. LUKSUHIN IBABA, ALFONSO

A successful medical and dental mission was conducted in Luksuhin Ibaba, Alfonso, Cavite on

March 26, through the initiative of the Office of the Provincial Governor - Medical Mission

Team, benefiting more than 600 residents with a comprehensive range of free healthcare services.

The initiative provided essential medical services including fasting blood sugar (FBS) testing, electrocardiogram (ECG) screenings, dental consultations and tooth extraction, and general medical check-ups. Patients also received prescribed medicines at no cost, ensuring continued care beyond the consultations.

mga magkakapitbahay para makabawas sa gastos. Napakaimportante rin nitong carpooling at ibababa natin ito sa mga community at mga barangay natin.”


The local chief executive also emphasized that the carpooling initiative will become voluntary for residents. (PB-PIA CALABARZON) **BY PATRICIA BERMUDEZ**

The mission was made possible through the collaborative efforts of healthcare professionals from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer and volunteers, including Barangay Health Workers (BHW) and nursing students from Far Eastern University (FEU), who played a vital role in

assisting with patient care and coordination.

Local leaders also showed their strong support for the program. Eighth District Board member Jasmin Angelli Maligaya-Bautista and Alfonso Vice Mayor Madona Pel were present during the activity, demonstrating their commitment to improving community health services. Their presence, along with the active participation of the Alfonso Mandaragat Lady Eagles Club, contributed significantly to the success of the health mission.

The residents and barangay officials expressed their gratitude to the provincial government, to all volunteers, partners, and supporters who made the mission possible and bringing the health services closer to their community. — **OPIO**

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REGIONAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON SA KASONG RAPE, ARESTADO NG SILANG PULIS SA CAMARINES SUR

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite — Matagumpay na naaresto ng mga tauhan ng Silang Municipal Police Station ang isang Most Wanted Person na nakalista sa PRO CALABARZON sa isinagawang manhunt operation sa Del Gallego, Camarines Sur, bandang alas-9:30 ng umaga noong Abril 4, 2026.

Kinilala ni PLTCOL JOSEPH D MACATANGAY, Chief of Police ng Silang MPS, ang inarestong akusado na si alyas "Kulong," residente ng Silang, Cavite.

Batay sa ulat, isang simultaneous manhunt operation laban sa mga wanted person ang ipinatutupad ng CAVITE PPO sa panahon ng paggunita ng Semana Santa, kaya't nagsagawa ng police operation ang Warrant Personnel ng Silang MPS bilang lead unit katuwang ang NCIT RIU5 bilang intel packet provider at 1st CamSur PMFC laban sa akusado. Nauwi ang operasyon sa kanyang pagkakaaresto sa bisa ng Warrant of Arrest para sa apat na bilang ng Rape sa ilalim ng Article 266-A(1) in relation to Article 266-B of the Revised Penal Code.

Ang nasabing warrant ay inilabas ng Regional Trial Court, Branch 3, Family Court, Tagaytay City, Cavite, na may petsang October 21, 2025, at walang piyansang inilaan para sa apat na bilang ng kasong rape.

Agad na ipinaalam sa akusado ang kanyang mga karapatang konstitusyonal sa oras ng pag-aresto. Ang operasyon ay maayos ding naitala gamit ang Alternative Recording Device.

Sa kasalukuyan, ang Warrant of Arrest ay ibabalik sa hukuman na nagpalabas nito para sa kaukulang disposisyon at tamang legal na proseso.

Sinabi ni PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, "Ang matagumpay na pagkakaaresto sa isang regional level most wanted person sa labas ng lalawigan ay patunay ng mahusay na koordinasyon at walang humpay na pagtugis ng ating kapulisan sa mga wanted person. Nananatiling matatag ang Cavite PPO sa pagpapatupad ng batas at sa pagtiyak na ang mga akusadong may mabibigat na kaso ay maihaharap sa hustisya."

NAIC PNP APPREHENDS A PROVINCIAL MOST WANTED PERSON

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite — A Provincial Level Most Wanted Person was arrested by the personnel of Naic Municipal Police Station at about 3:27 in the afternoon of April 3, 2026 in Naic, Cavite.

PLtCol Louie DC Gonzaga, Officer-in-Charge of Naic Municipal Police Station, identified the accused as alias DOMENG, 45 years old and a resident Naic, Cavite.

The accused was apprehended by virtue

of warrants of arrest for violation of Republic Act 7610, also known as the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act. Specifically, the charges include four counts under Section 5(b) and two counts of Lascivious Conduct under Section 5(b) of the same law.

The warrants were issued on September 6, 2022, by the Presiding Judge of the Regional Trial Court, Branch 15, Fourth Judicial

PROVINCIAL LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON, ARESTADO NG TRECE MARTIRES PULIS SA PANGASINAN

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite — Matagumpay na naaresto ng mga tauhan ng Trece Martires Component City Police Station ang isang Most Wanted Person na nakalista sa Cavite PPO sa isinagawang joint manhunt operation sa Bolinao, Pangasinan, bandang alas-8:40 ng umaga noong Abril 4, 2026.

Kinilala ni PLTCOL BRYIAN D MERINO, Chief of Police ng Trece Martires Component City Police Station, ang inarestong akusado na si alyas "Arnel", residente ng Bolinao, Pangasinan.

Batay sa ulat, isang simultaneous manhunt operation laban sa mga wanted person ang ipinatutupad ng Cavite PPO sa panahon ng paggunita ng Semana Santa, kaya't nagsagawa ng joint police operation ang Warrant Personnel ng Trece Martires Component City Police Station, katuwang ang Warrant Section ng Bolinao Police Station at mga intel operatives. Nauwi ang operasyon sa pagkakaaresto ng akusado sa bisa ng Warrant of Arrest para sa kasong

Lascivious Conduct under Section 5(b) of Republic Act No. 7610.

Ang nasabing warrant ay inilabas ng Family Court, Branch 5, Fourth Judicial Region, Trece Martires City, Cavite, at may inirekomendang piyansa na Php200,000.00.

Agad na ipinaalam sa akusado ang kanyang mga karapatang konstitusyonal sa wikang kanyang nauunawaan sa oras ng pag-aresto. Ang operasyon ay maayos ding naitala gamit ang Alternative Recording Device sa kawalan ng Body Worn Camera.

Sa kasalukuyan, ang akusado ay p a n s a m a n t a l a n g nakadetine sa Bolinao Police Station at sasailalim sa turnover sa Trece Martires Component City Police Station Custodial Facility para sa kaukulang disposisyon at tamang legal na proseso.

Sinabi ni PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, "Ang matagumpay na pagkakaaresto sa isang provincial level most wanted person sa labas ng lalawigan ay patunay ng epektibong koordinasyon at dedikasyon ng ating kapulisan sa pagtugis sa mga wanted person. Patuloy nating paiigtingin ang operasyon laban sa mga nagtatago sa batas upang matiyak na sila ay maihaharap sa hustisya at mapanatili ang kapayapaan at kaayusan sa ating komunidad."

firm commitment of Cavite PNP in protecting children from abuse and ensuring that offenders are brought to justice. He emphasized that operations against wanted persons will remain relentless in pursuit of safer communities.

IMUS PNP ARRESTED A PROVINCIAL MOST WANTED PERSON IN PASAY CITY

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite – A Provincial Level Most Wanted Person was arrested by authorities at about 3:00 in the afternoon on April 3, 2026, in Brgy. 183, this city, in line with the intensified manhunt operations during the Holy Week.

PLtCol Chey Chey I Saulog, Chief of Police of Imus Component City Police Station, identified the arrested individual as alias VIN, 37 years old, and presently residing at Kawit, Cavite.

Elements of Imus Component City Police Station in coordination with personnel of the 401st A Maneuver Company, Regional Mobile Force Battalion 4A apprehended the accused by virtue of a Warrant of Arrest for Violation of Section 11, Article II of Republic Act 9165, otherwise known as the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

The warrant was issued

and signed by the Presiding Judge of the Regional Trial Court, Branch 122, Fourth Judicial Region, Imus City, Cavite, for service of sentence dated February 7, 2025.

Upon arrest, the suspect was informed of the nature of his arrest and his constitutional rights. He is now under police custody and will be returned to the court of origin for proper disposition.

In his message, PCol Ariel R Red, Provincial Director commended the operating units for the successful conduct of the operation and emphasized the importance of sustained law enforcement efforts, especially during the Holy Week. He reiterated that Cavite PNP remains steadfast in its commitment to track down wanted persons and ensure that justice is served, while continuously upholding professionalism, accountability, and respect for human rights in all police operations.

PHP3.4 MILLION SHABU HAUL NETS TWO HIGH-VALUE TARGETS IN TAGAYTAY BUY-BUST OPS

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite - In an intensified campaign against illegal drugs, a joint buy-bust operation conducted by operatives of the Provincial Drug Enforcement Unit of Cavite PPO and Tagaytay Component City Police Station led to the arrest of two high-value individuals and the seizure of approximately 500 grams of suspected shabu on April 3, 2026, at about 9:45 AM at Kaybagal South, Tagaytay City, Cavite.

PMAJ SANDIE DF CAPARROSO, Officer-in-Charge of Provincial Intelligence Unit identified the arrested individuals as alias DANNY, 39, and alias CAMILLA, 45; both are residents of Dasmariñas City, Cavite.

Confiscated from the suspects were five knot-tied transparent plastic sachets containing white crystalline substance believed to be shabu weighing approximately 500 grams with an estimated standard drug price amounting to Php3,400,000.00, buy-bust and boodle money, one pink shoulder bag, one brown paper bag, one

brown wallet containing various identification cards, and one orange Toyota Wigo.

The suspects were apprehended for violation of Sections 5 and 11, Article II of Republic Act 9165 also known as the Dangerous Drug Act of 2002. The arrested individuals are currently under police custody and will be subjected to inquest proceedings for the appropriate charges.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director, commended the operating units for the successful operation and emphasized the continuing commitment of Cavite PNP in intensifying its campaign against illegal drugs. He underscored that the significant volume of illegal drugs seized reflects the serious threat posed by drug syndicates to communities. He further urged those still involved in illegal drug activities to cease their operations, surrender peacefully, and cooperate with authorities, stressing that the police remain resolute in pursuing offenders while upholding the rule of law and respecting human rights.

OPPDC FACILITATED TRAINING ON ELA- PDIP MONITORING REPORT PREPARATION

The Office of the Provincial Planning and Development Coordinator, successfully spearheaded the Training on the Preparation of Executive-Legislative Agenda – Provincial Development Investment Program 2025-2028 Monitoring Report at the New Provincial Government Center, on March 26, 2026.

The activity gathered ELA-PDIP focal persons from provincial government departments and units, to enhance their understanding of the monitoring system and capacitate them on how to properly accomplish the monitoring tool for the status of their respective programs, projects and activities (PPA).

Provincial Planning and Development Coordinator Engr. EnP Lorna Leyran welcomed the participants and emphasized the importance of the training in effectively tracking the progress and outcomes of PPAs. This was followed by an overview of the

activity delivered by EnP Mary Grace Reyes.

The training featured a series of interactive lectures, discussions, workshops, and presentation of outputs aimed at equipping participants with the necessary knowledge and skills in preparing accurate and reliable monitoring reports. These efforts contribute to ensuring transparency and data integrity in the implementation of provincial programs and projects.

By the end of the activity, participants gained a clearer understanding of the importance of well-planned and effectively monitored projects in achieving the province's development goals.

The training was conducted by governance sector, covering Economic, Infrastructure, and Environmental Management, and will continue with the Institutional and Social sectors. — *OPIO*

RECOGNITION OF THE HARD WORK AND DEDICATION OF PGC PUBLIC SERVANTS

On March 30, the Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence (PRAISE) Committee once again facilitated the distribution of tokens of appreciation as performance incentives to qualified employees of the Provincial Government of Cavite, in recognition of their excellent delivery of public service.

The ceremony was attended by Vice Governor

Ram Revilla Bautista, along with members of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan, who expressed their appreciation for the employees' hard work, loyalty, and valuable contributions to efficient and effective governance.

The event also served as a celebration for employees who marked their birthdays in the month of March. — *OPIO*

COMMUNITY MEDICAL-DENTAL MISSION REACHES 996 RESIDENTS IN IMUS

Nearly 1,000 residents of Barangay Pasong Buaya 2, City of Imus received free healthcare services during a Medical and Dental Mission conducted by the Provincial Government of Cavite on March 28, 2026.

The mission delivered 735 medical consultations and 79 dental services, along with 89 Free Blood Sugar (FBS) tests and 93 ECG screenings.

Present during the activity were Mayor Alex Advincula,

PNPA'S TOP CADET COMES HOME WITH A PROMISE FULFILLED

Every superhero has a tragic origin story: the death of Bruce Wayne's parents inspired him to become Batman, while Uncle Ben's stinging loss helped Peter Parker transform into a selfless hero.

For Police Cadet Van Marie Editha Cagasan, there were no capes nor radioactive spiders to rely on—only her grit, strength, and determination as she grieved a similar tragedy.

The twenty-four-year-old native of Baybay City, Leyte, is a proud member of the Philippine National Police Academy's SILANG PAGLAOM Class of 2026 as this year's top graduating cadet.

Raised in a family of academic achievers, Cagasan graduated as Valedictorian during her elementary and high school years before pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Biotechnology at Visayas State University as a scholar of the Department of Agriculture's Biotechnology program.

For someone of her caliber, a successful career in science was a sure path for Cagasan—until she entered the PNPA to pursue a degree in law enforcement. This change was abrupt for the young cadet, from the laboratories of VSU, where she could have enjoyed the freedom of an ordinary student, Cagasan flew halfway across the country to the confines of PNPA and adapted to its regimented instruction.

As part of the SILANG PAGLAOM class, Cagasan found strength from the sisterhood of her fellow female cadets.

It was in these same ties

where she found strength when, during her second year at the PNPA, then-third class cadet Cagasan lost her mother to cancer.

Being miles away from home, she had to endure the heartbreak of not always being by her mother's side. At one point, the young cadet considered leaving the academy and coming home. Despite her loss, Cagasan honored her mother's wishes and received her diploma from the Academy as her class's top graduate.

"Pumasok ako ritong dala ang kaniyang pagmamahal, ngunit magtatapos ako ritong dala ang pangungulila sa kaniya. May mga sandaling gusto ko nang sumuko, pero sa bawat pagkakataong ako ay nanghihina, bumabalik ang kaniyang mga salita, ang parangap niyang umakyat sa entablado at tinatanggap ang pangarap na ito."

A daughter fulfilling her mother's final wish, Cagasan persevered through heartbreak and loss, and turned her grief into determination that fueled her goal to finish as SILANG PAGLAOM's top cadet.

"Lalo na ngayong buwan ng kababaihan, ang tagumpay na ito ay hindi lamang para sa akin. Ito ay simbolo ng patuloy na pag-angat ng kababaihan sa larangan ng serbisyo. Sa bawat babaeng nangangarap na maglingkod, walang hangganan ang ating kakayahan; kailangan tayo ng bayan. Sa aking pamilya, kayo ang aking sandigan. Ang tagumpay na ito ay bunga ng inyong pagmamahal at mga sakripisyo."

After four years, Cagasan finally came home with the honors of PNPA's top graduate after their graduation rites at Camp Castañeda last March 27.

Carrying the much-coveted Presidential Kampilan and PNP Chief Kampilan—the PNPA's top awards for graduating students—now Police Lieutenant Cagasan will finally come home to pay her respects. (PB-PIA CALABARZON) *BY PATRICIA BERMEDEZ*

EDITORIAL

"Think before you speak"

Ang salita ay isa sa pinakamakapangyarihang sandata na taglay ng tao, may kakayahan itong maghilom ng sugat o kaya naman ay sumira ng dangal. Sa bilis ng takbo ng mundo ngayon, lalo na sa impluwensya ng social media, madalas ay nauuna ang emosyon kaysa sa rason. Ang pagbibitaw ng mga katagang hindi pinag-isipan ay tila isang palasong pinakawalan na hindi na kailanman mababawi. Ang isang saglit na bugso ng galit o pagkainip ay maaaring mag-iwan ng sugat sa puso ng kapwa na tatagal habambuhay. Kaya naman, ang pagtitimpi at pagsusuri sa bigat ng ating sasabihin ay hindi tanda ng kahinaan, kundi isang pagpapakita ng mataas na antas ng respeto at karunungan.

Higit pa sa personal na ugnayan, ang ating mga salita ay nagsisilbing repleksyon ng ating pagkatao at integridad. Kapag tayo ay nagsasalita nang may pag-iingat, itinataguyod natin ang isang kapaligirang may pag-unawa at kapayapaan sa halip na kaguluhan. Bago magsalita, mahalagang itanong sa sarili, "Ito ba ay totoo?", "Ito ba ay nakakatulong?", "O ito ba ay makakasakit lamang nang walang saysay?" Sa huli, ang pagpili sa pananahimik kaysa sa pagsasalita ng masama ay isang tagumpay ng ating pagpapakatao. Ang pag-iisip bago kumibo ay hindi lamang pag-iwas sa pagkakamali, kundi isang paraan ng pagpapalaganap ng paggalang sa ating kapwa.

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MARCOS CALLS ON FILIPINOS TO EMBRACE COMPASSION, UNITY

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. called on Filipinos to embrace kindness and unity, urging them to translate faith into action as the nation celebrates Easter Sunday.

Marking the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the culmination of Holy Week, Marcos said the occasion is a reminder that hope endures and renewal is always possible.

“On this day, the empty tomb stands as a testament that life conquers death and hope prevails over despair,” the President said in his message.

He stressed that beyond reflection, Easter calls for concrete acts of compassion and solidarity.

“As a people known for resilience and deep faith, let us carry the light of Easter into our daily lives, not only in words, but in action,” he said.

Marcos urged Filipinos to “choose compassion over

indifference” and “unity over division,” emphasizing that these values are essential in building a stronger nation.

“For in every act of kindness, in every hand extended to help, we become instruments of renewal for our entire nation,” he said.

The President further urged Filipinos to “rise with renewed purpose, unyielding hope, and a deep sense of responsibility for one another.”

“Let us build a nation where kindness is instinct and unity is our strength. For when we stand together guided by faith, bound by love of country, and driven by a shared vision, there is no challenge we cannot overcome.”

Easter Sunday is one of the most important Christian observances in the predominantly Catholic Philippines.

(PNA) BY DARRYL JOHN ESGUERRA

DOE SETS MORE MEASURES TO EASE IMPACT OF OIL SUPPLY ISSUES

MANILA – The Department of Energy (DOE) is implementing additional measures to help cushion the impact of oil supply issues, including the fast-tracking of net metering application processes.

DOE, in a news release Wednesday, said distribution utilities (DUs) and electric cooperatives (ECs) are required to finish the processing at their end within 10 days, while local government units (LGUs) are required to accomplish it within three working days.

This is among the programs in line with issuance of Executive Order (EO) No. 110, which declared a state of national energy emergency due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, which has hampered the transit of oil supply from that region.

DOE said before the issuance of EO 110, “DUs and ECs had 20 working days to complete the processing of net metering applications, while the prescribed period for LGU approvals varied per permit.”

Under the net metering program of the DOE, power consumers with the capacity to install their own power sources, such as solar panels, may do so, and their surplus power of up to 100 kilowatts (kW) may be transferred to the grid to boost supply in exchange for credits on their monthly electricity bill.

“Every unnecessary delay in net metering is a delay in savings for Filipino consumers,” Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said.

“Under the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. through Executive Order No. 110, we are pushing faster, simpler, and more responsive approval processes so that more households and businesses can benefit from rooftop solar, lower their electricity bills, and strengthen their resilience against global energy price shocks.”

Fuel station monitoring The DOE has also issued special guidelines for deputized agencies in fuel station monitoring and inspection to ensure that these activities are conducted “in a disciplined, coordinated, and orderly manner.”

Among those tapped by DOE for this program are representatives of the LGUs, the Philippine National Police (PNP), the National Electrification Administration (NEA), and the National Power Corporation (NPC).

“Under the Guidelines, deputized agencies are directed to coordinate closely with the DOE in the conduct of inspections, properly identify themselves and clearly communicate the purpose of their visit, observe fuel inventory levels, daily sales, and dispensing practices, verify unusual or bulk purchases when necessary, and document their observations for submission to the DOE for evaluation and appropriate action,” the DOE said.

The Energy department said the guidelines also “recognize the legitimate fuel requirements of essential sectors, including hospitals, transport, agriculture, telecommunications, and government services.”

Along with this move is the tightening of anti-

DSWD GIVES MATERNITY KITS TO EVACUATED MOTHERS DUE TO FIRE INCIDENT

MANILA – Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary Rex Gatchalian on Wednesday led the distribution of maternity kits to fire-affected pregnant or lactating mothers at the Manila Seedling Compound along Sen. Miriam Santiago Avenue in Quezon City.

The beneficiaries are temporarily staying at the evacuation center due to the March 6 fire incident along NIA Road. The maternity kits form part of the DSWD’s specialized disaster response efforts to ensure that lactating mothers, pregnant women, and families with children aged 0 to 12 months receive appropriate health

hoarding policies in the downstream oil industry during a State of National Emergency (SNEE) “to help ensure that fuel remains available and accessible to Filipinos” and prevent any artificial shortages.

Among the rules in the anti-hoarding measure are clear definitions of prohibited acts and hoarding indicators; preventive measures, such as temporary fuel purchase limits when necessary and tighter regulation of container-based transactions; enhanced monitoring through the Emergency Petroleum Monitoring System (EPMS) to track inventory levels, supply movements, and fuel distribution; and defined enforcement procedures, including the issuance of Show Cause Orders and timelines for evaluation and case action.

DOE is also re-convening the DOE-Department of Justice (DOJ) Task Force “to receive and act on reports of suspected hoarding, determine violations, and initiate appropriate administrative and criminal actions under existing laws,” the DOE said.

“These Guidelines are meant to ensure that petroleum products continue to move where they are needed, when they are needed, and at a level that protects consumers, supports economic activity, and upholds public order amid the impact of the Middle East conflict on global oil markets,” Garin said. **(PNA) BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**

and protection services. “Angutokasini Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., dapat siguraduhing napapangalagaan yung ating mga evacuees, lalo na yung mga vulnerable, at kasama diyan yung mga ina, nagbubuntis, at yung mga bata, kaya ngayon ni-roll out natin yung kauna-unahang set ng maternity kits. Lahat ng pwedeng kailanganin ng isang nagbubuntis o kakapanganak lang, na ina ay nandoon (President Marcos has ordered us to ensure the welfare of evacuees, especially the vulnerable, including mothers, the pregnant, and the kids, that’s why we rolled out the first set of maternity kits. All the things that a pregnant woman or lactating mother needs are there,” Gatchalian told reporters at the evacuation center.

Each maternity kit contains a storage box, an item checklist, a breastfeeding scarf, cotton buds, a breast pump, a hot compress, maternity pads, a malong, a rubberized baby changing pad, a bib, baby cloth diapers, flannel cloths, baby soap, lampin clips, a newborn bonnet, baby socks, baby clothes, a baby sleeping mat, a bolster pillow, a baby bag, and a mosquito net.

Gatchalian said the DSWD is currently delivering the first batch of maternity kits to various DSWD Field Offices for immediate distribution to all evacuation centers nationwide that are housing displaced individuals.

He emphasized that disasters, such as the fire on NIA Road, deplete a family’s essential resources and household necessities.

He noted that the hardships of displacement disproportionately affect lactating mothers, pregnant women, and young children, who face higher risks of illness and physical strain.

In accordance with the President’s mandate, Gatchalian said, the DSWD continues to research and develop additional specialized kits for other vulnerable sectors, including senior citizens, to ensure comprehensive assistance during disasters.

Through the specialized kits, he said, the DSWD ensures that government interventions provide sector-specific aid rather than generic assistance, demonstrating a commitment to addressing the precise needs of vulnerable populations. **(PNA) BY JOSE CIELITO REGANIT**

IRAN TO ALLOW ‘SAFE, UNHINDERED’ PASSAGE OF PH SHIPS THRU HORMUZ — DFA

MANILA – Iran will allow the “safe, unhindered, and expeditious” passage of Philippine-flagged vessels, energy sources, and all Filipino seafarers through the Strait of Hormuz, its top diplomat told the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on Thursday.

The DFA, in a statement, said the assurance was made during a phone call between Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro and Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi.

The DFA said the development is vital for the Philippines, as it will not only secure the safety of Filipino seafarers operating in the area but “also help ensure energy security for the country.”

“Given that the Philippines imports the majority of its energy requirements from the Middle East, these assurances from Iran will greatly facilitate the steady delivery of critical oil and fertilizer supplies to the Philippines,” it said.

DFA spokesperson Analyn

Ratonel, meanwhile, said the passage would not involve any toll fee amid reports that Iran is planning to impose at least USD1 per barrel, estimated to be around USD2 million for each vessel transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

“On question regarding the reported toll fee, there is no toll fee,” she said in a text message to reporters.

Both foreign ministers, the DFA said, affirmed their commitment to “maintaining excellent relations and achieving lasting peace through continued dialogue and diplomacy.”

Foreign Affairs spokesperson Analyn Ratonel, meanwhile, said the passage would not involve any toll fee amid reports that Iran is planning to impose at least USD1 per barrel, estimated to be around USD2 million for each vessel transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

“On question regarding the reported toll fee, there is no toll fee,” she said in a text message to reporters.

The call came after President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. instructed the DFA to initiate talks with Tehran to ensure the safe passage of Philippine-bound ships through the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran maintains a de facto blockade on the critical maritime chokepoint following the joint military operations mounted by Israel and the United States on Feb. 28, which targeted its nuclear sites and killed its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The blockade on the waters has since sent energy markets into shock, with rising oil and fuel prices prompting governments to implement austerity measures.

Last week, Marcos declared a state of national energy emergency to address potential disruption in fuel supply and stabilize the country’s energy sector. **(PNA) BY JOYCE ANN L. ROCAMORA**

BSP SEES INFLATION RISING BETWEEN 3.1-3.9% IN MARCH

MANILA – Upside risks from higher oil prices and their impact on other commodities are seen to push the domestic inflation rate between 3.1 to 3.9 percent in March, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

The projected range is faster than February's 2.4-percent inflation, which brought the two-month average to 2.2 percent.

"Inflation risks have intensified with upward price pressures arising from the significant increase in domestic petroleum prices, higher rice prices, increased electricity charges in Meralco-serviced areas, and depreciation of the peso," the BSP said in a statement Tuesday.

The central bank, however, noted that "the anticipated lower prices of vegetables, fish, and meat may help temper inflation, but upside pressures continue to warrant close monitoring."

The BSP said it remains

watchful of evolving risks and global developments.

"The BSP will remain vigilant and guided by incoming data, specifically on inflation and growth prospects. We will continue to monitor recent developments in the Middle East for their implications on inflation and economic activity," it said.

During an off-cycle policy meeting last week, the BSP's Monetary Board raised its inflation outlook for this year, citing the impact of higher oil prices and their spillover effects on commodities and services.

From an earlier projection of 3.6 percent, the Board now expects inflation to accelerate to as much as 5.1 percent—well above the government's 2 to 4 percent target range.

For next year, inflation is projected to average 3.8 percent, higher than the previous estimate of 3.2 percent. **(PNA) BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**

MANILA—The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is taking legal and protective actions against a local official in Barangay Caloco, Tinambac, Camarines Sur following allegations of harassment and abuses committed by his two sons against several children.

Following the receipt of the letter from the 11-year-old whistleblower against the cases of child abuse, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. immediately instructed DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian to take appropriate actions which he did by meeting the 11-year-old child on Tuesday at the DSWD Central Office.

"As we speak right now, more than helping the shelter, meron din kaming mga (we also have) social workers doing the necessary psychosocial, emotional intervention. So, we're now helping them, helping the shelter, but also helping the individual children, nandun na yung mga social workers namin (our social workers are already there)," Gatchalian said during a media interview on Wednesday.

The DSWD's intervention stemmed from a letter

written by an 11-year-old student to President Marcos pleading for help regarding alleged incidents of harassment perpetrated by a barangay official and the sexual abuses committed by his two sons.

Both perpetrators identified in the sexual assault cases are the sons of the respondent Barangay Kagawad in Caloco in Tinambac town, Camarines Sur.

One of the suspects was jailed five years ago and is currently detained at the Tinangis Penal Farm in Camarines Sur. Meanwhile, the legal proceedings for the second suspect are still in progress as the individual remains at large.

Gatchalian assured the public that immediate psychosocial and legal assistance is being provided to the affected minors.

Aside from helping the abused victims, the DSWD is also extending financial aid to families seeking refuge inside the Redeemer Homeless Mission due to poverty and natural calamities.

Social workers are also providing technical assistance to the NGO-

owned shelter to help secure the necessary Certificate of Registration and License to Operate (CRLTO).

DSWD officials and social workers visited the facility last week following a report made by the said barangay official requesting the closure of the shelter for lacking proper documents.

Instead of closing the center, the DSWD's assessment team opted to guide the management in fixing the paperwork, recognizing the facility as a vital safe space for the community.

"Kasi ang narration sa akin kahapon nung mga bata at ng kanilang mga magulang at shelter head, ay nahaharass sila, pinuputulan ng kuryente, tinatangalan ng tubig – umabot nga sa point na kaya sila na-detect ng DSWD, yung mga supposed, yung mga same barangay official na yon, sila rin ang nag report sa amin na wala raw papeles na tama tong shelter na to (The children, their parents and the shelter head told me that they are being harassed. Their electricity and water supply were cut – it reached the point that they were detected by the DSWD because the same barangay official reported to us that the shelter has no papers). They wanted the shelter closed," Gatchalian said.

To ensure full accountability, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) is now investigating the said local official and others who may be involved in the incidents made against the shelter.

Thorough probe The Police Regional Office in Bicol (PRO-5) is conducting a comprehensive investigation into the alleged abuse of minors.

In a statement, PRO-5 chief Brig. Gen. Erosito Miranda said personnel from the Tinambac Municipal Police Station have implemented measures to safeguard the minor, preserve evidence and prevent any potential

tampering that could compromise the case.

He added that standard operating procedures were strictly followed, including the careful and lawful documentation of the incident and the sensitive taking of the victim's statement.

Police also conducted interviews with various individuals who may help gather additional evidence, as investigators are exploring the possibility that other minors may have also been victimized by the suspects.

Miranda assured the public that efforts will continue to hold all responsible parties accountable while upholding the rights and welfare of the victims.

Meanwhile, Tinambac Mayor Edward Albert Prades thanked President Marcos for the prompt response and assurance of protection and support for the children and families of the town.

"We acknowledge this with full cooperation and a shared commitment to safeguard our constituents. The welfare of the children, women, and the people of Tinambac remains the utmost priority of this administration. In light of recent reports involving an alleged rape incident and the disruption of access to basic services, this Office takes these matters with the highest degree of seriousness and concern," Prades said in a statement.

The mayor also assured the Office of the President and the public that the matters have been acted upon and are currently under proper legal and administrative processes.

"The incidents and allegations have already been brought before the appropriate authorities and are now being addressed in the courts and relevant agencies. Due process is underway, where facts may be established and accountability determined in accordance with the law," he said. **(PNA) BY JOSE CIELITO REGANIT AND CONNIE CALIPAY**

EX-SOLDIERS IN BILIBID RECEIVE MEDICAL ATTENTION FROM VMMC

MANILA – Doctors from the Veterans Memorial Medical Center (VMMC) have conducted their first medical mission for former soldiers incarcerated at the New Bilibid Prison (NBP) in Muntinlupa City.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) said doctors from VMMC, led by Medical Director Dr. Peter Paul Reuben Galvez, conducted the outreach last Tuesday as a step toward addressing the healthcare needs of retired service members serving sentences within the prison system.

BuCor Director General Gregorio Pio Catapang Jr. said this medical mission

would be held more frequently to strengthen medical care for former soldiers, who deserve comprehensive medical attention even while confined.

Among the 31 ex-military officers and personnel currently imprisoned at NBP, 21 are from the Philippine Army, nine are former Marines, and one is from the Philippine Air Force.

These inmates are housed across various security levels within the prison, with 19 residing at the Maximum Security Compound, eight in the Medium Security Compound, and four at the Minimum Security Compound.

VMMC doctors conducted thorough health check-ups for each inmate, assessing their medical conditions and addressing any immediate health concerns.

Upon completion of their examinations, all former military personnel were provided with appropriate medications to support their treatment and improve their well-being.

CT/Supt. Ma Cecilia Villanueva, director for Health and Welfare Services and chief of the NBP Hospital, also shared an update regarding the health status of the former military inmates.

She disclosed that a 73-year-old former

Philippine Army officer, who had no prior hospital consultations or recorded medical visits at the NBP, passed away on Sunday.

An autopsy was scheduled to determine the cause of his death, underscoring the importance of consistent medical monitoring for all inmates.

Catapang said the collaborative medical mission between VMMC and BuCor highlights the commitment of both institutions to provide dignified, professional healthcare services to those who have served the nation, regardless of their current circumstances.

(PNA) BY BENJAMIN PULTA

DTI, PARTNERS STRENGTHEN CONSUMER PROTECTION FOR THE ELDERLY, PWDS

CITY OF ILAGAN, Isabela (PIA) — Efforts to promote inclusive and consumer-friendly business practices have gained momentum as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Isabela, in partnership with local stakeholders, supported the launch of an initiative aimed at protecting the rights of senior citizens and persons with disabilities (PWDs).

The program, dubbed 'KAPWA para sa SC at PWD,' was launched on May 23, 2026, at the BOSS Hall in Santiago City, spearheaded by the Konyumer Assistance Protection and Welfare Association (KAPWA) as part of its award-winning 2025 Consumer Welfare and Protection Project.

The initiative focuses on strengthening awareness and compliance among business establishments with laws governing mandatory discounts and privileges for senior citizens and PWDs, while promoting fair, accessible, and inclusive services.

Consumer Protection Division Chief Tessie Isidra A. Guitering said the activity gathered representatives from both the public and private sectors, highlighting the shared responsibility of government and businesses in upholding consumer rights, particularly for vulnerable sectors.

Guitering emphasized the importance of collaborative initiatives in strengthening consumer protection at the grassroots level.

KAPWA Vice President Epraim A. Abat presented the initiative's objectives, outlining its long-term goal of building a more inclusive and rights-based commercial environment.

DTI also provided technical guidance through Trade and Industry Development Specialist Mel Mari Angelo Laciste, who discussed key provisions on discounts, covered goods and services, and compliance guidelines to ensure proper implementation among businesses.

Fourteen representatives from grocery stores, restaurants, pharmacies, and transport groups participated in the seminar, signaling strong private-sector support for ethical and inclusive business practices.

The 'KAPWA para sa SC at PWD' initiative will continue to roll out advocacy campaigns, establish monitoring mechanisms, and recognize compliant establishments, reinforcing efforts to create a more inclusive, socially responsible, and consumer-friendly business environment in Santiago City. *(Otb/Mge/Pia Isabela) — Photo Courtesy Of Dti Santiago City Satellite Office*

PHIVOLCS STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF INFO DRIVE ON PERMANENT DANGER ZONE

SORSOGON CITY, Sorsogon (PIA) —

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) on Tuesday emphasized the need for a stronger public information campaign regarding the permanent danger zone surrounding the restive Bulusan Volcano in Sorsogon.

Resident volcanologist April Dominguiano highlighted the importance of ensuring that every resident and visitor is aware of the risks associated with trekking the active volcano.

Understanding these potential hazards enables residents and hikers to effectively prepare and avoid the dangers linked to volcanic activity, she said.

During the summer months of March and April, especially around Holy Week, there is a significant interest in climbing mountains. Many treat this activity as a form of penance or spiritual reflection, as well as an opportunity for exploration.

While Dominguiano acknowledged the local beliefs that drive this interest, she urged hikers to refrain from trekking to volcanoes during this

period for safety reasons.

"We want to extend our help in understanding our volcanoes, but we [must] strictly enforce danger zones to prevent mass casualties in the event of a sudden eruption," she said.

Bulusan is known for its sudden steam-driven or phreatic eruptions and is one of the most active volcanoes in the Philippines.

According to Phivolcs, there has been inflation or swelling in the western and southeastern sectors of Bulusan starting in January and March 2026, respectively.

Based on current seismic activity and ground deformation, it will take months of observation to consider lowering the alert level.

Historically, the weak volcanic earthquakes recorded recently are similar to those documented before prior eruptions, contributing to the decision to raise the alert level to 1 for Mount Bulusan.

To mitigate risks, a strict 4-kilometer radius permanent danger zone (PDZ) remains in place. This zone acts as a critical buffer against hazards such as hot ash, volcanic gas, and "ballistic projectiles"—large rocks ejected during steam-driven explosions.

Additionally, a 2-kilometer extended danger zone (EDZ) is currently active in the southeastern sector of the volcano, affecting Barangay Patag and Mapaso in Irosin, as well as Barangay San Roque in Bulusan.

Dominguiano reiterated that local government units are advised to strictly prohibit entry into the 4-km PDZ and maintain high vigilance within the 2-km EDZ.

Officials have warned that the area remains susceptible to various volcanic hazards, including pyroclastic density currents, ashfall, rockfalls, ballistic projectiles, and avalanches.

Residents are encouraged to stay informed through official channels and follow safety protocols to enhance community

SIMPLENG LIBANGAN NG INANG COPPER ARTIST NA KALAUNA'Y NAGING HANAPBUHAY

BAGUIO CITY (PIA) —

Ang paggawa ng copper accessories ay pampalipas-oras lamang ng copper artist na si Fely Ilao ng Baguio City hanggang sa nahubog ito at naging pinagmumulan ng kabuhayan.

Si Fely ay mahigit 15 taon nang gumagawa ng copper accessories. Mula sa pagtitinda sa kalye ng Session Road, ngayon ay mayroon na silang dalawang puwesto na matatagpuan sa EcoVibe Street Market sa Camp John Hay at Pansigshan Village sa Dominical Hill.

"Actually, umpisa ito noong 2011. Pero wala pa kami dito noon. Parang ito noon ay ano ko lang, hobby. Hobby-hobby ko lang siya. Gumagawa ako ng earrings. Tapos binebenta ng asawa ko sa kalye, along side road. Tapos hinuhuli siya lagi. Maraming bumibili, dinudumog especially yung mga students. Dinudumog siya hanggang sa 2011. Hanggang ngayon, buhay pa rin 'yung business na 'yan,' aniya.

Sa sipag at tiyaga, hanggang ngayon ay tinatangkilik pa rin ang kanilang negosyo na nakatutulong sa kanilang pang-araw-araw na pamumuhay.

Dagdag pa niya, ito ang nagpaaral sa kaniyang limang anak. Ngayon nga ay ilan sa kaniyang mga anak ang gumagawa na rin ng copper arts.

"In the long run, parang tinuruan ko na din sila, 'yung mga anak ko ... matanda na ako, senior na ako. Ipapasa ko na din sa

resilience against sudden eruptions.

"Being prepared is the best way to combat any disaster," said Dominguiano.

For more information, locals may visit the Bulusan Volcano Observatory located in Barangay Cabid-an, Sorsogon City. They may also visit the Phivolcs website: <https://www.phivolcs.dost.gov.ph/> and social media account <https://www.facebook.com/PHIVOLCS/>. *(PIA Bicol/Sorsogon)*

kanila ang paggawa nito para kahit na hindi na sila magtrabaho meron na ito," si Fely.

Ang panganay niyang si Renz ay natutong gumawa ng accessories gaya ng singsing. Magaling din siya sa pagguhit na naibebenta rin sa kanilang puwesto sa Eco Vibe.

"Medyo matagal ako nag-work sa office. From 2010 hanggang 2019. Pero during that time, meron na kasi 'yung... itong family business namin. Remember, nung nagkaroon ng pandemic nung 2020, nawalan ako ng work. And, naisip ko na nandito naman itong family business. So, after nung pandemic, sumama na rin ako sa family business namin. Five years na rin akong part nung business," si Renz.

Ang hobby ni Fely ay tumanggap din ng pagkilala—nanalo siya bilang 2nd runner-up sa paggawa ng korona sa Ibagiw Creative Festival 2021, isang craft competition na inilunsad ng Department of Trade and Industry-Cordillera Administrative Region.

Aniya, malaki ang naitulong sa kanila ng pamahalaan lalo na ang DTI. Nabigyan din ng puwesto sa Dominican Hill ang mga katulad niyang artisan.

Sa mahigit labing-limang taon ni Fely sa paggawa ng copper accessories, isa siyang magandang ehemplo sa mga kababaihan, isang ina na may magandang hangarin hindi lang para sa sarili kundi pati na rin sa kanyang pamilya.

"Ako, masasabi ko lang sa mga kababaihan, don't give up. Kasi, tayo talaga 'yung magiging... tayo 'yung ginagawang... ang story ng mga anak natin. Ginagawa tayo nilang role model. Since you are the mother, you are the role model. Matikita nila 'yung sipag mo, tiyaga mo, patience, lahat na. Nakikita ng mga anak sa mother. Nagre-reflect din sa kanila habang sila ay lumalaki. Nagre-reflect din 'yung pagiging mother mo sa kanila," si Fely. *(JDP/DEG PIA-CAR WITH SLU INTERN NATHALIA MACADANGDANG)*

BUTUAN CITY LAUNCHES CARPOOLING FOR 2026 PANAAD AMID HIGH FUEL PRICES

BUTUAN CITY (PIA)

— The city government of Butuan continues to demonstrate unity and compassion during the Holy Week with its carpooling initiative for the 2026 Panaad, ensuring support to residents who want to express their faith despite the continued rise in fuel prices.

Under the program, designated pick-up points will be established across the city where individuals can safely join shared rides going to Sitio Mahayahay, Barangay Anticala, where Panaad 2026 was held.

"We have five (5) designated pick-up points located at Libertad Overpass, Guingona Park, Tiniwisan, Rotunda

Ampayon, and Taguibo Crossing," said City Councilor Theodore Gabriel Salcedo.

He added that a total of 10 buses will be deployed to provide free carpool services. These same pick-up points will also serve as designated drop-off areas after the Panaad 2026. The free carpool service will remain available until the conclusion of the activity.

During the site inspection conducted by the city government and partner agencies, namely, the Philippine Army, Philippine National Police, Congressman Jose S. Aquino II, and Councilor Theodore Gabriel Salcedo on March 30, 2026, in Sitio Mahayahay, Anticala,

ensured that the road was secure for the safety of all the devotees who were going to join.

Meanwhile, a designated parking area was also established for those bringing their private vehicles and motorcycles, ensuring that the vehicles are safe and the pilgrimage orderly.

The city government emphasized that the carpool initiative is more than just a response to high fuel prices but a reflection of the community's spirit of devotion through service to others. (MFC, PIA Caraga, with a report from the Office of Butuan City Councilor Salcedo) *BY MARIESH F. CELEDEÑA*

POSITIVE SENTIMENTS LIFT PSEI, PESO

MANILA – The Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) and the peso rose in the shortened trading week amid improving investor sentiment.

The PSEi gained 0.84 percent to 5,998.68 points on Wednesday, while the All Shares index increased 0.59 percent to 3,353.60.

Most of the sectoral indices also increased during the day, led by Mining and Oil which rose 6.37 percent, followed by Holding Firms, 2.07 percent; Financials, 1.89 percent; Services, 0.54 percent; and Property, 0.36 percent.

Industrial, on the other hand, dipped by 1.38 percent.

Volume reached 1.18 billion shares worth PHP7.8 billion. Advancers beat decliners, 112 to 87, with 55 unchanged.

"PSEi extended its rebound on improving sentiment, driven by hopes

of a potential US de-escalation in Iran within the next two to three weeks, which could ease external concerns," said Luis Limlingan, Regina Capital Development Corporation head of sales.

"However, gains remained modest as elevated oil prices continue to pose inflationary risks, keeping investor sentiment cautious amid lingering geopolitical uncertainty," he added.

The peso strengthened to 60.16 from 60.74 against the US dollar. It opened at 60.50, an improvement from the previous session's 60.65, and traded between 60.5 and 60.1, averaging 60.32.

Volume rose to USD2.73 billion from USD1.59 billion.

There will be no trading on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday as both are regular holidays. **(PNA) BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**

BOC RECORDS P1.2-B SURPLUS IN MARCH REVENUE COLLECTION

MANILA – The Bureau of Customs (BOC) has exceeded by 1.4 percent or PHP1.190 billion its March collection target.

Based on preliminary figures, the bureau reported that it collected a total of PHP84.426 billion in revenues last month, showing a PHP4.067 billion increase or 5.1 percent growth compared to the PHP80.359 billion collected in March 2025.

Commissioner Ariel Nepomuceno commended all collection districts and ports nationwide for their vital role in achieving the bureau's March targets, highlighting the dedication of frontline personnel who ensure the smooth flow of trade while safeguarding government revenues.

"I extend my deepest appreciation to our District Collectors, port personnel, and all BOC employees across the country. Your hard work, discipline, and commitment to honest service made this accomplishment possible. This is a shared victory for every Customs officer who

continues to uphold our mandate with integrity," he said in a statement on Wednesday.

The Bureau chief emphasized that BOC's strong performance translates directly into better public services, funding for infrastructure and support for social programs that benefit millions of Filipinos.

Nepomuceno noted that the March revenue will help support vital government programs and services for the Filipino people.

Aligned with the direction of Finance Secretary Frederick Go, the BOC continues to advance reforms anchored on digitalization, transparency and ease of doing business.

Go has underscored the importance of efficient revenue collection and institutional integrity to sustain economic growth and ensure that government resources are maximized for public benefit. **(PNA) BY FERDINAND PATINIO**

PH'S BOP SEEN UNDER PRESSURE UNTIL 2027 – BSP

MANILA – The Philippines' balance of payments (BOP) is expected to remain under pressure through 2027, as global uncertainties and domestic constraints weigh on the external position, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said.

In a report released Tuesday night, the BSP said current global economic and geopolitical developments "shape the overall balance of payments outlook primarily through cost and confidence channels rather than abrupt volume contractions."

The country's BOP deficit stood at USD5.7 billion, or about 1.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), as of end-2025. The BSP projects the deficit to widen to USD7.8 billion this year and USD8.5 billion in 2027.

"Taken together, these trade, services and income dynamics are expected to result in a widening external imbalance. The current account deficit is projected to widen to around 4.0 percent of GDP over 2026–2027, while the balance of payments is expected to remain in deficit at about 1.5–1.6 percent of GDP," the BSP said.

Exports are seen growing modestly at 3 percent this year and 4 percent in 2027, significantly slower than the 15 percent expansion in 2025.

"The sector will nevertheless benefit from growth in some segments. Electronics exports will continue to be supported by demand for AI (artificial intelligence)-related peripherals, electric vehicle inputs and data center equipment. Meanwhile, agri-food exports will benefit from sustained demand for coconut products," the BSP said.

However, the BSP flagged persistent challenges, saying "structural constraints, including high electricity costs, regulatory frictions, and logistics bottlenecks continue to limit supply expansion."

Imports are projected to expand by 5 to 6 percent, driven largely by higher oil prices.

"Capital goods imports remain supported by private investment activity, although softer public infrastructure spending is expected to moderate overall growth in the near term. Meanwhile, services imports, particularly outbound travel, are projected to continue to expand faster than services exports, adding further pressure to the external balance," the BSP said.

The IT-BPM sector is expected to provide some cushion, with revenues projected to grow by 4 percent this year and next.

"While some firms are realizing productivity gains from AI adoption, other firms face transition costs that weigh on near-term growth," the BSP said.

Travel receipts are also expected to grow at a moderate pace due to higher fares, safety concerns, and increased regional competition.

Meanwhile, cash remittances are projected "to grow by about 3 percent over the next two years, despite geopolitical tensions, as there remain no signs of mass repatriation or widespread deployment bans."

The BSP said foreign direct investments, estimated at USD7.5 billion to USD8 billion, will provide a stable base, while portfolio flows remain sensitive to global market sentiment.

It noted that these projections "point to an orderly but gradual adjustment, with uncertainty and sentiment pressures transmitted mainly through uptick in prices rather than sharp volume contraction."

"External sustainability hinges on stable financing, resilient non-trade inflows, and adequate foreign exchange buffers. The country's gross international reserves remain sufficient in providing cushion against external shocks over the forecast horizon," it said. **(PNA) BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**

SEC EXTENDS INCORPORATION FEE DISCOUNT FOR MSMEs

MANILA – The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on Tuesday extended discounted registration fees for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) from end-March to end-December this year.

In a statement, the SEC said the move aims to encourage more MSMEs to incorporate.

It said MSMEs have saved about PHP54.77 million as of March 26 since fees were reduced on July 16, 2025.

"As the backbone of the Philippine economy, MSMEs deserve every opportunity to grow and thrive. The savings already realized by our entrepreneurs since July represent the businesses that now have legal standing to access credit, grow their operations, and contribute more robustly to our economy," SEC Chairperson Francis Lim said.

"By extending these discounted rates through the end of 2026, we are reaffirming our commitment to the accessibility and affordability of doing business in the Philippines," he added. Meanwhile, the 50-percent

discount on securities registration for MSMEs remains in effect until June 30.

The SEC said "the lower fees also cover securities being registered through the Commission's streamlined processes for power generation and distribution utility companies, real estate developers and/or managers in relation to rental pool deals, agri-business firms, and hospitals."

Citing Republic Act 9501 or the Magna Carta for MSMEs, the SEC said micro enterprises have capital of up to PHP3 million; small enterprises, up to PHP15 million; and medium enterprises, up to PHP100 million.

"Companies planning to avail of the discounted securities registration filing fee are required to submit a Certification of MSME Qualification, executed by the company's president or treasurer, and should have a paid-up capital of PHP25 million, except for those filing through the streamlined registration of securities process for agri-businesses," the SEC said. **(JOANN VILLANUEVA/ PNA)**

IPOPHL TARGETS 5% ANNUAL GROWTH IN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY FILINGS

MANILA – The Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL) is targeting at least a 5 percent annual increase in intellectual property (IP) applications as it steps up efforts to protect Filipino innovations.

In an online briefing Tuesday, IPOPHL Deputy Director General Ann Claire Credo-Cabochan said the Bureau of Patents is aiming for steady growth in filings each year.

"And just to highlight, our state universities and research institutions all over the country, I think there are already 103 of them — 103 of them are a fertile source of inventions, whether they are for patents or they could be utility models and industrial designs," she said.

Data from IPOPHL showed that filings for patents, trademarks, utility

models and industrial designs reached 53,231 in 2025, up 2 percent from 52,257 in 2024.

As of Feb. 28, 2026, total registered patents reached about 1,656. Of these, 1,399 were filed under the Patent Cooperation Treaty, 190 by non-residents and 67 by residents.

Cabochan said the agency aims to ensure that more local inventions are patented and protected.

"The thrust now is to build on IP valuation," she said. "Because if you can value an IP asset, the IP rights holder will have the, of course, the information that will make him make the right decisions."

Cabochan noted that protecting inventions is crucial as these may offer solutions to various human needs. **(PNA) BY JOANN VILLANUEVA**



GILAS WOMEN BAGS HISTORIC SILVER IN FIBA 3X3 ASIA CUP

MANILA – Gilas Pilipinas Women secured a historic silver medal after falling to defending champion Australia, 9-18, in the finals of the FIBA 3x3 Asia Cup in Singapore on Sunday.

Australia set the tone early with a 6-0 run, putting the Filipinas on the back foot.

Two-time UAAP Most Valuable Player Kacey dela Rosa scored back-to-back baskets to put the Philippines on the board, but Australia maintained control en route to the victory.

Despite the loss, Gilas Women made history by capturing the country's first-ever medal in the FIBA 3x3 Asia Cup and reaching its first finals appearance.

The Filipinas advanced to

the championship round after a hard-fought 21-19 win over Japan in the semifinals.

They earlier pulled off a 15-12 upset over Japan in

the quarterfinals.

Meanwhile, the Gilas Pilipinas men's team bowed out in the quarterfinals after an 18-15 loss to South Korea. (PNA) **BY DARRYL JOHN ESGUERRA**



(From left) Afril Bernardino, Kacey dela Rosa, Cheska Apag, and Mika Cacho banner Gilas Women to its first-ever podium finish in the FIBA 3x3 Asia Cup. (SBP photo)

JOTA DOMINATES AQ PRIME STANDARD CHESS OPEN

MANILA – Jonathan Jota scored 5.5 points to rule the 9th AQ Prime Chess Open at the SM City Masinag Atrium in Antipolo City on Monday night.

He scored victories over Xianle Klent Aragon (Round 1), Jon Mark Anarna (Round 2), Jin Clark Myco (Round 3), Christopher Khalil Kis-ing (Round 4), Ritchie James Abeleda (Round 6), and settled for a draw with Cedric Kahlel Abris (Round 5) to pocket PHP10,000 in cash.

Jeremy Marticio placed second with 5 points, earning PHP7,000, while Knaf Lawrence Batislaong, who defeated

Jin Clark Myco Miranda, Jersey Marticio, and Yuri Paraguya in the Bucholz tiebreaker for third place, received PHP5,000.

Rounding up the top 10 finishers were Abeleda, Abris, Eowyn Jullado, and Denniel Penafiel.

Meanwhile, John Randall Peralta scored 4 points to dominate the boys' Kiddie category. In Round 4, Peralta stunned top seed Catrihino Pestano with a 2220 FIDE Standard rating.

Also winning their respective categories were Queen Sheylee Tolentino (ladies), Dennis San Juan (seniors), Paraguya (16-18 years old), Jerick Faeldonia (13-15 years

old), and Laurice Isidro (girls Kiddie).

"Our goal is to support the chess community, especially in standard format. We thank the National Chess Federation of the Philippines for giving us the opportunity to organize this kind of event," AQ Prime CEO Aldwin Alegre said in a news release Tuesday.

"We want to promote standard chess format or long game format at least 60 minutes, because we want players to stay disciplined and focused, and promote a deeper mental engagement with the game. In standard, this is where you have a

CHINA RULES ASIAN TRACK CYCLING IN TAGAYTAY

MANILA – China dominated the medal tally with 18 gold, 10 silver, and one bronze medal at the 45th Asian Cycling Confederation (ACC) Track Cycling Championships and the 14th Asian Para Track Cycling Championships, which concluded Tuesday night at the Tagaytay CT Velodrome.

Japan finished second with 7 gold, 7 silver, and 10 bronze medals, followed by South Korea (5-9-7), Kazakhstan (4-5-2), and Chinese Taipei (3-4-5). Notably, Japan's riders used track bikes reportedly worth PHP7 million each.

Hong Kong, China, and Uzbekistan secured three gold medals each, while Malaysia collected two. India and Singapore each earned one silver medal, and Indonesia took home two bronze medals.

Uzbekistan dominated the para cycling competition with 17 gold, 10 silver, and seven bronze medals. Malaysia placed second (9-6-2), followed by South Korea (9-1-3), Japan (7-2-3), and the United Arab Emirates (3-5-2).

Asian Cycling Confederation (ACC) president Dató Amarjit Singh praised Tagaytay City and PhilCycling president Abraham

"Bambol" Tolentino for successfully hosting the event.

Athletes, coaches, and team managers also commended both the organization of the championships and the city's hospitality.

"The Philippines, specifically the Tagaytay CT Velodrome, now has its own niche on the global track cycling map," Tolentino said in a news release on Wednesday.

Barely a year after its inauguration in June last year, the Tagaytay CT Velodrome has already made a significant mark on the international cycling scene by hosting the Asian championships, which featured nearly 600 world-class athletes from 16 nations.

"We are now in the company of global destinations for competitions and training in the track cycling community. The next big step is to sustain the momentum—not only in hosting international events but also in fully developing our own track cyclists," said Tolentino, who also serves as president of the Philippine Olympic Committee.

He tempered expectations by noting that the country's track cycling program is

"starting from scratch," but emphasized that the championships are expected to spark greater interest in the discipline among athletes, the public, and sponsors.

"It has been 31 years since the Philippines last hosted this event—1995 at the now-defunct Amoranto Velodrome and now in 2026 at the Tagaytay CT Velodrome. It's historic," Tolentino said, thanking the Philippine Sports Commission, MVP Sports Foundation, Sports Plus PH, Toyota, and Peak for their support.

Tolentino highlighted the bronze medal won by Patrick Gerard Lee in the para men's elite scratch race and the new national record set by Zedrick Ivan Honorica in the flying 200 meters as signs of a promising future for Philippine track cycling.

"Yes, a Filipino rider can compete in track cycling," Tolentino said, adding that both athletes received cash incentives.

When asked about the future of the Tagaytay CT Velodrome, Tolentino said: "There's a long list—from completing track equipment to regularly hosting local, national, inter-club, and international championships. This was a dream that became reality, and we will continue to build on it." (PNA) **BY JEAN MALANUM**

FILIPINA RUNNERS BAG GOLD, BRONZE IN GOMU WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

CINISELLO BALSAMO, Italy – Filipino endurance athletes once again proved their strength on the global stage, delivering remarkable performances at the prestigious GOMU World Championships held during the Cinisello Balsamo Running Festival from March 28 to 30.

From its previous edition in Poland, the championship found its new home in Italy this year, drawing about 40 Filipino ultrarunners based in Europe.

Leading the Filipino charge was Paris-based ultrarunner Luisa Nuñez, who clinched the gold medal in the women's 24-hour category.

Nuñez completed an impressive 161 km. across

chance to increase your rating and eventually get a title in the future." (PNA) **BY JEAN MALANUM**

115 loops, showcasing not only her physical strength but also the mental resilience she gained during her preparation for the event.

"To the Pinoy runners group based in Milan, Italy, who always think positively to achieve the goal. A great example of leadership when it comes to running enthusiasm. I am grateful to be part of your team," Nuñez said in a social media post.

Milan-based Rachele Cabasa also made her mark, securing third place in the same category with 124.6 km. (89 loops). Anna Rybitw of Poland took the second spot with 141 km. and 101 loops.

Cabasa said she is happy to get a medal after an exhausting run.

"We're happy. Dami nakakuha ng medals (Many won medals), but

for now gusto ko matulog (I want to sleep)," she said.

In the men's 24-hour division, Poland's Rafal Wos and Wojciech Sip finished first and second with 145 loops (203.9 km.) and 141 loops (197.6 km.), respectively. Giorgio Basso of Italy took the third spot with 139 loops and 194.3 km. run.

Poland's Bartosz Fudali topped the main men's 48-hour category event with an outstanding 446.6 km. run, followed by Nemes Laszlo (427 km.) and Delas Heras Monforte (407.4 km.).

Polish runners also dominated the women's 48-hour category, pulling out an impressive 1-2-3 finish with Patrycja Bereznowska winning the event with 295 loops or a total of 413 km. run, followed by Edyta Lewandowska (279 loops/390 km.) and Magdalena Superson (265loops/371 km). (Alona Cochon/PNA)