

CAVITE GAZETTE

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GENTRI E-BUS LINE GOES GREEN WITH NO FARE HIKE

GENERAL TRIAS CITY, Cavite (PIA) – Public transportation in General Trias is going green as the city transitions to using electric buses.

Starting April 7, the PERJODA Transport Cooperative’s electric bus line will start plying routes within the city following the launch of its charging station in Barangay San

Francisco.

Mayor Luis Ferrer IV said launching the electric bus line will help Public Utility Vehicle (PUV) drivers and operators, as well as the riding public, save fuel amid rising costs.

Despite going electric, the local chief executive assured commuters that there will be no fare hike. “Napapanahon po ito lalo

na sa gitna ng patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo ng krudo, kaya’t malaking ginhawa sa ating mga tsuper at mananakay ang pangako nilang walang dagdag na pasahe.”

Ferrer said the electric bus line promised to provide inclusive transportation services, with bus conductors assisting passengers, including

Persons With Disabilities and pregnant women.

The city’s transition to electric vehicles started in November 2025, when PERJODA launched its Modernization program that promised modernized and eco-friendly electric public utility vehicles. (PB-PIA CALABARZON, Jon-Jon Ferrer/Facebook) **BY PATRICIA BERMEDEZ**



GMA RESIDENTS BENEFIT FROM MEDICAL-DENTAL OUTREACH

The Provincial Government of Cavite, through the Office of the Provincial Governor (OPG) and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer (OPHO), conducted a Medical and Dental Mission on April 7, 2026, at Brgy. Poblacion 5, GMA.

A total of 425 residents benefited from medical services, while 67 individuals received dental

care. Additional diagnostic services were also made available, with 17 residents undergoing ECG and 85 availing of FBS (fasting blood sugar) testing, helping detect and monitor common health conditions. The activity was graced by 5th District Board Member Aidel Paul Belamide, joined by Municipal Councilor Aisa C. Gutierrez and other local officials, whose presence reinforced the province’s commitment to accessible and community-based health services.

In collaboration with the GEAMH and Carsigma District Hospital medical team, consultation services were efficiently delivered, ensuring that patients received proper assessment and care.

The OPHO dental team provided dental services, while the OPG medical team distributed free medicines to beneficiaries, extending support beyond consultation.

Healthcare professionals and volunteers worked hand in hand to provide consultations, basic treatments, and dental procedures in a setting marked by cooperation and compassion.

The mission reflected a simple yet meaningful goal: to bring government services closer to the people. It also highlighted the enduring spirit of bayanihan, as local leaders and health workers came together to serve the community. — **OPIO**



Capt Montano st Arbis alley Amaya 6 Tanza Cavite

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CAVITE CITY PNP ARRESTS CITY LEVEL MOST WANTED PERSON IN TANZA, CAVITE

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite - A joint law enforcement operation conducted by the Cavite Component City Police Station led to the successful arrest of a City Level Most Wanted Person on the evening of April 10, 2026, reinforcing the intensified campaign against wanted individuals in the province.

PLTCOL SOCRATES S JACA, Chief of Police of Cavite CCPS, identified the accused as alias RICO, 42 years old and presently residing in Tanza, Cavite.

Personnel of Cavite CCPS, in coordination with the 401st Regional Mobile Force Battalion, conducted a manhunt operation in Tanza, Cavite that resulted in the arrest of the suspect. The accused was apprehended by virtue of a warrant of arrest for Violation of Section 24 (D) in relation to Section 28 (E) of Republic Act No.

11199. The warrant was issued by Presiding Judge of the Regional Trial Court, Branch 16, Cavite City, dated January 18, 2024, with a recommended bail of PhP72,000.00.

The accused was properly informed of his constitutional rights upon arrest. After the operation, the accused was brought to the police station for documentation and is currently detained at the custodial facility of Cavite CCPS pending his return to the issuing court.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director lauded the operating units, stating, "The successful arrest of a Most Wanted Person reflects the dedication and persistence of our personnel in ensuring that individuals facing charges are brought before the court. We will continue to intensify our operations and uphold the rule of law across Cavite."

RIDER NABBED FOR FABRICATING ROBBERY STORY IN NAIC, CAVITE

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite - The Naic Municipal Police Station remains steadfast in its commitment to uphold truth, integrity, and accountability in all police matters. On April 10, 2026, around 7:30PM, a 22-year-old male individual was arrested for perjury following a thorough investigation conducted by Naic PNP.

Earlier that day, the suspect personally reported to the police station claiming that he had been a victim of an armed robbery incident. In his statement, he alleged that while traversing Walong Butas Bridge at about 11:00 PM on April 9, 2026, he was accosted by three armed individuals who declared a hold-up, took his motorcycle, and seized his cash remittance amounting to PhP6,940.00. Acting promptly on the

report, duty investigators under the supervision of Chief of Police PLTCOL LOUIE DC GONZAGA initiated an in-depth investigation and verification process. Findings later revealed inconsistencies in the suspect's claims. It was established that prior to the alleged incident, the suspect had been drinking and only returned home at around 2:00 AM the following day.

Further coordination with barangay officials led to the recovery of the suspect's motorcycle, which was found parked along the roadside in Brgy. Calubcob, Naic, Cavite. Additionally, his sling bag containing the full amount of PhP6,940.00 was recovered intact at the same location.

Subsequent verification also disclosed that prior to the filing of the robbery report, the suspect's

P204K SHABU HAUL LEADS TO ARREST OF THREE IN ANTI-DRUG OPERATION

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite - The personnel of Dasmariñas Component City Police Station, in coordination with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency continues to intensify its campaign against illegal drugs, resulting in the successful arrest of three street-level individuals during a buy-bust operation conducted on April 10, 2026 in Dasmariñas City, Cavite.

PLTCOL MAC ARTHUR MERCADER, Officer-in-Charge of Dasmariñas CCPS, identified the arrested suspects as alias "NILO," 27 years old; alias LUIGI, 26 years old; and alias MARIA, 48 years old, all residents of Dasmariñas City, Cavite.

One of the suspects sold a heat-sealed transparent plastic sachet containing

suspected shabu to a police officer acting as poseur buyer in exchange for a marked money amounting to PhP500.00. Immediately after the transaction, the suspects were arrested.

Recovered during the operation were six heat-sealed transparent plastic sachets containing white crystalline substances suspected to be shabu with a total weight of approximately 30 grams and an estimated standard drug price of PhP204,000.00. Also seized were the marked money used in the operation and a blue pouch.

Following the operation, the arrested individuals and confiscated evidence were brought to the police station for proper documentation and disposition. The suspects were informed of their constitutional rights, including their Miranda and Anti-Torture rights. Criminal charges are currently being prepared for inquest proceedings before the Office of the City Prosecutor.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director, commended the operating units, stating, "This successful operation reflects our unwavering commitment to rid our communities of illegal drugs. We will continue to strengthen our intelligence-driven operations and ensure that those involved in illegal drug activities are held accountable under the law."

to transparency, integrity, and the faithful service of justice to the public."

We urges the public to remain truthful and cooperative in all dealings with law enforcement. We assure the community that every report is treated with urgency and diligence, and that justice will always prevail through honest and thorough police work.

PROVINCIAL MOST WANTED PERSON COLLARED BY DASMA PNP MANHUNT OPS

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, City of Imus, Cavite - In an intensified campaign against wanted persons, the personnel of Dasmariñas Component City Police Station arrested a Provincial Level Most Wanted Person during a warrant operation conducted in the evening of April 10, 2026 in Dasmariñas City, Cavite. PLTCOL MAC ARTHUR S MERCADER, Officer-in-Charge of Dasmariñas CCPS, identified the accused as alias "BILLY," 59 years old, and presently residing in Dasmariñas City, Cavite.

The accused was arrested for the crime of Acts of Lasciviousness in relation to Republic Act No. 7610. The warrant of arrest was issued and signed by the Presiding Judge of the Regional Trial Court, Fourth Judicial Region,

Branch 129, Dasmariñas City, dated June 5, 2025, with a recommended bail of PhP180,000.00.

Following the operation, the arrested individual was brought to the custodial facility of Dasmariñas Component City Police Station. The warrant of arrest will be returned to the court of origin for proper disposition and documentation.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director, commended the successful operation, stating, "The arrest of a Provincial Level Most Wanted Person is a clear manifestation of our strong commitment to ensure that fugitives of justice are apprehended. We will continue to intensify our operations and uphold the rule of law with professionalism and integrity."

CITY LEVEL MOST WANTED, SUCCESSFULLY ARRESTED BY CAVITE CITY PNP

Camp BGen Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City, Cavite — A City Level Most Wanted Person was arrested in a joint operation against Most Wanted Person at about 6:30 in the evening of April 9, 2026, in Bacoor City, Cavite.

PLTCOL SOCRATES S JACA, Chief of Police of Cavite Component City Police Station, identified the arrested accused as Jovelyn, a resident of Bacoor City, Cavite.

The Warrant Personnel of Cavite Component City Police Station together with 401st Regional Mobile Force Battalion, conducted a joint operation against Most Wanted Person which resulted in the arrest of the accused for Violation of SSS Law, Violation of Section 28(E) in Relation to Section 24, Paragraph (A), Section 9 and Section 10 of Republic Act

Number 11199 by virtue of warrant of arrest issued by Regional Trial Court, Branch 88, Cavite City, Cavite dated February 13, 2026 with PhP72,000.00 bail recommended.

The accused is currently under police custody, and the warrant will be returned to the court of origin for proper disposition.

PCOL ARIEL R RED, Provincial Director of the Cavite Police Provincial Office, stated, "This operation underscores the PNP's unwavering commitment to enforce the law, ensure public safety, and bring wanted persons to justice. We encouraged the public to remain vigilant and actively support law enforcement by providing information that can help in locating and apprehending fugitives, reinforcing community security across the province."

PNP ORDERS FULL-SCALE PROBE INTO PNPA HAZING; ACTIVITIES SUSPENDED, 22 VICTIMS IDENTIFIED, 3 SUSPECTS IN CUSTODY

The Philippine National Police (PNP) has launched a full-scale and uncompromising investigation into the reported hazing incident involving cadets of the Philippine National Police Academy (PNPA), following the directive of PNP Chief, Police General Jose Melencio C. Nartatez Jr.

The Chief PNP directed Police Lieutenant General Bernard M. Banac, Deputy Chief for Administration (TDCA), together with the Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management (DIDM) as the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR), in coordination with the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) and the PNP Health Service, to ensure a thorough, impartial, and evidence-based investigation.

The case stemmed from a follow-up operation by the CIDG Cavite Provincial Field Unit after reports of alleged maltreatment inside the PNPA. The operation led to the arrest of involved cadets and the recovery of items now submitted for forensic examination.

As an immediate directive, all cadet activities at the PNPA were suspended effective immediately to give way to the ongoing investigation, ensure preservation of evidence, and safeguard the welfare of cadets.

Initial findings revealed that twenty-two (22) Fourth Class cadets sustained injuries allegedly inflicted by three (3) Third Class cadets in an incident that occurred on April 3, 2026 at the PNPA. The victims were immediately given medical attention.

Medico-legal findings indicate that the injuries sustained have an estimated healing period of approximately fourteen (14) days. Further body checks conducted by

the PNP Health Service also revealed additional cadets with minor injuries, which are being validated as part of the expanded investigation.

The three (3) identified suspects are now under the custody of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group and have undergone inquest proceedings for violation of Republic Act No. 11053 or the Anti-Hazing Act of 2018.

Ongoing investigation has likewise unearthed possible prior hazing incidents, which are now being consolidated to ensure full accountability of all responsible individuals. PNP Chief PGEN Jose Melencio C. Nartatez Jr. has ordered the strict enforcement of command responsibility, directing that lapses in leadership, supervision, or reporting be addressed through appropriate administrative actions.

The PNP also emphasized that PNPA submits regular weekly reports to the Chief PNP on cadet discipline and welfare, including hazing-related concerns, and that corresponding reminders have consistently been issued to leadership.

A comprehensive review of PNPA policies, systems, and training protocols is now underway to strengthen safeguards and prevent recurrence of similar incidents. Following compliance with initial directives, PNPA activities are set to resume on April 11, 2026, subject to strict monitoring and additional control measures.

In a firm statement, PGEN Nartatez said, "Walang puwang ang hazing sa PNP. Walang pagtatakip. Walang palusot. Pananagutin ang lahat ng sangkot."

He added: "Those found responsible will face full legal accountability, administrative sanctions, and the loss of the privilege to serve in the institution."

OPERATION TULI SERVES 101 YOUNG BOYS IN THE CITY OF GENERAL TRIAS

A successful run of the PGC's Operation Tuli program was conducted on April 6, at Barangay Manggahan, City of General Trias, providing essential medical services to young male beneficiaries in the community.

A total of 101 patients safely underwent circumcision, performed by skilled and dedicated medical professionals from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer (OPHO), General Trias Rural Health Unit, and interns from the Cavite State University College of Medicine. The collaborative effort ensured that all procedures were carried out efficiently,

following proper medical standards and protocols.

The activity was also graced by 6th District Board Member Kerby Salazar, who showed support for the initiative and emphasized the importance of accessible healthcare services at the community level.

The Operation Tuli program not only promoted proper hygiene and preventive healthcare among young boys but also reflected the continued commitment of local health authorities and partners in delivering quality and compassionate medical services to the people. — *OPIO*

57 INTERNS ORIENTED FOR GOVERNMENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM IN CAVITE

The Provincial Government of Cavite through the Office of the Provincial Public Employment Service Manager, in partnership with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), successfully conducted the Government Internship Program (GIP) Orientation on April 6, at the New Provincial Government Center in Trece Martires City.

A total of 57 government interns participated in the orientation and are set to be deployed across various local government units in the province, including the Provincial Government of Cavite, the cities of Trece Martires and Tagaytay City, and the municipalities of Mendez, Maragondon, Noveleta, Magallanes, Tanza, Indang, and Naic.

The PNP assures the public that there will be no cover-up, no leniency, and no exceptions. All those found responsible will face the full force of the law, administrative sanctions, and possible dismissal from the service.

The Philippine National Police remains steadfast in upholding the rule of law, protecting human rights, and ensuring full accountability within its ranks.

(PNP-PIO)

The orientation aimed to familiarize the interns with their roles, responsibilities, and the work environment within government offices. It also highlighted the importance of professionalism, public service, and adherence to ethical standards as they begin their internship journey.

The Government Internship Program (GIP) is a component of DOLE's youth employment initiatives designed to provide opportunities for young individuals to gain meaningful work experience in government agencies. Through the program, interns are exposed to actual workplace settings where they can develop their skills, enhance their employability, and gain a deeper understanding of public service. The GIP also serves as a bridge for fresh graduates and out-of-school youth to transition into the workforce while contributing to nation-building.

The Provincial Government of Cavite expressed its continued support for programs that empower the youth and create employment opportunities, reinforcing its commitment to developing a competent and service-oriented workforce for the future. — *OPIO*

EDITORIAL

Ang Diwa ng Bayanihan sa Gitna ng Unos

Sa kabila ng mga pagsubok at tindi ng hirap na nararanasan ng ating bansa, hindi pa rin kumukupas ang bayanihan, isang tatak ng pagkapilipino na mas lalong nangingibabaw sa panahon ng krisis. Sa gitna ng kahirapan, laging may mga taong handang tumulong.

Gayunpaman, ang pag-iral ng bayanihang ito ay hindi lamang isang simpleng pagpapakita ng kabutihang-loob kundi isang hamon sa ating lahat na panatilihin ang ganitong diwa kahit walang krisis. Ang tunay na lakas ng isang bansa ay wala sa yaman ng kaban ng bayan, kundi sa pagkakaisa at malasakit ng mga mamamayan nito sa isa't isa. Sa bawat kamay na tumutulong nang walang kapalit, binubura natin ang kaisipang "kanya-kanya". Sa huli, ang bayanihan ang nagsisilbing pinakamabisang sandata natin laban sa anumang anyo ng kagipitan, isang paalala na sa bansang ito, walang Pilipinong dapat maiwan hangga't may pusong handang tumulong.

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342 FILIPINOS HOME FROM ABU DHABI IN 8TH CHARTERED FLIGHT

MANILA—The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) welcomed home 342 Filipinos repatriated from Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates as the eighth Philippine government chartered flight landed at Villamor Air Base in Pasay City on Friday afternoon.

Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac said in an interview that the latest batch consisted of 203 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), along with their dependents and relatives.

He said the Philippine government continues to scale up assistance for returning OFWs as he outlined expanded financial aid, reintegration programs, and employment support for repatriates amid tensions in the Middle East.

“Yung mga nakaraang repatriation natin, kung maalala ninyo, from Israel, ay na-place na natin dito sa ating G2G (From our previous repatriations, if you remember, from Israel, they have already been placed under our) Government to Government arrangement, hotel workers for Croatia. So, that's just one example of the continuing efforts we're doing,” Cacdac said.

“The President, kahapon nag-usap kami, he continues to emphasize na bigyan ng karagdagang serbisyo, lalo na sa aspeto ng pangkabuhayan, 'yung mga nanunumbalik, kaya tayo, ready tayo, together with DOLE sa job matching, and together with the other government agencies such as DTI, sa livelihood matching (yesterday we talked, continues to emphasize providing additional services, especially in terms of livelihood for those returning, so we are ready, together with Department of Labor and Employment for job matching, and together with the other government agencies such as Department of Trade and Industry, for livelihood matching),” he added.

Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Teodoro

Herbosa, together with officials from the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Office of the President, Presidential Management Staff, and Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), also welcomed the repatriates.

The DMW said the operation was carried out through the coordinated efforts with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and the Philippine Embassy in the UAE, in line with the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to ensure the safety and welfare of Filipinos in the Middle East.

Upon arrival, government agencies provided assistance and prepared additional support services for the returnees.

Other agencies remain on standby to extend financial aid, medical assistance, temporary shelter, reintegration support, and help with immigration and customs processing requirements.

Cacdac assured the government's continued efforts to bring home Filipinos affected by the Middle East conflict and seeking to be repatriated.

“Andito tayo kung ilan pa 'yung mga Pilipino na gustong bumalik sa Pilipinas. Meron tayong ninth chartered flight na napipinto sa Lunes and meron tayong (We're here to see how many more Filipinos want to return to the Philippines. We have our ninth chartered flight scheduled for Monday and we have) around 2,000 plus, 2,200 or so, still awaiting to be repatriated. And this is a live count. It all depends on how things turn out. We're hoping, of course, that the ceasefire will hold,” he said.

Cacdac confirmed funding allocations for continued operations, adding that the Department of Budget and Management has ordered the release of nearly PHP1 billion, with around PHP800 million for the DMW.

He said authorities are also

DA RAMPS UP FOOD SECURITY EFFORTS AMID FUEL COSTS, LOOMING EL NIÑO

MANILA—The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Friday said it is ramping up efforts to ensure food security in the country in the coming months amid surging fuel costs due to the Middle East crisis and the looming El Niño phenomenon.

During the Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon public briefing, DA Undersecretary Asis Perez said the agency has been preparing for the “worst case scenario” to protect both the food producers and consumers.

“The good thing about this is that we know what's likely to happen and we're able to set up a scenario of what's going to happen and how to address them. The government is very proactive,” he said.

“Nobody is prepared for this. We're making great strides so that we can immediately respond, and we have responded. But again, kulang pa iyan susubukan pa nating dagdagan at mas pabilisan (that's not enough, we will try to expand and expedite it),” Perez added.

Among the key challenges

pushing for supplemental funding if needed.

Cacdac, meanwhile, noted a significant decline in deployment to the Middle East, estimating it at “around 50 to 60 percent,” though he said that sea-based workers are largely unaffected.

Meanwhile, in Lebanon, Cacdac said the government has already repatriated around 60 Filipinos amid recent security developments.

“We've been in touch with our labor attaché and yes, there have indeed been gunfire, attacks there for these last 48 hours or so, 36 hours. And we know that the attacks have subsided, but still, what's unusual here is that the attacks are in Central Beirut, usually they are only in Southern Beirut. But having said that, no Filipino has been hurt so far,” Cacdac said. (PNA)

BY MARITA MOAJE

are the rising fuel and fertilizer costs, which can affect agricultural productivity.

“We're expecting that because of this increase in production cost, 'yung iba rito baka magbawas ng fertilizer kasi nagtitipid... With the El Niño, kailangan mo ngayong gumamit ng (others may lessen fertilizer use to save. With the El Niño, you need to use) pump. Again, that will require fuel,” Perez said.

To cushion its impact on productivity, the DA has begun releasing fuel subsidies to registered farmers and fishers; the release of PHP10 billion financial aid under the Presidential Assistance for Farmers and Fishers (PAFF) to about 4.175 million registered Filipino farmers and fishers worth PHP2,325 per beneficiary; and the utilization of half of its PHP1 billion quick response fund (QRF) to procure biofertilizer, among others.

“We are able to anticipate the challenge, and this early, we are banking on solutions. Ngayon pa lang may ginagawa na tayo (We are already doing something) to address those possible challenges,” Perez said.

The agency is also studying the transfer of its procurement budget for urea to purchase a cheaper equivalent liquid fertilizer for local farmers.

“If we do business as usual, talagang malaki ang impact noon sa (there's a huge impact on) agriculture production,” Perez said.

From March 30 to April 3, the prices of urea-prilled range from PHP1,832.50 per 50-kilo bag to PHP2,592.50, with a prevailing price of PHP2,181.46, according to the recent weekly data of the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA).

The prevailing price of urea-granular, meanwhile, is at PHP2,226.67 per 50-kg. bag and PHP1,780.59 for complete (14-14-14) fertilizer.

Agri jobs Perez, meanwhile, assured

GSIS FAST-TRACKS LOAN REFUNDS, CREDITS WITHIN 3 DAYS AFTER APPROVAL

MANILA — The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) is fast-tracking the release of loan refunds under its “Balik Ginawa” program, with approved applications credited to members within three working days.

GSIS Executive Vice President Joseph Philip Andres said in an interview on Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon on Friday that the streamlined processing is part of efforts to provide immediate financial relief to members and pensioners amid rising costs.

“Within three working days po, ito po ay maki-

efforts to protect Filipino farmers from bearing the ripple effects of the next harvest season due to the geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

“Kapag in distress 'yung mga workers, pwedeng suportahan (If the workers are in distress, they can be supported), but we want to do it in such a way that it's production-related,” he said.

Instead of disbursing financial aid, the agency is considering utilizing the potential funds for farm workers' salaries to sustain food production.

“At least 'yung labor cost mako-cover ng existing program natin, then makakatulong 'yun sa (the labor cost will be covered by the existing program, and it will help in the) overall productivity,” he added.

“The cost to produce is covered partly by the government fund. That is to relieve owners of course of the additional burden of kasi tumaas nga 'yung fuel (since the fuel prices have surged).”

Perez said the DA is in close coordination with the Department of Labor and Employment and the Department of Social Welfare and Development to protect agricultural workers. (PNA) BY STEPHANIE SEVILLANO

credit na po sa kanilang ATM... sa loob po ng tatlong working days ay maibabalik na po sa kanilang ang kanilang refund (Within three working days, this will be credited to their ATM... within three working days, they will get their refund),” Andres said.

He said the program refunds up to three months' worth of loan amortizations covering payments made from December 2025 to February 2026, provided borrowers have no arrears. Andres explained that loan deductions will continue, but the repayment period will be extended by three months without additional interest or penalties.

“Wala po itong cost sa kanila... ipu-push out lang po natin by three months ang end ng kanilang amortization period (There is no cost to them... we will only push out the end of their amortization period by three months),” he said.

He noted that refund amounts may range from PHP12,000 to PHP117,000 depending on the borrower's monthly amortization.

Since the program was launched, Andres said more than 453,000 members and pensioners have already received refunds totaling over PHP6.5 billion, part of the estimated PHP19 billion allocation for 1.37 million qualified beneficiaries.

He added that the application process is fully digital through the GSIS Touch mobile app, allowing members to apply, view projected refund amounts, and receive approval updates online.

The program runs until Oct. 31, 2026 and is part of the government's broader response to the ongoing energy crisis, aimed at easing financial pressure on households. (PNA) BY WILNARD BACELONIA

IT-BPM GROUP WELCOMES EXPANDED WFH FLEXIBILITY FOR RBES

MANILA – The Information Technology (IT) and Business Process Association of the Philippines (IBPAP) on Saturday welcomed the approval of the expanded 90 percent work-from-home (WFH) flexibility for registered business enterprises (RBEs).

The Fiscal Incentives Review Board (FIRB) on Friday issued FIRB Resolution 005-2026, granting authority to investment promotion agencies (IPAs) to adopt up to 90 percent temporary WFH arrangements for RBEs with registered projects or activities.

IBPAP president and CEO Jack Madrid said the approval reflects "how strong industry-government collaboration can translate into practical solutions for the IT-BPM sector's evolving operational needs."

"For the IT-BPM sector, this development provides immediate relief for both companies and their workforce, helping ease

cost pressures while enabling more flexible work arrangements," the IBPAP said in a statement.

"It allows the industry to remain agile, sustain service delivery, and continue meeting the demands of global clients amid a shifting operating environment."

The IBPAP made the initial proposal for WFH arrangement before the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) to help manage potential disruptions linked to rising transportation costs.

Under the approved resolution, RBEs may adopt WFH arrangements for up to 90 percent of their total workforce, or employees engaged in the registered project or activity.

The concerned IPA may impose a lower threshold of at least 50 percent of the total workforce, depending on specific circumstances and the nature of the RBE operations. (PNA) **BY JOYCE ANN L. ROCAMORA**

PH AMONG 7 PRIORITY COUNTRIES IN US FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

MANILA – The Philippines is among seven "priority countries" for new US international food assistance programs, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced Friday.

No funding details have been released, but Manila joins Bangladesh, Bolivia, Ecuador, Morocco, Sri Lanka and Thailand under the USDA's Food for Progress program.

The program, implemented by the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), works with eligible organizations through

cooperative agreements to carry out field-based projects that support agricultural, economic, and infrastructure development while promoting US trade.

For fiscal year 2026, the program expects to award up to USD226 million in new agreements for five-year projects worth USD28 million to USD35 million each.

These projects are primarily financed through the sale of US agricultural commodities in host-country markets. (PNA) **BY JOYCE ANN L. ROCAMORA**

PNP TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE YOUTH SHELTER STRAIN WITH DSWD

MANILA – The Philippine National Police (PNP) will strengthen coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to prevent overcrowding in youth shelters amid strict

curfew enforcement for minors under the "Safer Cities" initiative.

PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. on Friday said he would coordinate with the agency following concerns over possible congestion in Bahay Pag-asa facilities if large numbers of minors are rescued in one night.

"Our goal is to protect the youth, not overwhelm the system. By working closely with DSWD, we ensure that rescued minors receive proper care without straining our shelters," Nartatez said.

The Children's Legal Rights and Development Center (CLRDC) earlier urged the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to reconsider the blanket curfew for minors in Metro Manila, warning it could lead to arbitrary arrests and abuse.

The CLRDC said curfew enforcement often causes overcrowding in Bahay Pag-asa centers and mistreatment of children.

Nartatez said the PNP sees the curfew as protective, not punitive. "The curfew is a preemptive shield," he said. "It reduces the window of opportunity for syndicates to exploit minors and keeps our youth

Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.

Dumlao emphasized that the WGK remains open to all who are in need of immediate food support.

The WGK is one of the innovations of DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian that address involuntary hunger as well as the reduction in food wastage by turning donated surplus food from hotels, restaurants, and organizations into hot meals for individuals experiencing hunger.

Located at the Nasdake Building in Pasay City, the WGK continues to operate through donations from both public and private sector partners, as well as the support of volunteers who render services at the facility. (PNA) **BY JOSE CIELITO REGANIT**

Assistant Secretary Irene Dumlao said in a statement on Friday.

PUV drivers may avail of free breakfast at 6 a.m. and lunch at 11 a.m. from Monday to Sunday.

A variety of nutritious meals are served daily, including fried rice, dried fish and scrambled egg with potato for breakfast; and rice, fried chicken and vegetables for lunch.

While the kitchen is intended for individuals experiencing hunger, especially those in street situations, Dumlao said PUV drivers are also being welcomed to avail of free meals amid the ongoing oil price hike.

She said this is part of the whole-of-government approach of extending assistance to affected sectors in line with the directives of President

PUV DRIVERS CAN AVAIL DAILY FREE MEALS AT DSWD'S WALANG GUTOM KITCHEN

MANILA – The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is extending support to public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers by offering free meals through its Walang Gutom Kitchen (WGK) amid the surging fuel prices driven by the geopolitical conflict in the Middle East.

"Alam namin ang bigat ng epekto ng patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo ng langis sa ating mga PUV drivers. Sa pamamagitan ng Walang Gutom Kitchen, nais naming matiyak na may sapat at masustansyang pagkain silang makakain araw-araw (We recognize the adverse effects of the surging oil prices to our PUV drivers. Through the WGK, we would like to ensure that they have enough nutritious food to eat everyday)," DSWD spokesperson

DA ASSURES STABLE P20 SUPPLY, URGES BENEFICIARIES TO REGISTER ONLINE

MANILA – The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Friday assured a stable supply of rice for the P20 program and urged beneficiaries to register online.

The online registration comes amid the rising demand for the PHP20 per kilogram rice under the Benteng Bigas Meron (BBM) Na program in Kadiwa ng Pangulo sites due to the ongoing effects of oil price surges caused by Middle East tensions.

In a statement, DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the DA will continually cater to the needs of the members of the vulnerable sector.

"We implemented online registration to ensure that the most vulnerable sectors benefit from the PhP20 per kilo rice, especially during these challenging times," Tiu Laurel said.

The DA chief assured that the National Food Authority (NFA) has sufficient aging and soon-to-age but quality rice stocks, considering the record procurement in 2025.

Agriculture Assistant

Secretary Genevieve Velicaria-Guevarra said the online registration will help address the potential misuse or abuse of the BBM Na program.

"We've caught buyers presenting fake IDs, suggesting some are exploiting the program at the expense of real beneficiaries," she said.

"We appeal for cooperation from our fellow Filipinos; abusing the system would only hurt the most vulnerable among us during these trying times."

Covered in the program are members of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino program (4Ps), senior citizens, persons with disabilities, solo parents, tricycle, jeepney, and public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers, as well as registered farmers and fishers.

Earlier, the DA urged the BBM Na beneficiaries to secure their slot via an online appointment system at <https://bit.ly/P20BAI>. The online registration system will help beneficiaries to avail the cheaper rice without having to line up. The agency also urged walk-in buyers to refrain from long queues beyond KNP's operation hours. At the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) Central Office in Visayas Avenue, Quezon City, eligible buyers can avail the PHP20 per kilogram rice Mondays to Fridays, from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Besides the P20 per kilogram rice, the Food and Terminal Inc. also sells other cheaper rice options under the Rice for All program. (PNA) **BY STEPHANIE SEVILLANO**

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BENGUET COFFEE ORDINANCE, NILAGDAAN PARA MAPANGALAGAAN ANG LOKAL NA INDUSTRIYA NG KAPE

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet (PIA) — Isang mahalagang hakbang tungo sa pagpapaunlad ng lokal na industriya ng kape ang paglagda ng Benguet Coffee Ordinance 2026.

Nilagdaan nina Governor Melchor Dicalas at Vice Governor Marie Rose T. Fongwan-Kepes noong Marso 23, 2026 ang ordinansang naglalayong palakasin at protektahan ang industriya ng kape sa Benguet, na kinikilalang mahalaga hindi lamang sa ekonomiya ng lalawigan kundi pati sa kultura at pagkakakilanlan ng mga mamamayan.

Ayon kay Kepes, ang ordinansa ay bunga ng kolektibong bisyon ng pamahalaang panlalawigan upang mapangalagaan ang lokal na industriya ng kape.

Binigyang-diin din niya ang suliranin sa maling pag-branding ng Benguet coffee, kung saan ang mga beans mula sa lalawigan ay dinadala sa ibang lugar, ipinoproso, at ibinebenta bilang produkto ng ibang probinsya.

Ipinangalagan pa niya na bagama't bukas ang mga magsasaka sa pagbebenta ng kanilang produkto, mahalagang maprotektahan ang pagkakakilanlan nito.

Dahil dito, itatatag sa

ilalim ng ordinansa ang provincial coffee brand at certification mark upang maprotektahan ang tunay na pinagmulan ng produkto at maiwasan ang misrepresentation.

Bukod dito, bubuuin ang Provincial Coffee Development Council bilang policy-making at coordinating body upang matiyak ang maayos na implementasyon ng mga programa para sa industriya.

Kabilang din sa mga probisyon ang pagbibigay ng support programs sa mga magsasaka gaya ng capacity building, production at post-harvest support, tulong pangkabuhayan, at pagsasanay sa climate-resilient farming practices. Isasagawa rin ang taunang Provincial Coffee Week, na magsisilbing plataporma sa pagtataguyod ng Benguet coffee at kikilalanin ang kontribusyon ng mga coffee farmer.

Ang ordinansa ay inaasahang magbibigay ng mas matibay na proteksyon at oportunidad sa mga coffee farmer sa Benguet, habang pinalalakas ang pagkakakilanlan ng kanilang produkto sa lokal at pambansang merkado. (JDP/DEG-PIA-CAR w/ BSU intern Abegail Refuerzo) **BY PIA-CAR**

BOHOL WOMEN FIREFIGHTERS PROVE THE JOB WAS NEVER JUST FOR THE BOYS

On a sweltering morning at the Philippine Maritime Institute (PMI) grounds, six teams of women in colorful hooded uniforms hauled rolled fire hoses across the pavement, hoisted sand sacks for a lover's carry, and unspooled heavy hoses in one fluid motion — doing, without hesitation, what many still assume only men can do.

It was Bohol's first Women's Fire Olympics. And for the women of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) who competed that day, it was long overdue.

The event, organized by the Tagbilaran City Fire Station (TCFS), drew all-women teams from across Bohol's three congressional districts. They competed in four events — rescue and transfer operations, personal protective equipment donning, live firefighting simulation, and burst hose replacement — the same skills tested of every firefighter, regardless of gender.

That point was intentional. "Fire safety and protection is for everyone — it knows no age, it knows no gender," said Tagbilaran City Fire Supt. Angelie S. Salva, who took over as city fire chief in March. "Thus, the move to highlight women's power."

Salva leads a TCFS team of 40 active personnel. Fourteen of them are women.

That number reflects

a quiet but steady shift happening inside the BFP — more women moving into operational roles, not just administrative ones. The Women Fire Olympics was designed, in part, to make that shift visible.

"Every agency has a specific stakeholder," Salva said. "We wish to be the bridge that connects fire safety to their mandates — so that fire safety can become part of their mandates too."

The competition events left little room for doubt about capability. In the rescue and transfer event, teams carried a rolled fire hose 15 meters, performed a lover's carry with a simulated victim, and moved an injured victim strapped to a spine board to safety.

In the firefighting simulation, teams connected three hoses to a nozzle on a fire truck and directed water onto a target — the full sequence, executed under time pressure.

Senior Fire Officer Mariamric Gasque, TCFS operations officer, who oversaw the events, said the format was designed to mirror real emergency conditions as closely as possible.

Salva sees the Women's Fire Olympics as more than a competition. For a new fire chief building her team's presence in the community, it is a statement that the women

P20 RICE PROGRAM CUSHIONS OCCIDENTAL MINDORO HOUSEHOLDS FROM FUEL-DRIVEN INFLATION

SAN JOSE, Occidental Mindoro (PIA) — The national government continues to roll out its P20-per-kilo rice program in the province to help cushion households from rising living costs, as global fuel prices increase amid tensions in the Middle East.

Implemented by the Food Terminal Incorporated (FTI), the subsidized rice is being distributed at the National Food Authority (NFA) Nawaco Compound in San Jose town under a sectoral schedule to ensure orderly and targeted access for beneficiaries.

FTI representative Darwin Reyno said the program has expanded its coverage to include farmers, fisherfolk, persons with disabilities (PWDs), solo

stationed across Bohol's districts are not auxiliary to the mission. They are the mission.

Whether Bohol holds a second Women Fire Olympics next year may depend on momentum, funding, and institutional will. But the first one has already done something harder to measure: it put women, firefighters, at the center of the story, on a field where they have always belonged. (RAHC/PIA-7 Bohol) **BY REY ANTHONY CHIU**

parents, senior citizens, Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) members, tricycle and jeepney drivers, as well as teachers and non-teaching personnel.

The distribution follows a set schedule: Mondays for PWDs; Tuesdays for 4Ps members and solo parents; Wednesdays for farmers, fisherfolk and tricycle drivers; Thursdays for teachers and non-teaching personnel; and Fridays open to all sectors.

Reyno said farmers may purchase up to 50 kilograms of rice, which can last for about five months, while senior citizens, PWDs, solo parents and 4Ps beneficiaries are allowed up to 30 kilograms per month. Teachers, non-teaching personnel, fisherfolk and drivers may purchase up to 10 kilograms monthly.

The program targets to serve around 200 to 250 individuals daily, with families allowed to present multiple valid IDs to maximize access to the subsidized rice.

The initiative forms part of the government's broader efforts to mitigate the impact of inflation, particularly on essential commodities such as food, as fuel price hikes continue to affect transportation and supply costs.

For beneficiaries like 72-year-old Ceferina Balagso of Barangay Central, San Jose, the program provides much-needed relief. With her husband unable to work after suffering a stroke, she said the subsidized rice helps sustain their daily needs and those of their grandchildren under her care.

Despite long queues, Balagso said she is willing to endure waiting overnight to secure affordable rice for her family, underscoring the program's role in easing the burden on vulnerable households. (VND/JBG/PIA MIMAROPA-Occidental Mindoro) **BY VOLTAIRE DEQUINA**

showcasing their speed, strength, and agility on the regional stage. (JPA/MVE/PIA Basilan) **BY MARIA VERVEE ENRIQUEZ**

ISABELA CITY HOSTS REGIONAL ATHLETIC MEET FOR FIRST TIME

ISABELA CITY, BASILAN — History was made as Isabela City hosted the 22nd Zamboanga Peninsula Regional Athletic Association (ZPRAA) Meet 2026 for the first time, welcoming thousands of student-athletes, coaches, and officials from across the region to compete in various sporting events.

The city's debut as host of the peninsula's biggest athletic meet signals a major step forward, highlighting both its growing capacity and its bid to reshape long-held perceptions about the province.

A notable first for the regional meet was the fluvial parade, a first in the history of the ZPRAA meet. Traditionally, the event begins with a land-based parade. However, Isabela

City used its coastal geography to introduce a fluvial procession.

A fleet of decorated bangkas glided through the water, each vessel representing the distinct culture and heritage of the participating delegations.

The celebration moved from the sea to the streets, led by Isabela City Mayor Sitti Djalia Turabin-Hataman. Seven delegations marched through the city proudly representing their places, including delegations of Isabela City, the joint forces of the Zamboanga del Norte, Dipolog, and Dapitan for the first time, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Sulu, Pagadian City, and Zamboanga City.

During the ZPRAA 2026 Press Conference,

Turabin-Hataman noted that this historic hosting was the result of careful assessment and a relentless push for progress. With the support of the provincial government, the city underwent critical infrastructure upgrades, including the completion of its first-ever swimming pool.

More than just a sports venue, Turabin-Hataman also noted that hosting the event is an opportunity to change outside perceptions of Basilan.

"We hope na itong activity na ito, itong opportunity na ito, would also erase the fears, the negative image na meron ang Isabela at ang Basilan."

During the opening ceremony, Basilan

Provincial Governor Mujiv Hataman delivered a speech emphasizing the historical importance of the event.

"Ako po ay natutuwa at masaya. Hindi lamang dahil dito inilunsad ang ZPRAA. Kung hindi makasaysayan ang ZPRAA na ito, sa gitna ng masamang mga balita at kuwento sa ating lalawigan."

Hataman also guarantees safety to the parents of the competing athletes.

"Titiyakin namin ho sa inyo na babalik sila nang buo sa inyo. Titiyak namin ho na sila ay babalik nang may halong tuwa at saya dahil nanggaling sila dito sa aming lalawigan."

Addressing the local community, the Governor

MIDEAST CONFLICT DAMPENS PH, ASIA-PACIFIC GROWTH OUTLOOK – ADB

MANILA – The Middle East conflict is expected to weigh on the growth outlook of Asia-Pacific economies, including the Philippines, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said.

In its April 2026 Asian Development Outlook (ADO) released Friday, the ADB trimmed its Philippine economic growth forecast to 4.4 percent for 2026 from its earlier projection of 5.3 percent.

Economic growth is expected to pick up to 5.5 percent in 2027.

The ADB said domestic demand will continue to drive growth, though at a subdued pace, while business sentiment is likely to remain cautious amid uncertainty stemming from the Middle East situation.

Potential disruptions to remittances from overseas Filipinos, tighter financial conditions, and weaker investor and consumer confidence are also seen to dampen growth. Remittances, however, are expected to recover once conditions in the region stabilize.

The report noted that structural reforms — including amendments to the Foreign Investors' Long-Term Lease Act, the Open Access in Data Transmission Act, the CREATE MORE Act, and green lane initiatives — are expanding opportunities for foreign investment.

It added that effective implementation of these reforms, along with sustained improvements in regulatory processes, should help support investment.

Public infrastructure spending is projected to rebound on the back of improved budget execution, while the government's fiscal program remains anchored on consolidation under its medium-term framework.

Inflation is forecast to accelerate to 4 percent in 2026 from 1.7 percent in 2025, driven by elevated global commodity prices.

"The Philippine economy, with its heavy dependence on imported fuel, will face challenges from rising external risks," ADB Philippines Country Director Andrew Jeffries said in a statement.

The ADB noted that inflation averaged a relatively low 2.2 percent in the first two months of 2026 but surged in March following the escalation of the Middle East conflict.

In a briefing, ADB Principal Economics Officer Teresa Mendoza said higher global oil prices have quickly passed through to domestic fuel costs due to the country's reliance on imports.

The government has rolled out targeted assistance programs, including cash and fuel subsidies, to cushion the impact on vulnerable sectors

such as farmers, fisherfolk, and public transport drivers. It has also moved to secure oil supplies from non-Middle East sources.

Inflation is projected to ease to 3.5 percent in 2027.

Moving forward, the ADB underscored the need to strengthen inclusive and quality education, noting that lifelong learning remains a key policy challenge.

Mendoza said targeted education reforms, improved nutrition, and stronger private sector collaboration will be crucial to sustaining long-term, inclusive growth.

"What the current global conditions underscore is really the need for sustained reforms especially in strengthening human capital, improving investment efficiency, and the business environment alongside protecting vulnerable households," she said.

"Regional cooperation will also be important, strengthening, diversifying regional supply chains, deepening engagement with our neighbors can help reinforce or facilitate cross-border trade, investment, and capital flows," Mendoza added.

Asia-Pacific outlook

The ADB said the subdued growth outlook extends across developing Asia and the Pacific.

Most economies in the region are expected to see slower growth in 2026 and 2027, despite resilient private consumption and strong demand for artificial intelligence-related goods.

Growth in the People's Republic of China is projected to slow to 4.6 percent in 2026 and 4.5 percent in 2027, from 5 percent in 2025, amid continued property market weakness and slower export growth.

India's economy is forecast to ease to 6.9 percent this year from 7.6 percent in 2025, before accelerating to 7.3 percent in 2027, supported by strong domestic consumption.

Pacific economies are expected to post the sharpest slowdown, with growth declining from 4.2 percent in 2025 to 3.4 percent in 2026 and 3.2 percent in 2027.

After easing in 2025, regional inflation is projected to rise to 3.6 percent this year due to higher energy prices linked to the conflict.

"The two-week ceasefire announced this week provides some optimism, but it appears to be quite fragile at the moment," ADB Senior Economist Jaqueson Galimberti said.

He warned that prolonged disruptions in energy markets could significantly impact the region.

"In a scenario where disruptions persist into early next year, regional growth

DOE BACKS PRIVATE E-BUS PUSH TO LESSEN FUEL DEPENDENCE

MANILA – A new private sector-led electric bus program is being positioned as both an economic buffer and a climate solution, as the government moves to reduce the country's exposure to volatile global oil prices.

The Department of Energy (DOE) on Friday threw its support behind the Iwas-Taas Pamasaha E-Transport Solution Program, an initiative deploying locally assembled electric buses nationwide to keep public transport fares stable amid rising fuel costs linked to the Middle East conflict.

In a statement, the DOE said the program aligns with the government's long-term policy under the Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act and the Comprehensive Roadmap for the Electric Vehicle Industry, which collectively aim to accelerate EV adoption, expand charging infrastructure, and build a sustainable electric mobility ecosystem.

"This initiative shows that we can protect commuters from rising fuel costs while advancing a cleaner and more sustainable transport system," DOE Secretary Sharon Garin said.

"Through strong public-private collaboration, we are making affordable and reliable mobility a reality for every Filipino."

The DOE said the electric vehicle (EV) adoption in the country reached 60,906 registered units in 2025, reflecting a 2.5-fold increase from the previous year.

As of end March, the country has a total of 472 recognized EV models, 258 accredited EV charging station providers, and 1,569 charging points nationwide.

To sustain this transition,

could be 1.3 percentage points lower over 2026–2027, while inflation could be 3.2 percentage points higher," he said, adding that risks also stem from US tariff shocks and tighter global financial conditions. **(PNA) BY ANNA LEAH GONZALES**

the DOE said it continues to implement targeted policies and programs to accelerate EV adoption.

These include the forthcoming policy on mandatory EV charging station installation in key establishments; the integration of EV charging demand into power and distribution planning; and the issuance of technical standards to ensure safe, reliable, and interoperable charging systems.

The DOE said it is also advancing initiatives that directly benefit commuters.

Fiscal and non-fiscal incentives also remain in place to encourage adoption, including zero import tariffs on EVs until 2028, excise tax incentives, and exemption from number coding in Metro Manila. **(PNA) BY ANNA LEAH GONZALES**

FIRB ALLOWS UP TO 90% WFH FOR ECOZONE FIRMS AMID ENERGY EMERGENCY

MANILA – The Fiscal Incentives Review Board (FIRB) has approved the immediate and temporary implementation of work-from-home (WFH) arrangements for ecozone businesses amid a national energy emergency.

Under FIRB Resolution No. 005-2026 issued Friday, investment promotion agencies (IPAs) are authorized to allow up to 90 percent WFH for registered business enterprises (RBEs) with registered projects or activities.

IPAs may set a lower threshold of not less than 50 percent, depending on operational needs and circumstances.

RBEs will retain fiscal and non-fiscal incentives despite WFH arrangements, the FIRB said.

"We are extending full support to our investors as we navigate through this energy emergency, so they can remain competitive and keep their operations running smoothly," FIRB

MANILA – The local stock market closed nearly flat on Friday amid lingering uncertainty over the Middle East conflict, while the peso weakened.

The Philippine Stock Exchange Index (PSEi) rose 0.14 percent to 6,098.21, while the broader All Shares index fell 0.19 percent to 3,408.53.

Most sectoral indices declined, except Services, which gained 1.97 percent, and Mining and Oil, up 1.72 percent.

Property led losses, down 1.41 percent, followed by Industrial, 0.64 percent; Holding Firms, 0.39 percent; and Financials, 0.09 percent.

Total volume of trade reached 638.6 million. Decliners slightly outnumbered advancers, 102 to 100, with 66 unchanged.

"The PSEi moved to 6,098.21 up by +0.14%.

The Philippine market closed relatively flat, as investor confidence remained fragile amid lingering uncertainty over the US-Iran ceasefire. Participants staying on short positions while monitoring geopolitical developments and inflation risks," Regina Capital Development Corporation head of sales Luis Limingan said.

He added the peso's depreciation further weighed on sentiment.

The peso closed at 59.97 against the dollar, weaker than 59.43 on the previous session. It opened at 59.75 and traded between 59.65 and 60, with an average of 59.77.

Dollar trading volume fell to USD1.5 billion from USD2.48 billion in the previous session. **(PNA) BY ANNA LEAH GONZALES**

Chairperson and Finance Secretary Frederick Go said.

"In line with our promise in the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises to Maximize Opportunities for Reinventing the Economy (CREATE MORE) Act, we are prepared to provide a responsive incentives regime that not only safeguards workers, but supports investors and their businesses," he added.

The FIRB cited Rule 24, Section 3 of the CREATE MORE Act implementing rules and regulations, which allows temporary measures for RBEs affected by exceptional circumstances.

The Department of Finance warned that non-compliance with IPA-imposed thresholds will result in penalties, including payment of regular income tax based on the extent of excess WFH usage.

RBEs must notify IPAs, submit asset inventories

and surety bonds, and provide monthly reports on assets taken outside economic zones. Movement of tax- and duty-free assets will require prior approval and bonding.

IPAs may impose additional compliance measures and must report these to the FIRB for monitoring. RBEs must maintain export revenue levels and keep current employment levels regardless of WFH arrangements.

The temporary policy will remain in force for one year unless extended or lifted under Executive Order No. 110, s. 2026, which declared the national energy emergency.

"Through this temporary measure, we are striking the right balance between flexibility and accountability, ensuring that businesses can continue operating safely and efficiently while upholding fiscal discipline and protecting government revenues," Go said. **(PNA) BY ANNA LEAH GONZALES**



Sports

NU BEATS UE TO EARN 2ND SEMIS BERTH IN UAAP WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

MANILA – Defending champion National University earned a seat in the Final Four after beating University of the East, 25-19, 25-14, 25-14, Sunday in the UAAP Season 88 women's volleyball tournament at UST Quadracentennial Pavilion in Manila.

NU notched its third straight win to remain in second place with a 9-3 record, behind De La Salle University which is chasing an elimination-round sweep and an outright Finals berth. The two teams will meet on April 19 at Mall of Asia Arena in Pasay City.

Adamson University and University of Santo Tomas are tied for third at 7-5, with two games left in the preliminaries.

"Of course, we're very grateful [and] thankful that we are here. We really struggled in all the games. It's not all that easy. Of course, the hard work always pays off. Hopefully, it doesn't end just in the top four. Hopefully, we get to be up there. We want that twice-to-beat advantage, and we want to play in the championship games," NU

coach Regine Diego said. The Lady Warriors briefly took an 11-9 lead in the third set, but the Lady Bulldogs rallied behind Samantha Cantada, Evangeline Alinsug, Arah Panique and Alexa Mata to pull away at 18-11 en route to wrapping up the match after one hour and 30 minutes.

"I'm happy because we've made it to the Final Four, but that's not our goal yet. I think we still have a lot of work to do. I also know, especially my teammates, that we're not done with

our goal yet," Alinsug, who finished with 11 points, 11 receptions and three digs, said.

Cantada chipped in 11 points, built on six attacks, four aces and one block, along with five digs, while Panique also finished with 11 points on five attacks, four aces, two blocks and five digs.

UE, winless in 12 matches, was paced by skipper Van Bangayan with seven points on five attacks, one block and one ace. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**



SEMIS BOUND. National University opposite spiker Evangeline Alinsug (left) prepares to hit the ball during the game against University of the East in the UAAP Season 88 women's volleyball tournament at UST Quadracentennial Pavilion in Manila on Sunday (April 12, 2026). The Lady Bulldogs won, 25-19, 25-14, 25-14, to reach the semifinal round. (UAAP photo)

EALA MARCHES TO LINZ OPEN 2ND ROUND

MANILA – Filipino tennis star Alexandra Eala made it to the second round of the WTA 500 Linz Open in Austria, her first tournament on clay court this year.

The 2025 Southeast Asian Games singles gold medalist pulled off a 6-4, 6-3 victory over hometown bet Julia Grabher after one hour and 42 minutes at the Design Center Linz on Wednesday morning.

Eala, ranked No. 46 in the world, will be up against fourth seed Jelena Ostapenko, who took a first-round bye along with top seed Mirra Andreeva, second seed Ekaterina Alexandrova, and third seed Liudmila Samsonova. Meanwhile, American

Sloane Stephens defeated German Tatjana Maria, 1-6, 7-6 (5), 6-4, to advance against Andreeva.

Alexandrova, the defending champion, will face the winner between Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic and Aliaksandra Sasnovich.

Samsonova, on the other hand, will battle Austrian Lilli Tagger, who prevailed over Spanish Paula Badosa, 6-4, 7-6 (5).

Fifth seed Romanian Sorana Cirstea downed Austrian Sinja Kraus, 6-3, 6-3, to forge a second-round showdown with Hungarian Dalma Galfi, a 6-3, 6-3 winner over American Alycia Parks.

Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska, a runner-

up last year, eliminated seventh seed American Ann Li, 7-5, 4-6, 6-3, to set up a duel with Romanian Elena-Gabriela Ruse, who survived British Katie Boulter, 7-6 (3), 7-6 (2).

German Tamara Korpatsch shocked sixth seed Romanian Jaqueline Cristian, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4, to reach the second round, where she will meet the winner between Austrian Anastasia Potapova and Chinese Shuai Zhang.

Croatian Donna Vekic conquered American Katie Volynets, 6-3, 3-6, 6-4, to book a second-round ticket. She will face the winner between Ukrainian Anhelina Kalinina and Hungarian Panna Udvardy. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**

SIARGAO'S CLOUD 9 TOWER TO UNDERGO MAJOR RENOVATION

MANILA – The Philippine Sports Commission (PSC), in partnership with the local government of General Luna and the province of Surigao del Norte, is spearheading the renovation of the Cloud 9 Tower, an enduring symbol of Siargao's surfing heritage and a beacon for surfers and tourists alike.

The project was formally launched on Wednesday with the signing of an agreement among PSC Chairperson John Patrick Gregorio, General Luna Mayor Johnson Sajulga, and Vice Mayor Romina Rusillon-Sajulga, and Surigao del Norte Governor Robert Lyndon Barbers.

"Restoring Cloud 9 Tower is about elevating Siargao's surfing heritage to the global stage. We are committed to providing a world-class venue that reflects the spirit and resilience of our surfing community," Gregorio said in a news release on Friday.

Siargao will be hosting the World Surf League QS6000 International Pro from Oct. 16 to 25, representing a significant upgrade to the annual Siargao International Surfing Cup. With higher ranking points

and prize money, the event is expected to draw elite surfers from around the globe.

"This renovation is more than rebuilding a structure; it's about restoring the heartbeat of Siargao and boosting tourism and local livelihoods," said Barbers. "This is really an icon in the island of Siargao. If you don't have a photo of Cloud 9 Tower, it's like you haven't been to Siargao," added Mayor Sajulga, underscoring the tower's cultural significance.

The proposed three-storey Cloud 9 Tower will serve as a premier viewing platform for spectators and media, offering unparalleled vantage points of the competition.

"This is sports tourism at its best. The Cloud 9 Tower showcases our efforts in both tourism and sports," said Gregorio.

Originally built in 2003, the watchtower had witnessed countless competitions and become synonymous with Siargao's vibrant surf culture. But Super Typhoon Odette in 2021 devastated the structure, leaving only a partially rehabilitated single-storey platform rebuilt with PSC support.

The new project aims to

rebuild the watchtower into a resilient, environmentally sustainable structure that honors the past while meeting the demands of a world-class surfing event.

"The restoration of this iconic tower has been a dream for the people of Siargao, especially General Luna. If we are able to restore this tower, finally, we can say that we have recovered from Typhoon Odette," said Vice Mayor Rusillon-Sajulga.

Also present at the signing were PSC Commissioner Fritz Gaston and former Surigao del Norte provincial board member John Cubillan.

Beyond the planned three-level viewing deck, plans include a proposed two-storey viewing platform and event space powered by a solar energy system to support the entire complex.

With Siargao designated as the national training center for water sports, this upgrade not only enhances the spectator experience but also reinforces Siargao's reputation as the Surfing Capital of the Philippines, cementing the Cloud 9 Tower as the global face of Philippine surfing. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**

SPIN DOCTORS NEAR SPIKERS' TURF FINALS

MANILA – Savouge Aesthetics moved a step closer to the 2026 Spikers' Turf Open Conference Finals after prevailing over AEP Cabstars, 25-27, 25-15, 25-19, 25-16, on Friday at the Filoil Playtime Centre in San Juan.

The Spin Doctors, the only unbeaten team in the round-robin semifinals at 2-0, will wait for the result of the Criss Cross-Alpha Insurance match, which was ongoing as of publishing time.

A win by the King Crunchers would hand the Spin Doctors their first-ever Finals berth in franchise history.

"We just stuck in the system and I said be prepared in drop balls and what will be the approach of the spikers in the other side. So we adjusted in the second set. I said, it can't just be drop ball, we should pressure on them," Savouge head coach Sydney Calderon said.

The Spin Doctors were at set point in the opening frame, 24-22, but

squandered the lead as Nas Gwaza, Jay Rack Dela Noche, and EJ Casaña combined for a 5-1 closing run to steal the set, 27-25.

Savouge, however, responded, dominating the second set, 25-15, and never looked back.

Vince Imperial scored four points in the fourth set as the Spin Doctors took a 14-9 lead en route to the win in one hour and 44 minutes. Savouge's net defense took center stage, tallying 23 blocks compared to AEP's six.

Mark Calado led the Spin Doctors with 28 points built on 23 attacks and five

blocks, while JP Bugaoan added 16 points on nine attacks and seven blocks.

Louie Ramirez chipped in 13 points, and Rikko Marmeto impressed with 21-of-29 excellent receptions and 7-of-10 excellent digs.

Dela Noche paced the Cabuyao-based squad with 18 points followed by Jared Schnake with 13 points.

Savouge will face Alpha Insurance on Sunday at 5 p.m. while AEP Cabstars must beat Criss Cross at 3 p.m. to keep its final hopes alive. **(PNA) BY JEAN MALANUM**



FINALS BOUND?. Savouge's Louie Ramirez (right) tries to score against AEP Cabstars defenders in the Spikers' Turf Open Conference semifinals at the Playtime FilOil Centre in San Juan on Friday (April 10, 2026). Savouge won, 25-27, 25-15, 25-19, 25-16, moving closer to the finals. (Spikers' Turf photo)