# PHILIPPINES SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

**AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment**

Analysis Period: March 14, 2026 - March 21, 2026

This report was produced using open-source intelligence analysis. The assessment is grounded in publicly available reporting and should be cross-referenced with primary sources. RSS feed articles are listed in the annex for reference.

## Executive Summary

The Philippines experienced a period of heightened security activity and diplomatic maneuvering from March 14 to March 21, 2026. Tensions in the South China Sea remained a critical concern, with Manila firmly rejecting China's renewed sovereignty claims over features like Scarborough Shoal. Concurrently, the Philippines deepened its security alliance with the United States, conducting joint maritime exercises and preparing for the largest-ever Balikatan drills, alongside discussions for potential US missile deployments. Domestically, the government prioritized a strategic shift in its military posture towards external defense and grappled with escalating cybersecurity threats, particularly from state-sponsored actors. The broader geopolitical landscape, including the ongoing Middle East conflict, also presented economic and security challenges, necessitating robust internal security measures for upcoming religious holidays.

## Key Security Developments

- Military Activities and Exercises

The Philippines and the United States concluded a bilateral maritime cooperative activity (MCA) in Manila Bay and waters off Mariveles, Bataan, on March 21, 2026. These drills aimed to enhance interoperability and maritime security. This comes ahead of the "largest" Balikatan military exercises scheduled from March 28 to April 8, 2026, involving approximately 8,900 Filipino and American troops across Luzon. The exercises will focus on maritime security, amphibious operations, live-fire training, urban operations, aviation operations, counterterrorism, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, underscoring the deepening defense ties between the two treaty allies.

- Defense Policy and Strategic Shifts

On March 19, 2026, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. directed the Philippine Army (PA) to accelerate its transition from internal security operations to external defense. This strategic shift, announced during the PA's 129th founding anniversary, aims to prepare the military for evolving threats beyond the country's borders, particularly within its maritime frontiers and the digital space. The Department of National Defense (DND) is also advocating for legislative changes to remove the $300 million cap on foreign loans for defense acquisitions and to scrap the fixed 15-year timeline for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) modernization program, seeking greater

financial flexibility.

- Diplomatic Relations

The Philippines rejected China's renewed assertions of sovereignty over the entire South China Sea on March 16, 2026, specifically disputing claims related to the Scarborough Shoal. Philippine foreign ministry spokesperson Rogelio Villanueva emphasized that maritime and territorial claims are subject to international legal procedures, not unilateral proclamations. Amidst these tensions, China's Ambassador to the Philippines, Jing Quan, expressed a desire on March 19, 2026, to boost travel and cultural exchanges to stabilize bilateral ties, acknowledging a significant drop in Chinese visitors since 2019.

- Security Incidents and Threats

The Philippine National Police (PNP) implemented nationwide security measures on March 21, 2026, to ensure the peaceful and orderly celebration of Eid'l Fitr and Holy Week. This includes deploying police units to safeguard mosques, prayer venues, and Muslim communities, and strengthening coordination with local officials. The Philippines also successfully repatriated 106 Filipinos from Israel on March 20, 2026, due to ongoing security tensions in the Middle East, and 26 Filipinos rescued from labor trafficking in Malaysia arrived in the country the same week.

- Defense Acquisitions and Arms Deals

A US-led defense manufacturing partnership is exploring the possibility of the Philippines hosting a new ammunition production line for 30mm cannon rounds, a type of ammunition widely used by military aircraft and ground vehicles. This initiative aims to strengthen defense capabilities and reduce supply chain risks for allied nations. The US has also committed an additional $144 million in 2026 to invest in Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites, which grant US forces access to nine locations across the Philippines for cooperative exercises and training.

- Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity threats are now officially treated as national security risks in the Philippines, with incidents escalated to Cabinet and Presidential levels due to growing risks to government systems. Officials at the GovMedia Summit 2026 in Manila linked cyberattacks, misinformation, and data breaches to ongoing geopolitical tensions. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Cyber Command warned in February 2026 of escalating cyber threats from state-sponsored actors, particularly from China, linked to territorial disputes in the West Philippine Sea. Data breaches rose by 49% in the third quarter of 2025, exposing over 52 million credentials, and ransomware attacks also increased.

- Maritime and Border Security

The ongoing maritime dispute in the South China Sea continues to be a central security concern, with the Philippines consistently rebuffing China's expansive claims. The Philippines, along with Indonesia and Vietnam, is exploring trilateral security cooperation focused on maritime order in the South China Sea, aiming to reinforce ASEAN-led regionalism. This builds on increased maritime patrols and bilateral/multilateral maritime cooperative activities with allies.

## Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

The recent security developments in the Philippines significantly impact regional stability, particularly within the Indo-Pacific. The hardening stance against China's claims in the South China Sea, exemplified by the rejection of renewed assertions over Scarborough Shoal, underscores a defining geopolitical contest over authority and control in strategically vital waters. This rhetorical escalation, coupled with frequent maritime incidents, increases the risk of miscalculation, especially as more regional and external actors become involved.

The deepening security alliance with the United States, marked by the upcoming "largest" Balikatan exercises and the planned deployment of US missile and unmanned systems, signals a robust commitment to a "free and open Indo-Pacific." This strengthens the Philippines' position in deterring aggression but also raises concerns among some about increased reliance on US assets, particularly amidst the ongoing Middle East conflict and its potential impact on US munitions stockpiles. The Philippines' role as ASEAN chair in 2026, with a priority on concluding a legally binding South China Sea Code of Conduct, positions Manila as a key player in shaping regional maritime governance, though fundamental disagreements with China make a swift resolution unlikely.

The Middle East conflict has broader implications for the Philippines and the region. ASEAN economic ministers warned on March 13, 2026, that prolonged instability could threaten economic security, disrupt supply chains, and hinder regional growth, particularly due to rising oil prices. This economic vulnerability, coupled with the repatriation of Filipino workers from Israel, highlights the interconnectedness of global security events and their direct impact on the Philippines' domestic stability and economy.

## Military and Defense Analysis

The Philippine military is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by President Marcos Jr.'s directive to shift from internal security operations to external defense.

This reorientation is underpinned by the Comprehensive Archipelagic Defense Concept (CADC), which emphasizes securing the nation's vast maritime domain, including territorial waters, islands, and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). This shift necessitates a robust modernization program, with the government approving a P50-billion budget for the Revised AFP Modernization Program in the 2026 national budget.

The Horizon 3 Military Modernization Programme focuses on enhancing the AFP's defense capabilities through the acquisition of advanced equipment. This includes strengthening the naval force with missile-capable frigates and offshore patrol vessels, procuring multi-role fighter jets and surveillance aircraft, and acquiring advanced artillery systems, armored vehicles, and precision-guided munitions. Deliveries of A-29B Super Tucano aircraft and HDC-3100 corvettes are expected in 2026. The planned deployment of US cutting-edge missile and unmanned systems to the Philippines, coupled with an additional $144 million investment in EDCA sites, further bolsters the country's defense posture and interoperability with its primary ally.

However, challenges remain, particularly concerning the financing and legislative framework for modernization. The Department of National Defense is pushing to remove the $300 million cap on foreign loans and the 15-year timeline for the modernization program to allow for greater flexibility in acquiring high-cost systems. Despite increased defense spending, funding remains constrained relative to the scale of requirements for building an integrated defense posture capable of sustained operations in maritime and aerial domains.

## Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): Tensions in the South China Sea are expected to remain elevated, with continued diplomatic exchanges and potential maritime incidents, particularly around disputed features like Scarborough Shoal. The upcoming Balikatan exercises (March 28 - April 8, 2026) will be a significant event, showcasing enhanced US-Philippine interoperability and potentially drawing strong reactions from China. The Philippines will continue to push for progress on the South China Sea Code of Conduct as the ASEAN chair, though a breakthrough remains unlikely in the immediate future. Domestically, security forces will maintain a high alert level for religious holidays, and efforts to repatriate overseas Filipino workers from conflict zones will continue.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: The South China Sea, particularly the areas around Scarborough Shoal and the Spratly Islands, remains the primary flashpoint. Any direct confrontation or aggressive action by China against Philippine vessels or personnel in

these areas could rapidly escalate. Cybersecurity infrastructure, especially government agencies and critical national infrastructure, faces persistent and escalating threats from state-sponsored actors, posing risks of data breaches and disruption. The economic fallout from the Middle East conflict, including sustained high fuel prices and supply chain disruptions, could lead to domestic economic instability and social unrest.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the frequency and nature of maritime incidents in the South China Sea, particularly those involving Chinese and Philippine vessels. Progress in the South China Sea Code of Conduct negotiations, even if incremental, would be a positive sign. The pace and success of the AFP's modernization program, including the acquisition of new assets and legislative reforms for defense financing, will be crucial. The effectiveness of cybersecurity defenses against state-sponsored attacks and the government's response to economic pressures from global events will also be important barometers of the Philippines' overall security posture.

Strategic recommendations: The Philippines should continue to diversify and strengthen its security partnerships beyond the US, engaging with other like-minded regional powers to build a broader coalition for maritime security and adherence to international law. Investing heavily in indigenous defense capabilities and accelerating the modernization program, while addressing funding and legislative constraints, is paramount for self-reliance. A proactive and transparent communication strategy regarding South China Sea incidents can help shape international narratives and garner support. Furthermore, enhancing national cybersecurity resilience through advanced training, public-private collaboration, and robust threat detection and response mechanisms is critical to counter evolving digital threats. Finally, the government must implement economic mitigation strategies to cushion the impact of global crises on its citizens and maintain domestic stability.

## Structured Assessment

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# ANNEX: COLLECTED ARTICLES BY SOURCE

## Source: GMA Network

- US, allies move to build missiles, drones closer to Asia's flashpoints, explore ammunition production in PH (2026-03-21 04:10)

A US-led defense manufacturing partnership agreed to launch a new missile motor production program with Japan, push forward a drone cooperation effort across Asia and explore building a new ammunition production line in the Philippines, the Pentagon said on Friday.

- Malaysian woman carrying P102-M worth of 'shabu' nabbed in NAIA (2026-03-21 03:50)

Malaysian woman carrying P102-M worth of 'shabu' nabbed in NAIA

- LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 21, 2026) (2026-03-21 02:57)

LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 21, 2026)

- PH, US hold bilateral maritime activity in Manila, Bataan (2026-03-21 02:44)

PH, US hold bilateral maritime activity in Manila, Bataan

- DSWD plans special payout next week for NCR tricycle drivers who missed aid (2026-03-21 02:00)

Tricycle drivers in the National Capital Region who were not able to receive cash assistance this week will be accommodated in a special payout next week, the Department of Social Welfare and Development said Saturday.

- Filipino Muslims gather to celebrate Eid'l Fitr 2026 (2026-03-21 00:08)

Muslims in the Philippines gathered early on Saturday in parks and mosques to observe Eid'l Fitr, the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

- Marcos calls for compassion and solidarity beyond Eid'l Fitr celebrations (2026-03-20 23:33)

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Saturday urged Filipinos to practice the values of compassion, humility, and solidarity beyond the season of Ramadan and Eid'l Fitr 'to build a Bagong Pilipinas.'

- DMW announces 26 Filipinos in 4th batch of repatriates from Israel (2026-03-20 13:32)

A fourth batch of repatriates is set to return from Israel amid the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

- Arrested Filipino spy claims Chinese handler sought info on WPS missions, Balikatan (2026-03-20 12:45)

A Filipino who was allegedly involved in espionage for China revealed that he was asked to provide information not only on Philippine Navy and Coast Guard missions in the West Philippine Sea but also on operational details involving the Balikatan exercises with the United States.

- PH peace adviser highlights value of kindness as Ramadan ends (2026-03-20 10:57)

In his message for the culmination of Ramadan on Friday, Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. said that the month-long celebration of Ramadan reminded the public of patience, humility, compassion, generosity toward others, and devotion.

- DepEd: 3.7M learners expected to complete basic education in SY 2025-2026 (2026-03-20 10:26)

Around 3.7 million learners are expected to graduate from basic education this school year, according to estimates from the Department of Education (DepEd), marking one of the largest batches to exit the K to 12 system in recent years.

- Free TESDA skills certification for 260K SHS graduates announced (2026-03-20 10:17)

More than 260,000 graduating senior high school (SHS) students under the technical-vocational-livelihood (TVL) track will receive free skills assessment and certification this year, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) said.

- BRP Miguel Malvar faces fire control radar from Chinese navy ship (2026-03-20 09:39)

A Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy ship directed fire control radar at the missile frigate BRP Miguel Malvar in the West Philippine Sea (WPS), the Philippine Navy said on Friday.

- Rodrigo Duterte"s Davao ancestral house closed to public (2026-03-20 09:28)

The ancestral house of former president Rodrigo Duterte in Davao City has been closed to the public, according to a GMA Super Radyo Davao report.

- Teachers' group bucks trimester school calendar (2026-03-20 09:01)

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) has opposed the government"s newly-approved shift to a three-term school calendar, calling it a “rushed” reform that purportedly fails to address deeper problems in the education sector.

- Palace to PUV drivers: Trust gov't amid soaring fuel prices (2026-03-20 08:33)

Malacañang on Friday called on the public transport sector, particularly drivers, to trust the government"s measures amid their continued demand for President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. to address rising petroleum prices.

- Termination of ICC-approval on Unified Grand Central Station project OK"d --DEPDev (2026-03-20 08:08)

The Economy and Development (ED) Council, chaired by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., has approved the termination of the existing Investment Coordination Committee approval of the Unified Grand Central Station (UGCS) Project.

- DepEd: 241 SHS grads hired on the spot at gov't job fairs across PH (2026-03-20 07:53)

At least 241 senior high school (SHS) graduates and alternative learning system (ALS) learners were hired on the spot during government-led job fairs aimed at easing their transition into the workforce, the Department of Education (DepEd) said Friday.

- SC asked to declare 2026 BARMM budget bill unconstitutional (2026-03-20 07:48)

A petition questioning the legality of the P114 billion budget of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) for 2026 was filed Friday with the Supreme Court (SC).

- Hontiveros pushes for cash aid for more PUV drivers, transport co-ops (2026-03-20 07:22)

Senate Deputy Majority Leader Risa Hontiveros has urged Budget Secretary Rolando Toledo to extend financial assistance to additional public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers and transport operators or cooperatives, citing pressures caused by the ongoing Middle East conflict.

- Antigraft court junks $5.2M forfeiture case vs. Marcos kin (2026-03-20 06:49)

The Sandiganbayan has dismissed a US$5.2-million (about ₱290.8 million) forfeiture case against Benjamin “Kokoy” Romualdez, uncle of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., along with his wife Juliette and their heirs.

- Crescent moon not sighted; Eid"l Fit"r to be held March 21 - mufti (2026-03-20 06:37)

Eid'l Fitr will be celebrated by Filipino Muslims on Saturday, March 21, after the Shawwal or crescent moon has not been sighted on Thursday evening, the Bangsamoro Mufti announced.

- Economic council OKs DepEd trimester plan starting SY 2026-2027 (2026-03-20 05:00)

The Economy and Development (ED) Council, chaired by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., has approved the Department of Education"s (DepEd) proposed three-term school calendar starting in school year 2026-2027.

- Lawmaker seeks suspension of new taxes amid mega oil price hikes (2026-03-20 04:35)

Lawmaker seeks suspension of new taxes amid mega oil price hikes

- 33% of Pinoys 'very happy" with life -- SWS survey (2026-03-20 04:09)

At least 33% of Filipinos consider themselves “very happy” with their lives, according to a survey released by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) on Friday.

- No work, no pay? Ejercito says Sotto gave order to study amending Senate rules (2026-03-20 03:24)

Senator JV Ejercito said Friday that Senate President Vicente “Tito” Sotto III already gave instructions to study the possibility of amending the rules of the Senate, noting that the chamber has no existing “no work, no pay” policy.

- Marcos: Food supply enough, manufacturers agreed to keep prices steady (2026-03-20 03:08)

President Ferdinand ''Bongbong'' Marcos Jr. assured the public Friday that food supply in the country is sufficient amid the Middle East tension, noting that manufacturers had committed to keep prices steady “for as long as they can.''

- VP Sara Duterte invited to attend March 25 impeachment hearing - House panel (2026-03-20 02:37)

The House committee on justice has invited Vice President Sara Duterte to attend the hearing on the impeachment complaints lodged against her set on March 25.

- Marcos orders strict monitoring of procurement, hiring for DepEd --Recto (2026-03-20 02:16)

Executive Secretary Ralph Recto on Friday said that the ''shopping cart'' of school supplies, manpower, and facilities should be procured and hired without delay.

- How dates for Easter Sunday and Holy Week are determined each year (2026-03-20 01:00)

“The purpose of declaring these days holidays is because we need to go to church to renew our lives. We're fortunate that it's a holiday in the Philippines. In other places, it's not a holiday,” Fr. Earl Gabriel Tan, a priest collaborator at Imus's Diocesan Lay Formation Office. As movable holidays, how are the dates of the Holy Week and Easter Sunday-the day Christ's resurrection is celebrated-determined every year?

- Transport strike vs oil price hikes resume for second day (2026-03-20 00:23)

PISTON's transport strike due to the recent oil price hike due to the Middle East conflict resumed Friday.

- LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 20, 2026) (2026-03-19 22:50)

LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 20, 2026)

- Marcos, Bhutan PM Tobgay discuss bilateral ties at Malacañang (2026-03-19 17:37)

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday welcomed Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay during the latter''s courtesy call at Malacanang. The event was the first time the Philippine President hosted a Bhutanese leader at the Palace.

- DND stresses Philippines' lawful maritime operations over Bajo De Masinloc (2026-03-19 16:54)

The Department of National Defense (DND) on Thursday stressed that the Philippines had been conducting lawful and routine maritime operations over Bajo de Masinloc.

- DA monitoring sees P3 per kilo increase in price of local rice (2026-03-19 16:44)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has monitored that local rice prices have increased by up to P3 per kilo compared to March 9, or just a day before the mega oil price hike took effect. Meanwhile, the price of imported rice climbed by up to P5 per kilo.

- Right to Information bill passes committee level, says Speaker Dy (2026-03-19 14:56)

The Right to Information bill, aimed at giving the public greater access to government information, has been approved by the House committee on public information, Speaker Faustino “Bodjie” Dy III said.

- Pulse Asia survey: 41% of Filipinos want gov't to make food prices affordable (2026-03-19 14:35)

At least 41% of Filipinos want the government to prioritize making food prices affordable, a Pulse Asia survey commissioned by Stratbase showed.

- Marcos: Drivers to get more aid after fare hikes suspended (2026-03-19 12:19)

President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr., on Thursday said that the government would increase its assistance for public utility vehicle drivers after he ordered the suspension of the one-peso fare hike amid the massive fuel price hikes.

- Filipino spying for China says sensitive info obtained from PCG official (2026-03-19 10:58)

One of the Filipinos exposed as spies for an alleged Chinese spy network warned that other people in the private and public sector may have also been recruited to provide information to the Chinese Government.

- Curlee Discaya faces tax evasion charges for flood control project anomalies (2026-03-19 10:08)

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has filed tax evasion cases against contractor Curlee Discaya over anomalous flood control projects with the Court of Tax Appeals (CTA).

- Makabayan Bloc asks Marcos to certify as urgent repeal of Oil Deregulation law (2026-03-19 09:32)

Members of the Makbayan bloc on Thursday urged President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. to certify as urgent their bill seeking the repeal of the Oil Deregulation Law and the measure

seeking a wealth tax on the richest Filipinos in the wake of massive fuel price increases triggered by the Middle East conflict.

- ICI asks Customs to take Zaldy Co-tied luxury cars (2026-03-19 08:51)

ICI Special Adviser retired police general Rodolfo Azurin said the BOC must retrieve six luxury vehicles, including a Rolls-Royce, three Cadillacs, and two Lexuses. Meanwhile, the Philippine National Police-Highway Patrol Group (PNP-HPG) must get three luxury vehicles that were confiscated alongside Co"s alleged vehicles at a condominium in Taguig.

- Joel Villanueva seeks stronger anti-money laundering law (2026-03-19 08:02)

Senate Deputy Minority Leader Joel Villanueva has filed a measure seeking to amend the Anti-Money Laundering Act and tighten enforcement against financial crimes, including cybercrime and Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGOs).

- Fuel subsidy distribution: LTFRB orders RDs to help drivers, operators (2026-03-19 07:42)

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) has directed all its regional directors (RDs) to facilitate the updating and submission of the data relative to the distribution of the fuel subsidy of drivers and operators in their respective areas.

- Marcos inspects prefabricated classrooms in Bataan (2026-03-19 06:36)

President Ferdinand ''Bongbong'' Marcos Jr. on Thursday inspected newly installed prefabricated classrooms in Mariveles, Bataan as he highlighted the administration's innovative solutions to address the country"s classroom shortage.

- Marcos to PH Army: Exemplify discipline, integrity (2026-03-19 05:26)

President Ferdinand ''Bongbong'' Marcos Jr. on Wednesday called on the Philippine Army to exemplify discipline and professionalism in their service.

- Ex-DENR chief Loyzaga appointed as special envoy for disaster management (2026-03-19 04:37)

President Ferdinand ''Bongbong'' Marcos Jr. has appointed former Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga as Special Envoy for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM).

- Alcantara to testify in Oriental Mindoro P289-M flood control case vs Zaldy Co (2026-03-19 04:29)

State witness and former Bulacan district engineer Henry Alcantara will testify for the government"s malversation case filed against resigned Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Zaldy Co and 15 others over the alleged substandard P289 million flood control project in Oriental Mindoro.

- Marcos vows to maintain normalcy amid rising oil prices, Middle East conflict (2026-03-19 04:13)

President Ferdinand ''Bongbong'' Marcos Jr. on Thursday ensured that there's still normalcy in the country despite the skyrocketing fuel price hikes in recent weeks brought by the prevailing tension in the Middle East.

- DILG to file complaints vs 45 BFP officials over 'anomalous" fire truck deal (2026-03-19 04:08)

DILG to file complaints vs 45 BFP officials ??over 'anomalous" fire truck deal

- DOTr: 50% discount on train rides at MRT-3, LRT-2 starting March 23 (2026-03-19 03:50)

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) on Thursday announced it will be implementing a 50% discount on train rides at the Metro Rail Transit Line 3 (MRT-3) and Light Rail Transit Line 2 (LRT-2), starting March 23, 2026.

- DA's Tiu Laurel files cyberlibel complaints vs. Baligod, Zaldy Co (2026-03-19 03:49)

DA's Tiu-Laurel files cyberlibel complaints vs. Baligod, Zaldy Co

- Marcos says gov't continues to look for other oil sources (2026-03-19 03:22)

President Ferdinand ''Bongbong'' Marcos Jr. said Thursday the Philippines is looking for alternative fuel sources amid the continuing increase in petroleum product prices caused by the Middle East conflict.

- VP Sara's ex-security chief denies links to POGO, drug money (2026-03-19 02:46)

VP Sara's ex-security chief denies links to POGO, drug money

- Gov't deploys buses for free rides amid transport strike (2026-03-19 02:41)

Government deployed buses Thursday to provide free rides to commuters affected by the transportation strike.

- PNP strengthens market monitoring to combat unauthorized price hikes (2026-03-19 02:05)

The Philippine National Police on Thursday vowed to strengthen its presence near markets and grocery stores to prevent unauthorized price increases of basic goods amid oil price shocks.

- Henry Alcantara, Sally Santos dropped from malversation, graft cases (2026-03-19 01:33)

Due to their status as state witnesses, former Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) district engineer Henry Alcantara and contractor Sally Santos were dropped as respondents in cases over anomalous flood control projects in Bulacan, according to the Department of Justice.

- Nationwide transport strike kicks off amid rising fuel prices (2026-03-19 00:09)

Nationwide transport strike held amid rising fuel prices

- LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 19, 2026) (2026-03-18 22:39)

LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 18, 2026)

- Speaker Dy urges DBM to expedite fund releases for gov't projects (2026-03-18 16:17)

Speaker Faustino “Bodjie” Dy III urged the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to expedite the timely release of funds for government projects, saying delays unjustly burden the public.

- Busting myths on saving gas amid oil crisis (2026-03-18 14:28)

Motorists are finding ways to save on gas amid the mega oil price hike. But can you really save up when you refuel depending on the hour? Is it advisable to fuel up a few liters at a time?

- No winners of major lotto jackpot draws on March 18, 2026 (2026-03-18 14:11)

The Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) said there were no winners of the major lotto jackpot draws on Wednesday, March 18, 2026.

- 10 of 18 ex-Marines sign affidavits before NBI (2026-03-18 13:32)

Ten of the 18 ex-supposed Philippine Marines and personnel of former Ako Bicol Party-list Rep.

Zaldy Co have signed the affidavit prepared by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

- DSWD to TODA chiefs: Submit names of trike drivers not on ayuda list (2026-03-18 13:01)

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has asked leaders of Tricycle Operators and Drivers Associations (TODA) to submit the names of tricycle drivers who were not included in its master list of beneficiaries of the P5,000 cash assistance.

- Marcos swears in Frasco as Presidential Adviser for Sustainable and Resilient Communities (2026-03-18 12:09)

President Ferdinand Marcos on Wednesday swore in former Tourism Secretary Ma. Esperanza Christina Garcia-Frasco as Presidential Adviser for Sustainable and Resilient Communities (SRC) at Malacanang.

- Urban advantage falls short: NCR cities show high rates of struggling readers (2026-03-18 11:51)

The Second Congressional Commission on Education's (EDCOM II) findings highlight uneven literacy outcomes even in the country"s most developed urban centers.

- Duke Frasco makes comeback as House deputy speaker (2026-03-18 11:40)

The House of Representatives on Wednesday elected three additional House deputy speakers, including ex-deputy speaker and Cebu 5th District Rep. Duke Frasco.

- DBM releases P8.08B for projects in 800 insurgency-free barangays (2026-03-18 09:23)

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) on Wednesday said it has released P8.08 billion to fund priority projects in over 800 insurgency-cleared barangays.

- Marcos: Media has key role in fight vs fake news amid uncertainty (2026-03-18 09:07)

President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. on Wednesday underscored the need to combat fake news amid the global uncertainties and challenges being faced by many countries amid the conflict in the Middle East.

- PCG sends ships, plane to Bajo de Masinloc after alleged Chinese harassment vs Pinoy fishers (2026-03-18 09:03)

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) on Wednesday said it deployed vessels and aircraft to Bajo de

Masinloc in response to alleged harassment against Filipino fishers by Chinese maritime forces on Tuesday.

- Graft raps filed vs Herbosa, 3 others over alleged procurement irregularities (2026-03-18 08:40)

A group of concerned Department of Health employees has filed a graft complaint against Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa and three other DOH officials for alleged irregularities in the procurement of the Mobile Primary Care Facilities (MPCF).

- Pre-trial for malversation raps vs. ex-DPWH engineers in flood control mess set in April (2026-03-18 08:15)

The pre-trial hearing for the malversation cases against ex-Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) assistant engineers Brice Hernandez and Jaypee Mendoza and several others over alleged anomalous flood control projects in Bulacan has been scheduled for April.

- PCG: 17k personnel to secure Holy Week sea trips, travelers (2026-03-18 07:48)

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) will deploy 17,000 personnel across the country to ensure maritime safety and security amid the expected surge of travelers during the Holy Week.

- DILG to LGUs: Cut power, fuel use by up to 20% (2026-03-18 07:15)

Local government units (LGUs) nationwide should reduce their electricity and fuel consumption by 10% to 20%, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) said on Wednesday.

- Marcos to DOTr: Suspend fare hike (2026-03-18 06:43)

President Ferdinand ''Bongbong'' Marcos Jr. has ordered the suspension of the implementation of fare hike despite increases in the prices of petroleum products.

- Comelec: No evidence Marcoleta committed election offense (2026-03-18 06:25)

The Commission on Elections en banc on Wednesday ordered the termination of the probe against Senator Rodante Marcoleta due to lack of evidence that he committed any election offense.

- Ethics complaint vs Bato may be dismissed if Senate rules not amended -- JV Ejercito (2026-03-18 05:33)

The ethics complaint filed against Senator Ronald “Bato” dela Rosa over his continued absence in the Senate may be dismissed if heard without the rules of the Senate getting amended, panel chairman Senator JV Ejercito said Wednesday.

- PNP to deploy around 180K cops for March 19 nationwide transport strike (2026-03-18 05:23)

PNP to deploy around 180K cops for March 19 nationwide transport strike

- SC affirms conviction of man who sent threatening, humiliating texts to partner (2026-03-18 05:11)

In a 15-page decision, the SC found that the man caused his partner, AAA, emotional or psychological distress and found him guilty of violation of Republic Act No. 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004.

- PNP: Crime rate down by 7.2% in January-March 2026 compared to last year (2026-03-18 05:06)

The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Wednesday reported a decline in crime rate nationwide in the first months of 2026.

- MMDA prepares Libreng Sakay for March 19 transport strike (2026-03-18 04:52)

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) is readying to roll out a free ride program to assist commuters in anticipation of the scheduled transport strike on Thursday.

- DepEd rolls out school-based health caravans (2026-03-18 04:52)

DepEd rolls out school-based health caravans

- Quimbo pushes for House's adoption of Senate bill on Marcos' emergency powers (2026-03-18 04:31)

Quimbo pushes for House's adoption of Senate bill on Marcos' emergency powers

- Impeach raps vs. VP Sara sufficient in grounds, trial proper next --House panel (2026-03-18 03:55)

The House justice committee on Wednesday found the two impeachment complaints against

Vice President Sara Duterte sufficient in grounds.

- Luistro: Impeachment allegations vs VP Sara Duterte serious, weighty (2026-03-18 03:30)

The impeachment allegations against Vice President Sara Duterte are serious and demand answer, House committee on justice chairperson Gerville Luistro said Wednesday.

- VP Sara Duterte impeachment hearing proper begins March 25 (2026-03-18 02:36)

VP Sara Duterte impeachment hearing proper begins March 25

- Number coding scheme suspended on March 20, 2026 for Eid"l Fitr --MMDA (2026-03-18 01:43)

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) on Wednesday announced the suspension of the expanded number coding scheme on Friday, March 20, 2026, a regular holiday in observance of Eid"l Fitr.

- P20 base fare increase not enough amid rising fuel prices --Laban TNVS (2026-03-18 01:14)

A P20 increase in the base fare for transport network vehicle service (TNVS) is not enough to cushion the impact of rising fuel prices, a drivers" group said Wednesday.

- Marcos on suspending oil excise tax: We"ll see (2026-03-18 00:07)

President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. said exercising the emergency power to temporarily suspend or reduce the oil excise tax is yet to be determined.

- Marcos on economic impact of Middle East crisis: No need to worry (2026-03-18 00:00)

Marcos on economic impact of Middle East crisis: No need to worry

- LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 18, 2026) (2026-03-17 22:26)

LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 18, 2026)

- Lawyer in impeachment complaint vs. VP Sara waives right to reply (2026-03-17 21:22)

Impeachment complainant, lawyer Nathaniel Cabrera, has waived his right to reply to the answer of Vice President Sara Duterte on the impeachment complaints, saying "the filing of a reply would serve no useful purpose and would only delay the proceedings."

- House permits impeachment hearings during recess (2026-03-17 20:47)

The House of Representatives has adopted a resolution giving the go-signal to the committee on justice to continue with the hearings on the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte during recess.

- Tiangco confident VP Sara will prosecute perpetrators of flood control mess if elected (2026-03-17 18:51)

Navotas Representative Tobias Tiangco said that he is one million percent sure that Vice President Sara Duterte will hold the perpetrators of the flood control mess accountable if she is elected President in 2028.

- Lone bettor wins P100M Ultra Lotto 6/58 jackpot on Tuesday, March 17 (2026-03-17 14:20)

One bettor won the Ultra Lotto 6/58 jackpot prize of more than P100 million in Tuesday night"s draw, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) said.

- Senate OKs reso pushing for PH court remedies before ICC action (2026-03-17 13:50)

The Senate on Tuesday formally adopted the resolution expressing its sense to allow Filipinos accused of crimes abroad to first avail of legal remedies from Philippine courts before being surrendered to international tribunals.

- Jeepney driver skips lunch to take home P300 amid 3-digit diesel price (2026-03-17 13:49)

There are still a few weeks left before Holy Week, but it seems many Filipinos are already performing penitence because of the mega oil price hike.

- Anti-dynasty bill sponsored in House plenary for 2nd time in almost 40 years (2026-03-17 13:33)

The anti-political dynasty bill passed by the House Committee on Suffrage and Political Reform has reached the plenary of the House of Representatives, marking only the second time the constitutionally mandated measure was sponsored on the floor since 1987, or in almost 40 years.

- Transport groups welcome LTFRB fare adjustment, cite relief amid oil price shocks (2026-03-17 11:28)

Transport community groups on Tuesday welcomed the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board's (LTFRB) decision to adjust the base fares for transport network vehicle service (TNVS) amid continuing fuel price increases.

- DOJ endorses findings on malversation complaints vs. Villanueva to Ombudsman (2026-03-17 10:01)

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has endorsed its findings on the malversation complaints filed against Senator Joel Villanueva over ghost flood control projects to the Ombudsman.

- Palace on landing gear issues of aircraft carrying FL Liza: Not true (2026-03-17 09:33)

Palace Press Officer Undersecretary Atty. Claire Castro on Tuesday dismissed as fake news the rumors that the airplane carrying First Lady Louise ''Lizá'' Araneta-Marcos supposedly experienced issues with its landing gear.

- Unified 911 system now detects AI and bot calls, reduces prank incidents (2026-03-17 09:28)

The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) said that AI-generated and automated prank calls can now be detected under the modernized Unified 911 System.

- Surging oil prices: What the gov't has done so far? (2026-03-17 09:24)

Surging oil prices: What the gov't has done so far?

- DOJ denies Bong Revilla's opposition on inclusion of addt'l respondents (2026-03-17 09:15)

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has denied the opposition of former Senator Ramon “Bong” Revilla Jr. on the inclusion of additional respondents in his plunder complaint over alleged anomalous flood control projects in Bulacan, his lawyer said Tuesday.

- Tomas Cloma relative asked about Kalayaan Island discovery in CA hearing (2026-03-17 09:08)

Senator Rodante Marcoleta on Tuesday pressed his claim about the discovery of the Kalayaan Island Group by questioning the wife of a descendant of Filipino adventurer and businessman Tomas Cloma during a committee meeting of the Commission on Appointments (CA).

- Espionage network in Philippines described as worrisome by Gibo Teodoro (2026-03-17 08:52)

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. on Tuesday described the scale of the espionage network in the country as “worrisome” and called for stronger laws to ensure proper prosecution of those involved.

- Lawmakers: VP Sara failed to answer impeachment raps (2026-03-17 08:25)

Vice President Sara Duterte has failed to answer the allegations in the impeachment complaints against her, House Deputy Speaker Paolo Ortega V said Tuesday.

- CA OKs appointment, nominations of 57 AFP officials (2026-03-17 08:13)

The Commission on Appointments (CA) on Tuesday confirmed the ad interim appointments and nominations of 57 officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

- What is the LTFRB's basis for PUV fare increases? (2026-03-17 08:03)

In implementing the fare adjustment for public utility vehicles (PUVs), the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) considered several factors, such as fuel prices from the Department of Energy"s (DOE) official data.

- DND, AFP downplay alleged coup plot (2026-03-17 08:02)

The Department of National Defense (DND) has not received any information regarding an alleged coup plot, according to Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. on Tuesday.

- PNP-ACG: Red flags on children possibly being recruited online for violent acts (2026-03-17 07:43)

The Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group (PNP-ACG) has identified several warning signs that children may be exposed to online recruitment and indoctrination into performing acts of violence.

- Defense chief Teodoro dismisses China"s alleged 1990 letter on Scarborough Shoal (2026-03-17 07:14)

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. on Tuesday rejected a supposed 1990 letter from a Filipino diplomat that was cited by China in connection with its claims over Scarborough Shoal, accusing Beijing of spreading lies.

- Public warned vs online scams amid rising fuel, travel, product costs (2026-03-17 07:00)

Public warned vs online scams amid rising fuel, travel, product costs

- Send warships to Strait of Hormuz? Teodoro says PH does not have the capability (2026-03-17 05:52)

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. said the Philippines currently has no capability to deploy warships to escort oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz.

- Repealing Oil Deregulation Law? Palace says up to Congress (2026-03-17 05:20)

Malacañang said Tuesday it is up to Congress to decide whether there is a need to repeal the Oil Deregulation Law amid the continuing increase in the prices of fuel products.

- Bernardo: Zaldy Co gave me P130-M as 'token of gratitude' (2026-03-17 05:15)

Former Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Undersecretary Roberto Bernardo testified before the Sandiganbayan on Tuesday and claimed that former Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Zaldy Co gave him a P130 million "balato"

- VP Sara Duterte's impeach complainants won't reply to her answer to House panel (2026-03-17 04:58)

Impeachment complainants led by Rev. Fr. Joel Saballa filed Tuesday a waiver manifesting their intention not to file reply to the answer submitted by the camp of Vice President Sara Duterte.

- DOLE: Private sector may adopt flexible work arrangement amid rising oil prices (2026-03-17 04:21)

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) reminded private employers of available flexible work arrangements amid the rising fuel prices linked to the escalating conflict in the Middle East.

- DBM denies delaying fund releases on infra projects amid NUP concerns (2026-03-17 04:08)

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) on Tuesday issued a clarification on the release of funds for infrastructure projects in the respective districts of lawmakers amid National Union Party"s dissatisfaction with Speaker Faustino “Bojie” Dy III due to alleged

delay on release of local budgets.

- Duterte camp withdraws appeal vs. victims" lawyers (2026-03-17 04:01)

The camp of former President Rodrigo Duterte has withdrawn its request to appeal the ICC ruling not to revoke the appointment of the lawyers representing the victims in the case.

- Ex-Marines agree to one-on-one interviews with NBI (2026-03-17 03:47)

Ex-marines agree to one-on-one interviews with NBI

- PhilHealth mandate use of e-medical records for YAKAP Program (2026-03-17 03:18)

PhilHealth mandate use of e-medical records for YAKAP Program

- BFP names Wilberto Tiu as new officer-in-charge (2026-03-17 03:07)

Fire Chief Superintendent Wilberto Rico Neil Ang Kwan Tiu has been designated as the new officer-in-charge (OIC) of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), the agency announced on Tuesday.

- LTFRB OKs fare hikes across almost all public utility vehicles (2026-03-17 01:22)

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) has approved fare hikes of P1 to as much as P40 peso in all public utility vehicles, except regular taxis and motorcycle taxis, amid the the fuel price shock resulting from the Middle East conflict

- DOTr: Fuel subsidy rollout expected by fourth week of March (2026-03-17 00:39)

The government expects to begin rolling out fuel subsidies for transport operators and drivers by the fourth week of March to ease the impact of rising fuel prices, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) said Tuesday.

- Marcos leads cash payout to PUV drivers affected by oil price shocks (2026-03-17 00:19)

Marcos leads cash payout to PUV drivers affected by oil price shocks

- DSWD: Cash assistance payout for tricycle drivers starts in Metro Manila (2026-03-17 00:12)

The distribution of cash assistance to tricycle drivers began Tuesday in Metro Manila to help transport workers cope with rising fuel prices amid Middle East tensions.

- LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 17, 2026) (2026-03-16 23:38)

LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 17, 2026)

- One bettor wins Megalotto P20.8M jackpot on Monday, March 16, 2026 (2026-03-16 19:03)

A bettor won the Megalotto jackpot prize of more than P20.8 million in Monday night"s draw, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) said.

- Frasco grateful for DOT post, new role as adviser on sustainable communities (2026-03-16 18:42)

Christina Frasco, Presidential Adviser for Sustainable and Resilient Communities, on Monday expressed gratitude for her new position and her experience as Department of Tourism (DOT) secretary.

- Basilan has highest child stunting rate in PH -- EDCOM II (2026-03-16 17:38)

Basilan recorded the highest prevalence of child stunting in the country, according to data released by the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II).

- DFA: Scarborough Shoal part of PH territory (2026-03-16 15:59)

The DFA on Monday firmly asserted that Scarborough Shoal, also known as Bajo de Masinloc and Panatag Shoal, is part of the Philippines' territory, in response to a recent claim by China.

- Marcos to LGUs: End 'pass-through' fees for goods vehicles (2026-03-16 14:03)

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday reiterated his call for local government units (LGUs) to halt the collection of 'pass-through fees" on vehicles transporting goods, despite a 2023 executive order suspending such charges.

- Dutertes in House seek copies of ICI"s flood control probe results (2026-03-16 13:15)

Allies of former President Rodrigo Duterte in the House of Representatives have asked the ICI to release the results of its probe into government flood control projects.

- Marcos: Nearly 19,500 teachers, school heads promoted from Aug. 2025 to Feb. 2026 (2026-03-16 12:57)

Nearly 19,500 teachers and school heads have been promoted amid the government's implementation of the career progression system, President Ferdinand ''Bongbong'' Marcos Jr. said.

- Marcos: PH tourism under great deal of pressure (2026-03-16 12:03)

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday admitted that the Philippines" tourism industry is under “a great deal of pressure.”

- Sara Duterte answers impeachment complaint; lawyer cites non-uniform standards in substance (2026-03-16 11:43)

The camp of Vice President Sara Duterte on Monday filed her answer to the impeachment complaint, which the House Committee on Justice found sufficient in form and substance.

- Over 3.1M registered to vote for 2026 BSKE -- COMELEC (2026-03-16 10:32)

The number of Filipinos registered to vote for the 2026 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections (BSKE) has surpassed 3.1 million nationwide, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) reported.

- VP Sara says OVP ready to assist Filipinos amid Middle East conflict (2026-03-16 10:08)

Vice President Sara Duterte said she sympathized with OFWs dealing with the impact of the ongoing tensions in the region. “Kung ano man iyong matulong ng Office of the Vice President, ay gagawin namin. Ipaalam lang sa amin kung paano kami makakatulong," Sara Duterte said in Digos City.

- Palace dismisses coup talk, says police deployment part of security exercise (2026-03-16 09:39)

Malacañang on Monday dismissed coup rumors that spread after police were deployed in areas leading to the Palace complex.

- DOJ assures public: Only meritorious cases will proceed to trial (2026-03-16 09:03)

The Department of Justice (DOJ) assured the public Monday that only meritorious cases will proceed to trial as it welcomed the Supreme Court"s (SC) ruling that upheld the validity of a department circular that raised the standards of evidence in preliminary investigations and inquest proceedings.

- AFP dismisses online posts on alleged 'coup plotters,' 'Third Force' (2026-03-16 08:47)

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on Monday dismissed circulating social media posts claiming the existence of alleged “coup plotters” and so-called “Third Force.”

- PNP-ACG rescues 7 minors allegedly recruited online for mass shootings (2026-03-16 08:20)

Seven minor students who were allegedly recruited online to carry out acts of violence have been rescued by authorities, the Philippine National Police (PNP) said Monday.

- Marcos: PH infra must improve to boost tourism (2026-03-16 08:11)

President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. on Monday said the Philippines must continue improving its infrastructure to strengthen the country"s tourism industry.

- NUP dissatified with Dy, eyes leaving House majority over non-release of funds (2026-03-16 07:28)

The National Unity Party (NUP), led by its chairman Deputy Speaker Ronaldo Puno of Antipolo City, is considering leaving the over 200-strong majority bloc in the House of Representatives amid growing dissatisfaction with the leadership of Speaker Faustino “Bojie” Dy III.

- DepEd sets up disaster-resilient classrooms in Cebu, Masbate (2026-03-16 07:26)

The Department of Education (DepEd) has installed modular “Learning Continuity Spaces” (LCS) in schools in Cebu and Masbate to help students resume classes after natural disasters damaged or disrupted school facilities.

- Senators eye penalties for parents of student bullies (2026-03-16 07:03)

Senators on Monday raised the possibility of imposing penalties on parents whose children bully classmates, including requiring them to perform community service in schools, as lawmakers reviewed government measures to address the country"s persistent bullying problem.

- Marcos certifies urgent bill to amend Biofuels Act (2026-03-16 06:30)

President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. has certified as urgent a measure seeking to amend the Biofuels Act of 2006.

- Filipinos still most worried about inflation -- Pulse Asia (2026-03-16 05:37)

Controlling inflation continues to be the most urgent national concern of Filipinos, according to a recent Pulse Asia survey.

- 36% of Filipinos approve of Marcos" work in past 3 months (2026-03-16 05:03)

A recent Pulse Asia survey showed that fewer than half of Filipino adults expressed approval of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr."s work in the past three months, while approval was the dominant sentiment for Vice President Sara Duterte"s performance.

- 139K Metro Manila trike drivers to get P5K cash aid -- DSWD (2026-03-16 04:32)

At least 139,000 tricycle drivers in Metro Manila are set to receive ₱5,000 in cash assistance amid rising fuel prices, which have been driven higher by the escalating conflict in the Middle East, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) announced Monday.

- PNP: 54,000 personnel to secure summer vacation (2026-03-16 04:08)

The Philippine National Police (PNP) will deploy more than 54,000 personnel including cops and force multipliers nationwide as part of security preparations for the upcoming summer vacation period.

- PISTON to hold nationwide transport strike on March 19, eyes P5 fare hike (2026-03-16 02:39)

Transport group PISTON on Monday announced a nationwide transport strike on March 19, Thursday, to protest against the series of fuel price hikes due to the tensions in the Middle East.

- Marcos pays last respects to ALC Group chair Dominic Cabangon (2026-03-16 02:25)

President Ferdinand ''Bongbong'' Marcos Jr. has honored Dominic Edgard Angeles Cabangon, chairman of diversified conglomerate ALC Group of Companies, calling him a good and true friend.

- DOJ chief urges employees to conserve energy, fuel at home (2026-03-16 02:01)

Justice Secretary Fredderick Vida on Monday called on Department of Justice (DOJ) employees and their families to conserve energy and fuel even while at home amid continuing tensions in the Middle East.

- PNP probes gas stations stopping operations amid fuel price hikes (2026-03-16 00:12)

The Philippine National Police (PNP) has intensified monitoring of gasoline stations that have reportedly stopped operations amid the fuel price hikes.

- LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 16, 2026) (2026-03-15 23:48)

LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 16, 2026)

- Palace releases issuance on March 20 regular holiday for Eid"l Fitr (2026-03-15 17:50)

Malacañang has published the official issuance that proclaimed March 20, Friday as a regular holiday throughout the Philippines in observance of Eid"l Fitr to mark the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

- DHSUD hails exemption of socialized housing from farm lands conversion moratorium (2026-03-15 17:22)

The Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) on Sunday welcomed the exemption of socialized housing projects from the farm lands conversion moratorium imposed by the Department of Agriculture (DA).

- Victims" counsels ask ICC to deny Duterte appeal vs appointments (2026-03-15 16:43)

Two Filipino lawyers designated as external legal representatives of the drug war victims have asked the International Criminal Court (ICC) Pre-Trial Chamber I to reject the request of former President Rodrigo Duterte"s camp to challenge an earlier ruling on the Filipino lawyers" appointment as lawyers for the drug war victims.

- Palace defends Marcos" absence from airport welcome for returning Filipinos (2026-03-15 15:48)

Malacañang on Sunday explained why President Marcos Jr. has not joined government officials at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to welcome Filipinos returning home after being displaced by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

- Palace: Flood control probe to continue even with ICI closure (2026-03-15 15:22)

The government will continue its inquiries into anomalous flood control projects even if the Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI) is concluding its operations by the end of the month, Malacañang said on Sunday.

- PCSO: 6/49 prize now at P112M, no jackpot winners for major draws (2026-03-15 14:32)

The jackpot prize for the Superlotto 6/49 grew to P112.17 million as no one got the lucky combinations in the major lotto draws of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) on Sunday night, March 15.

- House eyes approval of 4 more LEDAC bills before adjournment (2026-03-15 12:36)

The House of Representatives is aiming to approve on third and final reading four more priority measures under the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) Common Legislative Agenda before Congress adjourns sessions on March 21.

- VP Sara says House will have to wait and see if she files impeachment reply (2026-03-15 12:26)

Vice President Sara Duterte said the House will have to wait and see if she will respond to the impeachment charges filed against her on Monday, the last day of the 10-day window to do so.

- Tarriela rebuts China"s Scarborough 'concession" claim (2026-03-15 08:34)

A Philippine Coast Guard senior official on Sunday dismissed China"s use of a supposed 1990 letter by a Filipino diplomat as proof that the Philippines conceded sovereignty over Scarborough Shoal, calling the claim "misleading" and a "distortion of historical records."

- What is Laetare Sunday and its significance during Lent? (2026-03-15 08:05)

The Catholic Church is currently observing the season of Lent, a period when the faithful renew their faith and prepare for the resurrection of Jesus Christ through prayer, fasting, and acts of charity.

- DA, FTI assure sufficient supply for 'Benteng Bigas' program (2026-03-15 07:46)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and state-owned Food Terminal Inc. (FTI) assured the public that the government"s P20-per-kilo rice program, dubbed “Benteng Bigas, Meron Na!”, continues to have sufficient supply.

- Senate inquiry sought on new procurement law (2026-03-15 07:25)

Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian has filed a resolution seeking a Senate inquiry into the implementation of the country"s new government procurement law to help ensure integrity in the use of public

funds.

- LTFRB OKs fare hike, to announce amounts on Tuesday (2026-03-15 05:15)

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) has approved fare hikes for jeepneys and buses, according to chairperson Vigor Mendoza.

- Marcos admin reaffirms support for LGUs during LMP 2026 assembly (2026-03-15 02:51)

The Marcos administration has reaffirmed its support for the local government unit (LGUs) as Executive Secretary Ralph Recto delivered his speech during the 2026 general assembly of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP).

- Comelec to issue decision on Rodante Marcoleta"s case on Wednesday (2026-03-15 02:30)

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) will release a decision involving Senator Rodante Marcoleta"s May 2025 statement of contributions and expenditures (SOCE) on Wednesday, according to chairperson George Garcia.

- Comelec: Bill to move BARMM polls to Sept. 2026 may pass this week (2026-03-15 02:04)

The Commission on Election (Comelec) on Sunday said the measure resetting the first regular elections in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) to September 14, 2026 may be approved this week.

- LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 15, 2026) (2026-03-14 23:02)

LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East (March 15, 2026)

- Ridon wants VP Sara to explain P50-M 'wealth gap" (2026-03-14 08:39)

Bicol Saro party-list congressman Ridon said on Saturday that lawmakers may seek subpoenas for Vice President Sara Duterte's income tax returns and business records so she can explain an alleged P50-million “wealth gap” between her estimated cumulative government service salary and declared net worth.

- House panel to discuss possible rejection of Poa, Munsayac as VP"s defense lawyers (2026-03-14 06:28)

House panel to discuss possible rejection of Poa, Munsayac as VP"s defense lawyers

## Source: PhilStar Global

- 1,467 cats, dogs in Bulacan undergo spaying, neutering (2026-03-20 16:00)

In observance of Rabies Awareness Month, 1,467 cats and dogs in Bulacan were spayed or neutered on Thursday.

- 4 arrested for illegal fuel sale in Albay (2026-03-20 16:00)

Four people were arrested in an entrapment operation for unauthorized fuel distribution in Guinobatan, Albay, the Philippine National Police said yesterday.

- P20 million shabu seized, 2 suspects nabbed in CDO drug sting (2026-03-20 16:00)

Anti-narcotics operatives arrested two drug suspects and seized an estimated P20.4 million worth of suspected shabu in a sting along Coastal Road in Barangay Lapasan before dawn on March 19.

- DOH to purchase 6.9 shabu flu vaccines (2026-03-20 16:00)

After failing to procure influenza vaccines last year, the Department of Health is set to purchase nearly seven million doses of flu shots for the country’s vulnerable population.

- BARMM voter registration reaches 84,859 as poll preps continue (2026-03-20 16:00)

Voter registration in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao has reached 84,859 as of March 19, with 1,814 new applications recorded in a single day, as preparations continue for the first BARMM parliamentary elections scheduled on Sept. 14.

- MWO warns OFWs vs repatriation scam (2026-03-20 16:00)

As reports of people and groups offering assistance in the repatriation of overseas Filipino workers surfaced, the Migrant Workers Office in Dubai and the Northern Emirates urged OFWs to remain vigilant against fraudulent schemes.

- PNP assures public amid theft fears (2026-03-20 16:00)

The Philippine National Police yesterday allayed fears of a possible rise in robbery and theft cases amid soaring prices of basic goods, saying the PNP is already implementing preventive measures nationwide.

- Random robbery killed Isko’s ex-aide – PNP (2026-03-20 16:00)

Robbery caused the death of retired policeman George Capistrano on Sunday, initial investigation by the Manila Police District showed.

- NBI flags 50,000 fake birth certificates (2026-03-20 16:00)

More than 50,000 suspected fake birth certificates have been recorded in over 1,600 civil registry offices nationwide, according to the National Bureau of Investigation.

- Isko to seek reelection in 2028 (2026-03-20 16:00)

Manila Mayor Isko Moreno revealed on Thursday his plan to run again as city mayor in 2028, dismissing rumors that he is eyeing a national post in the next election.

- DOH to purchase 6.9 million flu vaccines (2026-03-20 16:00)

After failing to procure influenza vaccines last year, the Department of Health is set to purchase nearly seven million doses of flu shots for the country’s vulnerable population.

- Maranao peace activist killed in Lanao del Sur ambush (2026-03-20 09:08)

Gunmen killed a Maranao man, known for his overt support for the joint peace and security programs of their local government unit and the police, in a daytime ambush in Barangay Punud in Calanogas, Lanao del Sur on Thursday, March 19.

- Shabu dealer operating near school campuses nabbed (2026-03-20 08:56)

Anti-narcotics agents seized P176,800 worth of shabu from an elusive trafficker finally entrapped on Thursday, March 19, in Barangay Sarmiento in Parang, Maguindanao del Norte with the help of local executives and Muslim religious leaders.

- Moon sighting fails; Eid’l Fitr moved to March 21 in Bangsamoro (2026-03-20 07:46)

Islamic theologians in the Bangsamoro region failed to see the new moon during a traditional moon sighting rite at about dusk Thursday, the supposed basis for declaring March 20 as Eid’l Fitr holiday, which they set to March 21 instead.

- Power issues take center stage in GenSan meeting (2026-03-20 07:03)

Concerns over electricity reliability, rising costs and governance challenges dominated a high-level meeting convened to address power service issues in parts of Mindanao.

- Stronger anti-bullying policies in Philippine schools pushed (2026-03-20 03:00)

Calls have been intensifying for stronger anti-bullying polices in Philippine schools, including the implementation of an urgent, widespread reporting system and holding parents of bullies accountable for their children’s actions.

- Tourism advocate pushes for support vs illegal gaming in Pangasinan (2026-03-20 02:14)

A “determined and consistent campaign against illegal gaming” should be backed by local government units,” to keep Pangasinan province free from these practices that have been eroding the moral foundations of our communities.

- DENR, partners release turtle hatchlings in Zambales (2026-03-19 16:00)

Community groups and government partners released 70 olive ridley turtle hatchlings to the sea in San Felipe, Zambales, as part of efforts to protect marine wildlife, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources reported.

- Camiguin vice mayor nabbed for drugs (2026-03-19 16:00)

The 66-year-old vice mayor of Guinsiliban town in Camiguin was arrested during a joint operation with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), the Philippine National Police said.

- PNP boosts visibility after Bohol ‘kidnapping’ (2026-03-19 16:00)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) has ordered heightened police visibility nationwide, following a video that went viral online of an alleged kidnapping in Tagbilaran City in Bohol. PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. ordered all units to intensify patrols in urban centers, transport hubs and commercial areas to deter street crimes and reassure the public. “We will not allow any disruption of peace and order that could cause panic and discomfort to the people,” Nartatez said. The PNP has tasked the Central Visayas regional and Bohol provincial police offices to investigate the incident, which reportedly occurred on March 11 outside a public market in Barangay Dao. A video circulating online showed a man being forced into a van, but authorities said no one has reported a missing person linked to the incident. Despite a 12.66-percent drop in crime incidents since January, Nartatez said isolated cases must still be addressed swiftly. Meanwhile, Brig. Gen. Jess Mendez, Central Luzon police director, said 2,000 PNP members are being deployed in the region to ensure a safe, orderly and secure summer vacation. Mendez said the campaign, dubbed “Ligtas Sumvac 2026,” would be enforced from March 29 to May 31. The enhanced police presence will be implemented through intensified foot and mobile patrols as well as police assistance desks in strategic locations, such as bus terminals, air and sea ports, tourist destinations and other public places. “Security is a shared responsibility. We call on the public to remain vigilant and to immediately report any suspicious activities. Your cooperation is vital in keeping our communities safe,” Mendez said.

- DOH programs duplicate LGU functions – group (2026-03-19 16:00)

A network of health development experts said funding for the community health programs of the Department of Health (DOH) should be discontinued as these only duplicate the functions of local government units.

- BARMM party filing deadline extended (2026-03-19 16:00)

The Commission on Elections has extended until April 6 the filing of petitions for registration and accreditation of regional political parties and parliamentary sectoral organizations seeking to join the first Bangsamoro parliamentary poll in November, the Comelec said.

- Pasay tops Metro cities with struggling readers – report (2026-03-19 16:00)

Pasay topped cities in Metro Manila with struggling readers as it posted 47.50 percent, according to the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2)’s report.

- DFA launches digital apostille for PSA, CHED (2026-03-19 16:00)

Filipinos abroad can now obtain digital apostilles authenticating the electronic certificates and documents issued by the Philippine Statistics Authority and Commission on Higher Education.

- DILG to file graft raps vs 45 BFP execs (2026-03-19 16:00)

Corruption charges will be filed against 45 current and former officials of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) over alleged irregularities in the procurement of firetrucks from 2018 to 2024, according to the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

- Quezon City deploys free rides (2026-03-19 16:00)

The Quezon City government yesterday deployed free rides for commuters affected by the transport strike.

- House staff get health, retiree aid (2026-03-19 16:00)

Retirees and employees of the House of Representatives can now avail themselves of health and wellness aid through the Alagang Kongreso program.

- 3 drug den owners in Koronadal City arrested (2026-03-19 10:48)

Agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency 12 arrested three men after selling them P81,600 worth of shabu right in their drug den in Barangay Zone 1 in Koronadal City in South Cotabato late Tuesday, March 17.

- 3 shabu dealers linked to Dawlah Islamiya remnants busted (2026-03-19 10:34)

Three longtime shabu dealers were arrested one after another in separate police entrapment operations in this city on Tuesday, March 17, with the help of their own relatives and leaders of the local Islamic and Christian religious groups.

- Excessive driver’s license fees flagged (2026-03-19 06:30)

Some medical clinics accredited by the Land Transportation Office are allegedly charging excessive and unexplained miscellaneous fees to driver’s license applicants.

- 9,000 cops deployed due to transport strike (2026-03-19 05:20)

In a statement on Thursday, March 19, the NCRPO said that it deployed Civil Disturbance Management, Special Weapons and Tactics, and dedicated Traffic Management teams.

- LIST: Free ride routes on Thursday, March 19 (2026-03-19 04:36)

Various government agencies will be implementing free rides in different routes across the metro on Thursday, March 19.

- Commuters given 50% discount at MRT-3, LRT-2 (2026-03-19 04:01)

The Department of Transportation is implementing a 50% discount for all passengers of the MRT-3 and LRT-2 amid soaring fuel prices caused by the Israel-Iran war.

- Maguindanao town exec slain in ambush (2026-03-18 16:00)

A municipal councilor was killed in an attack by unidentified assailants in Paglat, Maguindanao del Sur yesterday morning.

- 2 killed in Quezon road mishap (2026-03-18 16:00)

Two people were killed while two others were injured when a truck collided with a multicab before falling into a cliff in this town yesterday morning.

- Cebu bettor wins P100.33 million lotto pot (2026-03-18 16:00)

A bettor in Cebu City won the jackpot in the 6/58 Ultra Lotto draw on Tuesday night.

- P8.08 billion released for insurgency-free barangay (2026-03-18 16:00)

The Department of Budget and Management has disbursed P8.08 billion to fund projects in barangays cleared of insurgency.

- 2 PMA cadets graduate from Japan defense school (2026-03-18 16:00)

Two cadets of the Philippine Military Academy have graduated from the Japan National Defense Academy.

- Visayas lawmakers back Dy's leadership (2026-03-18 16:00)

Lawmakers from the Visayas have expressed support for the leadership of Speaker Faustino Dy III, whom they said has been pursuing reforms in the House of Representatives, particularly in crafting the national budget.

- LGUs told: Cut fuel, power use by 20% (2026-03-18 16:00)

As the country grapples with high prices of petroleum products, local government units (LGUs) have been ordered to cut power and fuel usage by up to 20 percent.

- PNP ready for crime surge (2026-03-18 16:00)

Despite recording a decrease in crime volume, the Philippine National Police is preparing for a possible spike in crimes due to soaring fuel prices.

- Ghost project: Sandigan affirms conviction of 5 ex-PNP execs (2026-03-18 16:00)

The Sandiganbayan has affirmed the graft conviction of five former officials of the Philippine National Police in connection with the ghost repair and procurement of spare parts for the PNP's armored vehicles from 2007 to 2008.

- Driver in ex-cop’s slay linked to robberies (2026-03-18 16:00)

Police on Tuesday linked to robbery cases the accomplice of a gunman who shot dead Manila Mayor Isko Moreno’s former security escort.

- Army, police deploy security measures in Central Mindanao for Eid’l Fit’r (2026-03-18 11:19)

The police and military are now guarding the entry and exit routes in this city and in nearby areas in the neighboring Bangsamoro region and in Region 12 to ensure a peaceful Eid’l Adha celebration by the local Muslim communities on Friday, March 20.

- Municipal councilor killed in gun attack (2026-03-18 10:58)

Gunmen shot dead a Moro municipal councilor in an attack, in the presence of villagers, at a residential area in the town center of Paglat in Maguindanao del Sur on Wednesday morning, March 18.

- Missing mountaineers rescued (2026-03-17 16:00)

Two mountaineers from Metro Manila and their two guides have been rescued after they were reported missing for nearly 10 days in Solsona, Ilocos Norte.

- No water rate hike in Davao (2026-03-17 16:00)

The Davao City Water District has assured its consumers that it will not increase water rates amid ongoing fuel price spikes.

- Monsoon may end tomorrow or on Monday (2026-03-17 16:00)

Cold winds brought by the northeast monsoon may have weakened as the amihan can be felt only in some parts of Luzon, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

- Kanlaon eruption affects 126,572 students (2026-03-17 16:00)

Up to 126,572 learners were affected by the disruption of classes following the moderately explosive eruption of Kanlaon Volcano on Negros Island on Sunday, according to the Department of Education.

- San Juan trike drivers get aid (2026-03-17 16:00)

Listed tricycle drivers in San Juan yesterday received P5,000 in financial assistance, according to Mayor Francis Zamora.

- MMDA opens shower facilities for bikers (2026-03-17 16:00)

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority opened yesterday shower facilities in Pasig for bicycle riders.

- BFP officer-in-charge named (2026-03-17 16:00)

Following the preventive suspension of Bureau of Fire Protection chief Jesus Fernandez for alleged corruption, Chief Supt. Wilberto Rico Neil Kwan Tiu has been designated as officer-in-charge of the BFP.

- DILG: 911 hotline ready vs AI prank calls (2026-03-17 16:00)

The Unified 911 system can now detect and filter prank calls generated and automated by artificial intelligence, according to the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

- Antipolo church declared national shrine (2026-03-17 16:00)

Cardinal Jose Advincula on Monday led a mass formally declaring the St. Therese of the Child Jesus Parish in Antipolo City as a national shrine.

- Dizon, Leni discuss infrastructure projects for Naga City (2026-03-17 16:00)

Public Works Secretary Vince Dizon met yesterday with Naga Mayor Leni Robredo to discuss the implementation of priority infrastructure projects in the city including sidewalks and bicycle lanes.

- MILF wants new chairman for gov't peace implementing panel (2026-03-17 11:16)

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front has temporarily suspended, since March 12, the supposedly sustained connectivity of its peace implementing panel with its counterpart in the government, whose chairperson resigned last January.

- 2 ex-NPAs say Central Mindanao unit is now non-functional (2026-03-17 11:07)

Two longtime members of the New People’s Army, both experts in the fabrication of improvised explosive devices, pledged allegiance to the government on Monday, March 16, in General Santos City and separately confirmed that all of the NPA units in Central Mindanao are now virtually defunct.

- ‘Lapse of judgment’: Lawmaker to retract bill renaming state university in Zambales (2026-03-17 01:00)

A bill seeking to rename the President Ramon Magsaysay State University to Zambales State University will be withdrawn by the author today, just one day after its filing, as the proposal drew vehement opposition from Zambales residents.

- Lookout in mayor’s RPG ambush surrenders (2026-03-16 16:00)

A lookout in the fourth assassination attempt on Mayor Akmad Mitra Ampatuan Sr. of Shariff Aguak in Maguindanao del Sur surrendered to the National Bureau of Investigation in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao over the weekend.

- Marcos turns over learning spaces in Cebu (2026-03-16 16:00)

To ensure the continued education of learners even during disasters, President Marcos and Education Secretary Sonny Angara yesterday turned over the learning continuity space or LCS facilities in Bogo City in Cebu, which was hit by a 6.9-magnitude earthquake last year.

- PNP identifies gunman in Nueva Ecija killing (2026-03-16 16:00)

Police are closing in on the gunman implicated in the murder of a man and a woman whose charred bodies were found in a burning car in Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija last week.

- Go asks traders, suppliers: Stop price manipulation (2026-03-16 16:00)

Amid soaring fuel prices, traders and suppliers should refrain from exploiting the situation through hoarding and overpricing, Sen. Bong Go said on March 9.

- Marikina launches bike-to-work challenge (2026-03-16 16:00)

In response to the fuel price hikes, the Marikina government is encouraging city hall employees to use bicycles in going work.

- 2 Pinays nabbed in UAE get legal aid (2026-03-16 16:00)

The Philippine embassy in the United Arab Emirates is providing legal assistance to two Filipinas arrested in Dubai for allegedly recording and sharing videos of missile attacks launched by Iran.

- Isko offers P.5 million to escort killer’s aide (2026-03-16 16:00)

Manila Mayor Isko Moreno yesterday offered a reward of P500,000 and witness protection to the accomplice of the gunman who killed his former security escort in Tondo on Sunday.

- Marcos: Cash, fuel aid ready (2026-03-16 16:00)

Cash aid, fuel subsidy and free rides are in place to ease the impact of soaring fuel prices, President Marcos said yesterday.

- House panel OKs bill expanding 4Ps coverage (2026-03-16 16:00)

A committee of the House of Representatives approved yesterday a measure that will expand the coverage of the government’s flagship Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program or 4Ps to allow beneficiaries to pursue college education, even in private learning institutions.

- 4 dead in Angono vehicular crash (2026-03-16 16:00)

Four people died in a vehicular crash in Angono, Rizal on Sunday.

- 2 dead in 2 ambush incidents in neighboring BARMM towns (2026-03-16 10:19)

Two Moro men were killed, and another was wounded in separate ambush incidents in two adjoining towns in the Bangsamoro Special Geographic Area of Cotabato province on Sunday, March 15.

- Traffic enforcers, street sweepers to get 'heat breaks' (2026-03-16 09:16)

MMDA reinstates heat breaks for traffic enforcers and street sweepers as temperatures begin rising.

- Transport strike set March 19 as fuel prices surge (2026-03-16 08:25)

Jeepney drivers plan nationwide strike on March 19 as fuel prices surge toward P100 per liter.

- Mom, 2 sons operating drug den in Maguindanao del Norte arrested (2026-03-16 08:25)

A mother and her two sons, who were helping her run a clandestine drug den, were arrested Sunday night, March 15, in Barangay Poblacion Dalican, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao del Norte.

- Missing PUP law student last seen in Cainta (2026-03-16 06:32)

he family of missing PUP law student Nikko Gorillo is asking the public for help in locating him.

- BARMM development initiatives figure in talks between Palace team, UN peace experts (2026-03-16 03:08)

Engagements in New York involving the Office of the Special Assistant to the President (OSAP) highlighted continued international support for the implementation of the Bangsamoro peace process and related development initiatives.

- Gas stations watched for hoarding, sudden stoppage (2026-03-16 02:11)

Some gasoline stations have suddenly stopped operations amid suspicions of hoarding or price manipulation

- Quezon City chills at 17.1 degrees Celsius (2026-03-15 16:00)

The temperature in Quezon City yesterday dropped to 17.1 degrees Celsius as the northeast monsoon weakens.

- Court affirms conviction of 2 cops in Cavite robbery (2026-03-15 16:00)

The Regional Trial Court has upheld the conviction of two former police officers for robbing a retired teacher in August 2023 in Imus City, Cavite.

- Palace declares holidays in 3 areas (2026-03-15 16:00)

Malacañang has declared special non-working days in three areas in the country for the celebration of their founding and charter anniversaries and local festivals.

- Acop’s son wins Antipolo election (2026-03-15 16:00)

Philip Conrad Acop has been elected to represent Antipolo City’s 2nd District in the House of Representatives, a post left vacant when his father, Romeo, died last year.

- Cop relieved after threatening cashier with gun over bill (2026-03-15 16:00)

A police corporal was relieved from his post for allegedly threatening a restaurant cashier with a gun after being billed P12,000 – an amount that exceeded the P6,000 cash he had on hand.

- Coast Guard rescues 5 revelers in Pangasinan (2026-03-15 16:00)

Philippine Coast Guard personnel rescued five people who almost drowned after strong waves carried them away from the beach in San Fabian town in Pangasinan, the PCG reported yesterday.

- DOTr: MRT-3 trains safe (2026-03-15 16:00)

Following a congressman's claims of unsafe train conditions, the Department of Transportation has assured the public that the Metro Rail Transit Line 3 train sets are not compromised.

- P136 million shabu intercepted at NAIA (2026-03-15 16:00)

Two parcels containing 20 kilos of shabu valued at P135.96 million were seized at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Pasay over the weekend.

- Trike drivers' payout in Metro Manila begins tomorrow (2026-03-15 16:00)

Tricycle drivers in Metro Manila will receive cash assistance starting tomorrow, with local governments ready to distribute the aid, according to Metro Manila Council president Francis Zamora.

- NLEX to Novaliches opens by September (2026-03-15 16:00)

Motorists can expect a faster route to Novaliches, Quezon City through the North Luzon Expressway when the first phase of NLEX Segment 8.2 opens by September.

- P10.2 million worth of shabu seized in 2 drug ops (2026-03-15 09:10)

Agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency 9 and policemen seized a total of P10.2 million worth of shabu from three peddlers entrapped in two separate anti-narcotics operations on Saturday, March 14.

- Son of Romeo Acop wins seat to replace father as Antipolo solon (2026-03-15 03:45)

The son of the late Antipolo 2nd District Romeo Acop has been elected as the district's new representative.

- Mayon Volcano logs 279 earthquakes (2026-03-15 02:45)

State seismologists at the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) recorded more than 270 earthquakes in the Mayon Volcano on Saturday, March 14.

- 1 dead in Maguindanao vehicular mishap (2026-03-14 16:00)

A rider died while his two relatives were injured when their motorcycle crashed into a backhoe in Datu Unsay, Maguindanao del Sur on Friday.

- P95.2 million shabu seized in Surigao (2026-03-14 16:00)

Shabu with an estimated street value of P95.2 million was seized in an anti-narcotics operation that also resulted in the arrest of a suspected drug trafficker in Surigao del Norte yesterday.

- 37 arrested for scamming (2026-03-14 16:00)

Thirty-seven employees of a company tagged in scamming activities were arrested in San Pedro, Laguna on Thursday, according to the National Bureau of Investigation.

- Mass shooting plot foiled (2026-03-14 16:00)

Police have thwarted an alleged plan of a group of students to carry out a mass shooting in a school in Calabarzon.

- DA bans poultry products from Indiana (2026-03-14 16:00)

A bird flu outbreak in Indiana has prompted the Department of Agriculture to restrict importation of poultry products from the US state.

- Baguio temperature drops to 9 degrees Celsius (2026-03-14 16:00)

A colder than usual morning greeted residents of Baguio City yesterday after the temperature dropped to nine degrees Celsius.

- 2 nabbed over Cagayan gold buyers' murder (2026-03-14 16:00)

Two men have been arrested in connection with the murder of three gold buyers in Lal-lo, Cagayan on Thursday.

- PCP cautions public vs unregistered diabetes drugs (2026-03-14 16:00)

A group of health experts warned the public against the use of drugs being marketed for the treatment of type 2 diabetes and obesity but are compounded and unregistered with the Food and Drug Administration.

- Antipolo special election peaceful, orderly – Comelec (2026-03-14 16:00)

No untoward incident was reported during the conduct of a special election in the second legislative district of Antipolo City yesterday, according to the Commission on Elections.

- Vertical housing eyed for Quezon City fire victims (2026-03-14 16:00)

The Quezon City government The Quezon City government has committed to provide permanent and dignified housing to thousands of victims in the fire that hit a residential community along NIA Road in Barangay Pinyahan on March 6.has committed to provide

permanent and dignified housing to thousands of victims in the fire that hit a residentialcommunity along NIA Road in Barangay Pinyahan on March 6.

- Drug den owner killed, 4 busted in Cotabato drug sting (2026-03-14 10:23)

A drug den operator tagged in heinous crimes was killed while four of his accomplices were arrested by anti-narcotics agents in an entrapment operation on Thursday in Barangay Nabalawag in Malidegao, Cotabato on Thursday, March 12.

- Fuel-intensive events scrapped in 2026 Zambales mango festival (2026-03-14 10:07)

There will be fewer spectacular shows, but more fun events in this year’s Dinamulag Festival here, as the provincial government canceled motor races and other energy-intensive events in the annual celebration of Zambales’s most famous agricultural product.

- Tribesman dead, 2 hurt in motorcycle-backhoe collision (2026-03-14 10:00)

A motorist died instantly while his two relatives were injured when the motorcycle they were riding together wiggled and slammed into a backhoe parked along a highway in Barangay Maitumaig in Datu Unsay, Maguindanao del Sur on Friday morning, March 13.

- Electric cooperative, consumer group team up for transparency (2026-03-14 09:56)

The Bantay Kuryente Movement and the South Cotabato II Electric Cooperative are strengthening ties through a partnership aimed at enhancing consumer education and transparency in cooperative operations.

- Subic welcomes first cruise ship visit for 2026 (2026-03-14 09:39)

Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority employees and students from local schools welcomed the cruise liner MS Crystal Symphony early this morning, March 14, buoying hopes for the revival of Subic as a regular cruise stop in Southeast Asia.

- Mindanao Army earthquake drills capped off with life-saving exercises (2026-03-14 08:40)

Personnel of Army divisions in southern provinces capped off their earthquake drills on Thursday, March 12, with life-saving exercises as a capability-building preparation for emergencies that unpredictable tremors can cause.

- Baguio temperature drops to 9 degrees Celsius (2026-03-14 03:23)

Temperature in Baguio City dropped to 9 degrees Celsius at around 5 a.m. on Saturday, March 14, bringing cold and foggy weather to the mountain resort city.

- Shabu dealers operating near schools arrested (2026-03-14 02:57)

Two men peddling shabu near school campuses in two Central Mindanao cities were arrested in separate entrapment operations by agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency 12.

## Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer

- Farmers' group hits Garin over 'no oil crisis' remark (2026-03-21 13:40)

MANILA, Philippines — A peasant group criticized Energy Secretary Sharon Garin for downplaying the country's oil situation, saying the issue has become a matter of survival for many Filipinos. In a statement, Anakpawis said the government's framing of the situation overlooks the reality faced by sectors already burdened by high fuel prices. "The oil crisis

- Grass fire hits vicinity of General Santos airport (2026-03-21 12:16)

COTABATO CITY — The General Santos City International Airport remains safe and functional after a grass fire around its vicinity on Friday. According to Senior Fire Officer 1 Lester Muñez, spokesperson of the Bureau of Fire Protection in General Santos City, flight operations were not affected even as the blaze was being put off. The fire

- 3 alleged NPA rebels slain in Negros Occidental clash (2026-03-21 12:04)

BACOLOD CITY — Three alleged members of the New People's Army (NPA), tagged in a string of killings and arson incidents, were killed in an encounter with government troops in Barangay Tampalon, Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental, at around 4 a.m. on Saturday, March 21. Troops from the 47th Infantry "Katapatan" Battalion, operating under the 302nd

- Bohol town extends aid to transport, boat sectors amid rising fuel costs (2026-03-21 11:53)

TAGBILARAN CITY — Citing the continued increase in fuel prices and economic strain, the local government of Talibon in Bohol province has rolled out a rice assistance program targeting transport and maritime workers. In an advisory, Mayor Janette Aurestila-Garcia said the initiative aims to support tricycle drivers and operators, as well as fishing and passenger

- Kanlaon Volcano sends ash plumes over 500 meters (2026-03-21 11:43)

MANILA, Philippines — Multiple episodes of ash emissions from the summit of Kanlaon Volcano were recorded on Saturday, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) reported. The state volcanology bureau observed emissions from the summit of Kanlaon Volcano early Saturday from 5:58 a.m. to 9:02 a.m. "Four episodes of ash emission that lasted 43

- 32 rescued as boat partially sinks off Batangas (2026-03-21 10:17)

LUCENA CITY — An infant and 31 other passengers were rescued after their boat partially submerged in the waters off Calatagan, Batangas, on Thursday, March 19. In a belated report, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)-District Southern Tagalog said the fishing boat FBCA Prince 2, carrying 32 passengers, was en route from Balayan to Calatagan for

- Fair weather Saturday in most of PH, light rains in Mindanao (2026-03-21 09:44)

MANILA, Philippines — Most parts of the country will experience generally fair weather on Saturday, with only isolated rain showers expected, while parts of Mindanao may see light to moderate rains due to prevailing easterlies, the state weather bureau said. In its 24-hour forecast, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said the

- Kanlaon Volcano ashfall alerts raised (2026-03-21 09:27)

BACOLOD CITY — The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) warned residents of possible ashfall from Kanlaon Volcano from Friday night through Saturday morning, March 20 to 21. Emergency alerts were issued after ash emissions were recorded at 9:02 p.m. and 11:23 p.m. on Friday, the NDRRMC said. Another alert followed after Kanlaon

- Why fires surge in March and how Filipinos can stay safe (2026-03-21 09:20)

MANILA, Philippines — As March heat settles over the country, a familiar warning returns: Fires are about to rise. It is not just tradition that marks March as Fire Prevention Month. It is data. Across three years of nationwide records obtained by Inquirer from the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), a clear pattern emerges: Fires

- Rare Philippine deer sighted again in Marinduque (2026-03-21 09:07)

MANILA, Philippines — The motion sensors were meant to catch whatever moved through the forest at night — a wild pig, a civet, maybe a stray dog. Instead, camera traps set in the Marinduque Wildlife Sanctuary captured an animal many residents had stopped expecting to see: the Philippine deer. After decades without confirmed sightings and

- Teachers: Trimestral school year plan won’t solve issues (2026-03-21 05:50)

MANILA, Philippines — The Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) urged the Department of Education (DepEd) to halt the implementation of its trimestral school year proposal and hold genuine and transparent consultations with students, parents, and educators. ACT chair Ruby Bernardo on Friday said the government has again imposed so-called “reforms” without consulting stakeholders, despite DepEd

- Address absenteeism, Ejercito urges senators (2026-03-21 05:46)

MANILA, Philippines — The Senate committee on ethics has taken receipt of a complaint against Sen. Ronald “Bato” dela Rosa for his continued absence from the upper chamber, although the panel may not take up the matter because there is still no rule on official absenteeism. At the same time, Sen. Joseph Victor “JV” Ejercito,

- SWS: Just 1 in 3 Filipinos ‘very happy’ in life, but 50% ‘fairly happy’ (2026-03-21 05:40)

MANILA, Philippines — Only 33 percent of Filipinos said they are “very happy” with their life, Social Weather Stations (SWS) showed on Thursday, a day before the celebration of the

International Day of Happiness on March 20. The latest SWS survey also said that 50 percent ofFilipinos are “fairly happy” with life, while 15

- Ride-hailing firms take steps to help drivers cope (2026-03-21 05:34)

MANILA, Philippines — Ride-hailing companies have introduced a variety of measures to help their drivers cope with the impact of high fuel prices triggered by the Middle East conflict. inDrive on Friday said it had rolled out P2.7 million worth of fuel discounts “to ease the financial strain of rising fuel costs, enabling drivers to

- DBM releases fuel subsidy; diesel seen hitting P130/L (2026-03-21 05:32)

MANILA, Philippines — As fuel prices continue to rise, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said on Friday that it had fast-tracked the release of P2.49 billion to the fuel subsidy program of the Department of Transportation (DOTr). Another P18.65 billion was released to the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to ensure

- Green groups insist on shift to renewables (2026-03-21 05:06)

LUCENA CITY—Environmental advocates on Friday warned that relying on imported coal to fuel power plants is not a sustainable response to the country’s energy supply challenges, even as global petroleum prices continue to rise due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Jay Lim, program director of the public interest law group Tanggol Kalikasan,

- Baguio, Tuba eye land swap deal (2026-03-21 05:04)

BAGUIO CITY—Residents of four Baguio villages and a barangay in the neighboring Benguet town of Tuba will decide whether to approve or reject a proposed government land swap aimed at resolving a boundary dispute that dates back to the creation of the summer capital, the Inquirer learned this week. The Baguio government led by Mayor

- No overpricing among BARMM gas dealers, regional energy body says (2026-03-20 23:07)

COTABATO CITY — The Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Energy (MENRE) in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) said its monitors have not reported any instances of fuel overpricing. In a statement, MENRE said fuel stations across the region are currently compliant with prevailing market prices. Since last week, MENRE has deployed

- Palace declares March 21 holiday in Calapan for city anniversary (2026-03-20 22:38)

CITY OF CALAPAN, Oriental Mindoro — Malacañang has declared March 21 a special non-working holiday here to mark the city’s 28th founding anniversary. Under Proclamation No. 1185 issued by the Palace, the declaration aims to allow residents to observe the occasion on Saturday by suspending work in government offices and private establishments. The move also

- PCSO: No jackpot winners in March 20 lotto draws (2026-03-20 21:52)

MANILA, Philippines — No bettor won the jackpots for Ultra Lotto 6/58 and MegaLotto 6/45 in Friday’s draw, according to the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. March 20, 2026, falls on a Friday. The winning combination for Ultra Lotto 6/58 was 47-19-23-34-20-37 for a jackpot of ₱75 million, with no winner. For MegaLotto 6/45, the winning

- Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair lands immediate jobs for SHS graduates (2026-03-20 21:47)

MANILA, Philippines — The graduation season has turned into a hiring season for over 1,700 Senior High School (SHS) learners as the Department of Education (DepEd) sustained the nationwide pilot of the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair (BPSF). The inter-agency initiative, aimed at dismantling the financial and bureaucratic hurdles facing first-time jobseekers, reported that 241 SHS

- Film showcases Ormoc’s charm, growth potential (2026-03-20 21:07)

TACLOBAN CITY — The local government of Ormoc City in Leyte is taking a creative step to promote itself as both a tourism hub and an emerging investment destination—while staying grounded in its identity and heritage. Through a short film titled “Homemade, Handmade Ormoc,” the city highlights its natural attractions, including Lake Danao, lush forest

- Over 5,000 Bukidnon teachers take oath after getting promotions (2026-03-20 21:04)

MALAYBALAY CITY, Bukidnon — Some 5,260 public school teachers from the Department of Education (DepEd) divisions of Malaybalay City, Valencia City, and Bukidnon took their mass oath before Regional Director Arturo Bayocot on Thursday, March 19, at the Bukidnon Sports and Cultural Complex. The DepEd is pushing to promote over 100,000 teachers by 2026 under

- Community radio announcer shot dead in Negros Occidental town (2026-03-20 20:55)

BACOLOD CITY — A radio announcer in Himamaylan City, who is also a job order worker in the local government, was shot dead in La Castellana town, Negros Occidental on Friday afternoon. The incident happened at around 2:30 p.m. in Sitio Lapak Kawayanan, Barangay Robles of La Castellana. The victim, Julito “Jaz” Diamante Calo, 49,

- Legarda hits digital trafficking, calls for stronger protection of women (2026-03-20 20:48)

MANILA, Philippines — Sen. Loren Legarda warned that human trafficking in the Philippines continues to exploit women and girls, with traffickers adapting faster than institutions and using digital platforms, deepfake technology, and cross-border networks to expand their reach. Legarda underscored that despite decades of legislation and a Tier 1 international ranking, trafficking persists and women

- PCSO hands 12 ventilators to 5 Bohol hospitals, boosting critical care (2026-03-20 20:36)

TAGBILARAN CITY, Bohol —The Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) on Friday (March 20) has strengthened healthcare services in Bohol with the turnover of 12 mechanical

ventilators to five government hospitals across the province, expanding critical care capacityand improving access to life-saving treatment. Distributed under PCSO’s Medical EquipmentDonation Program (MEDP), the ventilators were turned

- Camille Villar leads cervical cancer awareness drive (2026-03-20 20:25)

MANILA, Philippines — In line with the celebration of National Women’s Month, the youngest senator of the 20th Congress, Sen. Camille Villar spearheaded the launch of PROJECT CAM: Cervical Cancer Awareness Movement on March 17, 2026, at the Senate of the Philippines, providing free HPV vaccination and health kits to Senate employees. “Through initiatives like

- Kaamulan 2026 opens with sacred rites, unity call (2026-03-20 19:16)

MALAYBALAY CITY, Bukidnon – Dawn broke over the Bukidnon Capitol Grounds as the “Pamukalag Ha Pangampo” ritual formally opened the Kaamulan Festival 2026 on Thursday. The festival gathers the province’s seven ethnolinguistic groups in a show of unity and tradition. The early morning rite marked the start of the monthlong celebration, followed by a ribbon-cutting ceremony led by Bukidnon Gov. Rogelio

- PCSO donates ventilators to Bohol public hospitals (2026-03-20 19:10)

TAGBILARAN CITY—The Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) turned over 12 units of mechanical ventilators worth P13 million to the provincial government of Bohol on Friday, March 20, 2026, in a move aimed at strengthening the province’s critical care capacity. The ceremonial turnover was held at the Ceremonial Hall of the New Provincial Capitol, attended by

- Tacloban scales down fiesta amid austerity calls (2026-03-20 19:05)

TACLOBAN CITY — The city government here is set to implement austerity measures in response to the ongoing fuel crisis triggered by tensions in the Middle East, with Mayor Alfred Romualdez announcing a scaled-down fiesta celebration and stricter controls on government spending. Romualdez said the annual fiesta celebration in June will be significantly reduced, with

- Mindanao bus firm rolls back fares (2026-03-20 18:58)

SAN FRANCISCO, Agusan del Sur — Bachelor Express Incorporated has announced that is has reverted to its previous fare rates after the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) suspended the provisional fare increases set to take effect on March 14, 2026. The suspension follows a directive from President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on March

- Hontiveros says transport coops should also receive aid amid oil crisis (2026-03-20 18:40)

MANILA, Philippines — Aside from jeepney drivers, transport cooperatives should also be included in the aid to address the ongoing oil crisis due to the Middle East conflict, Sen. Risa Hontiveros said on Friday. Hontiveros made this known when she wrote on March 19 to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), as she sought

- House panel invites VP Duterte to March 25 impeachment hearing (2026-03-20 18:39)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte has been invited by the justice panel on March 25, when the "hearing proper" on impeachment complaints filed against her will be held. In a letter dated March 19, 2026, panel Chair Gerville "Jinky Bitrics" Luistro of Batangas said the panel will hold its regular meeting at 10 a.m.

- WATCH: Policy analyst discusses impact of removing excise tax, VAT on fuel (2026-03-20 17:59)

MANILA, Philippines — The INQUIRER had a roundtable discussion on Friday, March 20, with policy analyst Emmanuel Leyco, a member of the faculty of the Asian Institute of Management and former president of the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila. The discussion tackled the economic impact, particularly on consumers, of removing the excise tax on fuel,

- JV Ejercito calls to amend rules on absenteeism amid Dela Rosa woes (2026-03-20 17:25)

MANILA, Philippines — Sen. JV Ejercito on Friday called on the upper chamber to amend its rules to address absenteeism of its members. Ejercito, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Ethics, made the call as the panel received the complaint against Sen. Ronald "Bato" Dela Rosa. Previously, the chairperson noted that the there is no such

- Start of hot, dry season possible by last week of March, says Pagasa (2026-03-20 17:21)

MANILA, Philippines — Weather patterns show that the prevalence of the northeast monsoon or amihan is nearing its end, as the start of the hot and dry season may be declared by the last week of March, state meteorologists said on Friday afternoon. During its weather update, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa)

- Luistro: Justice panel acts like prosecutors, it examines evidence (2026-03-20 16:54)

MANILA, Philippines — The role of House of Representatives committee on justice members during an impeachment proceeding like that of a prosecutor who evaluates evidence and testimonies provided before them, Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro reminded the public on Friday. Luistro, chairperson of the committee, was asked in an online interview whether panel members can introduce evidence

- ACT urges DepEd to halt three-term school calendar (2026-03-20 16:44)

MANILA, Philippines – The approved three-term school calendar in public schools did not undergo any consultation, as far as the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) is concerned, urging the Department of Education (DepEd) to halt the implementation of the newly approved policy. ACT chairperson Ruby Bernardo on Friday said the government made a "pattern" in

- Palace asks: 'Understanding, trust' in efforts to help transport sector (2026-03-20 16:40)

MANILA, Philippines — Amid an impending nationwide transport strike due to rising fuel costs, Malacañang on Friday asked the public for "understanding and trust" in the government's

efforts to balance the welfare of drivers and commuters. Palace press officer Claire Castro made the statement in response to Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Opereytor Nationwide

- Tiny savings won’t protect Filipinos; policy reforms are key – analyst (2026-03-20 16:29)

MANILA, Philippines — While savings and prudent financial habits can help Filipinos cushion the impact of an economic crisis, policy reforms and systemic changes remain crucial, as millions of households have little to no capacity to prepare. Policy analyst and finance expert Prof. Emmanuel Leyco, in a roundtable discussion with Inquirer, said a significant portion

- Petitioner asks SC to keep TRO on NCAP, cites unconstitutionality (2026-03-20 16:25)

MANILA, Philippines — One of the petitioners seeking a full ban on the implementation of No Contact Apprehension Policy (NCAP) in Metro Manila has opposed the joint motion by five local governments to lift the Supreme Court’s temporary restraining order (TRO) on their respective policies covering city roads since 2022. In an 18-page opposition/comment filed

- Analyst says PH already in ‘economic emergency’ amid fuel price surge (2026-03-20 15:26)

MANILA, Philippines — Policy analyst Prof. Emmanuel Leyco said the country is already in a “state of economic emergency,” urging the government to immediately suspend fuel taxes and consider a new wealth taxation to offset revenue losses. Economy and finance expert Leyco said waiting for technical triggers — such as the requirement that global oil

- Nordeco urged to seek TRO, mount peaceful stand vs Davao Light takeover (2026-03-20 15:09)

SAN FRANCISCO, Agusan del Sur — The Northern Davao Electric Cooperative (Nordeco) should consider seeking a temporary restraining order (TRO) and continue peacefully protecting its assets as it faces a planned takeover by the Aboitiz-led Davao Light and Power Co. (DLPC), a cooperative official said on Tuesday. Lawyer Jordanne Chan-Antonio, general manager of the Zamboanga

- Solon: Sugar sector lost P7B, more seen if overimportations go unchecked (2026-03-20 15:08)

MANILA, Philippines — The country’s sugar industry has already lost P7.28 billion due to overimportation — and may even lose up to P20 billion by June 2026 if the situation is not addressed, Negros Occidental Rep. Javi Benitez warned. Benitez in his privilege speech on Wednesday said that Negros sugar industry players recommended the the Sugar

- Sandiganbayan junks $5M Swiss account forfeiture vs Rep. Romualdez’s kin (2026-03-20 14:51)

[Updated March 20, 2026, 4:43 p.m.] MANILA, Philippines — The Sandiganbayan has dismissed the government’s bid to forfeit the alleged “unexplained wealth” worth over $5 million in the Swiss accounts of the parents of Leyte Rep. Ferdinand Martin Romualdez. The Sixth Division of the antigraft court dismissed the Office of Solicitor General’s (OSG) motion for

- PNP aims for zero crime on Holy Week (2026-03-20 13:50)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Friday said it is aiming for zero crime this upcoming Holy Week through closer coordination with barangay officials. According to PNP chief, Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr., police commanders have been directed to work closely with barangay personnel to ensure the full implementation of peace and

- 2-month toll discount for PUVs, PUBs, freighters to start Mar 23 (2026-03-20 13:36)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Transportation (DOTr) announced on Friday that a two-month toll discount will be given to public utility vehicles (PUVs), public utility buses (PUBs) and vehicles involved in freight services in major tollways starting Monday, March 23. In a statement, the DOTr said the development aims to “alleviate the effects of soaring gas

- PNP boosts patrols, deployments to deter crime amid oil price hikes (2026-03-20 13:20)

MANILA, Philippines – The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Friday allayed fears of a possible uptick in robbery and theft linked to rising fuel prices, saying it is prepared to maintain peace and order under any scenario. PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said the current economic situation is unlikely to trigger a spike in

- P1.3-million worth of shabu seized; 2 suspects nabbed in Batangas (2026-03-20 12:45)

LUCENA CITY — Police seized over P1.3 million worth of “shabu” (crystal meth) from two alleged “high-value” traffickers in a buy-bust operation in Tanauan City, Batangas province, on Thursday. The Police Regional Office 4A reported on Friday that anti-illegal drugs operatives arrested the suspects, identified only as “Richard” and “Arvin,” around 2:50 p.m. after they

- Sara Duterte: Eid’l Fitr a reminder Filipinos’ sacrifices are valued (2026-03-20 12:41)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte on Friday said she hopes the celebration of Eid’l Fitr can be a reminder and assurance to Filipinos that their sacrifices and contributions to their families and the country are valued. In a statement to mark the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan, Duterte said she joins all

- PH’s 2nd largest container terminal construction ‘in full swing’ (2026-03-20 12:31)

MANILA, Philippines — The construction of the country’s second largest container terminal in Batangas, a P47.8 billion ($800 million) project, is “in full swing”, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) said on Friday. Once completed, the South Luzon Container Terminal (SLCT) will complement Metro Manila’s main port and expand the export capacity of Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna,

• SWS survey: Just 1 in 3 Filipinos ‘very happy’ in life (2026-03-20 12:11)

MANILA, Philippines — Only one in three Filipinos, or 33 percent, said they are “very happy” with their lives, according to the latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey released Thursday, a day before the International Day of Happiness. The survey also found that half of the respondents (50 percent) are “fairly happy,” 15 percent are

• Pagadian City tricycle fare hike on hold pending fuel subsidy (2026-03-20 12:08)

PAGADIAN CITY, Zamboanga del Sur— The city council has deferred any increase in tricycle fares as it awaits the release of a P5,000 fuel subsidy from the national government for drivers, Councilor Bienvenido Culve, chair of the Committee on Transportation, said. The Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association (TODA) earlier sought a fare adjustment from P5

• CIDG seizes P2.4-M worth of fuel, nabs 4 in Albay for illegal sale (2026-03-20 12:03)

MANILA, Philippines – Philippine authorities on Wednesday arrested four people and seized nearly P2.4-million worth of petroleum products in a crackdown on illegal trading in Albay province, the Philippine National Police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) said Friday. The agency said the operation, conducted in Barangay Maipon in coordination with the Department of Energy,

• PNP: Heightened measures for Eid’l Fitr celebrations on March 21 (2026-03-20 11:41)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Friday said it will implement heightened security measures across the country as Muslim Filipinos prepare to celebrate Eid’l Fitr on March 21. In a press release, the PNP said police units will be deployed in key areas to safeguard mosques, prayer venues, and Muslim communities. READ: Eid

• Subic marine tourism firm ends investor row after settlement (2026-03-20 11:14)

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT — The Subic Bay Marine Exploratorium, Inc. (SBMEI), operator of several tourism facilities in this freeport, has converted a P239.56-million claim into equity following a settlement with investor HS Equities, Ltd., ending a dispute that had lasted more than two decades. In a statement on Thursday, SBMEI said the compromise agreement, signed

• Marcos: Food firms agree no price hikes for 2 months (2026-03-20 11:05)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Friday said food processors and retailers have agreed not to increase the prices of their products for up to two months to help mitigate the impact of the conflict in the Middle East on basic commodities. In a brief media statement following an inspection at Century Pacific Food

• Fisherfolk group decries delayed, limited fuel aid as prices climb (2026-03-20 10:50)

MANILA, Philippines — As fuel prices continue to surge for the second straight week, fisherfolk group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) criticized what

it described as the government’s “slow and inadequate” response to the oil price crisis,warning that small fishers are being pushed further into debt. The group issued the statement

- DBM: Marcos released P21.47B for fuel subsidy, infra projects (2026-03-20 10:37)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the release of P21.47 billion to fund fuel subsidies for drivers and sustain infrastructure projects amid the impact of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, according to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). In a press release on Friday, the DBM said P2.49 billion was

- Malolos grants P10,000 aid to families of OFWs in Middle East (2026-03-20 10:09)

CITY OF MALOLOS — The city government has extended P10,000 in cash livelihood assistance to at least 114 families of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) affected by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Mayor Christian Natividad on Thursday distributed the aid to 78 beneficiaries in the second batch, whose relatives are working in Kuwait, Qatar,

- Suspect in killing of Isabela ex-beauty queen charged with murder (2026-03-20 09:32)

CITY OF ILAGAN, Isabela — The suspected gunman in the killing of a former Miss Philippines Earth 2013 runner-up has been indicted for murder before the Isabela prosecutor’s office on Wednesday. Police Colonel Manuel Bringas, Isabela police director, identified the alleged assailant only by the alias “JayR.” He is accused of fatally shooting beauty queen

- Endangered freshwater turtle released into Apayao River (2026-03-20 09:15)

TUGUEGARAO CITY — A week after being taken into the care of environmental workers in Calanasan, Apayao, a female Asian or Cantor’s giant softshell turtle (Pelochelys cantorii) named “Malaya” was released back into its natural habitat along the Apayao River in Barangay San Antonio, Pudtol, on March 19. The release was carried out with the

- PNP: Cops ready to prevent robbery, theft amid rising prices (2026-03-20 09:06)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Friday reassured the public that measures are in place to prevent an increase in robbery and theft, amid rising prices of basic goods. PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said the police force has been preparing for worst-case scenarios even before inflation became a major

- Bacolod-based Ceres bus operator halts fare increase nationwide (2026-03-20 08:53)

BACOLOD CITY — Vallacar Transit Inc. (VTI), the company behind Ceres buses, announced on Thursday, March 19, that it has canceled the implementation of fare increases across all its routes nationwide. The decision came a day after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered the suspension of planned fare hikes, citing ongoing global uncertainties. “In my opinion,

- PNP on alert on Day 2 of transport strike, chief says (2026-03-20 08:14)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) will remain on high alert on the second day of the nationwide transport strike, emphasizing that authorities are ready to respond to any emerging situation, PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said Friday. Nartatez reported that the transport strike, which began on Thursday, March 19, “remained

- Amihan weakens as easterlies bring hotter, humid weather (2026-03-20 07:34)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) on Friday said rising temperatures are expected across much of the country as the northeast monsoon or amihan weakens and easterlies begin to prevail. According to the state weather bureau, the amihan continues to affect Extreme Northern Luzon, while the easterlies are influencing

- Marcos counting on coal imports for stable power (2026-03-20 05:36)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday said the Philippines would import coal to ensure a stable energy supply in the country as the war in the Middle East continues to threaten global petroleum stocks. “We are trying to move away from coal, but because of this crisis we will reopen the importation and

- Piston: Marcos should have deferred fuel tax, not PUV fare increase (2026-03-20 05:34)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. erred in recalling a planned fare hike when he should have instead suspended the value-added tax and excise on fuel products, said the jeepney group Piston as it led a nationwide transport strike on Thursday to protest rising fuel costs caused by the Middle East conflict. Piston, which

- LRT 2, MRT 3 fares slashed by half starting March 23 (2026-03-20 05:32)

MANILA, Philippines — Passengers of Light Rail Transit 2 (LRT 2) and Metro Rail Transit 3 (MRT 3) will enjoy a 50-percent discount starting Monday, March 23, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) announced on Thursday. The DOTr said this is in compliance with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s directive to ease the burden on the public

- Ruby Bernardo: The teacher as leader (2026-03-20 05:30)

MANILA, Philippines — At a young age, Ruby Bernardo had experienced the hardships of being a teacher, from getting a measly wage and lacking benefits to the mismatch between her subject assignment and educational specialization. In 2011, fresh from the Philippine Normal University (PNU) at 19, her first job was at Good Shepherd Cathedral School

- Marcos can’t let go of Loyzaga, Frasco (2026-03-20 05:28)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. just can’t let go of some of his “trusted” people. The president has a penchant for placing officials he had already removed from his Cabinet to other token government posts. The president this week assigned new roles to former Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga and former Tourism Secretary

- More Filipinos want lower food prices, less corruption in government (2026-03-20 05:26)

MANILA, Philippines — Filipinos want the government to focus on bringing down food prices, creating more jobs and eliminating corruption, according to the latest Pulse survey commissioned by Stratbase Institute. The survey conducted from Feb. 27 to March 2 and released on Thursday found that 41 percent of the respondents wanted government officials to address

- Biz groups: No layoffs for now despite crisis (2026-03-20 05:24)

MANILA, Philippines — Local businesses are not yet considering cutting jobs despite rising costs linked to the Middle East crisis, with industry groups saying firms are holding the line on employment while assessing how long disruptions will last. “It’s really too soon,” said Elizabeth Lee, chair of the Federation of Philippine Industries, an umbrella group

- DA chief sues Co, Baligod, ‘ex-Marines’ (2026-03-20 05:22)

MANILA, Philippines — Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. on Thursday filed separate cyberlibel cases against resigned Ako Bicol Rep. Elizaldy Co, 18 “ex-Marines” and their lawyer Levito Baligod over their claims that he was involved in agricultural smuggling and the delivery of alleged kickbacks to some government officials. Tiu Laurel filed the complaints before the

- Tobacco agency asks LGUs’ help vs cigarette smuggling (2026-03-20 05:20)

MANILA, Philippines — The National Tobacco Administration (NTA) has urged local government units (LGUs) to help the government combat cigarette smuggling, which not only threatens the tobacco industry but also reduces revenues by up to P52 billion. It called on LGUs to actively monitor and report the presence of illicit cigarettes in their communities to

- Drivers in provinces also seek fuel tax halt (2026-03-20 05:17)

ILOILO CITY—Drivers, operators, and their supporters launched a transport strike here on Thursday, demanding the immediate suspension of levies on fuel such as value-added tax (VAT) and excise tax. Joining the strike, scheduled until today, were groups affiliated with Piston, Manibela and a coalition campaigning against the phaseout of jeepneys under the country’s public utility

- Mindoro fishers’ class suit on 2023 oil spill moves (2026-03-20 05:15)

CALAPAN CITY—A class suit filed by fisherfolk seeking accountability for the 2023 oil spill in the Verde Island Passage (VIP) had moved forward after the Regional Trial Court (RTC) here had reconsidered its earlier order requiring them to pay more than P500,000 in filing fees. An order issued by the Pinamalayan RTC last week allowed

- Galvez to MILF: Let us not stall peace process (2026-03-20 05:13)

DAVAO CITY—Presidential Peace Adviser Carlito Galvez Jr. called on the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to continue “doing its share” in the implementation of the Bangsamoro peace process, saying the gains achieved by the parties “are too precious to be stalled.” Galvez made the plea in response to the announcement of MILF chair Ahod “Al

- Journalist Joel Pablo Salud writes 30 (2026-03-20 01:27)

MANILA, Philippines — Joel Pablo Salud, the former editor-in-chief of the country’s national newsweekly magazine and a prolific writer, died on Thursday. He was 63. “Journalist, author, and editor Joel Pablo Salud passed away on March 19, 2026, after suffering a mild heart attack,” according to his obituary. The family has yet to announce wake

- Transport strike disrupts classes in Laguna (2026-03-19 23:51)

LUCENA CITY, Quezon — Laguna Gov. Sol Aragones on Thursday, March 19, announced the suspension of in-person classes in both public and private schools across the province due to a nationwide transport strike. “Modular or online learning will be implemented instead,” Aragones ordered. The transport group Piston began a nationwide strike on Thursday to protest

- Bohol lawmaker urges suspension of terminal fees to cut travel costs (2026-03-19 23:25)

TAGBILARAN CITY, Bohol — Bohol 3rd District Rep. Kristine Alexie Besas-Tutor has urged the national government to suspend terminal fees at all airports and seaports to ease the impact of rising fuel prices on travelers and the tourism industry. In a statement, Tutor warned that rising petroleum prices, driven by tensions in the Middle East,

- Bukidnon sugar millers raise fuel subsidy to aid cane deliveries (2026-03-19 22:40)

MARAMAG, Bukidnon — Sugar millers in Bukidnon have increased the fuel subsidy provided to planters to support the delivery of freshly harvested sugarcane to milling plants. According to sugar planter Jude Palmada of southern Bukidnon, the trucking allowance was recently raised from P170 to P200 per ton. “This support is meant to assist farmers while

- VAT exemption for natural gas should be enforced quickly — solon (2026-03-19 22:32)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Energy (DOE) should immediately implement value-added tax (VAT) exemptions on the sale and purchase of natural gas, as this would help the public cope with higher energy costs caused by the Middle East conflict, Senior Citizens Party-list Rep. Rodolfo Ordanes said. In a statement on Thursday, Ordanes said the Bureau

- Fuel price hike may force driver to stop sending child to college (2026-03-19 22:26)

MANILA, Philippines — As the transport group Piston began its nationwide strike on Thursday, a jeepney driver-operator said he may have to stop sending his child to college as rising fuel costs take a toll on his livelihood. Piston Cubao-Divisoria chapter President Tony Prado said he told his child that, as a single parent earning

- Pagasa decommissions 7 tropical cyclone names (2026-03-19 22:17)

MANILA, Philippines — The state weather bureau announced on Thursday the decommissioning of seven tropical cyclone names from its regular roster. READ: Pagasa unveils 2026 cyclone names According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), Crising, Emong, Mirasol, Nando, Opong, Tino, and Uwan have been removed from its roster of tropical

- Albay festivals called off amid Mayon unrest, fuel price hike concerns (2026-03-19 22:07)

CAMALIG, ALBAY, Philippines — Local officials in Albay called off the holding of key festivals this year as threats of eruption by Mayon Volcano remain, coupled with rising fuel prices. The Pinangat Festival in Camalig and the Magayon Festival in Albay province have been postponed. Camalig Mayor Carlos Irwin Baldo Jr. said in a statement

- March 19 lotto results: Lotto 6/42 jackpot has 1 winner (2026-03-19 22:04)

MANILA, Philippines—One ticket holder won the Lotto 6/42 jackpot in Thursday’s draw, while no bettor took home the top prize in SuperLotto 6/49, according to the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. The winning combination for Lotto 6/42 was 25-29-17-41-23-13 for a jackpot of ₱18.86 million. PCSO said the winning combination for SuperLotto 6/49 was 21-20-32-04-43-13. No

- Bohol inflation rises in February; still lowest in Central Visayas (2026-03-19 21:59)

TAGBILARAN CITY, Bohol—Bohol province registered the lowest inflation rate among provinces and highly urbanized cities in Central Visayas in February 2026, even as price pressures increased across the region. The Philippine Statistics Authority reported that Bohol posted a 3.0 percent headline inflation rate during the month, well below the regional average of 6.0 percent, according

- Eid al-Fitr is on March 21, says Bangsamoro Darul-Ifta’ (2026-03-19 21:58)

COTABATO CITY — The Bangsamoro Darul-Ifta’ (BDI) announced on Thursday evening, March 19, that the crescent moon (hilal) was not sighted, extending the holy month of Ramadan to a full 30 days. Muslims in the Bangsamoro region and across the Philippines will celebrate Eid al-Fitr on Saturday, March 21, with Friday, March 20, observed as

- Piston to continue nationwide transport strike on March 20 (2026-03-19 21:36)

MANILA, Philippines — Transport group Piston will continue its nationwide transport strike on Friday, March 20, after a “successful” first day of protest against the oil price hike as the tension in the Middle East continues. This is what Piston president Mody Floranda announced as the group concluded the first day of the strike. Floranda

- Manila Water harnesses new water sources to meet future demands (2026-03-19 20:41)

MANILA, Philippines — Manila Water is strengthening water security for its East Zone customers through its ownership and exclusive use of the Upper Wawa Dam and related bulk water facilities, complemented by other large-scale alternative raw water sources that collectively ensure a reliable supply during the summer months and into next year. Through sustained investments

- Right to info bill will strengthen fight vs corruption – Dy (2026-03-19 18:13)

MANILA, Philippines — A recently approved right to information bill will strengthen mechanisms against corruption as it will promote transparency by bringing critical data on government transactions and activities closer to the people, House Speaker Faustino "Bojie" Dy III said in a statement on Thursday. Dy called the House committee on public information's approval of the

- ACT tells DepEd: Allocate graduation rites budget to cut expenses (2026-03-19 17:55)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Education (DepEd) should consider allocating funds to schools from its budget to help ease the burden of parents and teachers alike for the students' graduation as the country faces trouble over the rising prices of oil, the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) said on Thursday. ACT Chair Ruby Bernardo

- Marcos missed welcoming OFWs due to overlapping activities – Palace (2026-03-19 17:53)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. was unable to personally welcome Filipinos arriving from the Middle East on Thursday due to other engagements in Malacañang, according to the Palace. In a media advisory sent to reporters Wednesday night, Marcos was expected to possibly welcome the returning Filipinos. However, he was unable to do so

- Jolo Revilla: Reconsider work-from-home setup amid rising fuel costs (2026-03-19 17:46)

MANILA, Philippines — A lawmaker has reiterated that there is a need to study proposals for a work-from-home setup amid rising fuel costs due to the Middle East conflict, saying that the Department of Labor and Employment (Dole) along with private companies should expand telecommuting arrangements. In a statement, Cavite Rep. Jolo Revilla who heads the

- P31.4M in counterfeit data storage devices seized in Manila (2026-03-19 17:43)

MANILA, Philippines — The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has seized over P31-million worth of counterfeit data storage devices following a series of coordinated enforcement operations in Manila. In a statement on Thursday, the NBI said its agents executed search warrants in Quiapo and San Miguel on Monday, March 16, targeting the "proliferation of high-capacity storage electronics

- DepEd rolls out job fair in 3 public schools in Metro Manila (2026-03-19 16:51)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Education (DepEd) on Thursday announced the rollout of the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair (BPSF) in three public schools in Metro Manila,

aiming to bridge the gap between senior high school (SHS) graduates and job opportunities.According to DepEd in a statement, the BPSF serves as one-stop shop that seeks

- Pangasinan logs lowest stunting rate in PH (2026-03-19 16:47)

MALASIQUI, Pangasinan – The province of Pangasinan has recorded the lowest stunting rate in the country at 1.95 percent, according to the latest Operation Timbang Plus (OPT+) results released by the Department of Health–Ilocos Region (DOH-1). DOH-1, in a statement on Thursday, said this indicates that the vast majority of children in the province are growing

- Special non-working day declared in Urdaneta, Pangasinan on March 21 (2026-03-19 16:37)

URDANETA CITY – Malacanang declared Saturday, March 21, as a special non-working day in this city in Pangasinan to celebrate its charter anniversary. Proclamation No. 1193, issued by Acting Executive Secretary Ralph Recto, said it is “but fitting and proper that the people of the City of Urdaneta be given full opportunity to participate in

- Lawyer: Duterte camp can’t claim no ultimate facts in impeachment raps (2026-03-19 16:21)

MANILA, Philippines — The lawyer for the petitioners behind the third impeachment complaint against Vice President Sara Duterte has asked whether her legal team is reading the right complaint, after her lawyer, Michael Poa, claimed that there were no ultimate facts inside the raps. In an online interview on Thursday, lawyer Amando Ligutan said Poa cannot claim

- Iloilo City fire leaves 30 families homeless (2026-03-19 16:18)

ILOILO CITY – A massive fire broke out in Zone 1, Barangay Gustilo, La Paz, Iloilo City, on Thursday afternoon, leaving 30 families homeless. According to initial reports from the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), the blaze started from an unattended wood-burning stove. The BFP reported that 10 houses were destroyed and five more were damaged. No

- Lawyer charged after name used for fake docs; NBI nabs suspect (2026-03-19 16:17)

MANILA, Philippines — A lawyer in Manila filed a manifestation in court after his name was used by an individual to notarize falsified documents, resulting in his being named as a respondent in estafa cases. The court then referred the case to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) for investigation. On Wednesday, the lawyer, Manuel

- PNP says transport strike peaceful, keeps eye on rising fuel prices (2026-03-19 15:58)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) reported Thursday that the nationwide transport strike is proceeding peacefully, while authorities are closely monitoring gas stations and markets to prevent unlawful price hikes and hoarding of essential goods. The statement comes as members of Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston) conducted their

- P40-M smuggled cigarettes seized in Maguindanao, Zamboanga del Sur (2026-03-19 15:25)

PAGADIAN CITY, Zamboanga del Sur – Authorities seized over P40 million in allegedly smuggled cigarettes in separate law enforcement operations on Tuesday in Zamboanga del Sur and Maguindanao del Norte provinces. Soldiers of the Army’s 53rd Infantry Battalion, in coordination with local police and customs authorities, seized an abandoned jungkong or motorized boat in Barangay

- LTO files more administrative cases vs RA 10586 violators (2026-03-19 15:14)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Office (LTO) has filed 40 administrative cases for the first quarter of 2026 for violations of the Republic Act No. 10586 or the Anti-Drunk and Drugged Driving Act of 2013, the agency said on Thursday. According to the LTO, these cases involved incidents in Metro Manila that violated three

- PNP deploys market watchdogs to curb illegal price hikes (2026-03-19 15:13)

MANILA, Philippines – The Philippine National Police (PNP) has stepped up its presence near markets and grocery stores to prevent unauthorized price increases of basic goods amid rising fuel costs. Police units nationwide are tasked to ensure that no vendor or retailer takes advantage of the crisis by raising the prices of their goods as a

- Lacson quips on Rep. Marcoleta’s query on impeachment (2026-03-19 15:12)

MANILA, Philippines – “The cocoNUT doesn’t fall far from the cocoNUT tree.” Senate President Pro Tempore Panfilo “Ping” Lacson wrote this in a social media post on Thursday as he posted photo quotes of SAGIP Party-list Rep. Paolo Marcoleta and Rep. Gerville Luistro’s exchange on the process of impeachment. On Wednesday, Rep. Marcoleta asked during

- Zambales solon seeks toll fee cuts to ease fuel price burden (2026-03-19 14:38)

SAN ANTONIO, Zambales – Zambales 1st District Representative and House Deputy Speaker Jay Khonghun filed on Wednesday a bill to decrease tollway fees amid the continued rise in fuel prices nationwide. The proposed measure, titled the “Tollway Fee Reduction Act” contained in House Bill No. 8652, aims to provide immediate and sustained relief by mandating

- NIA-Mimaropa vows public access as 4-day workweek starts March 23 (2026-03-19 14:17)

CITY OF CALAPAN — The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) in the Mimaropa region will implement a compressed four-day workweek beginning March 23, as part of government efforts to conserve energy amid global supply concerns. In a public advisory, the NIA MIMAROPA Regional Office said the new work arrangement will cover its offices and Irrigation Management

- Survey: Filipinos prefer focus on price control to corruption fight (2026-03-19 14:13)

MANILA, Philippines — More Filipinos wanted the government to focus more on price control than its fight against corruption amid the looming cost increase of basic goods due to the

volatility of the oil market caused by the Middle East crisis. These were the findings of a poll conducted by Pulse Asia on Feb. 27-March

- Piston: Jeepney drivers, operators now only earn P200-P300 daily (2026-03-19 14:01)

MANILA, Philippines — The major oil price hike continues to affect the livelihood of many jeepney drivers and operators, as they can only earn around P200 to P300 from a whole day of plying their routes, transport group Piston said on Thursday. Piston president Mody Floranda aired this grievance as they launched a nationwide transport

- BFAR accused of favoring commercial fleets amid fisheries dispute (2026-03-19 13:34)

MANILA, Philippines — An escalating dispute over the country's municipal waters has drawn criticism from marine conservation group Oceana, which accused the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of favoring commercial fishing interests at the expense of millions of small-scale fishers. In a press release issued Monday, Oceana said the agency's interpretation of a

- Marcos to PH Army: Shift to external defense role amid new threats (2026-03-19 13:00)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday directed the Philippine Army (PA) to accelerate its transition from internal security operations to external defense, citing evolving threats that require more focus from the largest service unit of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Speaking during the PA's 129th founding anniversary at its headquarters in

- Alcantara, named in 'balato' scheme, to testify in Co Sandiganbayan case (2026-03-19 12:56)

MANILA, Philippines — Prosecutors are tightening their case against former Ako Bicol Rep. Zaldy Co, informing the Sandiganbayan's Sixth Division on Thursday that a key witness in the P289.4-million malversation trial is set to testify on March 23. The prosecution informed the anti-graft court's sixth division that former Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) district

- Puno: Sandro Marcos resolves slow DBM action on infra projects' funding (2026-03-19 12:48)

MANILA, Philippines — Issues raised by the National Unity Party (NUP) regarding the national government's alleged refusal to download funds for key infrastructure projects have been resolved after talking to Majority Leader Ferdinand Alexander Marcos, Deputy Speaker Ronaldo Puno said on Thursday. Puno said this after being asked by INQUIRER whether he was able to listen to

- NTF-Elcac: Large turnout of amnesty applicants a 'quiet victory' (2026-03-19 12:47)

MANILA, Philippines – A ranking official from the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-Elcac) on Thursday described the government’s amnesty program as a “quiet but decisive victory for peace”. “The numbers speak for themselves. This is not failure—this is a quiet but decisive victory for peace,” NTF-Elcac executive director Undersecretary Ernesto Torres

- DILG to file corruption raps vs 45 BFP execs over firetruck deals (2026-03-19 12:38)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) on Thursday said it would file administrative and criminal charges against 45 current and former officials of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) over alleged irregularities in firetruck procurement from 2018 to 2024. “Every procurement must be aboveboard, transparent, and anchored on the

- Solon questions House’s failure to pass nat’l minimum wage bill (2026-03-19 12:22)

MANILA, Philippines — A lawmaker has questioned the House of Representatives’ inability to pass the proposed national minimum wage bill before Congress went on a recess, noting that the measure would have helped workers as the economy takes a hit due to the Middle East crisis. In a statement on Wednesday night, Kamanggagawa party-list Rep. Elijah

- Ex-DENR chief Yulo-Loyzaga takes oath as disaster risk special envoy (2026-03-19 11:48)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has sworn in former Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga as Special Envoy for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management during a ceremony at Malacañang Palace. During the oath-taking ceremony on Wednesday, Marcos expressed his appreciation for Yulo-Loyzaga’s acceptance of the role, citing her extensive expertise in disaster resilience management. READ:

- 50% discount for MRT-3, LRT-2 passengers starting March 23 — DOTr (2026-03-19 11:31)

MANILA, Philippines — A 50-percent discount will be given to all passengers of the Light Rail Transit Line 2 (LRT-2) and Metro Rail Transit Line 3 (MRT-3) starting Monday, March 23, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) announced on Thursday. The DOTr said this is in compliance with the directive of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to

- Marcos: PH looking for new oil sources amid global supply disruption (2026-03-19 11:20)

MANILA, Philippines — Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday said the government is looking for alternative sources of petroleum products as disruptions in oil supply triggered by the Middle East conflict continue to affect the country. According to Marcos, the public has nothing to worry about when it comes to food and oil supply, as the government

- MMDA: No stranded commuters during start of March 19 strike (2026-03-19 11:17)

MANILA, Philippines — No stranded commuters were monitored during the morning rush hour at the start of transport group Piston’s transport strike on Thursday, according to the

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA). Based on the initial assessment by the MMDA, MMDA General Manager Nicolas Torre said that the agency has been monitoring the situation on

- Piston: Marcos should have suspended VAT, excise tax, not fare hike (2026-03-19 09:07)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. should have suspended the value-added tax and excise tax on fuel products, instead of the fare hike amid the oil price increase, according to transport group Piston on Thursday. Piston president Mody Floranda made this statement as the group began its nationwide transport strike to protest the rising

- Rains over most of PH due to amihan, localized thunderstorms (2026-03-19 07:37)

MANILA, Philippines — Isolated rains are possible on Thursday due to localized thunderstorms and the northeast monsoon or amihan, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said. According to the state weather bureau, the amihan continues to affect the eastern section of Northern Luzon, bringing rains and cooler weather in the area. “We

- OIL PRICE WATCH as of March 19, 2026 (2026-03-19 07:28)

MANILA, Philippines – Amid the rising costs of oil products, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday has ordered the deferment of planned fare hikes for public transport, a move aimed at easing the burden on commuters. The fare adjustments, which were supposed to take effect this week, were put on hold as the government assesses

- Gov’t offers free rides on selected routes in Manila on Thursday (2026-03-19 07:14)

MANILA, Philippines — Commuters may avail of free rides from the government in selected routes in Metro Manila on Thursday amid the transport strike, according to the Department of Transportation (DOTr). READ: Marcos orders suspension of fare hike In an advisory, the DOTr said that the Office of the President, DOTr, Philippine National Police, and

- PNP tells cop-vloggers: Use AI with care (2026-03-19 05:52)

The Philippine National Police on Wednesday reminded its personnel who are also vloggers to “be mindful” of their use of artificial intelligence (AI) in videos. This came after the PNP Anti-Cybercrime Group flagged a supposedly AI-generated video on social media depicting a police officer misbehaving at a fast-food restaurant. “While we encourage digital transformation, we

- PNP files profiteering, hoarding charges vs gas station, driver (2026-03-19 05:46)

The Philippine National Police has filed charges against a gas station for alleged profiteering and a person caught hoarding 680 liters of gasoline. “We had two whom we already filed cases against,” PNP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Randulf Tuaño said at the Kapihan sa Manila Hotel forum on Wednesday. “These are in Nueva Vizcaya and Eastern

- NBI: Lawyer stopped 12 Co ‘bagmen’ from signing statements (2026-03-19 05:44)

Only six of the 18 alleged former Marines, who claimed to have delivered suitcases filled with cash totaling billions of pesos to several government officials and personalities, including President Marcos, have signed their sworn statements before the National Bureau of Investigation, according to Director Melvin Matibag. In a message to the Inquirer on Wednesday, Matibag

- 8 ex-police execs lose appeal in P358-M ‘ghost’ repairs case (2026-03-19 05:42)

The Sandiganbayan has affirmed the graft convictions of eight former Philippine National Police officers and personnel involved in the P358-million “ghost” repairs and maintenance of 28 police armored vehicles in 2007. At the same time, the anti-graft court’s Special Fourth Division acquitted one of the respondents, Henry Duque, after it determined that he was not

- Alcantara, DPWH contractor dropped from 3 cases–DOJ (2026-03-19 05:40)

Henry Alcantara, the dismissed public works official who was among the first to be implicated in the flood control corruption scandal, but who was later admitted into the witness protection program, now has fewer criminal cases to worry about. Formerly the district engineer of the Bulacan regional office of the Department of Public Works and

- Senate still lacks ‘no work, no pay’ rule for Bato’s case (2026-03-19 05:38)

Sen. Ronald “Bato” dela Rosa may have one thing less to worry about as the ethics complaint filed against him for absenteeism may be junked on a technicality. According to Sen. JV Ejercito, who chairs the panel that received the complaint, the chamber still has no such thing as a “no work, no pay” rule

- Comelec clears Marcoleta; ‘it defies logic,’ says poll watchdog (2026-03-19 05:36)

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) on Wednesday cleared Sen. Rodante Marcoleta of any violation of the Omnibus Election Code, saying his failure to disclose campaign contributions in the May 2025 elections in his statement of contributions and expenditures (Soce) was no longer an election offense. However, three of the senator’s campaign donors—Michael Defensor, Joseph Espiritu

- Sara Duterte impeachment raps advance; Evidence and witnesses next (2026-03-19 05:34)

The House panel evaluating the two impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte has declared both as having “sufficient grounds,” a basis to proceed to the more thorough presentation and scrutiny of the accusations against her. The House committee on justice set the next step—the hearing proper—for March 25, where the Vice President will be

- Prices normal ‘for now,’ no need to hoard, says President (2026-03-19 05:32)

The government on Wednesday assured the public that prices of basic commodities will not increase—for now—but the situation remains uncertain, and prices could rise if the Middle East conflict continues into the second half of the year. “In the Philippines, prices remain normal for now. Our supply of food, rice, and all basic goods is

- Marcos defers fare hikes: ‘Not right’ amid int’l crisis (2026-03-19 05:30)

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Wednesday ordered the suspension of fare hikes for most types of public utility vehicles (PUV), supposedly to take effect today, saying the increases should not happen during a global crisis. He also assured workers in the transport sector that government assistance would be expedited and fuel subsidies coursed through

- LGUs face subsidy demands as fuel prices soar in provinces (2026-03-19 05:08)

Local government units (LGUs) in different parts of the country are faced with rising demands for subsidy as the transport sector bears another round of fuel price hike on Tuesday. The latest increase is the second since the crisis in the Middle East began over two weeks ago, prompting public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers to

- ELIJO SHARON R. HERRERA-BELLONES: Iloilo judge champions women and children (2026-03-19 05:06)

ILOILO CITY—For Iloilo City Regional Trial Court (RTC) Judge Elijo Sharon R. Herrera-Bellones, justice is not merely an abstract ideal written in statutes and rulings—it is a responsibility she carries every day, especially for women and children whose voices often struggle to be heard in the legal system. Since her appointment as presiding judge of

- ANGELIQUE MORATO SONGCO: ‘Mama Ranger,’ protector of Tubbataha Reefs (2026-03-19 05:04)

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—What began as a hobby soon turned into a career, a passion, and ultimately, a lifelong advocacy to protect the ocean and its fragile ecosystems. Angelique Morato Songco, protected area superintendent of the world-renowned Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park (TRNP), recalls how a dive shop in this capital city of Palawan introduced her to

- MYRNA SIOSE: Quiet force behind ancestral land fight in Mindanao (2026-03-19 05:02)

The dust had barely settled on the makeshift tents along the national highway when gunfire rang out. It was April 19, 2022, in Quezon town, Bukidnon. The Manobo-Pulangiyon tribe, displaced for several years, had gathered the courage to finally step onto a fraction of their 1,000-hectare ancestral land. Among those who accompanied them was labor

- Speaker Dy says House work continues during recess, amid global crisis (2026-03-19 00:54)

MANILA, Philippines – Speaker Faustino G. Dy III on Wednesday said the House of Representatives will continue working during the congressional recess, and assured the public that lawmakers will remain active on the ground to help ease the burden on Filipino families

amid global challenges. Delivering his closing speech before the House adjourned for the

- Bohol marks 461st Blood Compact anniversary, highlights friendship, unity (2026-03-18 23:43)

TAGBILARAN CITY — Mayor Jane Yap emphasized unity, cultural pride, and tourism development as the city officially launched Saulog Tagbilaran 2026 on Monday, March 16, during the celebration of the 461st anniversary of the Blood Compact of 1565 at the Tagbilaran City Friendship Park. The celebration began with a Holy Mass at the St. Joseph

- 1 dead in Quezon motorcycle crash (2026-03-18 23:25)

LUCENA CITY, Quezon – A motorcycle passenger died while the rider was injured after their vehicle skidded on a slippery road early Wednesday, the police said. According to the Quezon police, the incident occurred at around 1 a.m. along the national road in Barangay 9. The driver, identified only as "Justine," 20, reportedly lost control

- BARMM town councilor shot dead in Maguindanao del Sur (2026-03-18 23:20)

TACURONG CITY, Sultan Kudarat – A town councilor in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) was shot dead by two men who spoke with him before the attack in front of his home in Paglat, Maguindanao del Sur Wednesday morning. Capt. Nelson Pedrico, Paglat police chief, identified the slain official as Samon Kitalok,

- 2 fake BIR agents arrested in QC (2026-03-18 22:59)

MANILA, Philippines — Authorities arrested two individuals in Quezon City for allegedly posing as Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) personnel and extorting over P1.6 million from a businessman. According to the Philippine National Police – Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG), the two men—identified as Roberto Nolasco and Bobby Baylosis—were arrested on Monday during an

- DPWH repairs seen to ease Andaya Highway traffic amid Holy Week rush (2026-03-18 22:33)

LEGAZPI CITY — Continuous road repairs along the Andaya Highway in Camarines Sur province are expected to ease traffic flow and reduce travel time ahead of the Holy Week rush. Public Works Secretary Vince Dizon, during a site inspection on Monday, said completed works include reblocking in Manangle village in Sipocot town and road slip

- Panay marks 81st Liberation Day (2026-03-18 22:27)

ILOILO CITY — Officials, veterans, and descendants of World War II freedom fighters gathered on Wednesday at the Balantang Memorial Cemetery National Shrine to commemorate the 81st anniversary of the liberation of Panay, Guimaras, and Romblon from Japanese forces. The event, which coincided with a local holiday, drew representatives from the Iloilo City local government,

- Nueva Ecija village chief gunned down (2026-03-18 22:16)

CABANATUAN CITY, Nueva Ecija- A 40-year-old village chief was killed while his 56-year-old relative was wounded in a gun attack by motorcycle-riding suspects in Barangay Kabulihan in Gen. Mamerto Natividad, Nueva Ecija on Tuesday. Police identified the fatality as Arthur Bautista, village chief of Barangay Kabulihan and the wounded relative as Conrado Villena, his uncle.

- March 18 PCSO Lotto: No winners in Grand, Mega jackpots (2026-03-18 21:52)

MANILA, Philippines—No jackpot winners were recorded in Wednesday’s Grand Lotto 6/55 and MegaLotto 6/45 draws, according to the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. March 18, 2026, falls on a Wednesday. PCSO said the winning combination for Grand Lotto 6/55 was 05-06-15-53-17-55 for a jackpot of ₱45 million, with no winner. In MegaLotto 6/45, the winning numbers

- House ‘Visayan bloc’ affirms support for Speaker Dy (2026-03-18 21:44)

BACOLOD CITY — Amid fresh questions hurled at the leadership of House Speaker Faustino “Bojie” Dy III, the “Visayan bloc” in the chamber expressed full support behind him. In a statement on Wednesday, Bacolod Rep. Alfredo Abelardo Benitez, who was newly elected House Deputy Speaker, defended Dy, particularly his steering the enactment of the General

- House’s three-pronged system to look after employees, public health (2026-03-18 21:16)

MANILA, Philippines — A three-pronged system established by the House of Representatives seeks to look after its current and retired employees’ health and welfare, as well as the requests of people who seek assistance from lawmakers. In a statement on Wednesday, Majority Leader Ferdinand Alexander Marcos said that the chamber launched Alagang Kongreso — a three-part

- DPWH taps scientists to fix ‘infamous’ pumping station in QC (2026-03-18 20:46)

MANILA, Philippines—The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) on Wednesday said it will be asking the help of scientists from Project Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards (Project Noah) to fix the controversial Matalahib Creek pumping station in Quezon City. Public Works Secretary Vince Dizon described the unfinished flood control project, which spans from Barangay

- DOLE issues holiday pay rules for Eid’l Fitr (2026-03-18 20:33)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has issued the pay guidelines for proper payment of wages for employees working during the observance of Eid’l Fitr on March 20, 2026. DOLE released the pay rules through Labor Advisory No. 4, Series of 2026, signed by Labor Sec. Bienvenido Laguasma. READ: Palace declares

- TUCP calls out Castro for downplaying emergency call amid oil price hike (2026-03-18 19:52)

MANILA, Philippines — The largest confederation of labor groups in the country called out Palace press officer Claire Castro for prematurely downplaying calls for President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to declare a national emergency to mitigate the energy and price shocks in the country brought by the Middle East crisis. In a statement on Wednesday, the

- Boracay Water excels in DOH microbiological performance test (2026-03-18 19:39)

MANILA, Philippines – Boracay Water, an operating unit of Manila Water Non-East Zone subsidiary Manila Water Philippine Ventures and a concessionaire of the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), has achieved an Excellent performance rating in the Department of Health’s (DOH) CY 2025 Proficiency Testing Scheme for Water Microbiological Testing Laboratories. The recognition affirms

- Dy hits DBM: Do your job, good budget meaningless if unimplemented (2026-03-18 19:38)

MANILA, Philippines — House of Representatives Speaker Faustino “Bojie” Dy has called out the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), asking them to do their job amid reports that the agency still has not released funding for critical infrastructure projects and dole out programs. In his speech on Wednesday before Congress adjourned its session, Dy said

- Legarda: Tax relief for families, accountability for government (2026-03-18 19:27)

MANILA, Philippines – Senator Loren Legarda stressed that tax reforms must bring relief to Filipino families while ensuring accountability in government spending. She assured that the revenue foregone from tax cuts can be recovered by addressing corruption, which drains far more resources than the reforms would cost. On Tuesday, March 17, Legarda delivered her privilege

- Palace says Marcos may declare state of emergency only if needed (2026-03-18 19:24)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. may declare a state of emergency to address energy issues and price shocks, but only if the situation worsens, according to Malacañang. In an interview on dzMM on Wednesday, Palace press officer Claire Castro said such was “possible,” but noted that the matter had not yet been discussed

- House Agri Chair Enverga, Vice Chair Poe push agri subsidies amid crisis (2026-03-18 19:19)

MANILA, Philippines — In the Committee on Agriculture’s recent briefing on mitigating the effects of the US–Israel–Iran conflict, FPJ Panday Bayanihan Congressman Brian Poe underscored the urgent need to expand and strengthen subsidy mechanisms for Filipino farmers and fisherfolk, warning that current interventions remain insufficient in the face of rising global pressures. During his interpellation

- Ex-DOT chief Christina Frasco starts new role as presidential adviser (2026-03-18 19:05)

MANILA, Philippines — Erstwhile Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco formally took over her new role in the Marcos administration as Presidential Adviser for Sustainable and Resilient Communities (SRC). President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. administered the oath of office of Frasco as presidential adviser in Malacañang on Wednesday, according to the Presidential Communications Office. Despite her removal as

- Senate OKs creation of ad hoc panel for Middle East crisis response (2026-03-18 18:53)

MANILA, Philippines – A resolution to form an ad hoc committee to address the country’s socioeconomic challenges amid the Mideast conflict was adopted in the Senate on Wednesday. Introduced by Senate President Vicente “Tito” Sotto III, Majority Leader Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri and Minority Leader Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, Senate Resolution No. 350 aims to

- House elects Arenas, Frasco, Benitez as new deputy speakers (2026-03-18 18:52)

MANILA, Philippines — Three lawmakers — Pangasinan Rep. Maria Rachel Arenas, Cebu Rep. Vincent Franco Frasco, and Bacolod City Rep. Alfredo Benitez — have been elected as new Deputy Speakers of the House of Representatives. During the session on Wednesday, Majority Floor Leader Ferdinand Alexander Marcos rose to nominate the three as new deputy speakers. The motion

- BI intercepts mail-order bride scheme victim at Naia (2026-03-18 18:49)

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Immigration (BI) on Wednesday said a woman suspected to be a victim of a mail-order bride scheme was intercepted at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia). According to the BI in a statement, the 21-year-old woman was intercepted at the Naia Terminal 3 by immigration officers before she could

- LTFRB mulls multiple waves of aid for PUV sector if passenger load drops (2026-03-18 18:34)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) may provide “multiple waves of assistance” if reduced passenger load adversely impacts the public utility vehicles (PUVs) sector, the agency said on Wednesday. According to LTFRB chairperson Atty. Vigor Mendoza II, passenger load is one of the primary problems the sector is facing right

- VP Duterte‘s lawyers: Impeachment complaints have ‘fundamental defects’ (2026-03-18 18:14)

MANILA, Philippines — The legal camp of Vice President Sara Duterte on Wednesday stood firm with its stance that the impeachment complaints have a “fundamental defect” and were based on “accusations” that they said lacked the necessary evidence. Duterte’s defense lawyers took note of the developments at the House justice committee after it found the grounds

- Herbosa bid-rigging graft raps under Ombudsman review (2026-03-18 17:52)

MANILA, Philippines — The graft case filed against Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Teodoro Herbosa is "undergoing evaluation," according to Assistant Ombudsman Mico Clavano. Herbosa and three other DOH officials were named in a nine-page complaint over alleged bid-rigging in the procurement of mobile primary care facilities (MPCFs) worth P1.8 billion. READ: Herbosa, 3 other

- LIST: Universities, colleges shift to online classes on March 19 (2026-03-18 17:35)

MANILA, Philippines — Several colleges and universities announced a shift to online classes on Thursday, March 19, due to nationwide transport strikes. The strikes will be held in protest of the ongoing oil price hikes caused by the escalating military conflict in the Middle East, to call for more subsidies, and to urge the government

- After QC student's death, NCDA calls for stronger anti-bullying policy (2026-03-18 17:30)

MANILA, Philippines — After the death of an allegedly bullied student with disability in Quezon City, the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) called on the government agencies concerned to strengthen their anti-bullying policies. In a statement sent to the Inquirer on Wednesday, the NCDA underscored that bullying is a problem, particularly for students with

- DOTr vows to provide cash aid, support amid suspension of fare hike (2026-03-18 17:04)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Transportation (DOTr) and its attached agencies will continue to ensure the provision of all cash assistance and support for the commuters, drivers, and operators amid the suspension of the fare hike. This is the DOTr's statement after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. announced on Wednesday the suspension of the fare

- Baguio forms crisis committee to address fuel price hike effects (2026-03-18 16:56)

BAGUIO CITY – The city government has created a Crisis Management Committee composed of representatives from fuel retailers, hotels, supermarkets, schools, and other business sectors to help monitor supply conditions and recommend actions if the situation escalates. Mayor Benjamin Magalong on Wednesday said among the actions to be taken immediately is ensuring certain sectors are prioritized

- NUP solon thanks House leadership for opening doors to dialogue (2026-03-18 16:51)

MANILA, Philippines — While National Unity Party (NUP) stalwart and Manila Rep. Rolando Valeriano thanked the House of Representatives leadership for opening their doors to a dialogue, he maintained that the chamber must and can find ways to resolve the issue of projects being delayed due to funding woes. Valeriano, in a statement on Wednesday, said that

- Marcos reaffirms commitment to media freedom, safety of practitioners (2026-03-18 16:32)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday reaffirmed his administration’s commitment to protecting the rights of media practitioners and strengthening the country’s democracy. Speaking during the oath-taking ceremony of the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas Board of Trustees and Standards Authority at Malacañang, Marcos highlighted the vital role of the media in promoting

- Sandiganbayan clears ex-PNP exec of graft in 2007 ‘ghost’ repair project (2026-03-18 16:31)

MANILA, Philippines — The Sandiganbayan has reversed its previous ruling convicting a former Philippine National Police (PNP) official of a graft charge in the “ghost repairs” of 28 light armored vehicles in 2007, which cost the government P400 million. In the Dec. 11, 2025 ruling of Sandiganbayan’s special fourth division, nine personalities, including PNP officials, were found guilty of

- Creation of gov’t-owned oil depot pushed in Senate (2026-03-18 16:08)

MANILA, Philippines — The establishment of a government-owned crude oil tank storage facility is being proposed in the Senate as the ongoing tensions in the Middle East have driven fuel prices soaring. READ: PH fuel prices most expensive yet as peso almost 60:$1 In Senate Bill No. 1993, which was filed on Wednesday, Sen. Francis “Chiz” Escudero

- Fuel excise tax break only needs Marcos nod as House uses Senate bill (2026-03-18 16:02)

[Updated March 18, 2026, 7:57 p.m.] MANILA, Philippines — The proposal to suspend the collection of excise tax on fuel products now only needs President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s signature to become a law, as the House of Representatives has adopted the Senate’s version of the measure. During the session on Wednesday, Deputy Majority Leader Luigi Villafuerte moved

- 2 dead, 2 hurt in truck-multicab crash in Quezon (2026-03-18 15:28)

LUCENA CITY, Quezon– Two motorists died while two others were injured in a vehicular accident on Wednesday in Pagbilao town, Quezon province. According to a Quezon police report, a truck allegedly lost its brakes while negotiating a downhill stretch of the old zigzag road in Barangay Silangang Malicboy at around 10:15 a.m. The truck driver,

- Tiangco urged: Name names, substantiate allegations vs lawmakers (2026-03-18 15:17)

MANILA, Philippines — Several lawmakers have called on Navotas Rep. Toby Tiangco to substantiate his allegations that some lawmakers want Vice President Sara Duterte impeached because they cannot avoid accountability if she becomes president, with one urging him to name names. In a press briefing on Wednesday, Bicol Saro party-list Rep. Terry Ridon said that it

- Marcos orders suspension of fare hike (2026-03-18 14:42)

[Updated March 18, 2026, 3:29 p.m.] MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday announced the suspension of a planned fare hike for public utility vehicles (PUVs) scheduled for March 19, and vowed to provide free rides nationwide, as well as discounts on train fares and toll fees. The announcement came a day after the

- Matibag: Only 6 of 18 ‘ex-Marines’ signed statements at NBI (2026-03-18 14:35)

MANILA, Philippines — Only six of the 18 alleged former Marines signed their written statements during the one-on-one interview with the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) because their counsel wanted to review these first, according to Director Melvin Matibag. In a Viber message to the Inquirer on Wednesday, Matibag said that when the alleged former

- PNP tells cop-vloggers to ‘be mindful’ of AI use (2026-03-18 14:24)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Wednesday reminded its police officers who are also vloggers to “be mindful” of their use of artificial intelligence (AI) in videos. This came after the PNP Anti-Cybercrime Group (ACG) flagged a supposedly AI-generated video on social media depicting a police officer misbehaving in a fast food

- Luistro: Impeach proceedings should proceed even if VP Duterte resigns (2026-03-18 14:22)

MANILA, Philippines — The impeachment proceedings against Sara Duterte should continue even if she resigns from office, according to Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro, who stressed that the process must still determine whether the country’s second-highest official should face the penalty of perpetual disqualification from holding public office. Luistro, who chairs the House committee on justice,

- PNP urges public to take caution vs scams amid fuel subsidy rollout (2026-03-18 14:09)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) urged the public to take caution against scams amid the rollout of fuel subsidies. In a statement on Wednesday, the law enforcement agency said it had deployed personnel to assist national government agencies and local government units in distributing the cash aid; and to secure the rollout

- Marcos admin brings Yakap at Kalinga health caravan to schools nationwide (2026-03-18 13:56)

MANILA, Philippines — Spearheaded by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the Department of Education (DepEd) recently conducted the Yaman ng Kalusugan Program (YAKAP) at Kalinga Caravan at Marcelo B. Fernan-Polambato Elementary School in Bogo City to bring essential medical services directly to learners, teachers and the school community. The initiative, a joint project of the Philippine

- Dy: Student support bills solidify Marcos legacy as education president (2026-03-18 13:48)

MANILA, Philippines – President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is steadily establishing his legacy as an “education president,” Speaker Faustino “Bojie” G. Dy III said, as the House of Representatives on Monday approved on third and final reading two measures expanding government support for Filipino students. Dy said the passage of the bills signals commitment of Congress

- Senate ethics panel to review 9 complaints (2026-03-18 13:41)

MANILA, Philippines – The Senate committee on ethics and privileges will soon review a total of nine ethics complaints, including a case against past and present senators, Sen. JV Ejercito said on Wednesday. Ejercito, who heads the panel, told the media that he and his colleagues shall begin the case review after their rules have

- ‘Read the rules’: Solons told after Marcoleta’s impeachment query (2026-03-18 13:38)

MANILA, Philippines — Sagip party-list Rep. Paolo Henry Marcoleta’s query about the House impeachment proceedings prompted Rep. Joel Chua to remind all panel members and non-members to ead the rules to avoid confusion. Marcoleta posed a question on Wednesday shortly before the House committee on justice declared the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte

- Gov’t bolsters education resilience with more disaster-ready classrooms (2026-03-18 13:29)

TAGUM CITY — The Department of Education (DepEd) spearheaded the delivery of new Learning Continuity Spaces (LCS) at the Davao del Norte Regional Sports Academy, expanding on the successful installations in Masbate and Bogo City. The project aligns with the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to ensure that the delivery of quality education

- PNP to offer free rides for commuters affected by March 19 strike (2026-03-18 13:21)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) will be offering free rides, also known as Libreng Sakay, for commuters who will be affected by the transport strike starting Thursday, March 19. “Our response will not just be about police visibility but the true help of the Philippine National Police to our kababayans who may

- Education reform group urges gov’t review of anti-bullying measures (2026-03-18 13:17)

MANILA, Philippines — The Civil Society Network for Education Reforms (E-Net Philippines) urged the government to review its measures against bullying following the death of an alleged bullied student with disability at his school in Quezon City. “The loss of this young life is a profound tragedy that should compel all of us, government, schools,

- Senate ethics panel may junk absenteeism complaint vs dela Rosa (2026-03-18 13:16)

MANILA, Philippines — The ethics complaint against Sen. Ronald “Bato” dela Rosa due to his supposed absenteeism may be dismissed as there is a ‘no work, no pay’ rule in the Senate.

This possibility was confirmed by Senate panel on ethics and privileges chairperson JV Ejercito during a press briefing on Wednesday. “If outright, we

- Rodriguez ‘disappointed’ with Sara Duterte’s lawyers: No answer given (2026-03-18 13:10)

MANILA, Philippines — From scrutinizing the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte, Cagayan de Oro Rep. Rufus Rodriguez is now disappointed with her legal team, as her consolidated verified answer ad cautelam failed to address the issues mentioned. In his manifestation during the House of Representatives committee on justice’s hearing on Wednesday, Rodriguez noted

- DOTr to give fuel subsidy to PUV drivers, operators starting next week (2026-03-18 12:51)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Transportation (DOTr) will begin the distribution of fuel subsidies for public utility vehicles and operators starting next week amid the oil price hikes. This aid covers the operators and drivers of jeepneys, taxis and buses. The announcement comes from the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board chairperson Vigor Mendoza

- Luistro: Sara Duterte impeachment hearing proper starts March 25 (2026-03-18 12:05)

MANILA, Philippines — The hearing proper related to the impeachment complaints filed against Vice President Sara Duterte will begin on March 25, according to House committee on justice chair and Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro. Luistro bared the full schedule for the hearing proper after the panel declared the two petitions lodged against Duterte sufficient in

- PNP warns of possible robbery, theft spike amid rising costs (2026-03-18 12:02)

The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Wednesday said it was preparing for a possible spike in robbery and theft cases amid rising prices. “The Philippine National Police acknowledges that it won’t just stay a perception. It’s possible that there’d be an increase in crimes against property,” the agency’s spokesperson Brig. Gen. Randulf Tuaño said at

- House panel finds grounds for Duterte’s impeachment sufficient (2026-03-18 11:54)

MANILA, Philippines — The grounds stated in the two impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte have been deemed sufficient by the House of Representatives’ committee on justice, setting the stage for hearings on the matter. During the hearing on Wednesday, Senior Deputy Majority Leader Lorenz Defensor moved to declare the third complaint sufficient in ground

- DBM allots P8.08B for dev’t in insurgency-cleared barangays (2026-03-18 11:43)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has released P8.08 billion to fund priority projects in 808 insurgency-cleared barangays under the Local Government Support Fund (LGSF)-Support to the Barangay Development Program (SBDP). The

SBDP is a key component of the administration’s 2026 LGSF program, aimed at strengtheninglocal governance and addressing the root

- Jobless Filipinos near 3 million as labor groups warn of jobs crisis (2026-03-18 11:36)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines’ labor market started 2026 on a troubling note, with nearly 3 million Filipinos out of work and millions more stuck in unstable jobs, prompting labor groups to call for an urgent shift in the government’s employment strategy. In a joint statement released Sunday, labor coalition Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at

- House justice panel goes straight to sufficiency of grounds discussion (2026-03-18 11:12)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives’ committee on justice went straight to discussing the sufficiency of grounds stated in the two impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte, as petitioners waived their right to reply. During the panel’s hearing on Wednesday, committee chairperson and Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro said that the discussions would answer whether

- PNP: 2 face raps for profiteering, hoarding amid oil price hike (2026-03-18 11:09)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) has so far recorded a case each of alleged profiteering at a gas station and hoarding of petroleum products amid oil price increases. “We had two whom we already filed cases against,” PNP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Randulf Tuaño said at the Kapihan sa Manila Hotel forum on

- Over P700,000 in fake skincare seized in Manila, Bulacan raids (2026-03-18 10:02)

MANILA, Philippines — The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) seized a total of P761,400 worth of fake Korean skincare products in a series of raids in Binondo, Manila, and in Marilao, Bulacan. The NBI said in a statement that around 846 assorted counterfeit serums bearing the trademark of the Korean skincare brand “Beauty of Joseon”

- P6.46-M ‘smuggled’ cigarettes intercepted at Maguindanao checkpoint (2026-03-18 09:46)

Police operatives intercept P6.46 million worth of allegedly smuggled cigarettes after flagging a cement mixer truck at a checkpoint in Sitio Marayag, Barangay Bayanga Norte, Matanog, Maguindanao del Norte on Tuesday morning, March 17, 2026. (Photo from the Philippine National Police) MANILA, Philippines — Police intercepted allegedly smuggled cigarettes valued at

- LIVE UPDATES: Sara Duterte impeachment hearing | March 18, 2026 (2026-03-18 09:44)

MANILA, Philippines — The House committee on justice is convening today to continue the proceedings on the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte. READ: House panel finds grounds for duterte’s impeachment sufficient LOOK: House justice panel resumes hearing on impeachment cases vs Sara Duterte READ: House allows justice panel to hold

impeach hearings during

- From convent to cinema: Filipina ‘firsts’ who made history (2026-03-18 09:40)

MANILA, Philippines — Women in the Philippines have long broken barriers and reshaped society, even when their work went largely unrecognized. Many of these Filipina “firsts” rarely appear in textbooks, but their contributions helped change the course of history and widened opportunities for women. RELATED STORY: #HerStory: Women Transforming Society From pioneers in religious life

- MMDA suspends coding scheme on March 20 for Eid’l Fitr (2026-03-18 09:35)

MANILA, Philippines — Following Malacañang’s declaration of March 20, 2026 as a regular holiday, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) is suspending the expanded number coding scheme on Friday in line with the observance of the Muslim holiday, Eid’lFitr. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. earlier declared March 20, 2026 as a regular holiday due to the

- WATCH: House hearing of Sara Duterte impeachment raps (2026-03-18 09:29)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives’ committee on justice continues its hearing on the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte after earlier ruling that the raps are sufficient in form and substance. Lawmakers are now moving to the next phase of the proceedings, which includes deeper discussions on the allegations and possible presentation

- DILG advises LGUs to cut energy use by 10 to 20% (2026-03-18 09:12)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) urged local government units (LGUs) to cut their energy consumption between 10 and 20 percent. “LGUs can lead by example by adopting simple but effective measures that reduce electricity and fuel consumption,” the DILG said in a statement on Wednesday. “Even small adjustments

- LOOK: House justice panel resumes hearing on impeachment cases vs Sara Duterte (2026-03-18 09:08)

MANILA, Philippines — The House committee on justice resumed deliberations on Wednesday to discuss the preliminary matters relating to the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte. Panel chair Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro earlier revealed that the discussions will focus on preliminary issues before the hearing proper, which is tentatively scheduled for April 8. She

- Sotto bill seeks repeal of oil deregulation law (2026-03-18 08:55)

MANILA, Philippines — Senate President Vicente “Tito” Sotto III has filed a bill to repeal the oil deregulation law, which will allow government to have the power to determine prices of petroleum products. Sotto introduced on Tuesday Senate Bill No. 1984, seeking to repeal the 28-year old Republic Act No. 8479 or the Downstream Oil

- Marcos on cutting excise tax on fuel: ‘We’ll see, depends on trends’ (2026-03-18 08:53)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said on Wednesday that his decision to exercise emergency powers to suspend or reduce excise taxes on oil products will depend on trends in oil prices. The Senate and House of Representatives have both approved measures that would give Marcos the authority to cut or suspend the imposition of

- OIL PRICE WATCH as of March 18, 2026 (2026-03-18 08:44)

MANILA, Philippines — Motorists were hit with a big-time increase in oil prices this week, with no immediate relief in sight as global oil markets remain under pressure driven by supply concerns linked to ongoing tensions in the Middle East. Market watchers said the current trend suggests that prices could remain elevated, especially if supply

- Marcos: ‘We don’t have a problem’ in supplies of food, fuel products (2026-03-18 08:24)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. sees no problem in food and fuel supplies in the country despite the ongoing war in the Middle East. “Right now, we don’t have a problem in food supply. We don’t have a problem in the supply of petroleum products, including fertilizer for the farmers,” he said. He made

- Baguio electric coop to 4ps, poor consumers: Avail of lifeline subsidy (2026-03-18 07:33)

BAGUIO CITY — The Benguet Electric Cooperative (Beneco) is encouraging beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) and poor families to avail of the lifeline rate offered by the cooperative. “As of the latest records, Beneco has 354 registered lifeline beneficiaries receiving total exemption or a discount in their electricity consumption,” Beneco general manager Engr.

- Amihan weakens; hotter, humid weather expected across PH (2026-03-18 07:28)

MANILA, Philippines — The northeast monsoon, or amihan, continues to weaken, signaling the onset of warmer and more humid conditions across much of the country. The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) on Wednesday said amihan is now affecting only the Northern and Central Luzon areas. By Thursday, the amihan may be

- DepEd reiterates call for simple end-of-school-year rites (2026-03-18 07:15)

MALASIQUI, Pangasinan — The Department of Education (DepEd) in Ilocos Region has reiterated its call for simple graduation and moving up ceremonies. “Even though we are not yet experiencing the crisis we are about to face, the officials in the Central Office have a mandate to the school officials to conduct the graduation of the students

- Buses, jeepneys, airport cabs, TNVS get fare hike (2026-03-18 05:55)

Commuters using public transportation must prepare extra cash this week as the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) on Tuesday approved fare increases for jeepneys, buses, airport taxis and transport network vehicle services (TNVS). LTFRB Chair Vigor Mendoza II said the decision to increase fare rates starting on Thursday was made on account of

- PH in process of acquiring 2 million barrels of fuel–DOF chief (2026-03-18 05:50)

The government is now in the process of acquiring two million barrels of oil from the global market in a bid to add 10 additional days to the country’s buffer stock of fuel, Finance Secretary Frederick Go said. Speaking at a Philippine Stock Exchange event, Go said the Philippine National Oil Co. – Exploration Corp.

- Luistro: VP’s reply to impeach raps didn’t answer accusations (2026-03-18 05:45)

Vice President Sara Duterte’s formal reply to the two impeachment complaints filed against her before a House panel “doesn’t seem like an answer” and read more like a “prohibited pleading” or “a motion to dismiss,” according to Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro. Luistro, who chairs the House committee on justice, shared her initial evaluation on Tuesday

- Airfares to spike in April as CAB raises fuel surcharge (2026-03-18 05:40)

Travelers booking local or international flights in April will face sharply higher airfares after the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) raised the passenger fuel surcharge to Level 8 for the first half of the month, up from Level 4 in March. The increase, which will more than double current rates, will be implemented under an extraordinary

- Ex-DPWH exec tells court: Co gave me P130 million as ‘balato’ (2026-03-18 05:35)

Former Public Works Undersecretary Roberto Bernardo took the witness stand for the first time on Tuesday and told the Sandiganbayan antigraft court that he received a total of P130 million as “balato” (share) from former Ako Bicol Rep. Zaldy Co. Of the P130 million, P100 million was coursed through Bernardo’s subordinates at the regional office

- Metro tricycle drivers first to get gov’t cash aid (2026-03-18 05:30)

The government has started the distribution of P5,000 cash assistance to public transport drivers, starting in Metro Manila on Tuesday and expanding to other provinces in April. “Two wheels, three wheels, four wheels, six wheels — any vehicle that operates for hire will be considered for inclusion in the program,” Executive Secretary Ralph Recto said

- PNP cracks down on abusive online lending apps (2026-03-18 05:20)

Philippine National Police chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. has ordered the Anti-Cybercrime Group (ACG) to crack down on online lending applications that allegedly harass borrowers online and violate data privacy laws. “We documented cases of photos [being manipulated] to humiliate and scare their borrowers. This is not acceptable and this kind of wrongdoing clearly

- Travel tax abolition bill hurdles House (2026-03-18 05:15)

House Bill No. 8464, which proposes to do away with the travel tax, has been approved on third and final reading in the lower chamber, with 257 lawmakers voting in favor, one opposed and one abstaining. “The travel tax belongs to a different era, when flying was mostly seen as a privilege for an opulent

- NFA pushes direct rice sales amid crisis (2026-03-18 05:00)

The National Food Authority (NFA) is seeking emergency powers to sell rice directly to the public, hoping to alleviate the impact of the Middle East crisis on the household staple. NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said that granting the grains agency a temporary authority would help streamline the processes of distributing and selling rice, including milling

- BFP chief suspended over graft raps (2026-03-18 04:55)

Fire Chief Supt. Wilberto Rico Neil Ang Kwan Tiu, the deputy chief for operations of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), has been appointed as officer-in-charge (OIC), Interior and Local Government Jonvic Remulla said on Tuesday. “He’s a capable OIC,” Remulla told the Inquirer, adding that they have yet to make a final choice on

- MMDA offers ‘shower rooms’ for bikers en route to work (2026-03-18 04:50)

It’s less stressful for the body to take a bath later in the day, as some Instagram posts about health suggest. The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) on Tuesday inaugurated four “bike-to-work end-of-trip” shower rooms in Pasig City. This is to provide cyclists a “comfortable, inclusive and accessible” changing space when commuting from their homes

- Heritage advocate: What’s libelous about citing book errors? (2026-03-18 04:45)

Food heritage advocate and researcher John Sherwin Felix maintained there was nothing libelous about his public criticism of the many errors he found in a government-funded book on local cuisines, saying he was exercising his right to free expression when he pointed them out on social media. “My defense is (that it was all) out

- MILF halts key talks over ‘gap’ in gov’t peace panel (2026-03-18 04:40)

COTABATO CITY — The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has declared a temporary stop in several aspects of engagement with the government under the joint mechanism for implementing the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). This came as the former rebel group noted that the government’s peace implementing panel (PIP) is leaderless. “In the exercise

- Planned DPWH road into watershed alarms Baguio council (2026-03-18 04:35)

BAGUIO CITY—A P23.9-million government road project that would cut through one of Baguio’s remaining watersheds has raised alarm among local officials and environmental advocates. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) bid out a 1,300-square-meter road in 2025 that would create a new route linking Barangays Pinget and West Quirino Hill, crossing the critically

- Cagayan de Oro execs seek clarity on Edca exercises (2026-03-18 04:30)

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—The city council has invited commanders of the Philippine Army and US forces currently involved in a joint training program with local soldiers. According to Councilor Edgar Cabanlas, they want clarification on the arrival of American servicemen and the scope of the ongoing training at the Philippine Air Force (PAF) Lumbia Air

- Palace rejects call for gov’t takeover of oil industry as prices soar (2026-03-18 00:10)

MANILA, Philippines — There is no need yet for President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to invoke his emergency powers for the government to temporarily take over the country’s privatized oil industry to rein in the soaring prices of fuel, which have breached P100 mark for the first time in history, the Palace said on Tuesday. “At

- Palace unfazed by survey results, touts gov’t programs (2026-03-18 00:02)

MANILA, Philippines — Palace press officer Undersecretary Claire Castro on Tuesday encouraged the public to open their eyes and ears to the government’s programs, following the release of a survey showing that nearly half of Filipinos expressed disapproval of and distrust in the performance of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. In a Viber message to reporters,

- Vietnamese arrested in Taguig for alleged P1 M currency exchange scam (2026-03-17 23:53)

MANILA, Philippines — A Vietnamese woman was arrested in Taguig City for alleged involvement in a P1-million cyber-enabled estafa scheme, the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) said Tuesday. In a statement, the NCRPO said the suspect was allegedly involved in a fraudulent currency exchange scheme. She reportedly deceived a Vietnamese male national by posing

- 4 arrested in QC, Navotas for animal cruelty (2026-03-17 23:11)

MANILA, Philippines — The National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) on Tuesday said four individuals were arrested in separate incidents of animal cruelty in Quezon City and Navotas City. In a statement, the NCRPO said three of the four suspects were arrested in Navotas City on Monday, following a report from a concerned citizen regarding

- 2 suspects busted, P5.4 M shabu seized in Iligan City – PDEA (2026-03-17 22:45)

MANILA, Philippines — Two suspects were arrested while an estimated P5.4 million worth of shabu was seized on Tuesday, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) said. READ:

Traffic enforcer nabbed in Iloilo City with P408,000 worth of shabu The PDEA said thesuspects—identified only by their aliases “Moammad” and “Maimana”—were arrestedduring an operation at

- CHR calls for full reparation for Malaya Lolas (2026-03-17 22:04)

MANILA, Philippines—The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) is calling for full reparation, official recognition, and a formal apology to the aging “Malaya Lolas”, Filipina survivors of sexual slavery during the Japanese occupation in World War II. In a Gender Ombud Policy Advisory issued on Tuesday, the CHR stressed that delivering justice to the elderly survivors

- One winner in Ultra Lotto 6/58 jackpot worth P100M on March 17 (2026-03-17 22:01)

MANILA, Philippines — One ticket holder won the Ultra Lotto 6/58 jackpot on Tuesday, March 17, while no bettor hit the top prizes for SuperLotto 6/49 and Lotto 6/42, according to the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. March 17, 2026, fell on a Tuesday. The winning combination for Ultra Lotto 6/58 was 29-52-49-55-25-09 for a jackpot

- Beware of flower urchins in beaches, National Museum warns (2026-03-17 21:32)

MANILA, Philippines — The National Museum of the Philippines on Tuesday reminded the public to be vigilant in exploring the country’s beaches, particularly against flower urchins which can be found in shallow waters. The National Museum issued the warning in a Facebook post as the dry season in the country approaches. READ: National Museum is

- Baligod: Probe aims to portray him, ‘ex-Marines’ as gov’t destabilizers (2026-03-17 21:19)

MANILA, Philippines — Atty. Levito Baligod said on Tuesday that he received information from an “active military officer” that the ongoing investigation into the joint affidavit of his clients—18 supposed former Marines—allegedly aims to portray him and the 18 individuals as “destabilizers” of the government. “Some bright people in Government want to canalize the ‘investigation’

- House allows justice panel to hold impeachment hearings during recess (2026-03-17 21:04)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives’ committee on justice has been allowed to hold hearings on the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte even during Congress’ recess. During the session on Tuesday, the House adopted House Resolution (HR) No. 892 authored by House Speaker Faustino “Bojie” Dy III, Majority Leader Ferdinand Alexander Marcos, and

- Sara Duterte impeachment: VP fails to answer issues — De Lima (2026-03-17 20:17)

MANILA, Philippines — Despite the long time given for Vice President Sara Duterte to answer issues raised in the impeachment complaints against her, she still failed to address questions from the people, Mamamayang Liberal Rep. Leila de Lima said Tuesday. In a statement, De Lima

said it seems that Duterte’s consolidated verified answer leans towards a

- Zambales solon apologizes, to retract bill renaming state university (2026-03-17 19:57)

SAN ANTONIO, Zambales — A lawmaker from this province on Monday night (March 16) apologized for filing a proposed measure seeking to rename President Ramon Magsaysay State University, saying the move was a “lapse of judgment” and that the bill would be withdrawn. In a statement, Zambales 2nd District Rep. Doris “Bing” Maniquiz said the

- Increased seismic activity detected in Bulusan Volcano – Phivolcs (2026-03-17 19:32)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Institute of Seismology and Volcanology (Phivolcs) on Tuesday said it has once again recorded increased seismic activity at Bulusan Volcano in Sorsogon. Phivolcs issued the statement recording 90 volcanic earthquakes between 12 midnight to 12 noon of March 17, 2026. “Nearly all of these events were weak volcano-tectonic earthquakes associated

- Transport strike: LTFRB open for dialogue with Piston (2026-03-17 19:23)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) is willing to hold a dialogue with transport group Piston about its plan to hold a nationwide transport strike amid the oil price hike caused by the Middle East conflict. This is what LTFRB Chairperson Vigor Mendoza III said on Tuesday when asked if

- LTFRB open to discussions on further fare hikes (2026-03-17 19:09)

MANILA, Philippines – The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) on Tuesday said it is open to reviewing more petitions for further fare hikes after two transport groups expressed dismay over the P1 increase in the base fare of traditional jeepneys. “If they think this is too small and we need to increase it,

- Villar backs OTP phaseout, eyes stronger digital security with Afasa law (2026-03-17 19:04)

MANILA, Philippines — Sen. Mark A. Villar welcomed the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas’ (BSP) directive requiring banks and financial institutions to phase out SMS one-time passwords (OTPs) and adopt stronger security measures by 30 June 2026. This is in line with the implementation of the Anti-Financial Account Scamming Act (Afasa), a law principally sponsored and

- Tuesday’s auction for 11 seized luxury cars did not push through – BOC (2026-03-17 18:54)

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Customs (BOC) on Tuesday declared a failed auction for its scheduled public auction of seized 11 luxury cars after no bidders registered for the event, according to the BOC. The BOC has set a public auction through sealed bidding for the vehicles on Tuesday at 10 a.m. It also

- Mayon eruption: No major explosion seen — Phivolcs (2026-03-17 18:48)

LEGAZPI CITY — Mayon Volcano has ejected 40 million cubic meters of volcanic material since its eruption intensified after Alert Level 3 was raised on January 6, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said. The agency recorded 425 volcanic earthquakes and 396 rockfall events over the past 24 hours, including frequent short-lived lava

- Senate adopts resolution protecting Filipinos from extradition risks (2026-03-17 18:46)

MANILA, Philippines – The minority-led resolution to protect Filipinos against extradition without prior local and legal remedies was adopted in the Senate on Tuesday. Senate Resolution No. 307 was introduced on February 18 after minority Sens. Bong Go and Bato dela Rosa were tagged by the International Criminal Court (ICC) as “co-perpetrators” of former President

- Muntinlupa Mayor Ruffy Biazon defends hands-on governance vs criticism (2026-03-17 18:14)

MANILA, Philippines — Muntinlupa Mayor Ruffy Biazon on Monday clapped back at a netizen who criticized his supposed “papogi” style of city governance, saying he does “field” work to lead by example. In a post on his official Facebook page, Biazon directly responded to the post of one Arniel C. Serato, a resident of Alabang,

- Baligod: Pangandaman personally took luggage of cash from ‘ex-Marines’ (2026-03-17 18:13)

MANILA, Philippines — Counsel Levito Baligod alleged that former Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman “personally” accepted luggage of cash from the former supposed Marines. Baligod said this in an ambush interview when asked if it is true that not all the personalities tagged in the 18 alleged ex-Marines’ affidavit directly accepted the supposed flood control kickbacks.

- Philippine Navy, Globalport sign MOA creating Affiliated Reserve Unit (2026-03-17 17:55)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Navy and Globalport Terminals Inc. (GTI) have signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) establishing Globalport as an Affiliated Reserve Unit (ARU) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, strengthening cooperation between the military and the private maritime sector. The agreement was signed by FOIC Jose Maria Ambrosio Ezpeleta, Flag Officer

- Sara Duterte impeachment: Filer of 4th rap won’t respond to her answer (2026-03-17 17:51)

MANILA, Philippines — The lawyer behind the fourth impeachment complaint against Vice President Sara Duterte also declined to respond to her submission, noting that it raised no new factual matters. In his manifestation submitted Tuesday to the House of Representatives’ Committee on Justice, lawyer Nathaniel Cabrera said Duterte’s consolidated verified answer ad cautelam “failed to raise

• NBI wraps ’ 18 ex-Marines’ probe; report heads to Ombudsman (2026-03-17 17:49)

MANILA, Philippines — National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Director Melvin Matibag said on Tuesday that they will submit a report to the Office of the Ombudsman about their investigation into the affidavit of the 18 supposed former Marines alleging that multiple government officials and personalities have accepted flood control kickbacks. Matibag said this as the

• Driver in killing of ex-cop in Manila surrenders (2026-03-17 17:47)

MANILA, Philippines — The motorcycle driver involved in the killing of retired police officer George Capistrano has surrendered to authorities, Manila Mayor Francisco “Isko” Moreno Domagoso announced on Tuesday. On his “Talk to the People” livestream, Domagoso identified the suspect as Liegem Bulalacao Young, also known as Biboy. He surrendered with the help of a

• MMDA unveils free shower rooms, other amenities for bike riders (2026-03-17 17:45)

MANILA, Philippines — Bike-to-work commuters can now use shower rooms and other amenities for free at the Motorcycle Riding Academy (MRA) in Pasig City before going to their respective workplaces. This came after the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) unveiled its Bike-to-Work End-of-Trip facilities at the MRA on Tuesday, as part of its commitment to

• Senate OKs bill letting Marcos cut fuel excise taxes (2026-03-17 17:43)

MANILA, Philippines — The Senate on Tuesday approved on third and final reading a bill that would give President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. the power to suspend or reduce the excise taxes on petroleum products to temper the impact of the surging fuel prices. Seventeen senators voted to approve Senate Bill No. (SBN) 1982, authorizing the president to

• JV Ejercito urges swift passage of automatic fuel excise tax suspension (2026-03-17 17:28)

MANILA, Philippines — Deputy Majority Leader Senator JV Ejercito on Monday urged the swift passage of a measure that would establish an automatic mechanism for the suspension of excise taxes on petroleum products during periods of high global oil prices, saying it would provide immediate relief to Filipino consumers facing rising fuel costs. Senate Bill

• Dy says House equipped Marcos with stronger tools vs fuel price shocks (2026-03-17 17:15)

MANILA, Philippines — Speaker Faustino “Bojie” G. Dy III on Monday evening said the House of Representatives has equipped President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. with stronger policy tools to tame fuel price shocks after approving on third and final reading two key measures aimed at protecting Filipinos from global oil market volatility. The measures, House

• LTFRB to ‘balance’ oil prices, commuters’ welfare in fare hike — Mendoza (2026-03-17 16:59)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) said on Tuesday that it will balance fuel costs and commuter welfare when considering possible new fare hike petitions. LTFRB Chairperson Atty. Vigor Mendoza III said another fare increase could be possible if the agency factors in current oil prices, which typically range from

- Vargas seeks stronger anti-bullying ordinance after PWD student's death (2026-03-17 16:54)

MANILA, Philippines — A stronger anti-bullying ordinance has to be considered after a student who is also a person with disability (PWD) was bullied and died inside the premises of a Quezon City school, Councilor Alfred Vargas said on Tuesday. Vargas, in a statement, said that there has to be a "comprehensive review and amendment" of the city's

- Fare hike a 'band-aid solution' for transport woes — group (2026-03-17 16:35)

MANILA, Philippines — A commuters' group on Tuesday criticized the fare hike across public utility vehicles (PUVs), calling it a "band-aid" solution amid rising oil prices and ongoing challenges in the transport sector and minimum wage levels. PARA Commuters Network convenor Nanoy Rafael made the statement following the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB)

- VP Duterte camp maintains 'double standards,' says 'no ultimate facts' (2026-03-17 16:31)

MANILA, Philippines – The legal camp of Vice President Sara Duterte on Tuesday maintained there was an alleged "double standard" by the House justice committee in its impeachment against her compared to how it treated the complaints against President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., as it also insisted that there were no "ultimate facts" in the allegations.

- Toby Tiangco: Impeachment push linked to some solons' flood scam fears (2026-03-17 16:19)

MANILA, Philippines — Some lawmakers are allegedly pushing for Vice President Sara Duterte's impeachment because they cannot negotiate terms to absolve them of accountability should she become president, Navotas Rep. Toby Tiangco said on Tuesday. In an ambush interview on Tuesday, Tiangco said that lawmakers involved in the flood control scam are allegedly afraid that, under

- PNP warns public vs AI videos falsely portraying a police officer (2026-03-17 16:17)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) issued a warning to the public about videos generated by artificial intelligence (AI) that falsely portray a police officer. "These videos, not only those impersonating police officers but also other misleading content, are created to appear real and can easily spread false information," the PNP said in

- PNP to Piston: Reconsider March 19 strike, but security still ready (2026-03-17 16:10)

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. hopes transport group Piston reconsiders its strike this coming Thursday, March 19. “While we understand the concerns being raised by those in the public transportation sector, we hope that they reconsider their decision to hold a strike for this is really not

- Toma Cloma’s kin, 56 other military officers get CA’s nod (2026-03-17 16:00)

MANILA , Philippines – The Commission on Appointments on Tuesday gave its nod to the ad interim appointments and nominations of 57 military generals and senior officers. One of them was Colonel Jacquelyn Cloma, who is married to a great grandson of Filipino adventurer and fishing magnate Tomas Cloma – the man who supposedly discovered and occupied the

- 18 ‘ex-Marines’ return to NBI to prove ‘bagmen’ claims (2026-03-17 15:50)

MANILA, Philippines — All 18 alleged former Marines returned to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) on Tuesday, facing the challenge of proving that they previously worked for former Ako Bicol party-list Elizaldy Co, whom they accused of hiring them as “bagmen.” The alleged 18 former Marines claimed they were tasked to deliver luggage-full or a bag full of

- Shopping online to save amid rising costs? PNP warns of scammers (2026-03-17 15:18)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group (PNP ACG) on Tuesday warned the public of scammers while shopping online to save up amid rising prices. “With the increase in prices due to the war in the Middle East, including in Iran, we expect more scam activity,” ACG director Brig. Gen. Wilson Asueta told

- Ex-DPWH exec Bernardo testifies at Sandiganbayan, reveals ‘balato’ scheme (2026-03-17 15:04)

[Updated March 17, 2026, 7:50 p.m.] MANILA, Philippines — State witness and former Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Undersecretary Roberto Bernardo on Tuesday revealed a “balato” scheme between lawmakers and public officials. Bernardo, taking the witness stand for the first time, made the revelation before the Sandiganbayan’s 6th Division trial on an anomalous

- Escudero wants name excluded from pre-election preference surveys (2026-03-17 14:39)

MANILA, Philippines – Sen. Francis Escudero has asked survey firms to exclude his name from preference surveys ahead of the 2028 National Elections. Escudero’s office said Tuesday that the senator has “repeatedly and unequivocally stated he harbors no intention of seeking a higher elective post in the upcoming election cycle.” “His presence on prospective candidate

- No double standards in review of VP Duterte impeach cases – Luistro (2026-03-17 14:33)

MANILA, Philippines — There are no double standards applied when the House of Representatives’ committee on justice separately tackled the impeachment complaints against the country’s top two officials, Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro said on Tuesday. Luistro, in a

statement, disputed Vice President Sara Duterte’s claims that the committee addressed her impeachment differently from how it handled the raps

- Traffic enforcer nabbed in Iloilo City with P408,000 worth of shabu (2026-03-17 14:25)

ILOILO CITY— A traffic enforcer categorized as a high-value individual (HVI) was arrested Monday morning after authorities seized over P400,000 worth of suspected “shabu” (crystal meth) in a buy-bust operation in Jaro district. The suspect, identified by police only as alias “Saad,” 39, a resident of Barangay Camalig, was apprehended in his home village at

- PNP chief orders crackdown on abusive lending apps (2026-03-17 14:23)

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. ordered the Anti-Cybercrime Group (ACG) to crack down on online lending applications allegedly involved in online harassment and data privacy violations. “We documented cases of manipulated photos to humiliate and scare their borrowers. This is not acceptable, and this kind of wrongdoing

- Man nabbed in Pasig after 3 years of sexual text harassment (2026-03-17 14:23)

MANILA, Philippines — A man, 41, was arrested in Pasig City for allegedly harassing a woman, 21, with text messages asking for sexual favors, the Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group (PNP ACG) said on Tuesday. The suspect was entrapped in an operation after the woman agreed to meet up with him in Barangay Kapasigan on

- Teodoro challenges coup claims, calls for formal affidavits (2026-03-17 14:22)

LAOAC, Pangasinan — Defense Secretary Gilberto C. Teodoro Jr. on Tuesday urged critics of the Marcos administration to present substantiated evidence if they believe a plot is underway to overthrow the government. His remarks came amid social media claims of a so-called “Kudeta Me” by a so-called “Third Force.” “No. You know, as responsible citizens, why

- Higher transport fares hit commuters beginning March 19 (2026-03-17 14:20)

MANILA, Philippines — Commuters will face higher transportation costs beginning Thursday, March 19, after the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) approved an across-the-board provisional fare hikes covering jeepneys, buses, taxis, and ride-hailing services. LTFRB chairperson Atty. Vigor Mendoza III announced on Tuesday that the increases were triggered by continued spikes in fuel prices

- Fuel shock and the peso pinch (2026-03-17 14:19)

MANILA, Philippines — While the government earlier warned of diesel hitting P96 per liter in a “worst-case scenario” because of the escalating crisis in the Middle East, consumers are now paying P94 per liter to as high as P115 per liter after a new double-digit increase this week. Ibon Foundation said rising oil prices threaten

- Camarines Sur Gov. Villafuerte quits as NUP president (2026-03-17 14:10)

LEGAZPI CITY – Camarines Sur Governor Luis Raymund “LRay” Villafuerte Jr. resigned on Monday as president of the National Unity Party (NUP). In a letter to party chairman Ronaldo Puno, Villafuerte said his resignation would take effect once a successor is confirmed. Villafuerte, who has led the party since 2022, cited NUP’s long-standing practice of

- DTI Zambales starts new work schedule to back energy conservation (2026-03-17 13:56)

SAN ANTONIO, Zambales – As fuel costs continue to rise, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Zambales Provincial Office announced a new work arrangement on Monday. READ: 4-day workweek starts in some gov’t offices Under the updated schedule, employees will report on-site from Monday to Thursday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and work remotely

- Ex-Gov. Singson set to testify in Senate flood control probe (2026-03-17 13:45)

MANILA, Philippines – Former Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis “Chavit” Singson has volunteered to testify in the Senate blue ribbon committee’s investigation into the anomalous flood control projects in the country. “He (Singson) sent me a letter. He indicated that he wanted to testify,” panel chairman, Senate President Pro Tempore Panfilo Lacson, said in an interview

- Pangasinan opts out of 4-day workweek plan (2026-03-17 13:42)

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan – The Pangasinan provincial government has decided not to adopt a four-day workweek, citing concerns that it could disrupt the delivery of essential public services, particularly in healthcare. Vice Governor Mark Lambino said the decision came after officials studied the feasibility of the extended Monday-to-Thursday work scheme authorized by Malacañang for executive branch

- Man dies while spearfishing in Zambales town (2026-03-17 13:30)

SAN ANTONIO, Zambales – A 44-year-old man died while spearfishing in the waters off Botolan town, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) confirmed on Monday. The victim was identified as Noli Ferrer, a fisherman and resident of Barangay Binoclutan in the said town. Based on reports, lifeguards and beachgoers spotted Ferrer waving for help while spearfishing

- PNP to talk with ISPs after foiled alleged Laguna mass shooting (2026-03-17 13:16)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group (PNP-ACG) will coordinate with local internet service providers (ISPs) after it caught seven children in Laguna allegedly planning a mass shooting, influenced by an individual in an online game. “We will make an arrangement with our providers. We will request the takedown of the platforms if the

- 2-year-old boy drowns in Cavite river (2026-03-17 13:13)

LUCENA CITY – A two-year-old boy drowned in a river in Ternate town, Cavite province, on Monday, police said Tuesday. The Region 4A police, in a report, identified the victim only as “Jhyroz,” a resident of Barangay Sapang 1. Authorities said the child was reported missing by

his mother, “Meralyn,” at around 5 p.m. She

- Marcos vows reforms, calls himself ally of women (2026-03-17 12:41)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday called himself an “ally” of women and pledged to pursue reforms that would advance their welfare in society. In his speech during the oath-taking of newly elected officers of the Association of Women Legislators Foundation, Inc. (AWLFI) of the 20th Congress at Malacañang, Marcos recognized the challenges

- Search on for 2 missing fishermen in waters off Northern Samar (2026-03-17 11:54)

TACLOBAN CITY — Search efforts are underway for two fishermen from Laoang, Northern Samar, who were reported missing after failing to return from a fishing trip on Sunday, March 15, prompting concern among their families and coastal communities. The missing fishermen were identified as Anthony “Toni” Bertos and Renato “Tokoy” Lagrimas, both residents of Barangay

- 2 men nabbed in N. Samar for alleged illegal fuel transport, sale (2026-03-17 11:33)

TACLOBAN CITY — Police arrested two men in Lavezares, Northern Samar, on Monday afternoon for allegedly transporting and selling petroleum products without proper authorization, as authorities continue to monitor fuel distribution amid supply concerns. Personnel of the Lavezares Municipal Police Station apprehended the suspects at 4:20 p.m. in Barangay Barobaybay. The suspects were identified only

- New BFP officer-in-charge named (2026-03-17 11:08)

MANILA, Philippines — Fire Chief Supt. Wilberto Rico Neil Ang Kwan Tiu has been appointed the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) officer-in-charge (OIC), Interior and Local Government Jonvic Remulla confirmed on Tuesday. “He’s a capable OIC,” Remulla told the Inquirer in a text message. This was done through a memorandum issued by Executive Secretary Ralph

- Transport groups: P1 fare hike not enough, strike to proceed (2026-03-17 10:27)

MANILA, Philippines — Transport group leaders on Tuesday criticized the government’s approval of a P1 fare increase for jeepneys, calling it “a slap in the face” amid soaring fuel prices. “It is a slap in the face to our sector that petroleum prices, particularly diesel, were raised by more than one hundred percent, while the

- LIST: Payout centers of P5,000 cash aid for drivers in Metro Manila (2026-03-17 10:25)

MANILA, Philippines — The national government on Tuesday began distributing P5,000 in cash assistance to public transport drivers to help ease the impact of rising fuel prices amid the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. The first beneficiaries are 135,196 tricycle drivers in Metro Manila. The payout will soon extend to the remaining 396,352 public

- Governance gaps deepen decline of Philippine fisheries (2026-03-17 10:06)

(Second of Two Parts) MANILA, Philippines — Before dawn, a fisherman eases his small banca away from shore. The motor sputters once, then settles into a steady hum as the boat glides into darker water, leaving behind the dim lights of houses along the coastline. For generations, fishers across the Philippines have started their day

- PNP hails Senate bill requiring body cams in law enforcement operations (2026-03-17 10:05)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) welcomed a bill approved by the Senate requiring law enforcement officers to use body-worn cameras during operations. "We have long been using body-worn cameras for we believe that they are instruments of truth, transparency and accountability," PNP Chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said in a statement

- Senate adopts WFH, skeletal workforce during recess to cut costs (2026-03-17 10:05)

MANILA, Philippines — The Senate of the Philippines will implement a work-from-home (WFH) scheme and skeletal workforce arrangement for its employees beginning April 6 as part of cost-cutting and energy conservation efforts. Congress will be on recess from March 21 to May 3. In a memorandum dated March 16, Senate Secretary Mark Llandro Mendoza

- LTFRB also declares fare hikes for buses, airport taxis, P2P and TNVS (2026-03-17 09:12)

MANILA, Philippines — Aside from the fare hike for traditional and modern jeepneys, the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) on Tuesday announced another round of fare increases for provincial and metro buses, airport taxis, point-to-point buses and transportation network vehicle services (TNVS). LTFRB chairperson Atty. Vigor Mendoza said the fare hikes will be effective

- Gov't starts P5,000 fuel aid for drivers; nationwide by April (2026-03-17 09:03)

MANILA, Philippines — Public transport drivers in Metro Manila began receiving P5,000 fuel assistance on Tuesday, covering drivers of tricycles, jeepneys, buses, and ride-hailing motorcycles and cars. The aid program aims to assist 396,352 public transport drivers in Metro Manila cope with rising fuel prices amid tensions in the Middle East, according to

- WATCH: Marcos leads in cash aid distribution to tricycle drivers in NCR (2026-03-17 08:07)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday (March 17) led the rollout of the cash assistance to drivers affected by the spike in oil prices due to the war in the Middle East. The distribution began with tricycle drivers in Metro Manila. The president personally inspected the event done by the Department of Social

- Cloudy skies, light rains to prevail in Luzon as amihan weakens (2026-03-17 07:32)

MANILA, Philippines — Cloudy skies with light rains are expected over Luzon on Tuesday as the northeast monsoon or amihan weakens, the state weather bureau said. According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), the

monsoon’s effect has already diminished, affecting only most of Luzon today. “We have alsoobserved that in

- DOTr announces P1 fare hike for regular jeeps, P2 for modern jeeps (2026-03-17 07:28)

MANILA, Philippines — There will be a provisional fare hike of P1 for traditional jeepneys and P2 for modern jeepneys, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) announced. This statements came amid the oil price hike as war in the Middle East continues. “When it comes to traditional jeepneys, there is an increase of P1. We will

- Ilocos Norte launches solar rooftop project with flexible financing (2026-03-17 07:23)

LAOAG CITY — The province of Ilocos Norte is encouraging homeowners to adopt solar energy with flexible financing options, officials said Monday. Under the solar rooftop project, the provincial government has partnered with ACEN Corporation, GCash, Solaric, and the Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative (INEC) to promote the installation of solar rooftops and net metering. Through this

- Gov’t urged to run oil industry as prices soar (2026-03-17 05:55)

MANILA, Philippines — Ahead of another round of double-digit fuel price hikes on Tuesday, the largest trade union in the country has called on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to enforce emergency powers under the oil deregulation law, to temporarily take over the industry in a bid to stabilize oil prices. Also on Monday, the House

- Buzzer beater: VP files reply to impeachment complaints (2026-03-17 05:50)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte on Monday beat the deadline to file her formal reply to the two impeachment complaints lodged against her before the House of Representatives’ committee on justice, Bicol Saro Rep. Terry Ridon said. Ridon, a member of the panel, confirmed to reporters that Duterte submitted her reply to the

- PH fuel prices ‘most expensive’ yet, as peso almost 60:$1 (2026-03-17 05:45)

MANILA, Philippines — Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said the country will log its “most expensive” fuel prices yet by Tuesday, the weekly schedule for price adjustments, amid the Iran war that continues to disrupt fuel exports past its second week. Meanwhile, the Philippine peso nearly reached the P60-per-dollar level after weakening to a new record

- PAOCC gets over 47,400 complaints vs abusive online lending apps (2026-03-17 05:20)

MANILA, Philippines — The Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission (PAOCC) said on Monday that it received 47,446 complaints about the allegedly abusive behavior of some companies operating online lending applications between August 2024 and January 2026. “What is painful about this is that there are reports that many of our fellow Filipinos are suffering from depression.

- SC junks Las Piñas resident’s petition vs higher trash collection fees (2026-03-17 05:15)

MANILA, Philippines — The Supreme Court has dismissed a petition filed by an educator seeking to nullify a Manila City ordinance that raised garbage disposal costs by up to 1,200 percent. In a ruling made public on Monday but promulgated on Feb. 26, the high court en banc said the petition filed by John Barry

- PNP thwarts teenagers’ alleged plan to attack school (2026-03-17 05:10)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police on Monday urged parents to warn their children against online games that “encourage violence” after seven teenagers in the Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon) region were turned over to social workers on Feb. 2 for hatching online a plan to attack their school on Feb. 16 using

- MMDA revives ‘heatstroke break’ for personnel (2026-03-17 05:00)

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) reintroduced on Monday its 30-minute heatstroke break policy for field personnel either in the morning or in the afternoon to protect them from heat-related illnesses during summer. Under MMDA Memorandum Circular No. 04, a staggered break schedule will be implemented for traffic and metro aides as

- Kanlaon eruption sparks fires; ashfall hits Negros villages (2026-03-17 04:40)

BACOLOD CITY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL, Philippines — A moderately explosive eruption of Mt. Kanlaon on Sunday night triggered forest and grassland fires covering an estimated 65 hectares (ha) and caused ashfall and a sulfuric odor across 90 barangays in Negros, authorities reported. The eruption began at 6:07 p.m. and lasted about a minute, but ash emission

- Fuel hike worsens Zambales fishing woes (2026-03-17 04:35)

SAN ANTONIO, ZAMBALES, Philippines — Fisherfolk sailing to the West Philippine Sea (WPS) are worried that rising fuel prices will further strain their livelihood, adding to the pressure they already face from the presence of the China Coast Guard (CCG) in the area. Ryan Jacinto, 43, a fisher from Subic who regularly travels to the

- Church leaders urge Baguio to ban gambling ads (2026-03-17 04:30)

BAGUIO CITY, Philippines — Church leaders have petitioned the local government to prohibit advertisements promoting all forms of gambling in the city, reasserting a public-backed antigambling stance that dates back to the destructive 1990 Luzon earthquake. According to the Baguio City Ecumenical Council, it has “consistently upheld its principled stand opposing all forms of gambling,

- OIL PRICE WATCH as of March 17, 2026 (2026-03-17 01:01)

In a press conference on Monday, Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said the country will log its “most expensive” fuel prices yet. The secretary noted that the latest increases include “two

of the highest jumps” in fuel prices. READ: OIL PRICE WATCH as of March 16, 2026 TheInquirer team gathered prevailing oil prices in Metro

- Diocese of Baguio issues warning vs theft of sacred vessels, other items (2026-03-17 00:51)

MANILA, Philippines — The Diocese of Baguio has called on parish priests and church staff to strengthen security measures amid a series of thefts involving sacred vessels and liturgical items. The Diocese made the call as several neighboring parishes suffered targeted theft over the last two months. READ: Female thief strikes at Bacolor, Pampanga church

- MegaLotto 6/45 winner bags P20.8M jackpot on March 16 draw (2026-03-16 23:23)

MANILA, Philippines — A bettor won the MegaLotto 6/45 jackpot in Monday night’s draw, while no one claimed the top prize for Grand Lotto 6/55, according to the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. March 16, 2026, fell on a Monday, the scheduled draw day for both games. PCSO said the winning combination for MegaLotto 6/45 was

- More senators push for swift passing of oil excise suspension (2026-03-16 23:03)

MANILA, Philippines — Several senators on Monday urged for the swift passing of the bill granting the president powers to suspend or reduce oil excise taxes during emergency situations, amid the conflict in the Middle East. Senators Loren Legarda, Erwin Tulfo, Joel Villanueva, Kiko Pangilinan, JV Ejercito, Pia Cayetano, Robin Padilla, and Bam Aquino expressed

- Senate approves Legarda’s Veterans’ Month Act, nat’l remembrance set (2026-03-16 23:03)

MANILA, Philippines — The Senate has passed on third and final reading Senate Bill No. 1719. The bill declaring April of every year as Philippine Veterans Month is principally authored and sponsored by Senator Loren Legarda. The measure establishes a permanent national framework to honor Filipino veterans, preserve their legacy, and strengthen access to welfare

- Drier summer for CDO as 3-month water plant rehab starts (2026-03-16 22:21)

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY — Thousands of residents in several barangays here face a drier-than-usual summer as Cagayan de Oro Bulk Water, Inc. (COBI) begins a three-month rehabilitation of its Taguanao water treatment plant on March 17. The City Mayor’s Office said it is coordinating with barangay officials to set up strategic water drop-off points

- Grievances over DBM, Dy, not related to impeachment, says Puno (2026-03-16 22:05)

MANILA, Philippines — Grievances raised regarding the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) failure to download funds for projects and his dissatisfaction with the House of Representatives leadership’s performance are not related to the impeachment proceedings, Deputy Speaker Ronaldo Puno said. Puno, in a press briefing on Monday said that connecting the two issues is

- More US troops arrive in CDO for joint training with PH forces (2026-03-16 22:01)

CAGAYAN DE ORO — Additional American troops arrived on a United States naval ship that docked at Macabalan Pier over the weekend. Colonel Anselmo Ty, group commander of the Philippine Air Force 590th Air Base Group stationed at Lumbia Air Base, said 100 US servicemen arrived to participate in the two-week humanitarian and disaster relief

- Marcos cites fuel subsidies among steps to cushion US-Iran war impact (2026-03-16 21:55)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. lays out the government’s steps to cushion the impact of the Middle East conflict, including the implementation of fuel subsidies to public utility drivers, farmers, and fisherfolk. In a video message on Monday, President Marcos also called on local government units to refrain from charging “pass thru

- House OKs bill suspending mandatory biofuel blending (2026-03-16 21:46)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives on Monday approved a bill seeking to allow the temporary suspension of mandatory biofuel blending in a bid to ease oil prices amid the volatile market. With 209 affirmative votes against five and zero abstentions, House Bill (HB) No. 8469, or the proposed Oil Price Stabilization Act was

- Marcos unveils more subsidies to cushion impact of Mideast conflict (2026-03-16 21:42)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday assured the public that the government is implementing measures to cushion the impact of the Middle East conflict on oil prices, including cash and fuel subsidies as well as the urgent certification of bills seeking to reduce excise taxes on petroleum products and amend the Biofuels Act

- House OKs travel tax abolition bill (2026-03-16 21:27)

MANILA, Philippines — The bill seeking abolition of travel tax, which one of the proponents said is already outdated, hurdled the House of Representatives. During Monday’s plenary session, 257 lawmakers voted in favor of House Bill No. 8464, while one voted against it and another abstained. HB No. 8464 seeks to repeal the travel

- House OKs priority bills on college scholarships, digital initiatives (2026-03-16 21:18)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives on Monday approved priority bills on government college scholarships and digitalization. During the plenary session, lawmakers approved on third and final reading House Bills (HB) No. 8476, the proposed reform under the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act; HB No. 8477, the proposed “Presidential Merit Scholarship

- House aware of NUP’s concern, but says budget release out of their hands (2026-03-16 21:15)

MANILA, Philippines — While they acknowledge the concerns raised by some National Unity Party (NUP) members, the House of Representatives leadership has clarified that the release of

the budget and other matters relating to project implementation are matters out of their hands.In a statement on Monday, Senior Deputy Speaker Ferdinand Hernandez echoed SpeakerFaustino

- 2 urgent measures vs oil price surge reach Senate floor (2026-03-16 21:15)

MANILA, Philippines – The two measures certified as urgent by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. were swiftly brought to the Senate floor on Monday to address surging fuel prices triggered by the crisis in the Middle East. As head of the Senate committee on ways and means, Sen. Pia Cayetano endorsed for plenary approval Senate Bill No.

- BARMM councilor survives gun attack in Cotabato town (2026-03-16 21:09)

COTABATO CITY– A town councilor is now under medical treatment after he was shot by riding-in-tandem gunmen along the national highway in Barangay Poblacion 8, Midsayap, Cotabato at around noon on Sunday, according to a police official. Captain Sammy Clarito, deputy chief of Midsayap police, identified the victim as Councilor Al-Hamidie Sampulna Mohamad, 42, of

- Water security projects top Manila Water’s 2025 Capex program (2026-03-16 20:55)

MANILA, Philippines — Manila Water Company, Inc. rolled out a robust capital expenditure program in 2025, with a strong focus on securing new and additional water sources and reinforcing critical infrastructure to ensure 24/7 water service across the East Zone service area as it anticipates increasing demand especially during the summer months. The 2025 CAPEX

- Ridon urges VP Duterte’s lawyers to ‘read SC decision again’ (2026-03-16 20:46)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte’s lawyers should read the Supreme Court (SC) decision again after they claimed that the allegations raised in the impeachment complaints were merely recycled, Bicol Saro party-list Rep. Terry Ridon. Ridon in a message to INQUIRER on Monday stressed that the SC decision which deemed the first set of impeachment

- Passion to purpose: Gutierrez tells women know your worth, your right (2026-03-16 20:45)

MANILA, Philippines — Knowing one’s rights is one of the most powerful forms of empowerment a woman can possess. This was the message of Department of Justice Undersecretary Margarita Gutierrez during Duty Free Philippines Corporation’s (DFPC) Women’s Month Pep Talk titled “From Passion to Purpose,” streamed live on the Duty Free Philippines Facebook page as

- Sara Duterte’s counsel says charges exaggerate issues, lack proof (2026-03-16 20:22)

MANILA, Philippines — The allegations raised against Vice President Sara Duterte in the two impeachment complaints against her were merely exaggerated and carry no evidentiary documents to back up the claims, her lawyers said on Monday. In their answer to the impeachment raps lodged before the House of Representatives’ committee on justice,

Duterte’s camp said accusations like

- DepEd boosts disaster recovery with learning hubs in Cebu, Masbate (2026-03-16 20:20)

BOGO CITY — Led by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., the Department of Education (DepEd) turned over new Learning Continuity Spaces (LCS) facilities in public schools in Bogo City and Masbate to address critical classroom shortages caused by recent natural disasters. President Marcos inspected the prefabricated, modular learning spaces equipped with solar-powered setups and internet

- 4 arrested in Taguig over alleged links to robbery, shooting incidents (2026-03-16 20:12)

MANILA, Philippines — Four suspects allegedly involved in a series of convenience store robberies as well as a shooting incident were arrested in Taguig City, authorities said Monday. According to the Taguig City Police Station Statement, the four suspects were arrested in separate operations. READ: Taguig police chief: Zero tolerance for 2 cops nabbed in

- DILG: Unified 911 hotline speeds up response vs road crashes, accidents (2026-03-16 20:02)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) on Monday said that its unified 911 hotline has successfully sped up response on road crashes and accidents. The DILG made the pronouncement after citing 1,113 road crash incidents during the recent holiday rush from December 2025 to January 2026. READ: ‘We’re winning drug

- Missing Puerto Galera teen found safe (2026-03-16 19:41)

CITY OF CALAPAN — A 14-year-old girl from Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro who was reported missing has been found safe, authorities and family members confirmed Monday afternoon. Kate Nicole Visaya, a Grade 9 student and resident of Barangay Balatero in Puerto Galera, was reported missing after leaving her home at around 8 a.m. on

- Nartatez bats for improved PNPA facilities, programs (2026-03-16 19:36)

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. on Monday renewed a push to improve the Philippine National Police Academy’s (PNPA) facilities and programs. He said this in a statement after attending the PNPA alumni homecoming over the weekend. “During the gathering, we discussed the continuing need to strengthen the

- PNP to be on heightened alert for 2026 summer season starting March 29 (2026-03-16 19:27)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) will be on heightened alert for the 2026 summer season, the agency said on Monday. The heightened alert level status, which limits the number of personnel who may take leaves, will take effect at 6 a.m. on March 29, ahead of this year’s commemoration of the Holy

- Sara Duterte lawyers hit ‘double standards’ in treatment of impeach raps (2026-03-16 19:20)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte on Monday said that impeachment complaints against her were addressed differently compared to those filed against President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. In the consolidated verified answer ad cautelam submitted on Monday to the House of Representatives’ committee on justice, Vice President Duterte’s legal team pointed out several times that

- CIDG eyes syndicate behind fake license plates manufacturing (2026-03-16 19:20)

MANILA, Philippines — The Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) on Monday said it was looking into a possible syndicate behind the manufacturing of fake license plates. “The plates you see being sold all around Metro Manila are only stores or depots,” CIDG Anti-Organized Crime Unit (AOCU) Chief Lt. Col. Dominick Poblete told reporters in

- Parents of school bullies must also be held accountable, says senators (2026-03-16 19:11)

MANILA, Philippines – Parents must also be held accountable for the behavior of bullies in school, Senators Bam Aquino, Raffy Tulfo, and Erwin Tulfo said on Monday. During the Senate Committee on Basic Education hearing on expanding the Anti-Bullying Act, Sen. Raffy Tulfo, in his opening statement, proposed mandatory training not only for teachers but

- 3 BIFF, Dawlah Islamiyah fighters surrendered to NBI (2026-03-16 18:50)

MANILA, Philippines — Three individuals linked to the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and Dawlah Islamiyah surrendered to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) during a protected extraction operation in Mamasapano, Maguindanao del Sur. In a press conference on Monday, NBI Director Melvin Matibag and NBI – BARMM Regional Director Jeremy Lotoc presented to members

- Cases endorsed vs 10 influencers over illegal gambling promotion — CICC (2026-03-16 18:47)

MANILA, Philippines — Cases have been referred to the Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group (PNP ACG) against 10 influencers over their promotion of allegedly illegal gambling sites, the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center (CICC) said. “Some of them have already had their accounts taken down. Others, the first-time offenders, came to us and promised they

- PAOCC, CICC team up vs transnational cyber crimes (2026-03-16 18:46)

MANILA, Philippines — The Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission (PAOCC) and the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center (CICC) on Monday formalized an agreement for a joint bid to crack down on transnational cybercrime. In a briefing after signing the agreement at Camp Crame on Monday, CICC Executive Director Aboy Paraiso told reporters that the agreement allows

• Dy assures House members: My door is always open for dialogue (2026-03-16 18:41)

MANILA, Philippines — House of Representatives Speaker Faustino "Bojie" Dy III has assured his colleagues in the chamber that his door is always open for any form of dialogue, saying that Congress' strength lies in their ability to "resolve concerns constructively." Dy in a statement on Monday said that the 2026 national budget or the General

• LTO names new Central Visayas regional director (2026-03-16 18:36)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Office (LTO) has named Wendel Dinglasan as the new regional director of Central Visayas. The LTO, in a statement on Monday, said Dinglasan's assignment is in line with Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez's directive to replace key officials and restructure regional enforcement units to strengthen service delivery. READ: LTO reassigns

• SC junks petition vs. Manila garbage fee hike of up to 1,200% (2026-03-16 18:10)

MANILA, Philippines — The Supreme Court (SC) has dismissed a petition filed by an educator seeking to nullify a Manila City ordinance that raised garbage disposal costs by up to 1,200 percent. In a ruling made public Monday but promulgated Feb. 26, the SC en banc said the petition filed by John Barry Tayam failed

• Health workers' group rejects compressed workweek, seeks pay hike (2026-03-16 18:08)

MANILA, Philippines—A group of health-care workers on Monday criticized the four-day workweek policy recently implemented across various government offices, saying that the measure will only increase the burden of employees in the health sector. In a statement, the Alliance of Health Workers (AHW) said policies enforcing a compressed workweek and other cost-cutting measures "are nothing

• MMDA gives field personnel 30-minute breaks to prevent heat illness (2026-03-16 18:08)

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) will be bringing back its 30-minute heat stroke break policy for its field personnel beginning on Monday in an effort to protect its workers from heat-related illnesses. In a statement on Monday, the agency said it recently issued Memorandum Circular No. 04, which prescribes a staggered

• Acop son takes oath as Antipolo solon (2026-03-16 18:05)

MANILA, Philippines — Philip Conrad Acop, son of former Antipolo lawmaker Romeo Acop, who passed away last December 2025, has taken his oath of office as the new representative of the city's second district. The younger Acop took his oath before House of Representatives Speaker Faustino "Bojie" Dy III during the session on Monday, two days after

• VP Duterte files official reply to impeachment raps, says Ridon (2026-03-16 17:40)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte has filed her formal reply to the two impeachment complaints lodged against her before the House of Representatives' committee on justice, Bicol Saro party-list Rep. Terry Ridon said. Ridon, a member of the panel, confirmed to reporters on Monday that Duterte submitted her reply to the committee on justice

- Banking on 'momentum,' House panel OKs FOI bill (2026-03-16 17:37)

[Updated March 16, 2026, 7:17 p.m.] MANILA, Philippines — The House committee on public information on Monday approved the Right to Information Act or the Freedom of Information (FOI) bill, mandating public access to all official records with certain exceptions. "For more than three decades, this measure has lingered in the legislative backburner," Cagayan de

- Use of body cams among bills OK'd on third reading in Senate (2026-03-16 17:33)

MANILA, Philippines – Several measures, including the mandatory use of body-worn cameras (BWCs) during law enforcement, were unanimously approved on third and final reading in the Senate on Monday. The 21 senators in attendance voted to approve on third reading Senate Bill No. 1908, a measure that will require all law enforcement officers to use BWCs

- Getaway driver in Nueva Ecija car killings nabbed, police eye hired gun (2026-03-16 17:23)

MANILA, Philippines — The alleged driver of the getaway tricycle in the killing of two people, who were later found dead and burned in a car in Nueva Ecija, has been arrested, the police said on Monday. He was caught at a mall in Santa Rosa town on the morning of March 12 after a hot

- San Beda alumni want Suntay stripped of award over lewd remarks (2026-03-16 17:12)

MANILA, Philippines — Concerned alumni and students of San Beda University are calling for the revocation of an award given by the school to Quezon City Rep. and Bedan alumnus Jesus "Bong" Suntay due to his lewd remarks about actress Anne Curtis. Through a change.org petition, members of the Bedan community and concerned alumni urged

- House OKs bill allowing fuel excise tax suspension during emergencies (2026-03-16 16:54)

MANILA, Philippines — A bill that will give President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. the power to suspend the collection of excise tax on fuel during emergencies has been approved by the House of Representatives on third and final reading. During the plenary session on Monday, 247 lawmakers voted in favor of House Bill (HB) No. 8418, which

- Sunday's heightened security at Palace was part of drill – Castro (2026-03-16 16:52)

MANILA, Philippines — Palace Press Officer Claire Castro on Monday said the "heightened security" implemented at the Malacañang complex on Sunday is just part of an exercise "to test the operational readiness of personnel and units." This statement, sent through a Viber message to reporters, was in clarification of a circulating social media post questioning why

• Speaker Dy vows House action on another measure vs oil price hikes (2026-03-16 16:50)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives will swiftly act on another bill seen to address the successive oil price hikes after President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. certified it as urgent, Speaker Faustino Dy III said on Monday. In a statement, Dy said that the House is currently in an “all hands on deck” status to

• Alaminos City celebrates signature ‘longganisa’ (2026-03-16 16:30)

ALAMINOS CITY, PANGASINAN, Philippines — For locals and visitors alike, Alaminos longganisa is a sausage with character—juicy, garlicky and perfectly crispy when fried. But what makes it unique is not just the taste—it’s the small buri sticks separating each portion, a simple detail that has become the city’s delicious trademark. The Alaminos longganisa is sold

• 2 stranded hikers rescued in Zambales mountains (2026-03-16 16:00)

SAN ANTONIO, Zambales — Two hikers were rescued on Sunday after getting stranded on a mountain trail near Anawangin Cove, a popular beach and camping destination in this town. The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) in Zambales said its local substation responded after the Municipal Tourism Office reported that the hikers were stranded due to exhaustion

• Solon pushes for 50% toll discount as oil prices surge (2026-03-16 15:59)

MANILA, Philippines — A lawmaker filed on Monday a House resolution urging the government to impose a 50-percent reduction on highway tolls in view of continuous spike in oil prices. Manila 2nd District Rep. Rolando Valeriano, chairperson of the House committee on public order, filed House Resolution No. 879 to reduce the tolls while fuel prices

• NBI, PRC nab proxy examinee at teachers’ board exam in Pagadian (2026-03-16 15:46)

PAGADIAN CITY, Zamboanga del Sur— Authorities foiled an attempt to cheat in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) after an impostor was caught trying to take the test for another examinee at Napolan National High School here on Sunday. The attempt was uncovered through the vigilance of room watchers and the Professional Regulation Commission–Region IX’s

• Puno clarifies: We just want stronger impeachment case vs VP Duterte (2026-03-16 15:19)

MANILA, Philippines — The National Unity Party’s (NUP) careful stance regarding the impeachment proceedings was borne out of a yearning to craft a stronger case against Vice President Sara Duterte, Deputy Speaker Ronaldo Puno said on Monday. During a press briefing held in his office inside the Batasang Pambansa complex, Puno was asked if he can

• Over 47,400 complaints logged vs abusive lending apps since 2024 (2026-03-16 15:18)

MANILA, Philippines — The Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission (PAOCC) received 47,446 complaints of allegedly abusive behavior by companies operating online lending applications between August 2024 and January 2026. PAOCC Executive Director Benjamin

Acorda Jr. shared this with the media in Camp Crame on Monday after signing a memorandumof agreement with the Cybercrime Investigation and

- Group sounds alarm on kids' association of vape with oxygen (2026-03-16 14:45)

MANILA, Philippines — A focus group discussion by Parents Against Vape Philippines (PAV PH) found that some children are now associating vaping with oxygen, a finding that PAV PH member Judy Delos Reyes described as alarming, as it highlights the risk of young people seeing vape as something essential. Delos Reyes aired these sentiments during

- PNP wants to coordinate with Piston for March 19 transport strike (2026-03-16 13:52)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Monday said it will coordinate with the transport group Piston and other rallying organizations that will mount a strike starting Thursday, March 19, to urge government action amid rising oil prices. In a press briefing, PNP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Randulf Tuaño said Chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr.

- Puno dissatisfied with Dy, says NUP considering move to minority (2026-03-16 13:46)

MANILA, Philippines — Deputy Speaker Ronaldo Puno has expressed dissatisfaction over House of Representatives Speaker Faustino "Bojie" Dy III's leadership, saying that several members of the National Unity Party (NUP) that he heads are mulling a move to the minority bloc. In a press briefing on Monday in his office, Puno said that the Department of

- WATCH: DOE briefing on energy supply, fuel prices amid Mideast tensions (2026-03-16 13:38)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Energy (DOE) holds a press briefing Monday to provide updates on the country's energy supply situation, fuel price movements, and government measures as the Philippines and the rest of the world face uncertainty due to the continuing conflict in the Middle East. Government officials said the agency continues to

- Fire breaks out at Regional Center Site in Pagadian City (2026-03-16 13:30)

PAGADIAN CITY, Zamboanga del Sur – A fire erupted Monday morning inside the Regional Center Site in Barangay Balintawak, right beside the Bureau of Treasury building, prompting residents and nearby workers to rush to the scene. Witnesses said individuals from a food stall located directly beside the burning house immediately threw buckets of water while

- Marcos certifies as urgent bill on amendments to biofuels law (2026-03-16 13:28)

MANILA, Philippines – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has certified as urgent the passage of a bill that would suspend the mandatory use of locally-sourced biofuels for a year as fuel prices continue to surge. The president sought the swift passage of Senate Bill No. 1965, which seeks to amend Republic Act No. 9367 known as

- Tulfo hits PTAs' lack of focus on school anti-bullying drive (2026-03-16 13:23)

MANILA, Philippines – Sen. Raffy Tulfo expressed on Monday his qualms against parent-teacher associations (PTA) in schools, citing their misplaced priority on projects instead of focusing on bullying among students. Tulfo made the remark amid the Senate Commission on Basic Education Hearing on the expansion of the Anti-Bullying Act. “Ako mainit ang ulo ko diyan

- Ex-cop killed in Manila; mayor offers cash, witness protection to driver (2026-03-16 13:20)

MANILA, Philippines — A retired police officer was shot dead in Manila, prompting Mayor Francisco “Isko Moreno” Domagoso on Monday to offer a P500,000 cash reward, not to informants, but to the driver of the motorcycle for him to surrender and stand witness against his companion – the gunman. Identified as George Capistrano, the former

- Ombudsman: Villanueva’s flood mess case now in ‘advanced stage’ (2026-03-16 13:18)

MANILA, Philippines — The case of Sen. Joel Villanueva being investigated by the Department of Justice (DOJ) is now in “an advanced stage,” Assistant Ombudsman Mico Clavano said on Monday. Villanueva faces charges in violation of the Anti-Graft Law, malversation of public funds through falsification of public documents, direct bribery, corruption of public officials, and

- PNP to deploy nearly 55,000 cops nationwide for Holy Week, summer (2026-03-16 13:09)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) will dispatch nearly 55,000 personnel nationwide as part of its security preparations for the Ligtas Summer Vacation (SUMVAC) 2026. This deployment is for the safety of the travelers and residents during the Holy Week and the peak summer travel season. A total of 54,989 personnel will be mobilized nationwide

- Inflation, corruption are top concerns of Filipinos, survey says (2026-03-16 13:07)

MANILA, Philippines — Curbing inflation and fighting graft and corruption in government are the Filipinos’ top national concerns for the first quarter of 2026, according to Pulse Asia Research’s Ulat ng Bayan survey released on Monday. The survey showed that 59 percent of Filipinos want the administration to control inflation, while 47 percent want corruption

- PNP to parents: Keep kids away from online games that ‘encourage violence’ (2026-03-16 12:15)

(Trigger warning: Mentions of violence and suicide) MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) warned parents to keep children away from online games that “encourage violence.” The caution comes after seven teens in Calabarzon were turned over to social workers after engaging in online discussions involving a mass shooting. “We have to work together

- A mom’s quest for justice for bullied son who jumped off school building (2026-03-16 12:02)

Candles are lit and offered on the spot where ‘Totoy’ landed after jumping from the fourth floor of a school building in Quezon City. (Contributed photo) Trigger warning: Mentions of suicide MANILA, Philippines — Nene remembers her 15-year-old son, Totoy (names withheld for privacy), as a friendly, generous and studious kid who managed his seizure

- Marcos ratings improve, VP Duterte rises in latest Pulse Asia poll (2026-03-16 12:00)

MANILA, Philippines — Nearly half of Filipinos expressed disapproval and distrust in the performance of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., while Vice President Sara Duterte enjoyed better approval and trust ratings in Pulse Asia Research’s 1st Quarter Ulat ng Bayan Survey released on Monday. However, Marcos’ disapproval rating went down by three percentage points in the new

- LOOK: Where tricycle drivers in NCR can claim P5,000 DSWD aid (2026-03-16 11:46)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) will simultaneously distribute P5,000 cash assistance to tricycle drivers in 30 identified sites across the National Capital Region (NCR) starting Tuesday, March 17. DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian and Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez presented the list of payout sites during a joint press conference

- School bullying affects students’ test scores, says Edcom II (2026-03-16 11:40)

MANILA, Philippines – Exposure to bullying affects the test scores of learners, the Second Congressional Commission on Education (Edcom II) reported on Monday. During the Senate Commission on Basic Education hearing on the Anti-Bullying Act, Edcom II Technical Specialist for Basic Education Riz Comia presented the effects of bullying on learning. “[Bullying] is a direct

- Soldiers recover decomposing body of NPA leader after Samar clash (2026-03-16 11:20)

TACLOBAN CITY — Government troops discovered the decomposing body of a suspected New People’s Army (NPA) leader following an armed encounter in Hinabangan, Samar, last Friday, March 14. Soldiers from the 63rd Infantry Battalion found the remains between Barangays Cabalagnan and Tabay while pursuing two fleeing members of the Sub-Regional Committee (SRC) Sesame, according to

- LOOK: Marcos visits Marcelo Fernan-Polambato Elementary School in Cebu (2026-03-16 10:58)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday led the turnover and inspection of the Learning Continuity Space (LCS) and the rollout of the YAKAP at Kalinga Caravan at Marcelo B. Fernan-Polambato Elementary School in Bogo City, Cebu. These initiatives support learning continuity and provide primary healthcare services to students and teachers following the

- Mayon volcano activity intensifies with 539 quakes in 24 hours (2026-03-16 10:35)

LEGAZPI CITY — The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) on Monday recorded the highest number of volcanic earthquakes since the latest unrest of Mayon Volcano began on Jan. 6, prompting authorities to maintain Alert Level 3 over the volcano. In its latest bulletin, Phivolcs reported 539 volcanic earthquakes in the past 24 hours,

- Why Philippine fisheries keep losing 45 million kilos of fish a year (2026-03-16 10:29)

(First of two parts) MANILA, Philippines — For generations, Filipino fishers measured abundance by instinct: the weight of a net, the distance they had to travel, the hours it took before a boat came home full. Long before scientists put numbers to it, many already knew something was wrong. Now, data is catching up. A

- Morning chills in Baguio linger at 10°C (2026-03-16 10:26)

BAGUIO CITY — Residents and tourists in this city woke up to a crisp morning on Monday as temperatures hovered around 10°C at 5 a.m., slightly warmer than the 9.4°C recorded the previous day. Locals described the cool breeze as unusually brisk for this time of year. READ: Pagasa records coldest day so far in

- Eastern Samar gov’t starts 4-day workweek (2026-03-16 10:08)

TACLOBAN CITY — The provincial government of Eastern Samar will begin implementing a compressed four-day on-site workweek in provincial offices starting Monday, following an executive order issued by Gov. Ralph Vincent Evardone. The directive, contained in Executive Order No. RVE-2026-03-014, adopts energy conservation measures and introduces a revised work schedule for provincial government employees while

- Clavano: All lawmakers-contractors in flood mess should face graft (2026-03-16 10:01)

MANILA, Philippines — Cases should be filed against all lawmakers who are contractors and are involved in controversial flood control projects for possible graft and conflict of interest violations, according to Assistant Ombudsman Mico Clavano. Clavano said the issue involves a growing number of contractors entering party-list positions in Congress, noting that the law prohibits contractors

- Piston to hold transport strike beginning on Thursday (March 19) (2026-03-16 09:50)

MANILA, Philippines — Transport group Piston will hold a transport strike starting Thursday, March 19, to protest the continuous oil price hikes amid tensions in the Middle East. Piston National President Mody Floranda announced this in a press conference at Welcome Rotonda in Quezon City on Tuesday. READ: Next week’s spike may push diesel to

- 14-year-old girl reported missing in Puerto Galera (2026-03-16 09:41)

CITY OF CALAPAN, Oriental Mindoro — A 14-year-old girl from Puerto Galera has been reported missing after failing to return home on Sunday morning, authorities said. According to the

municipal government, Kate Nicole Visaya, a Grade 9 student and resident of BarangayBalatero, was last seen on Sunday at around 8 a.m. after leaving home to

- Kanlaon eruption triggers forest fires; ashfall hits 11 LGUs (2026-03-16 09:22)

BACOLOD CITY—Forest fires broke out on the slopes of Kanlaon Volcano following a moderately explosive eruption at 6:07 p.m. on Sunday, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) reported. Ashfall and in some areas a strong sulfuric odor affected 54 barangays across 10 local government units (LGUs) in Negros Occidental: Binalbagan, La Castellana, Moises

- ‘Cool’ amihan’s effect in PH may last until Wednesday (2026-03-16 07:35)

MANILA, Philippines — The northeast monsoon, locally known as amihan, is expected to last in the country until Wednesday, March 18, the state weather bureau reported on Monday. According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), the effects of the amihan are already decreasing and may dissipate by Thursday. “By Thursday, we

- OIL PRICE WATCH as of March 16, 2026 (2026-03-16 07:33)

Motorists are seen to experience a new round of major oil price increases this week because of the impact of the Middle East war. Industry estimates indicate that the adjustments can reach up to P22.30 per liter. The Inquirer team gathered prevailing oil prices in Metro Manila and other parts of the country as of

- Endangered freshwater turtle rescued in Apayao River (2026-03-16 06:59)

PUDTOL, Apayao — A critically endangered freshwater turtle is being rehabilitated by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) – Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) in Calanasan after it was rescued in Barangay Capanikkian here Thursday. Known as the Cantor’s giant softshell turtle or frog-faced soft-shelled turtle, the rescued turtle weighs 10

- PNP probes sudden closure of gas stations amid price hikes (2026-03-16 05:45)

MANILA, Philippines — In an effort to protect consumers from hoarding and profiteering, the Philippine National Police (PNP) has stepped up its monitoring of gas stations that abruptly stopped operating as fuel prices continue to surge. “We in the PNP fully understand the situation that gas station owners face amid the challenges brought by the

- DOTr: No basis for safety claims of lawmaker, MRT 3 employees (2026-03-16 05:30)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Transportation (DOTr) on Sunday disputed claims that the Metro Manila Rail Transit 3 (MRT 3) has become unsafe, as alleged by the train line’s employees’ association and the freshman party list congressman who is championing the union’s claims. “Now that the price of crude oil is rising, commuters and

- Teen pregnancies on the rise again (2026-03-16 05:25)

MANILA, Philippines — The Commission on Population and Development (CPD) expressed alarm over the renewed increase in the number of children aged 10 to 14 years old who are getting pregnant and giving birth, urging lawmakers to immediately pass the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention bill. “As the country observes National Women’s Month, the Philippines is facing

- Higher biodiesel blend of 7% pushed amid surging oil prices (2026-03-16 05:15)

MANILA, Philippines — Biodiesel producers said they are ready to pump up the biodiesel blend to 7 percent to help shield Filipinos from further spikes in imported fuel prices due to the Middle East war. The Philippine Biodiesel Association (TPBA) said Republic Act No. 9367 or the Biofuels Act of 2006 “remains the country’s most

- PUV fare hikes in Metro Manila set Tuesday (2026-03-16 05:10)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) has approved fare increases for passenger jeepneys and buses in Metro Manila to provide a lifeline to drivers reeling from the ever-rising price of diesel, which is expected to breach the P100 per liter mark this week. In an interview with dzRH on Sunday,

- Faster impeachment seen without VP Sara Duterte response (2026-03-16 05:05)

MANILA, Philippines — The impeachment proceedings against Vice President Sara Duterte may be expedited by the House committee on justice if she does not answer the complaints by Monday, Bicol Saro party-list Rep. Terry Ridon said. Duterte was given 10 days to provide a reply shortly after two impeachment complaints against her were deemed sufficient

- Cagayan Valley farms reel from dry spell (2026-03-16 04:40)

SAN PABLO, ISABELA, Philippines — Farmers across Cagayan Valley are grappling with the early onset of the dry season, as prolonged lack of rainfall since last month c Manuel Dayag, 50, a farmer from Cabagan town, said his cornfields are already drying up despite not yet reaching harvest. READ: DA allots P300M for climate-resilient crop

- Fuel price surge halts fishing in Misamis Oriental town (2026-03-16 04:35)

OPOL, MISAMIS ORIENTAL, Philippines — Rising fuel costs triggered by escalating tensions in the Middle East are beginning to hit the small fishing village of Luyongbonbon here, where local fishers are now forced to keep their boats anchored and rethink how to support their families. Village chief Jerry Jacalan and fishing boat owner Cecilia Baculio

- 2 trafficked girls reunited with family in Maguindanao del Sur (2026-03-15 22:42)

COTABATO CITY, BARMM, Philippines — The Ministry of Social Services and Development in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (MSSD-BARMM) today said it had

facilitated the reunion of two girls with their families in Maguindanao del Sur after beingrescued from the clutches of trafficking operators. According to Jan Michella Agata, focal personof

- March 15 PCSO draw: No jackpot winners in Ultra, Super Lotto (2026-03-15 22:28)

MANILA, Philippines — No bettor won the jackpot prizes for Ultra Lotto 6/58 and Super Lotto 6/49 in Sunday’s draw, according to the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. PCSO said the winning combination for Ultra Lotto 6/58 was 51-54-37-36-42-57, with the jackpot reaching P96.53 million. No ticket matched all six numbers. Super Lotto 6/49 yielded 23-09-25-32-22-24

- 8 drug suspects busted in Zamboanga City and Lanao del Norte operations (2026-03-15 22:04)

PAGADIAN CITY, Zamboanga del Sur – Operatives of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency in Region 9 (PDEA-9) and local police units arrested eight suspects and confiscated around P13.6 million worth of suspected shabu in three separate operations in Zamboanga City and Lanao del Norte on Saturday. In Zamboanga City, the operatives arrested a male suspect

- Subpoenas on Sara Duterte, husband’s tax, business records eyed (2026-03-15 21:29)

MANILA, Philippines — Subpoenas may be issued on the income tax returns and business records of Vice President Sara Duterte, as well as her husband, lawyer Manases Carpio, Bicol Saro party-list Rep. Terry Ridon on Sunday, to explain what he described as an alleged P50-million gap between Duterte’s cumulative government salary and her declared net

- House on track for approval of Ledac priority measures (2026-03-15 21:29)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives is on track to pass priority measures under the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (Ledac) Common Legislative Agenda with 4 out of 52 bills set for approval in the coming days. House Majority Leader Sandro Marcos, in a statement, said a total of 17 measures, are targeted to become

- LTFRB approves provisional fare hike for provincial buses (2026-03-15 18:51)

MANILA, Philippines—The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) has announced the implementation of a provisional fare increase for provincial buses beginning this Saturday, March 14. In a statement on Saturday, the agency said it has released an updated fare guide for provincial public utility buses (PUBs) after a provisional fare increase was approved through

- Kanlaon Volcano logs moderate explosive eruption (2026-03-15 18:47)

MANILA, Philippines – Kanlaon Volcano in Negros Island had an moderate explosive eruption on Sunday evening, its third this year, the Philippine Institute of Seismology and Volcanology (Phivolcs) said. According to Phivolcs in a statement, the eruption occurred at the summit of the volcano at exactly 06:07 p.m. READ: Kanlaon Volcano erupts anew The eruption

- Groups asked to re-register for first parliamentary polls in BARMM (2026-03-15 18:32)

COTABATO CITY – The Office of Settler Communities (OSC) in the Bangsamoro on Sunday issued an urgent call to all settler communities' organizations to immediately secure their mandatory sectoral certification to participate in this year's parliamentary elections. Dr. Susana Anayatin, executive director of OSC, an agency under the Office of the Chief Minister (OCM) of

- Officials looking into complaints vs district hospital in N. Samar town (2026-03-15 17:02)

TACLOBAN CITY — Local and provincial officials are looking into the complaints of residents over the quality of patient care at a district hospital in Laoang, Northern Samar. Mayor Charlene Ongchuan said that while the district hospital Dr. Gregorio B. Tan Memorial Hospital (GBTMH) was not directly under the municipal government's jurisdiction, she could not

- Business groups, farmers hail gov't crackdown on illicit tobacco trade (2026-03-15 16:48)

MANILA, Philippines – Several business and agriculture groups have welcomed the government's intensified crackdown on illicit tobacco manufacturing and smuggling, citing the efforts of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) under Secretary Jonvic Remulla. The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), the Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI), and the British Chamber of Commerce

- Eastern Samar cop relieved from post over gun incident, probe underway (2026-03-15 16:15)

TACLOBAN CITY — A police corporal from the Can-avid, Eastern Samar police station has been relieved from his post after he reportedly displayed his service firearm before a cashier of a local resort Saturday night. The Can-avid municipal police station (MPS) issued a statement on Sunday, March 15, saying it started investigating the incident circulating

- La Union town defends cement plant amid hazardous waste allegation (2026-03-15 16:07)

CALASIAO, Pangasinan – The local government unit (LGU) of Bacnotan in La Union has defended a cement plant in the town following an allegation that it was dumping hazardous waste in the mountainous areas of the villages of Ubbog and Paagan. In a statement posted on social media early this week, the LGU said a

- Protect rights of arrested doctor – Cordillera health group (2026-03-15 15:29)

BAGUIO CITY — A regional health organization has called on authorities to respect the rights and dignity of Dr. Ana Marie Rilloraza, one of 10 individuals arrested in two separate police and military operations on March 11. The Community Health, Education, Services and Training in the Cordillera Region (CHESTCORE) urged authorities to ensure humane treatment

- PNP tightens monitoring of gas stations over sudden closures (2026-03-15 15:06)

MANILA, Philippines—The Philippine National Police (PNP) has intensified its monitoring of gas stations that suddenly halted operations amid soaring oil prices, driven by the ongoing Middle East conflict. This move follows complaints from motorists and netizens about unannounced closures. Police chiefs have been instructed to coordinate with local government units and the Department of Energy

- Temporary ‘holiday jobs’ led to spike in unemployment rate – Dole (2026-03-15 14:43)

MANILA, Philippines – The 5.8 percent unemployment rate for January 2026 was due to workers transitioning out of holiday-related jobs, the Department of Labor and Employment (Dole) said. This came after the employment dropped by 1.489 million from December 2025 to January 2026. Annually, employment declined from 48.89 million in 2025 to 47.94 million in

- Rep. Leviste buys Germany house where Rizal once lived, wrote ‘Noli’ (2026-03-15 14:25)

MANILA, Philippines — Batangas 1st District Rep. Leandro Leviste has purchased the house in Germany where national hero Jose Rizal finished his novel, Noli Me Tangere, the lawmaker’s office said Sunday. According to Leviste’s office in a Facebook post, the lawmaker bought the house in Wilhelmsfeld, Germany to preserve the property and promote Philippine history.

- DOTr downplays solon, train staff’s views MRT-3 operations are ‘unsafe’ (2026-03-15 13:43)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Transportation (DOTr) on Sunday rejected the allegations of Kamanggagawa party-list Rep. Eli San Fernando and some train employees, who had said that the Metro Rail Transit 3 (MRT-3) is operating under risky conditions. “The DOTr assures the public that MRT-3 remains safe for all passengers, contrary to their claim

- 2 suspects nabbed in slaying of 3 Maranaos in Cagayan (2026-03-15 13:15)

TUGUEGARAO CITY — Two men allegedly involved in the killing of three Maranaos during a botched P1.2-million gold sale were arrested in a police pursuit operation in Barangay San Juan, Buguey, Cagayan, on Friday, March 13, at around 3 p.m. Police Captain Sheila Joy Fronda, spokesperson for Cagayan police, identified the suspects as alias Fred,

- Ormoc house fire kills father, son; both were persons with disabilities (2026-03-15 13:05)

TACLOBAN CITY — A 90-year-old man and his 48-year-old son, both persons with disabilities (PWDs), died when a fire razed their home Saturday afternoon, March 14, in Barangay Linao, Ormoc City, Leyte, authorities reported. The victims were identified by their aliases – “Lino,” a widower, and his son “Jojo,” both residents of the village. Ormoc

- PNP is ‘more aggressive’ now against street crimes – chief (2026-03-15 12:58)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Sunday said it has undertaken a “more aggressive stance” against crimes in the streets following the killing of three mobile

phone technicians in Cagayan. The PNP released a statement after reporting that two suspectsin the slay had been apprehended. READ: 2 suspects in killing of

- Injured bird Brahminy kite finds sanctuary at Pagbilao, Quezon church (2026-03-15 12:50)

LUCENA CITY — A bird of prey called Brahminy kite (Haliastur indus) that was nursed back to health by church workers and a parish priest has seemingly chosen a Catholic church in Pagbilao, Quezon, as its permanent sanctuary. “We released it and watched it fly away, but it returned and refused to leave,” said parish

- Impeachment to go faster if Duterte won’t respond to complaints – solon (2026-03-15 12:29)

MANILA, Philippines — The impeachment proceedings against Vice President Sara Duterte may be expedited by the House Committee on Justice if she does not answer the complaints by Monday, Bicol Saro party-list Rep. Terry Ridon said. Duterte was given 10 days to provide a reply shortly after two impeachment complaints against her were deemed sufficient

- Police probe into fire that razed 6 houses in Antipolo City Saturday (2026-03-15 11:18)

LUCENA CITY — Police are conducting an investigation into the fire that swept through Barangay Mambugan in Antipolo City, Rizal, on Saturday, March 14. The blaze destroyed six houses. According to a report from Police Region 4A released on Sunday, the incident broke out around 3:45 p.m. and was brought under control by firefighters approximately

- Weekend cold snap stays in Baguio City as temperature lingers at 9.4 °C (2026-03-15 10:21)

BAGUIO CITY — The cool spell goes on in Baguio over the weekend, with temperatures registering at 9.4 degrees Celsius on Sunday (March 15) after hitting 9°C on Saturday. The weather information comes from the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa). The weekend cold was driven by the northeast monsoon, bringing chilly winds

- Oriental Mindoro Provincial Board urges suspension of ships’ fare hikes (2026-03-15 09:54)

CALAPAN CITY, Oriental Mindoro — The Sangguniang Panlalawigan (SP) or Provincial Board has called on the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) to immediately suspend its advisory allowing shipping operators to raise fares by up to 20 percent on the Batangas–Calapan route. The council said the suspension should be in effect pending public consultation and review. The

- Another Acop takes Antipolo seat in House – Comelec (2026-03-15 08:06)

MANILA, Philippines — Philip Conrad Acop was proclaimed on Sunday as the new second district representative of Antipolo, Rizal, succeeding his late father, Romeo Acop. The younger Acop obtained 60,051 of 82,796 votes during the district’s special polls on Saturday, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) reported. Romeo Acop, the former congressman of the

same district,

- Rebuilding Lake Lanao’s fishing economy, but at what ecological cost? (2026-03-15 08:00)

MANILA, Philippines—The national government has begun work on a P534.7-million fishing hub in Marawi City, a project officials say could help unlock the economic potential of Lake Lanao while supporting the city’s long-term recovery. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said it has begun developing an Integrated Cold Hub Complex to strengthen aquaculture

- Cold weather prevails in most of PH due to amihan – Pagasa (2026-03-15 07:40)

MANILA, Philippines — Most of the country will experience cold weather on Sunday due to the northeast monsoon, or “amihan,” the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said. “We will experience cold weather today because of the northeast monsoon. Currently, the amihan is affecting a large part of our country,” Pagasa weather specialist

- OIL PRICE WATCH as of March 15, 2026 (2026-03-15 07:26)

MANILA, Philippines — There will be no break from soaring fuel prices this coming week. An industry source told the Inquirer that the per-liter price of diesel may surge by P19.30 to P22.30 starting March 17 while gasoline prices may also rise by P14 to P17 a liter. Fuel prices monitored by the Department of

- Away from war: Government-set flights bring Filipinos home (2026-03-15 05:48)

MANILA, Philippines — The government on Saturday flew 442 Filipinos—about half of them migrant workers—out of the Middle East, where more than a week of bombardments of Iran by Israel and the United States and retaliatory strikes by Tehran have killed more than 2,100 people. More than 700 Filipinos who sought assistance to leave the

- Higher biodiesel blend pushed to ease oil price crunch (2026-03-15 05:44)

MANILA, Philippines — A committee under the Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF) is pushing for a higher biodiesel blend that could improve vehicle mileage and cushion the impact of surging fuel prices amid the ongoing war in the Middle East. The PCAF’s National Sectoral Committee (NSC) on Coconut has approved a manifesto supporting

- When the drug war ‘Pieta’ reached The Hague (2026-03-15 05:42)

THE HAGUE, The Netherlands — Eyes at the public gallery of the International Criminal Court (ICC) immediately turned to Filipino photojournalist Raffy Lerma. It was the first day of former President Rodrigo Duterte’s confirmation of charges hearing at the ICC. In his opening statement, Deputy Prosecutor Mame Mandiaye Niang flashed the image of a male

- Pagasa records coldest day so far in 2026: 9 degrees Celsius in Baguio (2026-03-15 05:40)

BAGUIO CITY, Philippines — The temperature in this city dropped to 9 degrees Celsius at 5 a.m. on Saturday, the lowest temperature recorded in the country so far this year. The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said the unusually low temperature was caused by prevailing cold winds and seasonal weather patterns, especially

- DTI warns hoarders, profiteers of penalties (2026-03-15 05:38)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) on Saturday warned retailers against hoarding essential goods and profiteering, saying violators could face up to 15 years in prison and fines of up to P2 million. This warning comes as global uncertainty linked to the ongoing Middle East crisis heightens concerns about potential supply

- Evidence vs VP Sara Duterte ‘essentially complete,’ House official says (2026-03-15 05:36)

MANILA, Philippines — The impeachment proceedings against Vice President Sara Duterte can proceed with sufficient evidence even if potential prosecutors of the House of Representatives sought more documentary evidence, a move that Duterte derided as a “fishing expedition.” “A fishing expedition presupposes an absolute absence of documentation before proceeding with any impeachment. It’s not true

- Government cuts airport, passenger fees (2026-03-15 05:34)

MANILA, Philippines — Acting Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez has ordered a reduction in passenger service charges and airport navigation charges to reduce the operating costs of airlines amid rising fuel prices. Lopez said he ordered the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP), and it will be applicable to all CAAP-operated airports in the country.

- School catering to poor youths upgrades campus for digital future (2026-03-15 05:32)

CAVITE, Philippines — The Sisters of Mary School in Silang, Cavite, a decades-old institution dedicated to providing opportunities for disadvantaged youths, has opened a new facility for digital and technical courses as well as other campus activities and community events. The Sisters of Mary of Banneux congregation and Fr. Al’s Children Foundation on Saturday inaugurated

- Ombudsman using AI to vet ICI’s ‘mega boxes of data’ (2026-03-15 05:30)

MANILA, Philippines — As many as “200 mega boxes of data” gathered by the Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI) will be examined by the Office of the Ombudsman using artificial intelligence (AI), Ombudsman Jesus Crispin Remulla said on Friday after the ICI completed the turnover of of the documents to his agency. This means not

- Tourism, conservation meet in Masbate’s Manta Bowl (2026-03-15 05:17)

LEGAZPI CITY, ALBAY, Philippines — When Rico Calleja slips beneath the waters off Ticao Island in Masbate province, he knows there is always a chance of a breathtaking encounter. For the

diving instructor, each descent into the sea near the famed Manta Bowl brings the possibility ofseeing one of the ocean’s most graceful giants—the

- This week’s milestones: March 15 to March 21 (2026-03-15 05:15)

March 18, 1901 The province of Masbate was officially created by virtue of the Philippine Commission Act No. 105. This significant event later served as the basis for the declaration of March 18 of each year as the foundation day of the province. Today, Masbate is a first-class province in the Bicol Region, recognized as

- P95M worth of shabu seized at Surigao port; suspect arrested (2026-03-14 23:29)

SAN FRANCISCO , AGUSAN DEL SUR, Philippines — Authorities seized about P95.2 million worth of suspected meth and arrested a man during an anti-illegal drug operation at a port in Surigao City on Saturday, March 14, police said. Operatives from the Philippine National Police in the Caraga region, together with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency

- Quezon governor urges LGUs to monitor prices amid profiteering reports (2026-03-14 23:16)

LUCENA CITY, QUEZON, Philippines — Quezon Gov. Angelina Tan on Friday urged all local government units in the province to activate their respective Local Price Monitoring Coordinating Councils (LPMCC) following the recent increase in the prices of basic goods driven by rising fuel costs linked to the Middle East crisis. In Memorandum Circular No. 015,

- NBI cracking down on online child sexual abuse in Zambales (2026-03-14 23:02)

SAN ANTONIO, ZAMBALES, Philippines — Agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) arrested a suspect in Subic town, following a report which indicated that an individual in the country was allegedly transmitting sexually exploitative content involving minors to recipients in the United States. The operation, announced by the NBI on Saturday, March 14, was

- March 14 draw: No winner in PCSO’s Grand Lotto 6/55 jackpot (2026-03-14 22:44)

MANILA, Philippines — No bettor won the Grand Lotto 6/55 jackpot in Saturday’s draw, according to the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. March 14, 2026, falls on a Saturday. PCSO said the winning combination for Grand Lotto 6/55 was 24-33-48-42-05-22. No ticket holder matched all six numbers to claim the P45 million jackpot. In Lotto 6/42,

- BIR-Bukidnon assures continuous services amid hybrid workweek (2026-03-14 21:43)

MALAYBALAY CITY, Bukidnon — Frontline services at the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) Revenue District Office No. 99 in Bukidnon will remain available from Monday to Friday even with the implementation of the four-day workweek as part of efforts to conserve energy amid rising global oil prices. The setup is implemented pursuant to Revenue Memorandum

- Cebu taps private sector to run flagship tour program (2026-03-14 21:29)

TAGBILARAN CITY. Bohol— The Cebu provincial government has turned over the implementation of the long-running tourism caravan “Suroy-Suroy Sugbo” (Wander Around Cebu) to the private sector to strengthen partnerships with tourism stakeholders. Gov. Pamela Baricuatro announced the move during the opening ceremony of the 11th International Travel Festival 2026 on Friday, March 13, at the

- 11 Chinese nationals nabbed for illegal lead recycling in Pampanga (2026-03-14 21:19)

ANGELES CITY, Pampanga— Police arrested eleven Chinese nationals for illegal recycling and processing of lead automotive batteries during a raid at an industrial compound in San Simon, Pampanga. In a statement on Friday, the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) said some P19.5 million worth of recycled lead products and related hazardous materials were found

- Sea travel resumes in northern Quezon, gale warning lifted (2026-03-14 21:07)

LUCENA CITY, Quezon – Sea travel in northern Quezon resumed on Saturday afternoon, March 14, after the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) lifted the gale warning in the area. The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) station in Real town, in a public advisory, said it lifted the sea travel ban following Pagasa’s 5

- Agusan del Sur imposes 30 liters weekly fuel cap on gov’t vehicles (2026-03-14 20:13)

PROSPERIDAD, Agusan del Sur — Government vehicles in Agusan del Sur will now operate under a strict weekly fuel cap as provincial officials move to cut consumption amid rising global oil prices and possible supply constraints. In Memorandum Order No. 89 issued on March 11, Gov. Santiago B. Cane Jr. directed all offices under the

- Development, promotion of Eastern Samar’s Maharlika Falls pushed (2026-03-14 20:06)

TACLOBAN CITY- A House of Representatives bill is seeking to declare a scenic, hidden waterfalls in Eastern Samar as among the priority sites for development by the Department of Tourism (DOT). House Bill No. 7692, authored by Eastern Samar Rep. Christopher Sheen Gonzales and 4Ps Partylist Rep. Marcelino Libanan, who is from the province, seeks

- VP Sara Duterte must explain ‘gap’ in SALN – Ridon (2026-03-14 19:56)

MANILA, Philippines – Vice President Sara Duterte must explain the P50 million “gap” in her statement of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALN) during the impeachment proceedings, Bicol Saro party-list Rep. Terry Ridon said on Saturday. Ridon explained that the SALNs of the vice president from 2007 to 2024 showed discrepancies, saying that the cumulative

- DLPC – Nordeco dispute over Samal power distribution continues (2026-03-14 19:48)

SAN FRANCISCO, Agusan del Sur — The Davao Light and Power Company (DLPC) and the Northern Davao Electric Cooperative (Nordeco )have traded claims over who has the legal authority to distribute electricity in the Island Garden City of Samal (Igacos), with both sides

citing laws, court rulings and pending legal motions to support their positions.

- Legarda bats for VAT exemption of basic goods, services, medical needs (2026-03-14 19:11)

MANILA, Philippines – Senator Loren Legarda filed two bills to lower prices on basic goods and services while expanding value-added tax (VAT) exemptions for essential necessities medicines and medical services. These measures represent concrete steps toward a more progressive national VAT system, easing the burden on low-income households. “The measures will immediately provide relief to

- Comelec eyes Sunday proclamation of Antipolo special polls winner (2026-03-14 19:11)

Screengrab from Comelec / Facebook MANILA, Philippines — The Commission on Elections (Comelec) is eyeing to proclaim the winner of the special election for the second Congressional district of Antipolo City as early as Sunday morning. Comelec Chairman George Erwin Garcia said election officials aim to finish canvassing once election returns from remote barangays arrive

- Speaker Dy honors teachers as pillars of society, backs classroom construction (2026-03-14 19:02)

MANILA, Philippines – Speaker Faustino G. Dy III hailed Filipino teachers as the pillars of society and reaffirmed the government’s push to accelerate the construction of classrooms nationwide to support quality education. Dy delivered the message as guest of honor and speaker during the 21st founding anniversary of the Schools Division Office of Cauayan City

- SGOP sets free gynecologic cancer surgeries in Zamboanga del Sur (2026-03-14 17:41)

PAGADIAN CITY, Zamboanga del Sur – Ten members of the Society of Gynecologic Oncologists of the Philippines Foundation, Inc. (SGOP) arrived here on Friday to perform free surgeries for women diagnosed with gynecologic cancers. Dr. Anatalio Cagampang Jr., Zamboanga del Sur Medical Center (ZDSMC) chief, said eight residents of the province were initially screened and

- Gov’t employee busted in Iloilo drug sting (2026-03-14 17:15)

ILOILO CITY – An employee of the Oton, Iloilo local government, classified by authorities as a high-value individual in the illegal drug trade, was arrested on Friday after yielding an estimated P 2.17 million worth of suspected meth or “shabu” during a buy-bust operation in Barangay Buray. Police identified the suspect only as alias “Scobe,”

- SRA, DA to shield sugar farmers from effects of Middle East conflict (2026-03-14 17:08)

BACOLOD CITY – The government has launched a measure to safeguard fuel and fertilizer stocks for the sugar industry to shield it from supply shocks during its most resource-intensive harvest window, Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said on Friday. The Department of Agriculture (DA) and SRA are coordinating with other government agencies

- Leyte provincial offices adopt flexi-work scheme, energy saving measures (2026-03-14 16:38)

TACLOBAN CITY- The Leyte provincial government has adopted a flexible work arrangement and a series of energy conservation measures for its offices, following a directive from the national government to curb fuel and electricity consumption amid rising global oil prices. The directive was contained in Memorandum No. 716-2026 issued by Governor Carlos Jericho Petilla on March 10, but was

- Lucena City offices shifting to regular hours from March 16 – 19 (2026-03-14 16:21)

LUCENA CITY, Quezon – The local government of Lucena City, the capital of Quezon province, on Friday announced the temporary return to regular office hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. from March 16 to 19. The city’s Public Information Office (PIO) said the adjustment was made because next Friday, March 20, has been declared

- Solon upbeat on swift effects of fuel excise tax suspension (2026-03-14 16:17)

MANILA, Philippines — Relief from rising fuel prices could arrive faster than expected, as the House of Representatives moves to pass a bill allowing President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to suspend or reduce fuel excise tax without the usual three-month waiting period. House Committee on Public Accounts chairperson Terry Ridon of Bicol Saro Party-list said

- Bulacan seeks subsidy for transport workers, fishermen, farmers (2026-03-14 16:08)

CITY OF MALOLOS, Bulacan—Ahead of the national government’s distribution of a P5,000 subsidy to public utility vehicle drivers, Bulacan officials had sought subsidy for the same vulnerable group including fishermen and farmers amidst another expected round of fuel price increase due to the continuing conflict in the Middle East. Gov. Daniel Fernando signed on Thursday

- Leyte town OKs measure to expand job options for senior citizens (2026-03-14 15:44)

TACLOBAN CITY- The municipal government of Matag-ob, Leyte has approved a new ordinance aimed at expanding employment opportunities for senior citizens, allowing older residents to remain active in the workforce and participate in community development. The Sangguniang Bayan of Matag-ob recently passed Municipal Ordinance No. 227, also known as the “Senior Citizens Employment and Participation

- P108 M road project breaks ground in Zamboanga del Sur town (2026-03-14 15:37)

PAGADIAN CITY, Zamboanga del Sur – The Department of Agriculture (DA) broke ground on Friday, March 13, for a P108 million road improvement and concreting project in Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur. The 5.9-km road will link the mountainous villages of Datu Tutukan and Labangon to the town center. Labangon village chief Chequito Tizon Jr. said

- Solon backs call to place Madriaga under House custody (2026-03-14 15:24)

MANILA, Philippines — Deputy Speaker Paolo Ortega V on Saturday said that Akbayan Party-list Rep. Chel Diokno’s request for the House justice panel to take custody of Ramil Madriaga to ensure his safety aligns with the constitutional duty of the House of Representatives to conduct a fair inquiry amid the impeachment complaints filed against Vice

- Fishers’ group warns of steep drop in catch as fuel prices surge (2026-03-14 15:05)

MANILA, Philippines — Fisheries production in the Philippines is expected to “fall significantly” in the first quarter of the year as successive increases in fuel prices force municipal fishermen to cut back or suspend operations, a national fishers’ group warned on Saturday. The Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) reported that the 60

- House can handle oil crisis and Sara Duterte impeachment – Ridon (2026-03-14 14:21)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives is capable of addressing the fuel price hike crisis while also processing impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte, Bicol Saro party-list Rep. Terry Ridon said Saturday. “Congress can undertake economic relief and accountability measures all at the same time,” Ridon said in a mix of Filipino and

- Solon backs bill banning public officials’ kin from securing gov’t deals (2026-03-14 14:16)

MANILA, Philippines — Senate Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano on Saturday said the measure seeking to disqualify relatives of public officials from securing government contracts will prevent corruption and conflict of interest in government transactions. In expressing his support for Senate Bill No. 1962, or the proposed Government Contracting and Procurement Integrity Act, Cayetano said

- LTO summons driver, owner of vehicle involved in Pasig road rage (2026-03-14 12:38)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Office (LTO) has summoned the registered owner and driver of a vehicle involved in a viral road rage incident in Pasig City, the agency said on Saturday. According to the LTO, a show cause order was issued following a viral video showing a female driver and her companion arguing

- Sulfur dioxide emission increases at Taal Volcano (2026-03-14 11:17)

LUCENA CITY, Philippines — Taal Volcano in Batangas province has shown an increase in sulfur dioxide emissions, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) reported on Saturday, March 14. In its 24-hour monitoring report, Phivolcs said the volcano released 2,039 metric tons of sulfur dioxide on Friday, an emission classified as “weak.” READ: Seismic

- Kaamulan Festival featured in BSP commemorative coin series (2026-03-14 10:12)

MALAYBALAY CITY, Bukidnon — The Kaamulan Festival is featured in the third release under the P100 Philippine Festivals Commemorative Coin Series, highlighting the culture and unity of the

seven indigenous groups of Bukidnon province. The commemorative coin pays tribute to theprovince’s major cultural celebration held annually in Malaybalay City, where the Bukidnontribes gather

- OIL PRICE WATCH as of March 14, 2026 (2026-03-14 08:07)

MANILA, Philippines — Motorists will see no relief from soaring fuel prices next week, with diesel projected to climb by P19.30 to P22.30 per liter and gasoline by P14 to P17, as the Middle East crisis continues to choke the vital Strait of Hormuz shipping route. The pressure on oil prices comes as the Philippine

- Cotabato City hits highest heat index forecast at 38°C on Saturday (2026-03-14 07:53)

MANILA, Philippines — Cotabato City in Maguindanao is expected to experience the highest heat index on Saturday at 38°C, placing it under the extreme caution category, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said. According to Pagasa’s latest forecast, the heat index under this category ranges from 33°C to 41°C. With this, the

- Colder weekend for Baguio City as temperature dips to 9°C due to amihan (2026-03-14 07:26)

BAGUIO CITY—The temperature dropped to 9 degrees Celsius, the coldest recorded so far this year, as cooler weather conditions affected the area. Authorities said the unusually low temperature that was logged at 5 a.m. was caused by prevailing cold winds and seasonal weather patterns, bringing a noticeable chill, especially during the early morning hours. Residents

- NTF-Elcac to continue engaging with academe vs NPA recruitment (2026-03-14 07:08)

MANILA, Philippines – A ranking official of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-Elcac) on Friday said the body will continue engaging with universities and the academe to inform and educate students on the realities of insurgency and recruitment of young people. “The NTF-Elcac will never tire in engaging academic institutions with

- Dizon says filing of cases vs erring DPWH officials to continue (2026-03-14 06:42)

MANILA, Philippines – The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) will continue to file charges against its officials and personnel involved in anomalous flood control projects. READ: Reforming the DPWH, finally At the Kapihan ng Samahang Plaridel on Friday, DPWH Secretary Vince Dizon vowed to pursue cases against erring DPWH officials before the Office of

- BOC seizes P235-M illicit cigarette shipment at Batangas port (2026-03-14 06:34)

MANILA, Philippines – Bureau of Customs (BOC) Commissioner Ariel Nepomuceno on Friday led the inspection of a shipment containing P235 million worth of smuggled cigarettes from the United Arab Emirates bound for the Port of Batangas. In a statement, the BOC chief reported

that the shipment containing 637 master cases of cigarettes labeled MAC Super Slim

- Government scrambles to get fertilizer, fuel supplies (2026-03-14 05:48)

MANILA, Philippines — The government is scrambling to secure fuel and fertilizer supplies for the sugar industry, as the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East could significantly affect local production. The Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) are coordinating with other government agencies to ensure stable access to critical farm inputs

- Jobless Filipinos reach nearly 3M (2026-03-14 05:44)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine labor market weakened at the start of the year and is likely to remain under pressure amid the Middle East crisis, after the number of jobless Filipinos rose to 2.96 million, its highest level since 2022, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. Unemployment in the country soared to 5.8 percent

- Dela Rosa’s request to use Senate’s Baguio Mansion denied (2026-03-14 05:38)

MANILA, Philippines — Citing “ongoing repairs,” the Senate leadership denied a request from Sen. Ronald “Bato” dela Rosa—which he made despite being absent in the chamber’s session for the past four months—to allow his family to use the Senate Mansion in Baguio City. In a letter addressed to Senate President Vicente “Tito” Sotto III dated

- ICI’s work on flood mess ends March 31 (2026-03-14 05:36)

MANILA, Philippines — The Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI), the body tasked to investigate anomalies in the government’s flood control and other infrastructure projects, is winding down its operations six months after its creation by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ICI Chair Andres Reyes Jr., in a statement on Friday, said the commission would remain operational

- Sara Duterte questions call to place Madriaga under House protection (2026-03-14 05:32)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte on Friday questioned the move by the House of Representatives to provide protection to Ramil Madriaga, her alleged former “bagman,” as her deadline to reply to two impeachment complaints looms. In a two-page statement, Duterte described the “special treatment” extended to Madriaga as “disturbing,” alleging that the latter

- Marcos reaffirms support for Bangsamoro peace process (2026-03-14 05:04)

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. reaffirmed his administration’s continuing support for the Bangsamoro peace process, asserting that the national government is working hard to bring progress to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). This comes as domestic and global think tanks recently warned that the landmark 2014 peace deal between

- Rising rent, power rate push Cordillera inflation higher in February (2026-03-14 05:02)

BAGUIO CITY — Rising rental costs, higher electricity rates, and increasing food prices—including “bangus” (milkfish) farmed in Dagupan City, Pangasinan—pushed inflation in the Cordillera region higher in February, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported on Thursday. The region’s inflation rate climbed to 3.1 percent in February, up from 1.9 percent in January, according to the

## Source: The Manila Times

- Over 100,000 cases of TB recorded in NCR, says Health dept (2026-03-21 04:35)

MANILA, Philippines —The Department of Health-Metro Manila Center for Health Development (DOH-MMCHD) reported a total of 101,807 cases of tuberculosis (TB) in the National Capital Region, stressing the need to intensify the agency's campaign for early detection.In a statement on Saturday, the DOH-MMCHD said the number showed the importance of early detection through screening, especially as the country prepares to observe World TB Day on March 24.DOH-MMCHD Regional Director Lester Tan said that while TB remained one of the top illnesses in the country, it can be overcome if detected early.“TB is curable. We should not be afraid of it, and even more so, be ashamed of it. It only makes the situation worse if you hide it or brush it aside,” Tan said in Filipino.The agency also held a “TB-Free Generation Fun Run” in Taguig City to raise awareness and encourage the public to undergo testing.

- PH, US complete maritime drills off Bataan, Manila Bay (2026-03-21 04:25)

MANILA, Philippines – The Philippines and the United States have completed a bilateral maritime cooperative activity (MCA) in Manila Bay and waters off Mariveles, Bataan, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said on Saturday.Dubbed as Bilateral MCA 26-3.1, the latest drills, completed on Friday, aimed to enhance interoperability among the participating units of the AFP, the US Indo-Pacific Command, and the Philippine Coast Guard to support sustained maritime security and response within the country’s maritime zones.“The successful conduct of the MCA reflected the continuing commitment of the Philippines and the United States to strengthen coordination and cooperation in promoting regional maritime security, stability, and adherence to international law,” the AFP said.“The AFP remains committed to building strong defense partnerships and enhancing its capability to safeguard the country’s maritime interests and uphold a rules-based international order.”Assets from the Philippines included the BRP Antonio Luna (FFG15), two A-29B Super Tucano, a C-208B aircraft, a Sokol Search and Rescue Aircraft, and the PCG’s BRP Gabriela Silang (OPV 8301), while the US deployed the US Navy’s 7th Fleet flagship USS Blue Ridge (LCC-19).During the activity, the participating forces carried out a series of exercises, including a communications check and a photo exercise.The US 7th Fleet clarified that these drills, along with other MCAs, were conducted in a manner consistent with international law and with due regard to the safety, navigational rights, and freedoms of all nations."The US, along with our allies and partners, upholds the right to freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea and international

airspace, as well as respect for maritime rights under international law," it said."US 7th Fleet, the US Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific.” Before the bilateral sails, the USS Blue Ridge conducted a port visit to Manila, where the US 7th Fleet and the Philippine Navy Fleet conducted subject matter expert exchanges and leadership calls.The latest drills follow the two nations’ January MCA off the Bajo de Masinloc against the backdrop of China’s sustained presence in the West Philippine Sea.

- US, allies eye PH to host facility for ammunition production (2026-03-21 03:49)

WASHINGTON — A US-led defense manufacturing partnership agreed to launch a new missile motor production program with Japan, push forward a drone cooperation effort across Asia and explore building a new ammunition production line in the Philippines, the Pentagon said on Friday.The Partnership for Indo-Pacific Industrial Resilience, known as PIPIR, is a group of nations working together to build up their weapons and defense manufacturing capacity in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States set it up in May 2024 to reduce supply chain risks and help allies produce and maintain military equipment closer to where it might be needed.The Pentagon published a joint statement following a virtual meeting on Wednesday, where the group welcomed two new members — Thailand and the United Kingdom — bringing its total membership to 16 countries spanning both the Indo-Pacific and Europe.The group said it had agreed to set up a new program to produce solid rocket motors — the propulsion systems used in many guided weapons — with Japan taking the lead. The move is seen as a way to boost production capacity outside the United States for a key weapons component.On drones, members agreed on a series of steps to develop common standards and shared supply chains for small military drones across the region, including work on batteries and small motors that power them. The group also agreed to explore building drones together across a range of military uses.On ammunition, members said they would look into the Philippines hosting a new facility to load, assemble, and package 30mm cannon rounds — a type of ammunition widely used by military aircraft and ground vehicles.

- Marcos urges Filipinos: Live with compassion, humility, charity beyond Ramadan (2026-03-21 03:19)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. called on Filipinos to embody the values of compassion, humility, patience, and charity demonstrated during the holy month of Ramadan as the country celebrates Eid’l Fitr on Saturday.In his message, Marcos joined Muslim Filipinos in celebrating what he described as a “solemn and joyous” occasion, recognizing Ramadan as a period of prayer, fasting, reflection, and generosity.“It reminds us that the deepest joys are often those earned through sacrifice, and that discipline in faith strengthens not only the individual, but the entire community,” he said.The President said that the discipline and sacrifice observed during the sacred month should not end with the breaking of the fast, but instead continue to guide individuals and communities.“The virtues nurtured during this sacred month— compassion, humility, patience, and charity—must not end with the

breaking of the fast. They must travel beyond the self," Marcos said. "They must strengthen families, restore hope in communities, and remind us that a nation is built not only through laws and institutions, but through people who choose kindness, responsibility, and solidarity with one another,” he added.The President also paid tribute to Muslim Filipinos, recognizing their resilience, quiet generosity, and unwavering sense of duty even in difficult times.He also acknowledged the example set by Muslim Filipinos, citing their quiet generosity, resilience amid hardship and steadfast sense of duty.“We see it in the quiet fidelity to duty even when no one is watching. These are the virtues that preserve peace in our neighborhoods, sustain trust in our communities, and keep hope alive in difficult times," Marcos said. "That is why, in honoring this day, we also uphold a tradition of moral steadiness that helps keep our nation humane, united, and worthy of the aspirations of its people,” he added.The President expressed hope that Eid’l Fitr would bring comfort to those facing difficulties, renewed strength to those in service, and joy to every Filipino home.“May it deepen understanding across faiths and cultures and continue to unite us in our shared aspiration to build a Bagong Pilipinas where dignity is upheld, opportunity reaches every Filipino, and peace flourishes through justice and mutual respect,” he said.The President declared March 20, 2026 a regular holiday nationwide through Proclamation 1189 to mark Eid’l Fitr.However, the Bangsamoro Darul-Ifta’ announced Thursday evening that the crescent moon was not sighted, moving the celebration to March 21.Eid'l-Fitr, or the Festival of Breaking the Fast, marks the end of the month-long fasting of Ramadan.It symbolizes gratitude, generosity, and renewed devotion, as Muslims around the world mark the end of a month-long period of fasting, prayer, and reflection.

- Metro Manila, Maguindanao to experience high heat levels, advised to take 'extreme caution' (2026-03-21 01:16)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) warned residents in Metro Manila and Maguindanao to exercise " extreme caution" amid 33 to 40 degrees Celsius temperatures today, Saturday.Pagasa weather specialist Loriendin De la Cruz-Galicia said in a video forecast that it would be 33 to 36 degrees Celsius in Metro Manila and 40 degrees Celsius in Cotabato City, Maguindanao.Galicia said these temperatures could cause heat cramps or heat exhaustion."We advise [people] to refrain from activities that could cause heat stroke, because of the extreme heat,” she said in Filipino.But despite the heat, Metro Manila and the rest of the country will still have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms.In its early morning bulletin, the weather bureau said that Caraga, Northern Mindanao, Southern Leyte, Bohol, Lanao del Sur, Cotabato, and Davao Oriental will have cloudy skies with scattered rains and thunderstorms because of the easterlies.

- UNICEF: 99% of foods marketed to Filipino children fail global health standards (2026-03-20 22:03)

MANILA, Philippines—The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) revealed that 99 percent of food products marketed to children fail to meet global standards, highlighting the need for

stronger legislation to protect minors from aggressive promotion of foods and drinks high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats.In a statement released late Friday, UNICEF said that of the 1,035 digital food advertisements targeting children in the country, 99 percent did not comply with World Health Organization (WHO) standards for marketing to children.The agency said this trend is contributing to rising obesity rates among school-aged children, now at 12.9 percent, up from 10.4 percent in 2019.UNICEF attributed the increase to a shift toward ultra-processed foods and sugary beverages, which are heavily marketed and designed for convenience.If left unaddressed, the agency warned that by 2035, an estimated four billion people worldwide—about half the global population—could be overweight or obese.In response, UNICEF, along with the WHO and the National Nutrition Council (NNC), urged the Philippine government to pass the proposed Healthy Food Environment bill, which aims to protect children from aggressive marketing of unhealthy food and drink products.

- Lawmaker: Supply caused sugar price rollback (2026-03-20 18:48)

NEGROS Occidental 3rd District Rep. Javier Miguel Benitez has denied that the Congressional hearing on sugar prices triggered sugar price rollback, emphasizing that the decline was caused by excessive supply due to over-importation and policy decisions.Benitez held a high-level public consultation over the declining price of sugar in Talisay City last January, which was attended by other lawmakers, officials, and sugar industry groups.In a privilege speech on Wednesday, Benitez described the allegations as "baseless and irresponsible," noting that the accusations came from the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA). “Rather than answer for the oversupply it authorized, the SRA would rather point the finger at the institution that chose to investigate it,” Benitez said.The neophyte lawmaker cited data showing that at the start of the 2025 milling season, the total physical sugar inventory reached 902,082 metric tons, or a 44-percent increase from the previous year, while carry-over stocks stood at 738,633 metric tons, nearly double the ideal buffer level.These conditions, Benitez said, reflected an excessive supply already in the market due to over-importation.He also cited SRA's Sugar Order No. 8, which authorized the importation of 424,000 metric tons of refined sugar scheduled to arrive between July and November 2025, coinciding with the opening of domestic milling.Benitez said that the timing and volume of imports contributed to the sharp drop in farm-gate prices, which fell to between P2,000 and P2,200 per 50-kilo bag by January 2026, below production costs. “All of this happened before any hearing was announced,” he said, adding that commodity prices respond to actual market conditions, not congressional inquiries.The neophyte lawmaker emphasized that traders stopped purchasing because warehouses were full, not because of new information during the hearing.He further said the hearings helped build the basis for the Department of Agriculture’s extension of the sugar import ban through December 2026, describing the moratorium as vital protection for local producers.

- Pangilinan advocates for new agricultural extension laws (2026-03-20 16:38)

SEN. Francis Pangilinan has pledged to advance key legislative measures aimed at ensuring food security, while stressing the critical role of agricultural workers in national

development.Speaking during the 140th founding anniversary of Pampanga State Agricultural University on Thursday, the senator commended students and graduates in agriculture-related fields, emphasizing their future role in revitalizing the country’s agri-fisheries sector. He cited the potential impact of his proposed Agricultural and Fisheries Cooperatives Act and Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Act, which aim to expand job opportunities across local government units, national agencies, and the private sector.Pangilinan, who chairs the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform, said the measures would institutionalize stronger support systems for farmers and fisherfolk, including improved access to markets, financing and technical assistance. He noted that the proposed laws would also help professionalize the sector and encourage entrepreneurship among young agriculture graduates.The senator expressed concern that the Philippines has lagged behind its regional peers in agricultural development, despite being a training ground for experts from neighboring countries through institutions such as the University of the Philippines Los Baños and the International Rice Research Institute. He called for renewed investments in agricultural education, research and extension services to regain competitiveness.During a dialogue with farmers in San Simon, Pangilinan elaborated on plans to renationalize the agricultural and fisheries extension system and re-establish a dedicated bureau under the Department of Agriculture. These reforms aim to decentralize services and bring technical support directly to the municipal level, enabling farmers to adopt modern practices and improve productivity.The proposed measures are designed to complement the implementation of the Sagip Saka Act, which Pangilinan authored. The law allows government agencies and LGUs to procure food directly from farmers and fisherfolk without public bidding, creating more stable and accessible markets. Local farmers have already benefited through supply agreements with agencies such as the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and other government institutions.Pangilinan also highlighted recent policy gains, including Executive Order 100, which sets a minimum floor price for palay purchases, and EO 101.The senator reiterated the need for sustained policy support for the agriculture sector, including increased investments in modern farming technologies, expanded access to credit and improved infrastructure. He also stressed the importance of education, training, and sustainable development initiatives to empower rural communities and ensure long-term growth in the sector.

- Bills to freeze rents, expand unemployment insurance filed (2026-03-20 16:32)

TWO House of Representatives lawmakers have filed separate bills seeking to ease Filipinos' economic burden from skyrocketing fuel prices, resulting from the ongoing war in the fuel-rich Middle East.In separate statements, Navotas Rep. Toby Tiangco filed House Bill (HB) 8715, which seeks to impose a temporary freeze on increases in residential and micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) commercial rental rates and defer housing loan payments without penalties.HB 8715 also seeks to allow emergency loans from the Social Security System and Government Service Insurance System and declare a moratorium on the accrual of interest on government loans.In a statement, Tiangco said that in times of crisis, there should be immediate action and the government must do everything to help Filipinos ease their daily

lives.He further said that the Philippines imports over 90 percent of its oil needs primarily from the Middle East, which is currently mired in conflict amid the war in Iran.Tiangco said that MSMEs, which account for 99.6 percent of businesses nationwide, are among those most affected by the fuel crisis."Operating on thin margins, even modest increases in logistics and input costs can significantly strain their finances, and in many cases, threaten their ability to remain operational," Tiangco said.Also, the measure authorizes government agencies and their subsidiaries to partner with duly registered transport providers to deliver free public transportation during national or local emergencies, ensuring continued mobility for the riding public.Tiangco's bill also mandates the Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Energy, in coordination with relevant agencies, to to keep prices of petroleum products, basic commodities and utilities, including telcos and internet service providers remain reasonable by preventing unjustified increases, with authority to impose or recommend price ceilings, curb hoarding and profiteering, and implement necessary interventions such as requiring price justification, subsidies, or buffer stocking to stabilize supply and protect consumers."It is our job to protect vulnerable sectors from the adverse effects of sudden fuel price hikes. To this end, we must provide immediate relief, while ensuring fiscal sustainability and equitable burden-sharing," Tiangco said.The measures, however, would be in effect for six months from effectivity or until the president certifies, through a proclamation, that the national average fuel price has stabilized below P60 per liter for gasoline or diesel, whichever comes first.Meanwhile, 1Tahanan Party-list Rep. Nathaniel Oducado has filed HB 8586, which would expand unemployment insurance and aid displaced workers to find new work.Under his "Expanded Unemployment Insurance and Employment Reintegration Act," Oducado said that when Filipino workers lose their jobs through no fault of their own, the government will give them " meaningful and timely support."The bill aims to strengthen income protection for displaced Filipino workers and reinforce the country’s resilience amid global economic disruptions, expanding unemployment insurance coverage from two months to four months.The payout from the insurance coverage shall be 50 percent of the member’s average monthly salary.“Two months of partial income is simply not enough in an economy where job matching and retraining can take time, especially as geopolitical tensions abroad threaten fuel prices, supply chains, and domestic business stability," Oducado said.

- Experts: PH education must focus on science, technology (2026-03-20 16:30)

CALLS for the Philippines to urgently recalibrate its education system and economic strategy intensified during a policy forum in Manila, with experts warning that the country risks being left behind amid rapid technological shifts and a changing global order shaped by China’s rise.At the center of the discussion was the think tank Asian Century Philippine Strategic Studies Institute (ACPSSI), which convened analysts and academics to examine the implications of China’s recently concluded Two Sessions and its 15th Five-Year Plan for 2026 to 2030.Speaking via Zoom, Henry Chan, distinguished visiting fellow at the Cambodian Center for Regional Studies, emphasized that while China’s ambitious development blueprint presents opportunities for regional partners, the Philippines lacks the human capital to seize what our

neighbor can offer. “If you look at the skill set required, it’s not just [the] so-called small artisan type of technology you need, which is unfortunately our orientation,” Chan said. “I think now we have to reassess the whole thing.” The Singapore-based academic pointed to the Philippines’ poor performance in the Program for International Student Assessment, where 15-year-old Filipino students ranked near the bottom among 71 countries in 2018 and posted similarly dismal scores in the latest 2022 assessment. “That means before Grade 9, anyone who has a good foundation in the level can choose what he wants to study in Grades 10 to 12 and the subsequent university,” Chan said. “It’s very sad to know that we are second to the bottom.” The warning comes as China’s 15th Five-Year Plan prioritizes “new quality productive forces” driven by technological innovation, including artificial intelligence, robotics and advanced manufacturing.Chan noted that China has committed to increasing research and development spending by at least 7 percent annually over the next five years, positioning itself among the world’s top five R&D spenders.But the academic delivered a sobering assessment of one of the Philippines’ main economic pillars. “There’s a very serious danger lurking,” Chan said. “Our two biggest foreign exchange earners are remittance and BPO (business process outsourcing). And now, whether you like it or not, some activities in the BPO are under threat with these large language models.” Chan recommended that the Philippines look to successful models in Germany and China, focusing on physical science education, where productivity gains are most significant. “Put more focus on physical science education because that is where you will have a huge productivity gain,” he said, adding that students sent overseas for exchange programs in China could become “very receptive partners of Chinese industry migrating overseas.” The forum was held amid discussions on how the Philippines can benefit from China’s economic plans, with participants noting that the country has fallen behind regional peers, including Vietnam, in attracting Chinese investment and technology partnerships. “If we want to learn, to improve our upskilling, first look for good students,” Chan said. “And after good students, can we look for what we want them to study?” The forum also situated these domestic concerns within a wider geopolitical and economic transition, as analysts pointed to the emergence of a multipolar world order.In a presentation, ACPSSI President Herman Tiu Laurel argued that global power dynamics are shifting away from centuries of Western dominance toward a more diversified system led by major players, including China, Russia and other developing economies.Tiu Laurel said these changes are already reshaping economic alliances and could redefine trade, finance and development pathways in the coming decades.He warned that the Philippines risks being caught between competing global blocs, particularly after policy decisions in recent years that aligned the country more closely with the United States while straining ties with China and other emerging powers.According to Tiu Laurel, these moves have coincided with mounting economic pressures, including rising debt, supply constraints in fuel and fertilizer, and missed opportunities for infrastructure and investment cooperation.He argued that countries such as Vietnam have surged ahead by maintaining stronger economic engagement with China, attracting investments and integrating into regional supply chains.

- SC OKs regulatory framework for judiciary's use of AI (2026-03-20 16:28)

THE Supreme Court has adopted a comprehensive framework governing the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the judiciary, establishing ethical guidelines that emphasize human oversight and accountability in court operations.The Governance Framework on the Use of Human-Centered Augmented Intelligence in the Judiciary sets rules for deploying AI tools across all court levels, ensuring technology supports — not replaces — human judgment.The framework is built on three ethical principles: fairness, accountability, and transparency, which aim to "reinforce the public's faith and confidence in the independence and impartiality of the judicial system," according to the resolution.Human-centered approachA key feature of the framework is its adoption of the term "human-centered augmented intelligence," emphasizing that technology must remain centered on human values and should only support, not replace, human reason and judgment."The use of human-centered augmented intelligence should be centered on human values, such as the promotion of the rule of law and fundamental freedoms, dignity and autonomy, privacy and data protection, fairness, nondiscrimination, and social justice," the Court said.The framework explicitly states that AI tools or their outputs must not be the sole basis for any adjudicatory decision. Human decision-makers remain responsible for independent legal reasoning and final judgments that determine the parties' rights and duties.Scope and implementationThe framework applies to justices and judges of all court levels, court officials and employees, court users, and vendors or third-party contractors involved in designing, developing, or using AI tools for the judiciary.No AI tool may be used unless expressly authorized by the Supreme Court en banc. Implementation will proceed in phases, starting with pilot testing before gradual rollout.A permanent Committee on Human-Centered Augmented Intelligence will be created to serve as the Court's main advisory body, guiding the design, development, and ethical use of AI tools. Members will come from stakeholders in the legal community and other fields relevant to AI use in courts.Mandatory disclosureDisclosure of AI use is mandatory under the framework. Users must state the AI tool used, its version, why it was used, and the level of AI involvement and human oversight. They must also declare that they are responsible for the output in line with the accountability principle.Court officials and employees must disclose the use of AI tools in preparing court-issued documents for adjudication, including:– Voice-to-text transcription and translation– Automated compilation of legal authorities and citations– Legal research and document summarization– Automated document processing and optical character recognition– Copy-editing and proofreading– Data redaction and sanitationFairness and privacy protectionsThe framework requires that the development and use of AI tools must not worsen existing inequalities or create new forms of discrimination. The judiciary shall offer training programs to address algorithmic bias, automation bias, and other negative effects that may arise when people interact with computer systems.Privacy and data protection must be maintained at all stages — from design to its application or use. Users must know what data is entered into an AI tool, how it is processed, and who can access it. The Court stressed that confidential, privileged, sensitive, or secret information must not be processed using AI tools without express authority.Before any AI tool is used, a comprehensive risk assessment must be conducted to guard against threats such as data poisoning.The framework was developed by a working group chaired by Senior Associate Justice Marvic Leonen, with Associate Justices Ramon

Paul Hernando and Rodil Zalameda as vice chairmen. It was created with input from members of the judiciary, subject matter experts, lawyers, and the academe, and refined through consultations with the Supreme Court, the Management Information Systems Office, and the Office of the Chief Attorney.The framework draws from global best practices, including the Council of Asean Chief Justices Governance Framework on the Use of Artificial Intelligence for the Asean Judiciaries and Unesco Guidelines for the Use of AI Systems in Courts and Tribunals.It also expands its ethical scope by including environmental responsibility and sustainability, encouraging the adoption of AI tools that reduce ecological harm and use resources efficiently.

- Duterte praises Filipino Muslim devotion in annual Eid al-Fitr address (2026-03-20 16:26)

VICE President Sara Duterte praised the Muslim community’s discipline and devotion during the month of Ramadan as it celebrates Eid al-Fitr on Saturday.In a video message on Friday, Duterte said the entire month of Ramadan is a celebration of a journey “defined by prayer, sacrifice and deep spiritual reflection.” ” The discipline and devotion you have shown throughout your fast are testaments to the strength of your faith and your commitment to the values of compassion and charity,” she said.She also praised Filipinos for their resilience and hard work, which remain a “source of pride” for the country.” May the spirit of Eid bring you comfort and remind you that your contributions to your families and our country are deeply valued,” she said.Amid the joy and thanksgiving, Duterte also offered a prayer for peace across the globe, urging people to use the lessons of Ramadan as inspiration to “work together toward a global community that is inclusive, safe and anchored in the pursuit of the common good.” ” May your homes be filled with peace, and may your hearts be filled with the light of Allah’s blessings. Eid Mubarak!” Duterte said.

- Joint efforts to clear Hormuz gain ground (2026-03-20 16:15)

LEADING European nations, Japan and Canada, are offering to join efforts to secure safe passage for ships through the Strait of Hormuz, but that has not stopped the price of oil from surging.In a joint statement on Thursday, after earlier hesitating, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Japan expressed “our readiness to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait,” through which 20 percent of the world’s oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) transit.Looking to curb soaring oil prices, United States Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the US may soon remove sanctions from Iranian oil stranded on tankers, and said a further release of crude from the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve was possible.Brent futures rose $1.67, or 1.5 percent, to $110.32 a barrel on Friday, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude added 33 cents, or 0.3 percent, to $96.47.For the week, benchmark Brent was on track to rise nearly 7 percent, while WTI was set to fall about 2 percent in its first weekly decline in five weeks.“The potential for a quick reversal in energy prices is unlikely because damage has been done to production,” said Ole Hansen, the head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank. “The fact on the ground remains that we have a tight market.” Israel and Iran traded fresh attacks on Friday, following a hit on an oil refinery in Kuwait.Brent jumped higher than $119 a barrel on Thursday, coming close to a March 9 peak,

after Iran responded to an Israeli attack on a major gas field by knocking out 17 percent of Qatar’s LNG capacity, causing damage that will take up to five years to repair.Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said he had told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to repeat attacks on Iranian energy infrastructure.Netanyahu said Friday Iran was being “decimated” and that the war would end earlier than many feared.Traders also welcomed Trump’s remarks that Israeli forces would not target any more of Tehran’s energy infrastructure, after strikes on a key gas field on Wednesday sparked warnings of retaliation against installations across the Gulf.But with the conflict heading into a fourth week, equities mostly fell as investors fret over energy markets, with oil still holding around $100 and gas surging amid the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz.Netanyahu told a news conference on Thursday that Israel and the US were “winning and Iran is being decimated,” adding that the Islamic republic no longer had the capacity to enrich uranium or manufacture ballistic missiles.“This war is ending a lot faster than people think,” he said without providing a specific time frame.Netanyahu also said he would help the United States try to secure Hormuz, through which a fifth of global oil and gas flows.His comments came after Washington said there was no deadline to end the war launched against Iran on Feb. 28.Before Netanyahu’s comments on Thursday, the commodity had soared to as high as $119 after Tehran struck a number of energy sites around the Gulf in retaliation for Israel’s attack on its South Pars field.Asked whether he had talked to the prime minister about attacking Iranian gas fields, Trump replied: “I did. I told him, don’t do that, and he won’t do that.“You know, we’re independent. We get along great. It’s coordinated, but on occasion, he’ll do something, and if I don’t like it... and so we’re not doing that anymore.”He had warned Iran earlier that US forces would “massively blow up” the South Pars field if Tehran did not stop attacking Qatar, to which Iran said it would have “zero restraint” if its energy infrastructure was hit again.French President Emmanuel Macron said his country planned to talk with permanent members of the UN Security Council about establishing a UN framework — once the ongoing exchange of fire had ended — to secure navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.In a sign, the conflict was unlikely to end soon, Israel launched a wave of strikes on Tehran on Friday as Gulf nations faced fresh attacks, while Iran continued to target neighbors with an oil refinery in Kuwait set alight after a drone attack.While Wall Street enjoyed a late rally on the remarks, Asian stock markets slipped as nervous traders awaited positive developments in the crisis.Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Singapore, Taipei and Wellington all fell, though Seoul, Mumbai and Bangkok rose. Tokyo was closed for a holiday.London, Paris and Frankfurt opened higher.“Netanyahu’s remarks have poured a layer of soothing balm over sentiment, with talk of securing the Strait and claims that Iran’s nuclear and missile capabilities have been neutralized, feeding the idea that this conflict could burn out faster than feared,” wrote Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management.“That narrative matters because it shortens the perceived life of the supply shock. But even if the geopolitical chapter closes sooner than expected, the energy system does not reset on command.“You do not rebuild liquefaction trains, repair export terminals or restore confidence in global shipping lanes with a press conference.”

- Smaller fuel price increase seen next week (2026-03-20 16:14)

THE price of fuel will continue to rise, but the increase will not be as steep as last week’s.Diesel is expected to go up by P14 to P14.50 per liter, and gasoline by P7 to 7.50 per liter.The estimates are based on the four-day trading of Mean of Platts Singapore, the pricing index of refined goods in Southeast Asia.Fuel prices will be going up for the 10th straight week.The increase was projected before latest developments in the Middle East indicated that the Strait of Hormuz could reopen soon.The skyrocketing price of diesel and gasoline has triggered calls for government subsidies to transport workers, farmers and fisherfolk, sectors that are most vulnerable to higher fuel prices.On Friday, Manibela, an organization of jeepney drivers and operators, said jeepney drivers should be entitled to the government’s P5,000 fuel assistance, since they consume more diesel, carry more passengers and are being squeezed by rising fuel prices.In a text message to The Manila Times, Manibela Chairman Mar Valbuena questioned why jeepney drivers have yet to receive the same subsidy tricycle drivers are entitled to.“Whether it rains, the sun blazes, a storm comes, an earthquake strikes, every kind of calamity, disaster and suffering, we ‘drivers’ are here, ready to serve the ‘commuters’ whatever the challenge of the weather and the struggle of life, now where are we?” Valbuena said.The government has announced a P5,000 fuel subsidy for tricycle and jeepney drivers in Metro Manila starting March 17.The subsidy issue gained more urgency after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered the suspension of the planned public transport fare hike.Valbuena warned that Manibela would call a transport strike if the government fails to deliver on its promise to drivers and operators.Another transport group, Piston, staged a strike on Thursday and Friday over rising fuel prices and the suspension of the planned fare hike.Sen. Risa Hontiveros said the government must expand its assistance to include the “poorest of the poor.”In a letter dated March 19 addressed to the Department of Budget and Management, Hontiveros sought clarification on how the P30-billion allocation under the Department of Social Welfare and Development’s (DSWD) Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations can be repurposed to benefit hundreds of thousands of transport workers affected by rising oil prices.“Our drivers are struggling to earn a living and are already in debt, and the P1 fare hike has even been suspended. Let’s not wait for the entire public transport system to be paralyzed before we help,” she said.Hontiveros said limiting aid to traditionally defined low-income groups excludes a significant number of transport workers who, while not classified as indigent, are nonetheless experiencing severe financial strain.“Even those not currently classified under the poorest of the poor require urgent supplemental income,” she said.The DSWD on Friday assured transport workers that all qualified beneficiaries will receive aid, including those who missed earlier distributions.The agency said mechanisms are in place to accommodate unserved tricycle drivers through special payout schedules requested by local government units.Drivers who were absent, had incomplete records, or were excluded from initial lists may still qualify once their details are verified and submitted through proper channels.Social Welfare Secretary Rexlon Gatchalian said payouts will continue in key areas, including Quezon City, to ensure wider coverage of beneficiaries.The DSWD said the payouts will expand to other transport sectors and areas nationwide after Holy Week in coordination with the Land

Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board, and local government units.As part of government efforts to ease the burden of rising fuel prices, the Department of Transportation announced that private tollway concessionaires, including San Miguel Corp. and Metro Pacific Tollways Corp., will implement the two-month discount program.Public utility vehicles, public utility buses and freight vehicles will receive temporary toll discounts on major tollways starting March 23.On Friday, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said manufacturers have agreed to keep prices steady for as long as possible to help mitigate the impact of the war in the Middle East on basic commodities in the country.Speaking to reporters following his visit to the Century Pacific Food Inc. Calamba Distribution Center in Laguna, Marcos assured the public that the country has sufficient food supply even in the long term.The president also thanked the private sector for its commitment and vowed that the government would continue monitoring market prices closely.In a related development, Trade Secretary Cristina Roque said the agency has not received reports of hoarding or profiteering.“We’ve been monitoring on a daily basis because again we have a department in DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) that handles these particular scenarios,” Roque said.She reminded the public to check the prices of basic necessities and prime commodities and report any unauthorized increases through the agency’s hotline or website.

- House panel invites Sara to impeachment meeting (2026-03-20 16:13)

(UPDATE) THE House Committee on Justice has formally invited Vice President Sara Duterte to a meeting on March 25 to discuss the ground rules on the impeachment complaints that she faces.In a letter to Duterte, committee chairman and Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro said the meeting will focus on the initial hearing of the impeachment cases filed by Fr. Joel Saballa and lawyer Nathaniel Cabrera.The meeting will also determine the lineup of resource speakers and witnesses to be invited to the first hearing scheduled for April 14.In an interview with Newswatch Plus, Luistro said Duterte’s presence during the hearings is “significant” since she needs to question the evidence of the complainants and provide basis for the committee in voting on the complaint.Luistro said if the vice president fails to attend, “she will not participate in the hearing proper. She will not rebut, she will not challenge, she will not refute the evidence of the complainant. Then the evidence of the complainant will stand.” Each member of the panel might also vote in favor of finding probable cause for the impeachment to proceed to the Senate, he said.“So it is really significant for the respondent to assess the importance of participating in the hearing proper because definitely, it will be her presence only which will pave [the] way toward the presentation of her evidence either by her alone or by her assisted by her lawyers,” Luistro said.Luistro also ruled out the possibility that bribes could influence the voting, as Navotas Rep. Toby Tiangco had warned.“Regardless of all the comments or various comments of people in politics, we only have one commitment here at the Justice Committee. To make sure that we will be able to conduct an orderly, organized and fair impeachment proceeding to all the parties, the complainant, the witness and even the respondent,” Luistro said.On Friday, Duterte’s defense team spokesman Michael Poa confirmed having received the invitation from the committee.Poa has said there is “no

requirement under the applicable rules” for Duterte to attend the proceedings. “Any decision in that regard will be made in accordance with her rights and upon the advice of counsel,” he said.

- Transition to 3-term school calendar approved (2026-03-20 16:12)

THE proposal of the Department of Education’s (DepEd) to transition to a three-term school calendar starting next school year has been approved by the Department of Economy, Planning and Development (DEPDev).The DEPDev said on Friday the transition was approved during the council’s meeting on Thursday chaired by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.The policy, endorsed by the Social Development Committee-Cabinet Level, aims to maximize learning time, which is often interrupted by inclement weather, as well as celebrations and observances.The DEPDev said the policy aligns with the findings and recommendations of the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EdCom 2) for a plan that ensures sufficient learning time amid frequent climate-related disruptions. “By shifting from a four-grading-period system to a three-grading-period system, students will benefit from longer, uninterrupted instructional blocks, stabilizing their learning pace and recovery each term,” it said.A three-term school calendar also allows teachers to pursue opportunities for professional development and allot time for the implementation of catch-up initiatives. “Our commitment to developing a globally competitive workforce begins with providing evidence-based solutions to bridge educational gaps in our country,” said Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan, who is vice chairman of the ED Council.House Basic Education Committee Chairman Rep. Roman Romulo said that while he supports the switch to a three-term school calendar, he hopes that the Education department reconsiders holding catch-up classes during the break.In a message to The Manila Times, Romulo, also a co-chairman of EdCom 2, said that one of the recommendations of the commission is to “protect instructional time by reducing overload from noninstructional activities and improving governance of school calendar disruptions.” “If the proposed three-term school calendar ensures more instructional time in classrooms by reducing the number of class day disruptions brought about by weather disturbances, and national and local holidays, we are in full support. However, it is hoped that DepEd reconsiders holding catch-up classes during the break,” Romulo added.The DepEd has yet to respond to the recommendation of the DepDev, but in an earlier statement, Education Secretary Sonny Angara said the move would ensure strategic curriculum implementation through the appropriate distribution of learning blocks covering academic, co-curricular and extracurricular activities. “We are pushing this so there will be longer and more flexible instructional periods, improved lesson pacing and lower administrative burden for teachers. In this way, we are improving the quality of education,” Angara said.In a related development, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered the monitoring of the rollout of the DepEd’s budget from hiring more teachers to building more classrooms.In a statement, Executive Secretary Ralph Recto said the “shopping cart” of school supplies, manpower and facilities should be procured and hired without delay.Under the 2026 national budget, about P1.345 trillion has been allocated for the education sector — from preschool to postgraduate — a 4.36-percent gross domestic

product share aimed at closing learning gaps. “This historic high spending should not be squandered to slow procurement. What is in the budget must leapfrog to classrooms,” Recto said.He added that some of the items in the “school shopping cart” that must be prioritized are classrooms, teachers and books.Recto said corrective measures to cure delays in classroom construction, “a traditional problem area,” are being instituted.Unlike classroom construction, Recto said that hiring of teachers are not “long gestation projects,” so the 65,184 new teaching and nonteaching positions funded in the 2026 budget “can be onboarded immediately.”

- DND claps back at China over Bajo de Masinloc ops (2026-03-20 16:11)

THE Department of National Defense (DND) slammed China for criticizing Philippine military officials over operations near Bajo de Masinloc, saying it was a “self-directed farce.” Guo Jiakun of the China Foreign Ministry earlier took a swipe at the officials who, “driven by personal political motives, have repeatedly made outrageous and absurd statements, and habitually incite confrontation” between Beijing and Manila. “Such behavior is despicable,” Guo said.In a statement, the DND clapped back, saying, “Philippine operations in these waters are lawful, routine and conducted in the exercise of the country’s sovereign rights and jurisdiction under international law.” “The real farce is the act of calling for peaceful engagement, while the fully armed and heftily funded People’s Liberation Army [Navy] is harassing our fisherfolk who are merely trying to make a living in their traditional fishing grounds,” it said.On Wednesday, the Philippine Coast Guard was conducting an air patrol over Bajo de Masinloc when it received radio challenges from People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy warships and its air force.The DND said it is also “not surprising that the government of the People’s Republic of China is assailing the Philippines’ transparency strategy” since [their] “transparency is abhorred by those who twist the truth and manipulate narratives to legitimize their unlawful acts and baseless claims.” The DND reiterated that China’s illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive activities in the West Philippine Sea are “accurately documented and communicated to the public.” China “is to blame for the world’s growing awareness of the cognitive illusion that it is trying to create in order to cover up the reputational damage it is inflicting upon itself,” the DND said.Chinese and Philippine ships regularly clash in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims nearly in its entirety, despite an international ruling that its assertion has no legal basis.The Philippine Navy said that on March 7, a Chinese navy ship directed its fire control radar toward one of its vessels near another flash point, the Sabina Shoal, a fish-rich area about 150 kilometers from Palawan.The specialized radar provides precise targeting coordinates to a ship’s weapons systems.The Navy said the BRP Miguel Malvar was patrolling the area when “a PLA Navy vessel, with bow number 622... approached and later directed its fire control radar toward the Philippine Navy ship.” “This was an alarming and provocative action that created unnecessary risk and could have led to misinterpretation and misunderstanding at sea,” the Navy said.

- Philippines cited as ‘nation of contrasts’ (2026-03-20 16:10)

THE latest issue of the Austrian magazine Cercle Diplomatique highlighted the Philippines as “a nation of contrasts and rapid change” in the publication’s cover story.The issue was launched during a reception on March 13 at Meliá Vienna, which gathered members of the diplomatic community and key stakeholders from across Austria.The feature portrays a country navigating the intersection of tradition and transformation. It highlights the Philippines’ current leadership role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, alongside the recent visit of Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro to Vienna.The article underscores strengthening ties with Austria as the two nations commemorate 80 years of diplomatic relations.Beyond diplomacy, the magazine provides an overview of the Philippines’ historical depth, economic promise and globally competitive workforce.It also showcases the country’s diverse cultural heritage and natural landscapes spread across its 7,641 islands, positioning it as both an investment destination and a cultural hub in Southeast Asia.The magazine carried an interview with Philippine Ambassador to Austria Evangelina Bernas, who emphasized the expanding scope of bilateral cooperation.Bernas pointed to growing engagement in diplomacy, trade and cultural exchange, as well as the contributions of the Filipino community in Austria.“Our bilateral ties continue to flourish, through cooperation in multilateral diplomacy, through growing economic engagement and through the well-established Filipino community in Austria,” Bernas said during the magazine’s launch.She also noted the impact of Filipino professionals in sectors such as health care, information technology and hospitality, as well as the achievements of second- and third-generation Austrians of Filipino descent in fields like sports and the arts.The launch drew representatives from Austrian government institutions, international organizations, business, academia, media and cultural sectors.The collaboration with Cercle Diplomatique forms part of the Philippine Embassy’s initiatives marking the 80th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Austria, further strengthening visibility and engagement between the two nations on the global stage.

- Pagasa retires 7 storm names; announces replacements for 2029 (2026-03-20 16:09)

THE Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) announced that seven tropical cyclone names have been retired from its regular roster.In a statement dated March 5 but made public Thursday night, the weather bureau said it decommissioned the names Crising, Emong, Mirasol, Nando, Opong, Tino and Uwan.The replacement names — Chico, Elias, Magyawan, Nilad, Omar, Tala and Urbano — will be used starting in 2029.“A domestic tropical cyclone name is removed from the roster by Pagasa if its occurrence resulted in either the deaths of at least 300 individuals or damage to agriculture, infrastructure, and other assets amounting to at least P1 billion based on official reports from the Office of Civil Defense (OCD),” the weather bureau said.“Due to the exceptional magnitude and extent of the devastation they caused, these seven tropical cyclones in 2025 have met the criteria for decommissioning," the bureau added. "According to OCD, these weather disturbances cumulatively resulted in 373 fatalities, 680 injuries, and 132 missing individuals, while the combined cost of damage amounted to more than P36 billion.”Last year’s strongest storm was Super Typhoon Nando, which affected areas in Northern Luzon,

killing 22 and causing nearly $13 million in property damage. Super Typhoon Uwan killed 34 people and left 52 injured in the Bicol Region and Northern Luzon.Meanwhile, Pagasa said the northeast monsoon continues to affect extreme Northern Luzon, while the easterlies affect other parts of the country.In the weather bureau’s afternoon forecast, Batanes and the Babuyan Islands were affected by the system, seeing partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated light rains.Metro Manila and the rest of the country had partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms because of the easterlies. Caraga, Southern Leyte, and Davao Oriental had cloudy skies with scattered rains and thunderstorms.No tropical cyclone was spotted outside the Philippine Area of Responsibility.

- DMW issues alert on repatriation racket (2026-03-20 16:08)

THE Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) warned overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to be vigilant against scams related to its Repatriation Assistance Program amid rising tensions in the Middle East.In a memo late Thursday, the MWO said repatriation can only be done through official channels.“We have received reports of individuals and groups falsely offering assistance for OFW repatriation in exchange for fees or personal information. Please be advised that legitimate repatriation assistance from the DMW and MWO (Migrant Workers Office) is processed only through official channels,” the memo read.OFWs are urged to visit the official website and Facebook pages of the DMW and the MWO in Dubai.“Avoid transacting with unauthorized individuals, agents, or social media accounts claiming to facilitate repatriation services,” the DMW said.“Refrain from sharing personal information or sending money to unverified sources,” it added.The MWO can be contacted through the following numbers and emails: 056-353-3558, 054-223-0822, 054-153-3057, atn.mwodubai@dmw.gov.ph, and repat.mwodubai@gmail.com.Meanwhile, the office of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) in Dubai can be contacted at 050-558-5536 or through email at dubai@owwa.gov.ph.“We urge everyone to carefully review the official guidelines and to communicate only through our official channels for any assistance or inquiries. Stay alert and help us combat scams by reporting suspicious activities to MWO-Dubai immediately,” the OWWA said.On Thursday, 317 Filipinos — consisting of 153 OFWs, 114 dependents, and 50 other stranded Filipino passengers — returned to the country from Dubai on a government-chartered flight.

- DSWD Buong Bansa Handa: 4.5M Emergency food packs prepositioned nationwide (2026-03-20 16:07)

THE Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) announced that its stock of emergency family food packs (FFPs) has reached 4.5 million.The figure was confirmed by the agency’s National Resource and Logistics Management Bureau on March 19.The DSWD said the food packs have been prepositioned across hubs, spokes, and last-mile warehouses to ensure faster response during emergencies.“This achievement reflects the DSWD’s strong commitment to respond swiftly and effectively to emergencies, ensuring timely food assistance reaches families affected by disasters,” Assistant Secretary Leo Quintilla said.The initiative is

part of the agency’s Buong Bansa Handa program aimed at enhancing disaster response capabilities.“Reaching this level of preparedness reflects the dedication, coordination, and hard work of DSWD personnel and partners who help strengthen the country’s disaster response capacity,” Quintilla added.The program utilizes two supply chains, including a government-led system that works with local government units and a private-sector partnership model.“The initiative runs two simultaneous supply chains to ensure efficient and rapid deployment of resources during disasters,” Quintilla said.The DSWD announced plans to establish a new disaster resource center in Butuan City to further boost production capacity.“With an initial allocation of 500 million pesos, the new regional hub in Butuan City is expected to significantly enhance the government’s ability to deliver assistance to disaster-affected families,” Quintilla said.

- Go Supports Philippine Citizenship for Basketball Standouts Diouf, Means (2026-03-20 16:06)

SEN. Bong Go expressed his support for the naturalization of basketball stars Maodo Diouf and Elizabeth Jeanette Means, noting their potential to enhance the performance of Philippine teams in international competitions.In the Senate session Monday, the plenary passed on third and final reading House Bills 6640 and 6641, granting Philippine citizenship to the two athletes.The bill granting citizenship to Diouf was ratified in the Senate with 20 votes in favor, none opposed and no abstentions. Diouf attended the plenary session.Conversely, the bill that conferred citizenship upon Means was approved with 17 votes for, two against and one abstention. She could not be present due to an emergency.Once enacted, Diouf and Means will receive Philippine citizenship along with all rights, privileges and responsibilities, as well as the duties and obligations mandated by the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of the Philippines.The athletes will be required to take the Oath of Allegiance to the Republic of the Philippines before an authorized officer. This oath will be registered with the Bureau of Immigration (BI). Following registration, the BI will issue Certificates of Naturalization, allowing them to fully enjoy the rights and responsibilities of Filipino citizenship.As an author and co-sponsor of the naturalization bills, Go, who leads the Senate Committee on Sports, highlighted the importance of increasing the country’s basketball talent pool as the Philippines competes in international events.“You know, I have been a basketball fan since 1983; I used to take a jeep to Araneta and then go to Ultra, now called Philsports, just to watch basketball,” he said in Filipino.“And even now, I’m a fan of the PBA. Not only as a fan, but as chairman of the Senate committees on sports and youth, I continue to support our athletes, and I believe that if we collaborate, our athletes can achieve great success. With backing from the private sector, PSC, POC, we can win,” he added.Diouf hails from Senegal, West Africa, and is a foreign student-athlete at the University of the Philippines, participating in Season 84 Men's Basketball in the University Athletic Association of the Philippines. He is recognized for his strong presence in the key, rebounding ability and defensive skills.Means, originally from the United States, played NCAA Division II basketball at Westminster University in the US. She has showcased impressive performances in women’s collegiate basketball in the Philippines and is

viewed as a valuable addition to the national women’s basketball team.Go said legislative naturalization is a constitutionally endorsed process that permits the country to grant citizenship to individuals demonstrating dedication and potential contributions to the nation.

- Aquino urges focused, swift aid for MSMEs, middle class (2026-03-20 16:05)

SEN. Bam Aquino urged the government on Friday to swiftly implement targeted support for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and the more vulnerable segments of the middle class, emphasizing the need for assistance amid the ongoing war in the oil-rich Middle East and its impact on fuel prices.In a television interview, Aquino highlighted a growing gap in government aid programs, noting that many minimum-wage earners and small business owners fall outside traditional assistance frameworks despite facing significant economic risks.“Let’s say the middle class, minimum wage earners, or small businesses... they’re above the poverty line, and therefore they don’t get your aid, but they’re in a dangerous situation,” Aquino said.He warned that the economic effects of the conflict would soon be felt more sharply by consumers, particularly through higher costs of basic goods and services.“We will see the shocks eventually at the market, at the grocery store, at the gasoline station, at the sari-sari store. This is what’s really painful,” he said in Filipino. “Your government needs to move quickly. If there is targeted aid, give it immediately. If there is support for industries, release it swiftly. Don’t be general, be specific,” he added.Aquino emphasized the importance of using data-driven systems to ensure that government assistance reaches the most affected sectors efficiently. He said that in an era of advanced information systems, aid distribution should be both precise and rapid.“We need to be very targeted in this assistance. And we need to act fast,” he added.Beyond households, the senator also underscored the urgency of supporting MSMEs and transport sector workers, warning that failure to act could weaken economic activity and risk broader instability.“We need to support our MSMEs. We need to support our transport workers. There is a lot of funding allocated for aid. Maybe this is the time to use it,” Aquino said. “Targeted use of aid to ensure that our economy does not go into recession.”He further emphasized that sustaining business operations and mobility is key to maintaining economic momentum.“We have to keep our businesses open. We have to support our transport driver because if it's too expensive to go out, why would I go out?” he said.Aquino suggested several measures the government could adopt, including fuel subsidies, direct financial assistance or “ayuda,” and stronger supply chain linkages — such as increasing government procurement from MSMEs — to cushion the impact of rising costs.As inflationary pressures persist, the senator called for more responsive and inclusive economic interventions to protect both businesses and consumers from external shocks.

- Heavy traffic expected on NLEX over K-pop event (2026-03-20 16:04)

(UPDATE) NORTH Luzon Expressway (NLEX) Corp. warned motorists to expect heavy traffic in Bocaue, Bulacan, as K-pop boy group Seventeen holds its world tour stop at the Philippine Sports Stadium on Saturday, March 21.The tollway operator said traffic buildup is expected in the venue area and along NLEX-covered roads leading to Ciudad de Victoria.NLEX Corp. advised

concertgoers to take the Ciudad de Victoria exit and urged motorists bound for Bocaue or Santa Maria to take other routes via the Marilao, Bocaue, or Tambubong exits.It also advised motorists to load their RFID accounts before traveling and plan their trips ahead to avoid delays.Traffic personnel will be deployed in NLEX-covered areas to assist motorists during the event.Parking will be on a first-come, first-served basis for those bringing private vehicles.NLEX Corp. said attendees coming from North Luzon are advised to use Parking A and Parking B, while those coming from Manila are advised to use Parking C1, C2, D, and E for easier exit after the concert.Seventeen last performed in the Philippines on Jan. 18 and 19, 2025, also at the Philippine Sports Stadium in Bocaue, with the group’s two-night “Right Here” world tour stop drawing 57,600 fans.

- MMDA rules to keep Quezon Ave. road plan (2026-03-20 16:03)

THE Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said Friday it will continue the traffic management scheme at the Quezon Avenue-Araneta Avenue intersection after a dry run showed faster travel times and improved vehicle speeds in the area.This means the agency will keep and refine the traffic adjustments introduced in the transport corridor, which will affect motorists regularly passing through C-3 Road and Quezon Avenue.MMDA said its travel time and speed runs showed measurable improvements along key stretches of C-3 Road and Quezon Avenue.Along the northbound section of C-3 Road between Maria Clara Street and Kaliraya Street, travel time dropped to 4 minutes and 42 seconds on March 11 from 8 minutes and 21 seconds on Jan. 21, or a 43.71-percent reduction.Average speed on the same segment rose to 11.39 kilometers per hour from 6.41 kph, or a 77.69-percent improvement.On the southbound side, travel time fell to 3 minutes and 1 second from 7 minutes and 29 seconds, equivalent to a 59.69-percent reduction, while average speed increased to 17.71 kph from 7.15 kph, or a 147.69-percent improvement.MMDA also reported smoother traffic flow on Quezon Avenue between Scout Chuatoco and Banawe Street.Travel time on the westbound side dropped to 2 minutes and 19 seconds on March 11 from 4 minutes and 19 seconds on Feb. 11 — equivalent to a 46.33-percent reduction.On the eastbound side, travel time went down to 1 minute and 38 seconds from 3 minutes and 12 seconds, while average speed increased to 41.76 kph from 21.28 kph, or a 96.24-percent improvement.After the results were known, the MMDA said it is recommending the continuation and refinement of the traffic scheme, including turning rules, road markings, signage, and possible replication at other major intersections in Metro Manila.The dry run began on Feb. 23, 2026.

- New Spider-Man trailer draws over 700M views (2026-03-20 16:02)

A NEW trailer record had been set, as the trailer for the upcoming movie “Spider-Man: Brand New Day” garnered 718.6 million views in just 24 hours, according to Sony Pictures. The record topped the previous one set by another superhero movie, Deadpool & Wolverine, which had 365 million views during its first 24 hours online. It had also topped the trailer views of its 2021 predecessor, Spider-Man: No Way Home, which had 355.5 million views in 24 hours. “Spider-Man: Brand New Day,” which stars Tom Holland as the main character, along with

Zendaya and Sadie Sink, is expected to hit Philippine cinemas on July 29, 2026.

- Health supplement brand offers fatty liver test for free (2026-03-20 16:01)

AN over-the-counter health supplement brand has encouraged the public to take advantage of free liver testing as part of an initiative to improve access to early screening among Filipinos.In a statement on Friday, Essentiale Forte P, in partnership with drugstore Mercury Drug, said it launched a free liver test program in select branches of the drugstore nationwide. The initiative will run throughout the year. According to the Hepatology Society of the Philippines, about 18 million Filipinos are at risk of developing fatty liver disease — a condition often referred to as a “silent epidemic” due to its lack of visible symptoms in its early stages. With symptoms often not immediately visible, many people remain unaware of the condition until it has already progressed into a more serious health concern.Gheck Barlis, brand manager of Phospholipids Essentiale Forte P, said limited awareness about liver health contributes to the growing risk.“Many Filipinos are unaware that everyday lifestyle factors such as diet, stress, and alcohol consumption, as well as existing conditions such as hypertension, obesity, and type 2 diabetes, can affect liver health,” Barlis said.The program offers a Serum Glutamic Pyruvic Transaminase (SGPT) test, which measures liver enzyme levels, using a small blood sample. Elevated SGPT levels can indicate potential liver damage, making it a critical diagnostic tool for early detection.Cora Lim, vice president for Merchandising of Mercury Drug Corporation, stressed the importance of the initiative.“Preventive health care empowers customers to take charge of their well-being. By partnering with Essentiale, we can bring meaningful health initiatives to our stores and foster better health outcomes for the Filipino community,” Lim said.They told The Manila Times there is no official list of branches offering free testing, as it may change frequently. They instead urged consumers to regularly check the official social media pages of Essentiale PH and Mercury Drug or inquire directly at the Mercury Drug branch nearest them.

- NAIA plans to decongest remote parking from foreign aircraft (2026-03-20 15:57)

MANILA, Philippines - Several large foreign aircraft parked at Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) since the war began in the Middle East are set to be transferred to Clark International Airport and other major regional hubs to decongest the country's main gateway.According to the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA), these aircraft have been grounded in Manila since February 28, 2026, when the United States and Israel began attacking Iran.MIAA General Manager Eric Ines admitted that parking space for aircraft is becoming scarce, as NAIA has become crowded with planes due to widespread airspace closures triggered by the crisis. The MIAA chief declined to name the foreign carriers or specify how many planes remained at the remote parking area.Operations to the Middle East remain irregular due to volatile airspace conditions. Ines reported that 372 flights at NAIA have been affected so far, including cancellations from major carriers like Philippine Airlines and Cebu Pacific.Ines clarified that airline operations have not been completely suspended. Depending on airspace availability, some flights - including those from Etihad Airways, Emirates, Qatar Airways, and Kuwait Airways - are still able to depart."There are some flights, like yesterday (Thursday), where a Qatar

Airways plane was able to depart for Doha. It's a matter of timing," Ines said. He added that original schedules are no longer being followed, as departures now depend strictly on the safe availability of airspace.Despite the high number of flight disruptions, passengers flow at NAIA remains stable. The airport is currently handling a daily volume of 152,000 to 158,000 travelers.

- Manibela warns of wider transport strike if government fails to deliver (2026-03-20 15:38)

MANILA, Philippines — Transport advocacy group MANIBELA on Friday warned that a wider transport strike could follow if the government fails to fulfill its promises to drivers and operators.The group’s membership now totals about 180,000 across the jeepney, UV Express, TNVS, taxi, and motorcycle and delivery rider sectors, according to Chairman Mar Valbuena.Valbuena told The Manila Times in an exclusive text message that MANIBELA did not join the transport strike on Thursday and Friday because it is still waiting for the government to act on its commitments.“We will only stage a strike if nothing really comes out of what the government has been promising,” he said.He said a future protest could involve not only jeepney drivers but also the group’s TNVS and UV Express members.“Yes, they will all join together, including the TNVS and UV Express members who are part of our group,” he said.PISTON and allied groups staged a transport strike on Thursday and Friday over rising fuel prices and the suspension of the planned fare hike.

- Amid implementation of three-term school calendar, Romulo urges DepEd to hold catch-up classes during term break (2026-03-20 14:52)

House Basic Education Committee chairman and Pasig City Rep. Roman Romulo said that while he supports the move of holding the three-term school calendar beginning next school year, he hopes that the Department of Education reconsider holding catch-up classes during the break.This comes after the Department of Economy, Planning and Development's (DepDev) Economy and Development team approved the implementation of the three-term school calendar beginning School Year 2026-2027.According to DepDev, the move aims to maximize the length of learning time, often disrupted by bad weather as well as celebrations and observances.In a message to The Manila Times, Romulo, also a co-chairman of the Second Congressional Commission for Education (Edcom 2), said that one of the recommendations of the commission is to "protect instructional time by reducing overload from non-instructional activities and improving governance of school calendar disruptions,""If the proposed three term school calendar ensures more instructional time in classrooms by reducing the number of class day disruptions brought about by weather disturbances and national and local holidays, we are in full support. However, it is hoped that DepEd reconsiders holding catch-up classes during the break," Romulo added.The DepEd has yet to respond to the recommendation of the DepDev

- Marcos admin calls for peace, unity during Eid'l Fitr (2026-03-20 13:46)

MANILA, Philippines - The Marcos administration called for unity, faith and sustained efforts toward peace as it joined the Muslim community in celebrating Eid’l Fitr. Special Assistant to the President Anton Lagdameo Jr. conveyed President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s message of

solidarity with the Bangsamoro and all Muslim communities nationwide.In a message, Lagdameo highlighted the resilience and devotion of the Muslim Ummah, stressing that their discipline and sacrifice during Ramadan served as an inspiration for all Filipinos.“Eid’l Fitr reminds us that beyond our differences, we are one nation guided by faith, respect, and a shared vision for peace; may the spirit of Ramadan strengthen our unity and commitment to uplift every Filipino,” he said.Lagdameo also called on communities to continue working together in promoting peace, development, and mutual respect, especially in areas striving for long-term stability.In an earlier message, the President has emphasized the importance of compassion, discipline, and spiritual reflection, noting that the lessons of Ramadan should guide Filipinos in building a more inclusive and harmonious nation.Marcos underscored that Eid’l Fitr is not only a celebration but also a reminder of shared responsibility in fostering understanding among different cultures and faiths across the country.Eid'l-Fitr, or the Festival of Breaking the Fast, marks the end of the month-long fasting of Ramadan.It symbolizes gratitude, generosity, and renewed devotion, as Muslims around the world mark the end of a month-long period of fasting, prayer, and reflection.

- Tara Basa program shows strong gains in literacy (2026-03-20 13:17)

THE Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said learners under its Tara, Basa! Tutoring Program posted positive results in English and Filipino literacy, based on an assessment conducted by the Department of Education.The assessment was carried out by the Bureau of Education Assessment in 12 implementing regions during the program’s 2025 rollout.DSWD officials said 45,794 incoming Grade 2 learners from 2,295 elementary schools were assessed out of the 55,932 learners enrolled in the program.Results showed that 72.39 percent or 33,149 learners reached the “Meets Expectations” level in Filipino literacy, while 70.08 percent or 32,094 learners achieved the same level in English.“This positive result from DepEd proves that Tara, Basa! Tutoring Program is effective and will help prepare the future generation to become globally competitive,” DSWD Assistant Secretary Irene Dumlao said.The assessment also showed that 21,801 learners in Filipino and 20,013 learners in English improved from lower proficiency levels to meet expected standards.“The data clearly shows strong upward movement in learners’ reading skills, with many improving from lower proficiency levels, proving the program’s effectiveness in helping struggling readers,” Dumlao said.The report noted high retention rates among learners already performing at expected levels, with 93.76 percent in Filipino and 95.39 percent in English maintaining their proficiency.The DSWD said it will continue to improve the program and provide targeted interventions for learners who still require support as part of its commitment to inclusive child development.

- Lawmakers seek probe into online sexual abuse of women (2026-03-20 13:17)

SEVERAL women legislators filed a House resolution Wednesday seeking a congressional inquiry into the proliferation of online sexual abuse or exploitation of children (OSAEC), child sexual abuse or exploitation materials (CSAEM), and technology-facilitated gender-based violence

(TFGBV) in the Philippines.The initiative coincides with the observance of Women’s Month.House Resolution 900 was principally authored by Laguna Rep. Ann Matibag, alongside Albay Rep. Krisel Lagman and San Juan Rep. Ysabel Zamora. Matibag chairs the House Committee on Women and Gender Equality.Under the resolution, the House Committees on Women and Gender Equality; Information and Communications Technology; Welfare of Children; and Public Order and Safety are directed to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation. The probe aims to strengthen legal, institutional, and technological safeguards against digital sexual exploitation and abuse.The lawmakers stressed the urgency of the probe, citing data from United Nations Women and the Economist Intelligence Unit showing that digital violence disproportionately affects women, with 38% reporting personal experience and 85% witnessing such abuse.The measure was filed electronically during the lawmakers' participation in the 70th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) in New York. The resolution reflects insights from the international forum, which was also attended by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.The filing was also informed by engagements with Philippine delegates at CSW70, including officials from the Department of Information and Communications Technology, Department of Justice, Commission on Human Rights, Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity, and the Supreme Court.Matibag emphasized that the resolution underscores the need for legislative action, even as Congress enters its recess."Even on the final session day before the congressional recess, and while attending international engagements, we continue to fulfill our legislative duties," Matibag said. "This initiative reflects our commitment to ensure that our laws keep pace with evolving digital threats against women and children."She added that as technology evolves, so must safeguards, and called on Congress to ensure that legal and institutional responses remain coordinated and effective.The lawmakers also noted that addressing online sexual exploitation requires strengthened coordination among government agencies, digital platforms, and civil society. The inquiry is part of ongoing efforts to modernize legal frameworks and protect women and children in digital spaces.

- DoST turns over e-tranvia to Intramuros (2026-03-20 13:16)

THE Department of Science and Technology (DoST) on Thursday turned over a locally developed 18-seater electric tranvia to the Intramuros Administration (IA).The ceremonial turnover was held at Centro de Turismo in Intramuros.The Intramuros Administration said the e-tranvia will have fixed stops, with its main station at Plaza Roma. Other stops will be at IA-managed heritage sites such as Fort Santiago, Centro de Turismo, Plaza San Luis Complex, and Baluarte de San Diego.IA’s Joan Padilla said e-tranvia rides will be free “as a response to the ongoing oil supply disruption, although the agency is also assessing how long it can sustain the service.” “We also have to be practical that after this, we will rent it out to recover operational expenses,” Padilla said.She said the e-tranvia is not intended to compete with existing transport modes within Intramuros, such as kalesas and pedicabs.“There are many visitors in Intramuros, and different markets prefer different modes of transport... this is another option that we want to give our tourists so they have a choice of mobility,” Padilla said.Padilla said

solar-powered charging could help reduce part of the e-tranvia’s operating costs, particularly for energy.Additional units are planned, pending the availability of government funds.“There was already an appropriated budget last year, 2025, for the procurement of electric tranvia units, but it has not yet been released by the Department of Budget and Management,” Padilla said.“We are hoping that it will be released very soon, and that would be good for three electric tranvia units,” she said.DoST Secretary Renato Solidum Jr. said the project is part of a broader effort to promote electric mobility in the country, citing its lower operating cost compared to diesel-powered vehicles.“Before fuel prices increased, the per kilometer cost of the e-tranvia was around 6.16 if charged from electricity, compared to 18.98 for diesel, and even higher now at around 30 to 32,” Solidum told reporters.He said initial hesitation among drivers, particularly in the tricycle sector, often stems from concerns about speed.“Some drivers think electric vehicles are slower because they want to go fast to make more trips, but if you show them that they save on electricity and reduce fuel costs, their earnings actually increase, so they do not need to rush,” he said.Solidum stressed the need to expand charging infrastructure to support wider adoption of electric vehicles.“If you want to use an electric vehicle for long-distance travel, you should not run out of power, which is why it is important to have many charging facilities,” he said.

- Biazon tells Maynilad to provide long-term solution (2026-03-20 13:13)

MUNTINLUPA Mayor Ruffy Biazon blasted temporary measures by Maynilad Water Services Inc. and demanded a long-term solution for water supply interruptions.Biazon said the city raised its concerns directly with the water concessionaire during a meeting Wednesday, stressing that temporary responses are not enough to resolve recurring supply issues.“Not only temporary solutions should be in place. We need a clear direction to finally fix water service in our city,” Biazon said.Maynilad attributed the service interruptions to elevated water turbidity—a high level of impurities in raw water being processed by its treatment facilities—which it said it is continuously working to address.Biazon said 28 water tankers are currently deployed across the city but noted that many affected households remain unreached, prompting the city to insist on same-day water delivery in all affected areas.He said additional tankers should be deployed if needed to ensure sufficient coverage.The city government also proposed a quadrant-based distribution system, assigning specific water tankers to designated areas to improve response time and efficiency.Beyond immediate measures, the city called for long-term solutions, including additional water sources, new reservoirs and infrastructure upgrades to prevent recurring interruptions.Biazon also flagged unresolved road restoration issues following Maynilad’s excavation works, warning that the city may withhold new permits if previous projects are not properly completed.Maynilad committed to coordinate with the City Engineering Office for an inventory and monitoring of affected roads, according to the city government.The meeting was attended by city councilors, Muntinlupa Rep. Jimmy Fresnedi and representatives from homeowners associations, who conveyed residents’ frustrations over the disruptions.Biazon said the city will continue to monitor Maynilad’s compliance with its commitments to ensure reliable water service for Muntinlupa residents.

• House panel invites Sara to meet on ground rules in impeach hearing to start in April (2026-03-20 05:52)

MANILA. Philippines — The House of Representatives' Justice Committee invited Vice President Sara Duterte to its meeting on March 25 to discuss the ground rules for the impeachment hearing to start in April.A letter signed by panel chairman and Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro said the meeting would tackle the impeachment complaints filed by Fr. Joel Saballa and lawyer Nathaniel Cabrera and determine the resource speakers and witnesses to be invited to the first hearing on April 14."In this regard, we respectfully invite you to personally attend the said meeting in your capacity as the respondent in the impeachment complaints filed by Reverend Father Joel Saballa, et. al. and Atty. Nathaniel G. Cabrera," Luistro said in her letter.In a statement on Friday, Duterte defense team spokesman Michael Poa confirmed that they have received the invitation from the committee.Poa had said that there was "no requirement under the applicable rules for her personal attendance,""Any decision in that regard will be made in accordance with her rights and upon the advice of counsel," Poa said

• Oil retreats as US and allies look to boost supply, unchoke Strait of Hormuz (2026-03-20 05:42)

SINGAPORE — Oil prices fell on Friday as leading European nations and Japan offered to join efforts to secure safe passage for ships through the Strait of Hormuz and the US outlined moves to boost oil supply.Looking to curb soaring oil prices, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the US may soon remove sanctions from Iranian oil stranded on tankers, and said a further release of crude from the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve was possible.In a joint statement on Thursday, after earlier hesitating, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Japan expressed "our readiness to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait," where 20 percent of the world’s oil passes.This is the full text of the statement from Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Japan and Canada:“We condemn in the strongest terms recent attacks by Iran on unarmed commercial vessels in the Gulf, attacks on civilian infrastructure including oil and gas installations, and the de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iranian forces.We express our deep concern about the escalating conflict. We call on Iran to cease immediately its threats, laying of mines, drone and missile attacks and other attempts to block the Strait to commercial shipping, and to comply with UN Security Council Resolution 2817.Freedom of navigation is a fundamental principle of international law, including under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.The effects of Iran’s actions will be felt by people in all parts of the world, especially the most vulnerable.Consistent with UNSC Resolution 2817, we emphasise that such interference with international shipping and the disruption of global energy supply chains constitute a threat to international peace and security. In this regard, we call for an immediate comprehensive moratorium on attacks on civilian infrastructure, including oil and gas installations.We express our readiness to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait. We welcome the commitment of nations who are engaging in preparatory planning.We welcome the International Energy Agency decision to authorise a coordinated release of strategic petroleum

reserves. We will take other steps to stabilise energy markets, including working with certain producing nations to increase output.We will also work to provide support for the most affected nations, including through the United Nations and the IFIs (International Financial Institutions).Maritime security and freedom of navigation benefit all countries. We call on all states to respect international law and uphold the fundamental principles of international prosperity and security.”

- PH cited as 'nation of contrasts, rapid change' in Austrian diplomatic magazine (2026-03-20 04:46)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines takes center stage in the Spring 2026 (March–May) issue of Cercle Diplomatique, which highlighted the country as “a nation of contrasts and rapid change” in the publication’s cover story.The issue was formally launched during a reception on March 13, 2026, at Meliá Vienna, gathering members of the diplomatic community and key stakeholders from across Austria.The feature paints a picture of a country navigating the intersection of tradition and transformation. It highlights the Philippines’ current leadership role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), alongside the recent visit of Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro to Vienna. The article also underscores strengthening ties with Austria as both nations commemorate 80 years of diplomatic relations.Beyond diplomacy, the magazine provides an overview of the Philippines’ historical depth, economic promise, and globally competitive workforce. It also showcases the country’s diverse cultural heritage and natural landscapes spread across its 7,641 islands, positioning it as both an investment destination and a cultural hub in Southeast Asia.A key highlight of the issue is an interview with Philippine Ambassador to Austria Evangelina A. Bernas, who emphasized the expanding scope of bilateral cooperation. She pointed to growing engagement in diplomacy, trade, and cultural exchange, as well as the contributions of the Filipino community in Austria.“Our bilateral ties continue to flourish, through cooperation in multilateral diplomacy, through growing economic engagement, and through the well-established Filipino community in Austria,” Bernas said during the launch. She also noted the impact of Filipino professionals in sectors such as healthcare, information technology, and hospitality, as well as the achievements of second- and third-generation Austrians of Filipino descent in fields like sports and the arts.

- Sara praises discipline, devotion' of Muslims in Eid'l Fitr message. (2026-03-20 04:18)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte praised the Muslim community for their " discipline and devotion" during the month of Ramadan as it ends on Saturday with the celebration of Eid'l Fitr.In a video message on Friday, Duterte said that the entire month of Ramadan celebrated a journey "defined by prayer, sacrifice, and deep spiritual reflection,""The discipline and devotion you have shown throughout your fast are testaments to the strength of your faith and your commitment to the values of compassion and charity,"She also praised Filipinos for their resilience and hard work, which remains as a "source of pride" for the country."May the spirit of Eid bring you comfort and remind you that your contributions to your

families and our country are deeply valued," she said.Amid the joy and thanksgiving, Duterte also offerf a prayer for peace across the globe, and to use the lessons of Ramadan as an inspiration to "work together toward a global community that is inclusive, safe, and anchored in the pursuit of the common good,""May your homes be filled with peace, and may your hearts be filled with the light of Allah’s blessings. Eid Mubarak!" Duterte said.

- Pagasa decomissions names of 7 destructive storms in 2025 (2026-03-20 04:12)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) has retired the names of seven storms that brought massive death and destruction to the country.In a statement dated March 5, but only made public on Thursday night, the weather bureau decommissioned "Crising, Emong, Mirasol, Nando, Opong, Tino, and Uwan."They were replaced by Chico, Elias, Magyawan, Nilad, Omar, Tala, and Urbano, and will be used starting 2029.“A domestic tropical cyclone name is decommissioned (i.e., removed from the roster) by Pagasa if its occurrence resulted in either the deaths of at least 300 individuals or damage to agriculture, infrastructure, and other assets amounting to at least P1 billion based on official reports from the Office of Civil Defense (OCD),” the weather bureau said.

- 4 tax evasion charges vs Curlee Discaya filed in court (2026-03-20 03:55)

MANILA, Philippines – Prosecutor General Richard Anthony Fadullon has confirmed that four tax evasion cases were filed against Pacifico "Curlee" Discaya before the Court of Tax Appeals (CTA) after initial delays due to the filing of a motion for reconsideration.Fadullon said on Thursday that Discaya’s motion for reconsideration has also been dismissed, allowing the Department of Justice (DOJ) to file the four charges against Discaya for alleged tax evasion and failure to file tax returns and/or supply correct and accurate information in connection with taxes.On Feb. 6,2026, tax evasion charges were first filed against Discaya’s wife, Cezarah Rowena "Sara", after Curlee sought a motion for reconsideration.Curlee, who is currently under the custody of the Senate, is the sole proprietor of St. Gerard Construction. The Discaya couple is being linked to the anomalous flood control projects.The criminal information dated December 2025 was filed before the CTA on March 12.Defense lawyers filed their respective " entry of appearance," identifying themselves as counsels for Discaya on March 18.In November last year, the government said the Discaya's tax liability was estimated at around P7.18 billion and includes unpaid individual income taxes and documentary taxes on their supposed divestment from four construction firms.The charges carry a prison term of up to 10 years and a fine of up to P100,000 in case of conviction.

- 'Spider-Man: Brand New Day' sets brand new record as most watched movie trailer with over 700M views (2026-03-20 03:46)

MANILA, Philippines — A new record has been set for the most viewed movie trailer in history and that belongs to “Spider-Man: Brand New Day,” garnering 718.6 million views in just 24 hours, according to its producer Sony Pictures as quoted on the IMDb website.The record

topped the previous one set by another superhero movie, Deadpool & Wolverine, which had 365 million views during its first 24 hours online.It had also topped the trailer views of its predecessor, Spider-Man: No Way Home, which had 355.5 million views.“Spider-Man: Brand New Day,” which stars Tom Holland, along with Zendaya and Sadie Sink, is expected to hit Philippine cinemas on July 29, 2026.

- PH to open first oil and gas R&D; lab (2026-03-20 03:35)

MANILA, Philippines —The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) is set to open the country’s first research and development (R&D) laboratory for oil and gas exploration in Palawan.In a statement on Thursday, the agency said the Drilling Fluids Research and Innovation (DFRI) laboratory—which is set to open on March 25, 2026—aims to develop locally available and sustainable drilling fluids.DOST Secretary Renato Solidum Jr. said the conflict in the Middle East highlighted the need for the country to strengthen its capacity to sustain its own petroleum-related resources.“The implications of the growing geopolitical tension in the Middle East are already becoming evident. Given the ongoing instability in global oil supply chains and persistent fuel price hikes, the ability to develop local substitutes for critical drilling materials becomes strategically important to secure our future in sustaining our own petroleum products like drilling fluids,” said Solidum.

- MMDA to retain new traffic scheme along Quezon Ave after dry run showed faster travel time (2026-03-20 02:53)

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said Friday it would continue implementing its traffic management scheme at the Quezon Avenue-Araneta Avenue intersection after a dry run showed faster travel times and improved vehicle speeds in the area.The move means the agency is pushing to keep and refine the traffic adjustments introduced in the corridor, a development that could affect motorists regularly passing through C-3 Road and Quezon Avenue.MMDA said its travel time and speed runs showed measurable improvements along key stretches of C-3 Road and Quezon Avenue.Along the northbound section of C-3 Road between Maria Clara Street and Kaliraya Street, travel time dropped to 4 minutes and 42 seconds on March 11, 2026 from 8 minutes and 21 seconds on Jan. 21, or a 43.71-percent reduction.Average speed on the same segment rose to 11.39 kilometers per hour from 6.41 kph, or a 77.69-percent improvement.On the southbound side, travel time fell to 3 minutes and 1 second from 7 minutes and 29 seconds, equivalent to a 59.69-percent reduction, while average speed increased to 17.71 kph from 7.15 kph, or a 147.69-percent improvement.MMDA also reported smoother traffic flow on Quezon Avenue between Scout Chuatoco and Banawe Street.Travel time on the westbound side dropped to 2 minutes and 19 seconds on March 11 from 4 minutes and 19 seconds on February 11, equivalent to a 46.33-percent reduction.On the eastbound side, travel time went down to 1 minute and 38 seconds from 3 minutes and 12 seconds, while average speed increased to 41.76 kph from 21.28 kph, or a 96.24-percent improvement.Following the results, MMDA said it was recommending the continuation and refinement of the traffic scheme, including turning rules,

road markings, signages, and possible replication at other major intersections in Metro Manila.The dry run began on Feb. 23.

- PUJ transport group says jeepney drivers should get P5K fuel aid alongside tricycle drivers (2026-03-20 02:46)

MANILA, Philippines — A public utility jeepney transport group on Friday said jeepney drivers should receive the government’s P5,000 fuel assistance alongside tricycle drivers, claiming that its sector consumed more diesel, carried more passengers and was also being squeezed by rising fuel prices.MANIBELA Chairman Mar Valbuena, in an exclusive text message to The Manila Times, questioned why jeepney drivers have yet to receive the same assistance as tricycle drivers despite continuing to serve commuters through calamities and daily hardship.“Whether it rains, the sun blazes, a storm comes, an earthquake strikes, every kind of calamity, disaster and suffering, we ‘drivers’ are here, ready to serve the ‘commuters’ whatever the challenge of the weather and the struggle of life, now where are we?” Valbuena told The Manila Times.Valbuena said jeepney drivers should have been included at the same time in the fuel subsidy distribution.“We consume more diesel, we carry more passengers, diesel prices are higher, I hope the fuel subsidies were given alongside what was granted,” he said.The government announced that tricycle and jeepney drivers in Metro Manila would receive P5,000 each in fuel subsidy starting March 17 to cushion the impact of rising oil prices.The issue gained more urgency after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered the suspension of the planned public transport fare hike on Wednesday, saying commuters should be spared from additional costs for now.

- Women leaders inspire, offer advice at TMT forum (2026-03-19 16:14)

EMBRACE challenges, be tenacious in honing skills and foster good values at home. These are the messages that women leaders in government shared with fellow women at The Manila Times’ Women’s Forum at Casa Buenas, Newport City, on March 19.The Women in Government panel was composed of Nograles Ilagan Cayco Lizada & Dabi Law CEO and founding partner Margarita Ignacia Nograles-Almario, Solicitor General Darlene Marie Berberabe, Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro, and Budget and Management Assistant Secretary for Communications and Public Relations Diana Camacho-Mercado.The speakers shared a common experience from the beginning of their careers up to occasional encounters with adversity where they had to assert themselves in male-dominated fields. They experienced being underestimated despite their stellar credentials, colleagues questioning their capabilities and having to take extra steps just to prove themselves. Nevertheless, they remained inspired and took these as opportunities for learning and growth. Leveraging on their experiences, they shared advice for aspiring young women.Women with integrityAs leaders, the speakers are not only focused on empowering women but also showing them how role models in leadership should be. For Nograles-Almario, integrity has to be rock solid, especially for public officials who are always in the public eye. They also need to have a strong foundation of values, acquired from their families. It is also important to have a strong support system, which

includes colleagues. “What you say, what you do, how you present yourself, and the work that you do will reflect the people who voted for you, and the people who hold you accountable,” she said. “It’s a lot of balancing because when you make a decision, especially for women in government with a high position, you affect a lot. Most of the time, you have to stick to your guns. You have to really decide and when you make a decision, you have to stick to it. You have to make sure that you’ve considered all possibilities, even the consequences. It’s important to have a very strong core value to navigate you through the decisions that you’re making,” she added.Echoing family values, Berberabe emphasized the importance of personal integrity and consistency in realizing those values. “Do not go near the line. Go far from the line. All of us know what is right and wrong. You just listen to your gut. Try to be more discerning and wise,” she advised. “It shouldn’t be [hard] for the vast majority of you because we all have our own principles to begin with, and that should guide us in every decision we make.” Lazaro enjoined other agencies to strengthen integrity in their spaces. “Foreign affairs is not foreign affairs without the other agencies; so, it’s very important that we also deal with the same amount of integrity with other agencies. There is nothing to discuss if you have no good relations with defense, with trade, and so on and so forth,” she said.Moreover, she said personal integrity should be consistent as it ripples across institutions at work. The speakers also imparted inspirational words for aspiring female leaders. “You’re not just a woman; you are a woman for whatever you want to be — a woman with purpose, with integrity. Whatever it is, it’s your [own story]. Do not let others, especially men, dictate who you are. Dictate where and what rooms you belong in, what position you belong to. We are all capable women,” Nograles-Almario said. “There will always be doubters. [These are] the people who tell you ‘It’s so hard. It’s for men. Don’t get into that. You’re not that good.’ Don’t believe them,” Berberabe said. “So if other people tell you to not get into something because it’s hard or because it’s for men, that’s your cue. Get into that. Just stay humble, stay open, and stay diligent and hardworking.” Lazaro emphasized underserved women in provinces, saying, “We have to also take care of the women in the provinces, who are the real ones that are exploited. We have to provide that education. Education is the only thing that no one can take away from us; so, it’s important that we ripple that across the entire Philippines, so that more women can be empowered and know their rights.” “I think women everywhere are very good in the home, at the workplace, in public service and in the communities. We belong everywhere, not just in places that will allow us to be there. We just have to remember that we are enough, and we belong,” Camacho-Mercado said.Eliminating gender rolesAs female role models, the panel members emphasized that spaces are built for women to grow, and that it is also women who should aid fellow women. “Sponsorship and mentorship of other women is very important [so] that we can highlight inspiring women for our daughters and the next generation,” Berberabe said.Nograles-Almario, who is also active on social media, said it should be all right for women to feel things. “As a woman [and] as a leader not just in government [but also] in business, we are put in a higher standard, and we are under a lot of scrutiny more than men. [We] have to be presentable, but not distracting. [We] have to be assertive, but not aggressive. [We] have to be emotional, but not unstable. There’s so many things that we have to balance out, and sharing those things online lets other women see that it’s OK to talk. It’s OK to be

able to defend yourself when you want to.” Berberabe stressed the importance of cultivating women empowerment in homes, especially in teaching daughters to dream. “When our foundation is strong and we encourage our daughters to pick up space, it gives them the leverage in society,” she said.Agencies should also eliminate gender bias by focusing on merits. “If we give this opportunity and if we remove the gender biases and stereotypes, we’ll see that women can really excel in any field they choose to pursue,” Lazaro said.

- MRT-3, LRT-2 fares cut by 50% starting March 23 (2026-03-19 16:13)

THE Department of Transportation (DOTr) will implement a 50-percent fare discount for all passengers of the Metro Rail Transit (MRT) 3 and Light Rail Transit (LRT) 2 beginning March 23.The fare reduction comes as the war in the Middle East takes its toll on fuel and transport costs, and strained household budgets.Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez said the move is expected to generate significant savings for commuters, particularly as fuel prices continue to climb. “The government is doing everything it can to cushion the impact of the crisis in the Middle East. Affordable fares and reliable transport remain our priorities, which is why we are granting a 50-percent discount on MRT 3 and LRT 2 for all passengers,” Lopez said.He added that taking the train would allow commuters to save more compared to using private vehicles, given the high cost of fuel.The DOTr said the discounted fares will be automatically applied to passengers using blue Beep cards, while those without stored-value cards may avail themselves of the reduced rates through single-journey tickets.The existing 50-percent discount for senior citizens, persons with disabilities and students using white Beep cards will remain in effect.Meanwhile, the DOTr said it is in talks with the private operator of LRT 1, Light Rail Manila Corp., to explore the possibility of extending similar fare discounts.On Wednesday, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. met with members of the Private Sector Advisory Council (PSAC) to discuss measures to mitigate the impact of rising oil prices on the air transport sector.The Presidential Communications Office (PCO) said Marcos and PSAC identified several measures to mitigate the immediate impact of rising fuel costs, including those affecting air transport, and to ensure affordability, operational stability and minimal disruption to mobility and supply chains. “President Marcos also underscored the administration’s commitment to work closely with the aviation sector in pursuing other measures to secure a steady supply of oil and fuel amid global tightening, and to cushion the impact of price increases to the traveling public,” the PCO said.During the meeting, the DOTr reported that the government, through the Civil Aeronautics Board, adopted a 15-day airfare price monitoring and implementation cycle for the imposition of passenger and cargo fuel surcharges on domestic and international flights.The Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines also approved the reduction of passenger service and airport navigation charges in government-operated airports.The initiative aims to provide a temporary cushion for airlines and passengers.Airlines operating at Ninoy Aquino International Airport have asked the government to lower airport fees to help manage soaring jet fuel prices.Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) General Manager Eric Ines confirmed that the airline association submitted a formal request to the DOTr seeking a discount on operational charges.Airlines are requesting an extension or removal of the three-hour parking

cap, along with a general fee reduction. According to Ines, some carriers are also seeking waivers for aircraft stranded by Middle East tensions.The MIAA chief said that the agency will gather all the concerns from the airlines before raising them with the DOTr.However, Ines clarified that changes will not be implemented immediately, as they must undergo a formal process and receive approval from the MIAA board, DOTr and the Cabinet.MIAA warned that airfares may increase this April as the Civil Aeronautics Board raises the fuel surcharge to Level 8. Ticket prices are expected to rise depending on the distance traveled and global oil price movements.The Airline Operators Council, the Board of Airline Representatives and other stakeholders are scheduled to meet with the MIAA and DOTr on Tuesday, March 24, to discuss the impact of rising global fuel costs.

- P21.47B released to cushion impact of fuel price increases (2026-03-19 16:12)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to release P21.47 billion to sustain infrastructure projects, protect jobs and cushion Filipinos from the impact of global shocks triggered by the war in the Middle East.In a statement on Thursday, Budget Secretary Rolando Toledo said the DBM sped up the fund release to ensure that critical government services and public works continue uninterrupted — especially as higher oil prices threaten transport costs and household budgets.“Every peso we release is meant to ease a burden, sustain a livelihood or keep a service running for our people — especially at a time when global events beyond our control are affecting daily life here at home,” Toledo said.“At a time when global headwinds are pushing fuel prices up, it is critical that we step in where it matters most — supporting our drivers, protecting commuters and ensuring that no Filipino is left to carry these challenges alone,” he added.Of the total, P2.49 billion was allocated to the Department of Transportation for the Fuel Subsidy Program, providing direct relief to drivers and operators grappling with rising fuel costs.Toledo said the government’s intervention was designed to protect livelihoods and ensure that the burden of global price hikes did not fall solely on the transport sector.Meanwhile, P18.65 billion was released to the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to sustain infrastructure projects nationwide, ensuring continued employment, safer roads and unhampered economic activity.An additional P324.36 million was released to the DPWH to settle prior obligations for foreign-assisted infrastructure projects, ensuring their timely completion.The DBM assured the public that all fund releases were subject to strict budgeting, accounting and auditing safeguards — ensuring that assistance reaches the right beneficiaries while protecting every peso of public funds.

- VP lawyers: House panel failed to prove offenses (2026-03-19 16:11)

THE spokesman for Vice President Sara Duterte’s legal team has denied that the answer ad-cautelam they submitted to the House Committee on Justice was a “non answer,” saying the panel disregarded the “fundamental points” the lawyers presented during the impeachment proceedings.The committee, headed by Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro, declared that the two impeachment complaints against Duterte were “sufficient in grounds,” paving the way for a hearing during the session break.In a television interview, Michael Wesley Poa

cited the example of plunder, explaining that for plunder to happen, a public official must be able to amass, accumulate, acquire ill-gotten wealth through a series or combination of overt acts.Plunder was among the allegations raised against Duterte. “Given that our Vice President is a public official, where is the allegation that she was able to amass and accumulate? All that they said there, at least in our opinion, is a conclusion of law, or at least speculations or self-serving conjectures,” Poa said.He also cited the allegation that Duterte had amassed wealth as reflected in her statement of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALN). “When you show the SALN, then you suddenly conclude that there is ill-gotten wealth because there is an increase in the SALN, to us that is again another conclusion of law. Those are just examples just to simplify the matter. But that is why in our answer, we pointed out that fundamental defect,” Poa said.He said the complaints omitted “certain facts,” and the accusers presented certain facts that are by itself are not criminal. “But when you have to deny certain things, one. They have to be material averments or allegations, which we feel they weren’t, and secondly, if there are actionable documents, actionable documents are like contracts, for example, where the vice president participated in a contract. There is nothing like that,” Poa said.Poa said the option to go to the Supreme Court to question the proceedings remains a possibility. “We will see if the committee violated our rights. We want to first raise our objections at the committee, that we oppose and we disagree, but if we are not heard there, then maybe that would be the appropriate time [to go to the Supreme Court],” he said.

- DILG to finalize Interpol red notice against Zaldy Co (2026-03-19 16:10)

INTERIOR and Local Government Secretary Jonvic Remulla said on Thursday that he will meet with the Philippine Center on Transnational Crime (PCTC) to finalize its request for an Interpol red notice against resigned congressman Zaldy Co.In an interview, Remulla said the agency is pursuing all possible avenues to ensure Co’s arrest, even if previous attempts were hampered by the lack of a treaty agreement. “We will ask for it even if there’s none; we will try everything to get him,” Remulla said.The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has already applied for a red notice against Co.According to Remulla, latest intelligence places Co in Portugal.He said authorities have frozen assets linked to him, including his properties in Forbes Park, Valle Verde, Shangri-La, as well as business holdings such as Midas Casino. “If a red notice is issued, we believe we can take action in Portugal. We’ll try our best,” Remulla said.Cases against Co have been filed before the Sandiganbayan. Last Nov. 21, the Sandiganbayan released warrants of arrest and hold departure orders against Co and 17 other individuals over anomalous flood control projects, particularly in Oriental Mindoro.

- Marcos directs army to boost defense amid new threats (2026-03-19 16:10)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday directed the Philippine Army (PA) to continue advancing its defense capabilities amid the new threats that the country is facing.Speaking during the PA’s 129th founding anniversary at its headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Marcos called for closer coordination with law enforcement agencies and stressed the importance of readiness across evolving domains, including maritime and digital security “The

demands of our time call for a force that is agile, effective, and prepared to safeguard our nation across new and evolving domains—from our maritime frontiers to the digital space,” Marcos said. “To meet this challenge, this Administration remains steadfast in modernizing the Armed Forces of the Philippines, while advancing meaningful peace-building initiatives at the grassroots. These are anchored in dialogue, trust, and a shared vision of inclusive progress,” he added.The President said that the Department of National Defense (DND) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) continued to monitor developments to sustain progress in addressing internal security concerns.Marcos also highlighted the role of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-Elcac) in promoting community stability through programs such as the Barangay Development Program. “Our commitment to national defense remains firm. We are strengthening the Philippine Army’s role in external defense through the Comprehensive Archipelagic Defense Concept. This concept enables the Army to perform External Security Operations while gradually transitioning its Internal Security Operations,” he said.Marcos lauded the annual Combined Arms Training Exercise “Katihan,” which integrates infantry, armor, and artillery to enhance rapid deployment and maritime defense. “Through the integration of infantry, armor, and artillery, we enhance rapid deployment and reinforce maritime defense,” Marcos said. “We also invest in capacity-building through interagency exercises among the AFP, the PNP, Philippine Coast Guard, and this we have been doing since 2025. These efforts deepen coordination and readiness across all our institutions,” he added.This comes as the government continues to monitor residual domestic threats, including that of communist guerillas, and sustain stability efforts in conflict-affected communities.The President said the DND and the AFP were working in parallel with the NTF-Elcac to ensure a smooth and orderly shift, while maintaining gains in peace and security.Marcos also recognized the Army’s recent achievements, including its distinction as the only uniformed service recipient of the Anti-Red Tape Authority’s Report Card Survey Awards 2.0 and a Bronze Award from the Civil Service Commission for excellence in human resource management.He cited the military’s partnership with the Department of Science and Technology in developing the Control-Operated Battle-Ready Armament, describing it as a step toward strengthening the country’s self-reliant defense posture and local defense industry.The President urged soldiers to uphold integrity, discipline, and public trust as they take on a broader role in national defense. “To carry this momentum, I encourage the Army to exemplify integrity, discipline, and professionalism as these are the bedrocks of your institution. You have earned the trust of the Filipino people through your steadfast service. Every day offers an opportunity to deepen and uphold that trust,” Marcos said.Carrying the theme, “Ang Inyong Matatag na Hukbong Katihan,” the event highlighted the Army’s crucial role in safeguarding national security, supporting nation-building efforts, and enhancing disaster response capabilities.This year’s celebration showcases modernization initiatives and improved training to strengthen the PA’s readiness and professionalism.

- Jeepney strike demands removal of fuel tax (2026-03-19 16:09)

THOUSANDS of jeepney drivers staged a nationwide transport strike on Thursday, demanding lower fuel prices, higher minimum fares, and wage increases as the Philippines grapples with rising oil costs fueled by the war in the Middle East.Led by transport group Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston), the strike coincided with the scheduled fare hike by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) for nearly all modes of public transport. The fare hike, however, was suspended a day earlier by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., leaving jeepney operators still calling for a minimum fare increase from P13 to P18 to offset the soaring fuel prices.Piston also urged the government to scrap excise and value-added taxes on fuel and called for a hike in the minimum wage to P1,200 to address the continuing surge in commodity prices, citing the economic burden on drivers and commuters alike.Despite the strike, government agencies reported no major disruption to public transport. Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) General Manager Nicolas Torre III said that as of 5 a.m., there were no stranded passengers, noting that only one transport group participated in the strike. “It’s only one group that joined the transport strike, and we still have not deployed our emergency dispatch vehicles because there haven’t been any stranded passengers,” Torre said in an interview.The MMDA, together with other national government agencies and local government units, has readied emergency vehicles under a single dispatch system to avoid redundancies and ensure coordinated response.Meanwhile, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and partner agencies deployed vehicles along key routes to ferry passengers for free.Earlier, Piston accused police officers of harassing its members, as protest actions against high fuel taxes disrupted traffic in several areas.Piston president Mody Floranda condemned the Philippine National Police (PNP) for allegedly dispersing its members from peaceful assembly points.Floranda specifically cited an incident in Sucat, Parañaque City, where he claimed police disrupted a gathering of striking drivers. “The police should only be observers and not engage in harassment,” Floranda said in Filipino, stressing that law enforcers are meant to ensure order, not interfere with peaceful protests.Floranda reported that the group had staged about 20 “mass actions” across the metropolis since 4 a.m. Thursday.He expressed frustration over the alleged police intervention, pointing out that the protest, which calls for the removal of excise taxes on petroleum products, is an issue that also affects ordinary police personnel. “This is a burden that even police officers feel,” he added.Libreng sakayMeanwhile, mayors in the cities of Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas and Valenzuela said on Thursday that more vehicles were deployed in the major roads to provide “Libreng Sakay” (free rides) to commuters who could be affected by the nationwide transport strike.Caloocan Mayor Dave Gonzalo said he instructed the city’s Public Safety and Traffic Management Department to make sure that sufficient number of vehicles and mini-trucks were dispatched particularly in the major thoroughfares including Monumento area.In Valenzuela, Mayor Wes Gatchalian told The Manila Times that several local government-owned vehicles were stationed, especially along the stretch of Mac-Arthur Highway, where some members of Piston were holding their protest action.Malabon Mayor Jeannie Sandoval was seen personally monitoring the on-going transport strike in her turf as she inspected the deployment of at least 10 vehicles to provide free rides on affected commuters.

- PH named among most polite, friendly countries, survey says (2026-03-19 16:08)

THE Philippines was named among the world’s politest and friendliest countries in the world, according to cross-border digital financial services provider Remitly, which surveyed more than 4,600 people worldwide.According to Remitly, the country placed 6th in the politeness ranking, with 2.3 percent of respondents saying Filipinos are the most polite.The list was topped by Japan, where 35.15 percent of respondents say Japanese are the most polite people in the world, followed by Canada (13.35 percent) and the United Kingdom (6.23 percent).China (3.07 percent) and Germany (2.8 percent) finished behind the country, to round up the top five.The Philippines also ranked in the top 10 friendliest in the world, placing 8th with 4.16 percent of respondents saying so.This list was topped by Canada (10.5 percent), Brazil (7.96 percent) and Australia (5.10 percent), with Japan (4.94 percent) and Spain (4.9 percent) rounding up the top 10.However, the study noted that despite the country being among the politest countries on Earth, this perception was not matched by Filipinos.The Philippines is ranked 22nd among countries that perceive themselves to be polite, with an 8.86 out of 10 politeness rating.South American countries Brazil and Chile lead the list, both of which with a politeness rating score of 9.46 out of 10, followed by India (9.41), Sweden (9.40) and France (9.36).“Supporting friends and family is a social expectation, while saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ may not be,” Remitly said.Remitly said perceptions of politeness and friendliness could vary across cultures.“If you’re planning to start a new life in a different country, immersing yourself in the local culture and communities can help you feel settled. Even small gestures of kindness, like a friendly smile or a bow, can help turn unfamiliar places into welcoming communities,” it said on its website.In a statement, Ryan Riley, vice president of marketing at Remitly, said that moving to a new nation is easier by “positive everyday interactions that share whether someone feels welcome or not.” “Small acts of courtesy, whether that’s patience over a language barrier, or giving up a seat on public transport, can have a real impact on someone who is starting over thousands of miles from their home,” Riley said.“What stood out in our research is the gap between how nations see themselves and how the rest of the world sees them,” he added.

- Groups applaud drive against illegal tobacco (2026-03-19 16:07)

BUSINESS and agriculture groups backed the government’s intensified crackdown on illicit tobacco, citing the operations of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) that dismantled illegal cigarette factories and disrupted suspected syndicates.The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), the Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) and the British Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (BCCP) said the campaign signals stronger efforts to protect legitimate industries, secure government revenues and safeguard jobs.Their statements came after police operations shut down illegal cigarette factories in Pampanga, where millions of pesos worth of illicit tobacco products were seized.Local Government Secretary Jonvic Remulla said authorities are expanding the crackdown to target organized groups operating in Central Luzon and other provinces nationwide.Law enforcement agents recently uncovered several abandoned cigarette plants in Pampanga believed to be linked to a big syndicate. Seized

machinery, raw materials and related equipment were estimated at about P400 million.Remulla said each facility had the capacity to produce up to P160 million worth of cigarettes per day, highlighting the scale of the illegal operations.The FFF said intensified enforcement is crucial to protecting tobacco farmers, noting that illicit trade weakens the legal supply chain and destabilizes livelihoods in agricultural communities. “We commend the DILG and other law enforcement agencies for pursuing a stronger campaign against illicit tobacco operations. Illegal cigarette production and smuggling undermine the legal tobacco supply chain and ultimately hurt thousands of Filipino farmers whose livelihoods depend on a stable and legitimate market,” FFF Chairman Leonardo Montemayor said.The FPI also expressed support, warning that illegal tobacco trade distorts competition and erodes government revenues.FPI Chairman Emeritus Jesus Arranza said illicit tobacco products disadvantage law-abiding companies that comply with taxes, regulations and quality standards, stressing that firm action against illegal factories and smuggling syndicates helps restore fairness in the market.The BCCP said the enforcement drive reinforces investor confidence by promoting a level playing field for businesses operating within the law.BCCP Executive Director and Trustee Chris Nelson said efforts to dismantle illegal manufacturing networks help protect legitimate enterprises, ensure government revenue collection, and support a predictable and transparent business environment.Remulla earlier warned that some illicit tobacco operations may be receiving protection from individuals from government, claiming that smugglers have “backers” embedded in the system.He disclosed that politicians allegedly linked to illegal cigarette activities had attempted to reach out to him while the investigation was ongoing.Authorities have carried out coordinated enforcement actions in several areas, including Pampanga, Cavite, Batangas, Laguna, Makati and Quezon City.Investigators also found that some of the raided facilities in Pampanga initially operated under legitimate permits before allegedly shifting to unauthorized cigarette manufacturing.Remulla said initial findings suggest the operations began in January 2026, but stopped after authorities seized the first illegal factory in Mexico, Pampanga, on Jan. 29.The DILG estimates that illicit tobacco activities resulted in about P30 billion in lost excise tax revenues in 2025 alone.Authorities said enforcement efforts will intensify, with investigations now focused on identifying financiers, operators and other key figures behind the syndicate.Remulla said the government is determined to dismantle the entire supply chain of illegal tobacco operations and hold those responsible accountable under the law.

- Govt eyes extension of amnesty program (2026-03-19 16:06)

THE National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-Elcac) on Thursday pushed for the extension of the government’s amnesty program for insurgents until 2028 to accommodate thousands of potential applicants. Undersecretary Ernesto Torres Jr., executive director of the NTF-Elcac, said the program has emerged as a resounding success, with more than 16,000 former rebels stepping forward to reclaim peaceful lives. He said the overwhelming response to the program underscored a decisive shift on the ground, where former members of the Communist Party of the Philippines–New People’s Army–National Democratic Front

(CPP-NPA-NDF) were choosing peace over armed struggle. Torres said that the government has received 16,003 applications, far exceeding the initial projection of 10,000. Of these, he said, that 13,633 were actual combatants and supporters of the armed struggle under the CPP-NPA-NDF. “The numbers speak for themselves. This is not failure—this is a quiet but decisive victory for peace,” Torres said, as he dismissed claims by the CPP that the amnesty initiative is an “epic fail.” Torres said that the amnesty program was voluntary and grounded in law, with no coercion involved. “No one is forced to apply. They come forward on their own, acknowledge their past, and submit to a legitimate legal process. If this were truly a failure, there would be no applicants. Yet thousands have stepped forward nationwide,” he said. National Amnesty Commission (NAC) Chairman Leah Tanodra-Armamento said that the surge in applications reflected growing trust in the process, as former rebels realize they could pursue their advocacies without violence and without endangering their families. “We received a total of 16,003 applications—far exceeding expectations. This shows that more and more are choosing peace and lawful engagement over armed struggle,” Armamento said during a virtual press conference organized by the Task Force. Amid the surge in applications, Armamento disclosed that an extension of the amnesty period—originally set to lapse under Executive Order 47—was now in motion, with a recommendation from the Executive Committee, NTF-Elcac awaiting President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s approval and signature. “We are inviting everyone—even though the application period was supposed to have ended, we now have a recommendation for extension which is awaiting the President’s signature,” she said. Armamento said the extension would cover another two years, up to 2028, through another proclamation aligned with the end of Marcos’ term, ensuring continuity without the need for a yearly congressional concurrence. “In the meantime, we continue to accept applications and mark them as provisionally accepted,” she added. The NAC chief also highlighted the government’s “Aftercare for Grantees of Amnesty” program, which provides a comprehensive pathway for reintegration, including the dismissal of pending cases and the clearing of records from the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police. “This is not just amnesty—it is a real second chance,” she said. “We are removing the fear, restoring dignity, and allowing them to live normal lives in their communities.” Armamento said that the program uncovered cases where applicants had multiple pending charges they were unaware of—one even having as many as 80—which were now being addressed through government support mechanisms. Meanwhile, Torres said the CPP’s attempts to discredit the program revealed its growing desperation as it struggled to contain the steady exodus of its members. “This is what the CPP fears—the truth that their own members are leaving, choosing dignity, stability, and a brighter future with their families,” Torres said. “Unable to stop the departures, they resort to delegitimizing those who choose peace and dismissing their testimonies. But these are sworn statements, validated through due process, and they expose the reality of life inside the armed movement,” he added. The NTF-Elcac official emphasized that the success of the Amnesty Program goes hand in hand with the government’s broader peace and development initiatives, particularly the Barangay Development Program, which delivers infrastructure and basic services to conflict-affected communities. “While the CPP offers only conflict, the government offers construction—not just of roads and schools, but of

lives and communities," Torres said. "For the CPP, amnesty may be just a piece of paper. But for thousands of Filipinos, it is a passport back to society, stability, and hope," he added

- Former DENR chief named special envoy for disaster risk reduction (2026-03-19 16:05)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has appointed former Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga as special envoy for disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM), Malacañang said Thursday.Loyzaga's appointment came nearly a year after she left the agency following a Cabinet revamp by Marcos in May last year.The chief executive administered Loyzaga's oath of office Wednesday at the Palace, where he also conveyed his full support for the new special envoy as she advances the administration's agenda on climate action, renewable energy integration and disaster risk reduction.Marcos likewise expressed confidence that Loyzaga "will champion sound environmental governance and help build a more resilient Philippines," according to the Presidential Communications Office (PCO).Loyzaga served as DENR secretary from 2022 to 2025. Before that, she served as a director at the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies for two years.She also served as president of the National Resilience Council and was a member of the UNDRR Asia Pacific Science and Technology Advisory Group.Climate resilience and effective disaster response have been consistent priorities for Marcos.During his recent working visit to the United States, he underscored how the climate crisis is not a future risk but a "present reality" while pitching for the Philippines' candidacy for a nonpermanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.The president positioned climate change as an urgent, existential threat to the Philippines, emphasizing disaster resilience, renewable energy and the need for climate financing from industrialized nations.

- 45 BFP execs charged over firetruck deals (2026-03-19 16:04)

THE Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) said Thursday it would file a complaint before the Office of the Ombudsman against 45 active and former officials of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) over allegedly rigged firetruck procurements from 2018 to 2024.The respondents include former BFP chiefs Leonardo Bañago and Louie Puracan, suspended Fire Director Jesus Fernandez, members of the Bids and Awards Committee, the Technical Working Group, and the Technical Specifications Committee.Private suppliers Palmer Asia Inc. and F. Cura Industries, along with other individuals, will also be named in the complaint.The DILG said the officials tailored technical specifications to favor only the two suppliers.The complaint cited a dramatic rise in the cost of 1,000-gallon firetrucks — from P5.975 million per unit in 2014 to nearly P15 million in 2024 — without any documented market study or justification.There were also serious lapses in the procurement process, including missing official deliberations, failure of oversight bodies to independently review specifications, and pre-bid conferences that did not address bidders' queries or issue necessary bid bulletins, the DILG said.The Bureau of Customs reportedly flagged the same suppliers for undervaluing import declarations by more than 30 percent and failing to present key financial documents

during audits.The officials face administrative and criminal charges, including grave misconduct, serious dishonesty, gross neglect of duty, conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service, and violations of Section 3(e) of Republic Act 3019, the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.In a media briefing, DILG Secretary Jonvic Remulla emphasized the stakes involved. “The lives of our fellow citizens should never be put at risk because of irregularities. Every procurement must be aboveboard, transparent, and anchored on the public interest,” he said.The DILG announcement came amid reports of a P900 million to P1 billion alleged bribery attempt tied to the BFP firetruck purchases.Remulla said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. personally warned him about the dangers of corruption. “You know that money from theft? You can’t feed that to your children,” Marcos reportedly said. “Karma will hit your kids. I would never, in my heart, feed my children money that came from this corruption.” Remulla, a father of five, said the president’s words reinforced his belief that personal ethics must come first, especially when family is involved.The DILG said it will strengthen internal controls and institutional safeguards in its attached agencies to prevent similar incidents and restore public trust.

- DepEd service fair to help SHS students (2026-03-19 16:03)

THE Department of Education has launched a service fair in three public schools in the cities of Caloocan, Makati, and Mandaluyong to help graduating Senior High School (SHS) students face steep financial and bureaucratic barriers.The “Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair” is a one stop-shop for SHS Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) graduates and Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners who often miss job opportunities due to the high cost and complexity of securing pre-employment documents.The fair was organized by the House of Representatives under former speaker Martin Romualdez.The fair served around 488 beneficiaries in Tala National High School in Caloocan City; 290 in Makati High School in Barangay Poblacion; and 397 in Mataas na Paaralang Neptali A. Gonzales in Mandaluyong City.Education Secretary Sonny Angara said the department is bringing the government closer to learners to ensure that their transition from the classroom to the workplace is seamless and cost-free. “Through these reforms and partnerships, we are transforming our graduates into highly employable assets who are ready to contribute to our nation’s growth,” Angara said.The initiative, conducted together with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and other government agencies, provides a critical solution for families confronted by spiraling fuel prices due to the Middle East conflict, by saving each student upwards of P1,000 in clearance fees and transportation costs.By offering essential clearances and certificates for free as mandated under the First Time Jobseekers Assistance Act, the program also removes the added burden of multiple trips and significant transportation expenses.The program also includes industry-aligned job matching and career guidance to bridge the gap between education and real-world employment, as well as employers offering vacancies.DepEd said around 550,000 SHS and TVL students are graduating this year.

- Hontiveros pushes P52.8B aid for vulnerable sectors (2026-03-19 16:02)

SEN. Risa Hontiveros has filed a bill authorizing a P52.8-billion supplemental budget to fund expanded subsidies for drivers, farmers, fisherfolk, and repatriated overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) affected by the oil crisis brought about by the war in the Middle East.Senate Bill 1986 seeks to augment the budget for assistance programs to the marginalized sectors affected by the United States-Israel war on Iran, which has entered its third week.Hontiveros said the aid package includes P12 billion for transport subsidy to public transport drivers, including delivery riders and transport network vehicle service drivers.The subsidy will also fund the service contracting program of the Department of Transportation (DOTr).A P2.8 billion subsidy under the Department of Agriculture will go to farmers and fisherfolk, who are badly affected by the steep increase in the prices of fuel and fertilizer.Hontiveros said the subsidy aims to prevent food supply shortages by ensuring that farmers are not forced to reduce output due to high costs.She said the SB 1986 provides a P38 billion fund for the repatriation expenses (P18 billion) and reintegration and livelihood programs (P20 billion) for thousands of OFWs who might seek repatriation to escape the Middle East conflict. “Currently, the fund for transport subsidy is P2.5 billion from the 2025 continuing funds. The agricultural subsidy is only P150 million,” Hontiveros said on Wednesday in Filipino. “And the Department of Migrant Workers is also asking for help because their P1.76 billion emergency funds would not be enough if thousands of OFWs would be forced to return home,” she said.

- LTFRB pushes fuel aid payout via e-wallet (2026-03-19 16:01)

THE Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) is encouraging beneficiaries to use e-wallet accounts for the rollout of fuel subsidies for public transport drivers and operators.In a statement Thursday, LTFRB Chairman Vigor Mendoza II said the method is faster and more convenient, noting digital disbursement would prevent long queues at payout sites.For those without access to e-wallets or who prefer other modes, Mendoza said cash assistance will still be distributed through physical payout venues organized by local government units in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development.The LTFRB has begun preparatory measures for the nationwide implementation of the Fuel Subsidy Program, including the selection of qualified electronic money issuers that will serve as payment channel providers to ensure secure and transparent transactions.Mendoza said the initial distribution started earlier this week in Metro Manila, covering tricycle drivers.He added that regional directors have been instructed to coordinate closely with local governments and the DSWD to streamline the distribution process and ensure timely delivery of assistance. “Everything will move faster if we work together,” Mendoza said, noting that the government is implementing measures to speed up the release of subsidies to affected transport workers.

- Oil surges to $113 a barrel as Gulf plants burn (2026-03-19 16:00)

OIL surged more than 5 percent on Thursday and stocks sank as Iran attacked several Gulf energy facilities and warned of more in retaliation for a strike on one of its key gas fields.Brent crude soared past $113 per barrel as Tehran threatened to target regional installations after an

Israeli hit on a site serving its massive South Pars field, which it shares with Qatar.Iranian missiles struck Qatar’s Ras Laffan, the world’s largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) hub, causing extensive damage and stoking energy supply fears as the war grinds on.European gas jumped more than 30 percent after the strikes.United States President Donald Trump said Washington “knew nothing” of Israel’s attack on South Pars, but vowed “NO MORE ATTACKS WILL BE MADE BY ISRAEL” on the site if Tehran stops attacking Qatar.But if Iran did not comply, the US would “massively blow up the entirety of the South Pars Gas Field,” Trump warned.The Iranian strikes on Qatar came as Abu Dhabi shut down operations at a gas facility due to falling debris from missile interceptions.Meanwhile, the UN nuclear watchdog said Iranian authorities had reported a projectile impact at the country’s only operational nuclear power plant but that it caused no damage.“We warn you once again that you made a big mistake in attacking the energy infrastructure of the Islamic republic,” the Revolutionary Guards said in a statement carried by Iranian media.“If it is repeated again, further attacks on your energy infrastructure and that of your allies will not stop until it is completely destroyed.” Iran’s President Masoud Pezeshkian wrote on X that the attacks on South Pars “will complicate the situation and could have uncontrollable consequences, the scope of which could engulf the entire world.” Brent spiked more than 5 percent to hit a peak of $113.77, its highest since the first Monday after the Feb. 28 US-Israeli strikes on Iran, when it nearly touched $120. West Texas Intermediate was sitting around $97.The increased tension hit equities, which had enjoyed a broadly positive start to the week thanks to a fresh rally in tech firms.Tokyo tanked more than 3 percent and Seoul more than 2 percent. Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Singapore, Taipei, Wellington, Mumbai, Manila and Bangkok were also down.French President Emmanuel Macron said on X: “It is in the common interest to implement without delay a moratorium on strikes targeting civilian infrastructure, particularly energy and water infrastructure.”

- Marcos: PH looking for new fuel sources (2026-03-19 16:00)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday said the Philippines was looking for alternative sources of petroleum products as part of the government’s efforts to ensure a steady supply amid the war in the Middle East.Speaking to reporters in Mariveles, Bataan, Marcos maintained that the country’s current stocks of oil and essential goods remained sufficient, saying that concerned government agencies were focusing on keeping prices as stable as possible.He also said that existing suppliers have committed to continue honoring contracts, particularly for petroleum-based products such as fertilizer.“For food, we can do more. We are looking for additional ways to lower food prices. As for oil, there’s nothing much we can do about that, but at least we are making sure that the supply will be available,” Marcos said.“So even if we have stock, the Philippines continues to look for more — because we really source from the Middle East. So we are looking for alternative sources of oil,” he added.Despite global uncertainties, the president said the public should not worry as the government would be able to “soften the blow.” “The problem is that the price of oil is very volatile, we cannot fully anticipate so we are still adjusting right now,” Marcos said.China, home to the world’s biggest oil refining sector, said it was ready to work with Southeast Asia in addressing energy

problems stemming from the war in Iran and called on the parties involved to immediately cease military operations.China’s show of willingness to work with the region of more than 700 million people would be welcome relief to Southeast Asian oil importers after an order by Beijing earlier in March to ban Chinese exports of diesel, gasoline and jet fuel.The ban would worsen shortages and further hike prices for some of China’s strategic partner-nations in Southeast Asia, which have already been reeling from supply cuts brought on by the US-Israeli war against Iran.“The situation in the Middle East has disrupted global energy security,” said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian at a regular news conference when asked if South-east Asian nations had reached out to China for help.“The countries involved should immediately cease military operations to prevent regional instability from having a greater impact on global economic development,” said Lin.“China is willing to strengthen coordination and cooperation with Southeast Asian countries to jointly address energy security issues,” Lin added.Any easing of Beijing’s ban could help soothe fuel jitters in countries from the Philippines to Cambodia.

- Mail-order bride rescued at NAIA (2026-03-19 16:00)

IMMIGRATION officers at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) rescued a 21-year-old woman suspected of being a victim of a mail-order bride scheme.In a report submitted Thursday to Immigration Commissioner Joel Anthony Viado, officers from the Immigration Protection and Border Enforcement Section (I-Probes) said the passenger was intercepted at NAIA Terminal 3 as she was preparing to board a Cebu Pacific flight to Guangzhou, China.The passenger initially claimed she was traveling to Guangdong province for language studies, citing enrollment at a public higher vocational engineering college. However, I-Probes officers found significant inconsistencies between her statements and the documents presented.The woman eventually admitted her enrollment was fraudulent and she was traveling for an arranged marriage set up by an agent with an unidentified individual, for which she was promised P50,000.“This attempt exposes how traffickers now use fraudulent study programs abroad as a cover for their illegal activities,” Viado said. "Our officers at all ports of entry and exit remain vigilant against any schemes that place Filipinos at risk of exploitation." Viado said the operation was part of the government’s strengthened measures against human trafficking, initiated under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., to tighten safeguards for vulnerable Filipino travelers.He said the racket has already victimized many Filipinas who were induced into the scheme by promises of large sums of money that are not fulfilled when they arrive at their foreign destinations.“This is very concerning, since they are able to present authentic documents despite their sham marriages,” Viado said.Viado said the Bureau of Immigration reported the incident to the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (Iacat) for the filing of appropriate cases against the traffickers. The woman has been turned over to Iacat for further investigation.

- QC bestowed education governance award (2026-03-19 16:00)

QUEZON City was awarded the prestigious Seal of Good Education Governance (SGEG) from the Synergeia Foundation for the second straight year, Mayor Joy Belmonte said Thursday.“Our

second Seal of Good Education Governance is a reflection of the efforts of our stakeholders, partners and QCitizens who have made sure that our education programs truly reach every child in the city,” Belmonte said.The award is given to local government units that demonstrate exceptional leadership and innovation in improving basic education, resulting in greater student retention and a decrease in nonreaders, according to the foundation.The city’s Public Affairs and Information Service Department (PAISD) said the foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of basic education through community empowerment and local governance reform. It recognized the city government’s sustained efforts to strengthen support for learners through various education programs, improved learning facilities and policies that promote accessible, high-quality education, PAISD said.Belmonte noted that the back-to-back SGEG highlights the local government’s effective management of its many education initiatives.“Education remains one of our top priorities because educating our children means building a stronger Quezon City,” she said.Since 2019, the city government has exemplified transformative efforts in the education sector, including inclusive policies, enhanced transparency and strong collaboration with stakeholders such as teachers, parents and civil society organizations."The Quezon City Council remains committed to crafting and updating policies that respond to the real needs of our learners," said Majority Leader Aly Medalla.Belmonte, together with Medalla, Schools Division Superintendent Carleen Sedilla and Acting Education Affairs Unit Head Maricris Veloso, accepted the award during the 2026 Washington Sycip National Education Summit.

- Agri chief sues Zaldy Co, ‘ex-Marines’ lawyer for cyber libel (2026-03-19 16:00)

AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. on Thursday filed cyber libel cases against dismissed congressman Zaldy Co and lawyer Levito Baligod at the Makati City Prosecutor’s Office.Tiu Laurel said the malicious claims against him and the Department of Agriculture (DA) first surfaced during the press conference of 18 people who identified themselves as former Marines who had delivered huge amounts on Co’s orders to public officials as kickbacks.They said they used to fetch suitcases filled with money at a house in South Forbes Park in Makati City owned by Tiu Laurel, and linked him to ghost irrigation projects and other supposed irregularities.Tiu Laurel said Baligod, the ex-Marines’ lawyer, repeatedly claimed there were anomalies in the DA, including diversion and misappropriation of public funds.Co, through videos posted on his social media pages, alleged the existence of a rice cartel in the country, as well as discrepancies in onion and sugar importations.He said Tiu Laurel had asked Congress to stop hearings investigating high rice prices after showing a confidential report that said first lady Liza Araneta-Marcos was behind rice importers and was involved in rice smuggling.Co also implicated Martin Araneta, the first lady’s brother, in onion smuggling.He claimed there were collections for sugar importations at the Bureau of Customs, which amounted to P9 billion. He said the imports were distributed among five companies that control the prices of sugar in the market.Tiu Laurel denied the allegations of the ex-Marines, saying he does not know any of them, and he has not lived in Forbes Park since 2018.He said he believes the attacks against him may be politically-motivated.“This feels like a distraction from the work I need to do as

Agriculture Secretary, especially during these challenging times. But I will no longer allow myself to be their punching bag,” Tiu Laurel said.He said the respondents’ statements were made with malicious intent, and therefore constitutes cyber libel.A cyber libel conviction could result in imprisonment of up to 12 years or fines of up to P1.5 million.“My call to the 18 [ex-Marines,] please tell the truth already so that you would no longer be used by whoever is behind that,” said Tiu Laurel. “I am only asking for the truth.”

- CFO positioning PH as prime retirement choice for returning Filipino migrants (2026-03-19 14:24)

MANILA, Philippines -- The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) aims to position the Philippines as a premier destination for returning Filipino migrants who want to reinvest their skills and resources in their home provinces.The CFO on Thursday said it is modernizing its retirement and reintegration frameworks to entice more "balikbayans" (returning overseas Filipinos) to share their talents and resources with their provincemates.CFO Secretary Dante Ang II reaffirmed the agency’s commitment to bridging the gap between global Filipino success and local community development during the third technical working group (TWG) meeting on retirement and reintegration held on Mar. 11.The CFO said the meeting served as the "tactical execution of its primary mandate to serve as the permanent link between the motherland and the more than six million Filipinos residing permanently abroad."It also said that to better understand the evolving needs of retirees, the TWG urged concerned overseas Filipinos to participate in the CFO's Retirement and Reintegration Survey. Deadline is on April 30, 2026. "The data will be used to calibrate government services to match the specific expectations of Filipinos returning from North America and Europe," the CFO said."Returning migrants who intend to retire in the Philippines will directly contribute to national economic growth by boosting the retirement industry in the Philippines—creating more job opportunities, raising standards for welfare, and developing communities with skills of returning professionals looking to give back to the country," it said.By streamlining reintegration pathways, the CFO wants to ensure that the "diaspora remains tethered to the Philippines not just through nostalgia, but through viable economic and social partnerships."The CFO also works closely with Medicare PH Incorporated, a national membership advocacy group for Filipino-American seniors to extend long-term Medicare coverage for their retirement destination. The extension is expected to cut costs both for Medicare beneficiaries and the American government as healthcare providers outside of the United States charge significantly less for their services. This advocacy works hand-in-hand with the development of the Continuing Care Retirement Community, allowing more Filipino-American seniors to consider the Philippines as their retirement destination without the risk of losing their Medicare benefits.

- Lone bettor wins P18M in Lotto 6/42 draw for March 19 (2026-03-19 14:04)

MANILA, Philippines — A lone bettor won the ₱18,861,406.90 jackpot prize in the Lotto 6/42 draw on Thursday, March 19, 2026, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office announced.The winning combination was 25-29-17-41-23-13.According to PCSO, the winning ticket was

purchased at a lotto outlet in Aklan.Meanwhile, no bettor won the Super lotto 6/49 jackpot worth ₱124,187,419.45.The winning combination for the 6/49 draw was 21-20-32-04-43-13.

- PH ranks 6th most polite nation, 8th most friendliest country (2026-03-19 13:42)

MANILA, Philippines -- The Philippines ranked as the world's 6th most polite nation and the 8th most friendliest country, according to a survey conducted by Remitly in 26 countries involving over 4,600 respondents.For people moving abroad, "everyday social interactions can shape how welcomed they feel," said Remitly which shared its survey to The Manila Times on Thursday."This could be as simple as a friendly greeting at their local coffee shop, patience with language barriers, or a simple smile on the street," said Remitly, a cross-border digital financial services provider.The top 15 most polite nations based on the votes gathered are: Japan (35.15 percent), Canada (13.35 percent), United Kingdom (6.23 percent), China (3.07 percent), Germany (2.80 percent), Philippines (2.30 percent), Sweden (2.26 percent), Denmark (2.07 percent), Finland (1.92 percent), South Africa (1.82 percent), Australia and Switzerland (both got 1.73 percent), United States (1.57 percent), India (1.53 percent), and Ireland (1.46 percent)."This list does not measure rudeness, the results simply reflect which nations people most associate with politeness," Remitly said.Based on the survey the top 15 friendliest countries are: Canada (10.50 percent), Brazil (7.96 percent), Australia (5.10 percent), Japan (4.96 percent), Spain (4.90 percent), Mexico (4.79 percent), Italy (4.50 percent), Philippines (4.16 percent), Ireland (3.69 percent), India (3.42 percent), Greece (3.37 percent), New Zealand (3.30 percent), United States (3.21 percent), Portugal (3.17 percent), and South Africa (3.06 percent)."These moments of politeness can make a big difference in helping someone feel at home in a new country, something we hear often from our customers who move overseas and send money home," it added.One of its key findings was that despite the Philippines' ranking as the world's 6th most polite nation, "this perception isn't matched by Filipinos themselves."Remitly said it used the surveying platform Prolific in asking 4,697 participants from 26 countries around the world to name the country they believe has the most polite and friendliest people. "We then calculated the total number of votes each country received and ranked them by the highest percentage share. In addition, we asked them whether they consider themselves to be polite and if they treat strangers with respect " Remitly said.A maximum of 10 points was possible, with higher scores indicating a higher level of perceived politeness."The self-perception ranking includes only countries where sufficient local responses were collected. All data is correct as of March 2026," it said.Japan ranks as the most polite nation, with over 35 percent of respondents saying so, yet it also ranks near the bottom for self-perceived politeness.The people of Brazil and Chile are the most confident in their own politeness, "while Filipinos aren't, ranking themselves as the fifth least polite country."

- DOST turns over e-tranvia to Intramuros, free rides eyed (2026-03-19 11:52)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) on Thursday launched and turned over a locally developed 18-seater electric tranvia to the Intramuros Administration, with free rides being eyed as part of efforts to offer an alternative transport

option amid rising fuel costs.The turnover was held at Centro de Turismo in Intramuros.The Intramuros Administration said the e-tranvia would follow fixed stops, with its main station at Plaza Roma and designated stops at key heritage sites across the walled city.“There are specific stations at Plaza Roma, and it will only stop at IA-managed heritage sites such as Fort Santiago, Centro de Turismo, Plaza San Luis Complex, and Baluarte de San Diego,” Intramuros Administration official lawyer Joan Padilla said during an ambush interview.She said details on how the public may avail of the free rides would be announced, as the agency finalized operational guidelines.The planned free ride program is being positioned as a response to the ongoing oil supply disruption, although the agency is also assessing how long it can sustain the service.“We are working on hoping that we can sustain it in response to the ongoing oil crisis, but we also have to be practical that after this, we will rent it out to recover operational expenses,” Padilla said.She said the e-tranvia was not intended to compete with existing transport modes within Intramuros, such as kalesas and pedicabs, but to provide an additional mobility option.“There are many visitors in Intramuros, and different markets prefer different modes of transport… this is another option that we want to give our tourists so they have a choice of mobility,” she said.Padilla said solar-powered charging could help reduce part of the e-tranvia’s operating costs, particularly for energy.“The operational cost will be reduced, at least the operational cost for energy. But of course, this has manpower, and it has maintenance that we still need to address. So, one way or another, there should still be a charge for what is called OPEX, or operational expenses,” she said.She also disclosed that additional units were planned, pending the release of government funds.“There was already an appropriated budget last year, 2025, for the procurement of electric tranvia units, but it has not yet been released by the Department of Budget and Management,” Padilla said.“We are hoping that it will be released very soon, and that would be good for three electric tranvia units,” she added.DOST Secretary Renato Solidum Jr. said the project was part of broader efforts to promote electric mobility in the country, citing its lower operating cost compared to diesel-powered vehicles.“Before fuel prices increased, the per kilometer cost of the e-tranvia was around 6.16 if charged from electricity, compared to 18.98 for diesel, and even higher now at around 30 to 32,” he told reporters.He said initial hesitation among drivers, particularly in the tricycle sector, often stemmed from concerns about speed.“Some drivers think electric vehicles are slower because they want to go fast to make more trips, but if you show them that they save on electricity and reduce fuel costs, their earnings actually increase, so they do not need to rush,” he said.Solidum emphasized the need to expand charging infrastructure to support wider adoption of electric vehicles.“If you want to use an electric vehicle for long-distance travel, you should not run out of power, which is why it is important to have many charging facilities,” he said.He added that improving affordability, infrastructure, and public awareness remains key to increasing confidence in electric vehicles.

- Airlines seek NAIA fee cuts to offset rising jet fuel costs (2026-03-19 11:41)

MANILA, Philippines — Airlines operating at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) have asked the government to lower airport fees to help manage soaring jet fuel prices.Manila

International Airport Authority (MIAA) General Manager Eric Ines confirmed that the airline association submitted a formal request to the Department of Transportation (DOTr) seeking a discount on operational charges.Airlines are requesting an extension or removal of the the three-hour parking cap, along with a general fee reduction. According to Ines, some carriers are also seeking waivers for aircraft stranded by the Middle East crisis.The MIAA chief said that the agency would gather all the concerns from the airlines before raising them with the DOTr.However, Ines clarified that changes would not be implemented immediately, as they must undergo a formal process and receive approval from the MIAA board, DOTr, and the Cabinet."We cannot just change it; we cannot immediately reduce the rate because it is in the concession agreement and governed by law, specifically Administrative Order No. 1," Ines said. If the President, and the Cabinet agrees, it can be then replaced by a new regulation."MIAA warned that airfares may increase this April as the Civil Aeronautics Board raised the fuel surcharge to Level 8. Ticket prices are expected to rise depending on the distance traveled and global oil price movements.The Airline Operators Council (AOC), the Board of Airline Representatives (BAR), and other stakeholders are scheduled to meet with the MIAA and DOTr on March 24 to discuss the impact of rising global fuel costs.

- PH named among politest, friendliest worldwide, says survey (2026-03-19 09:12)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines was named among the world’s politest and friendliest countries in the world, according to cross-border digital financial services provider Remitly, which surveyed more than 4,600 people worldwide.According to Remitly, the country is ranked 6th in the politeness ranking, with 2.3 percent of respondents saying Filipinos are the most polite.The list was topped by Japan, where 35.15 percent of respondents say Japanese are the most polite people in the world, followed by Canada (13.35 percent), and the United Kingdom (6.23 percent).China (3.07 percent) and Germany (2.8 percent) finished behind the country, to round up the top five.

- Marcos orders release of P21.47B to shield Filipinos from fuel price surge, sustain infrastructure projects (2026-03-19 08:39)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to release P21.47 billion to sustain infrastructure projects, protect jobs, and cushion Filipinos from the impact of global shocks triggered by the war in the Middle East.In a statement on Thursday, Budget Secretary Rolando Toledo said the DBM fast-tracked the fund release to ensure that critical government services and public works continue uninterrupted—especially as higher oil prices threaten transport costs and household budgets.“Every peso we release is meant to ease a burden, sustain a livelihood, or keep a service running for our people—especially at a time when global events beyond our control are affecting daily life here at home,” Toledo said.“At a time when global headwinds are pushing fuel prices up, it is critical that we step in where it matters most—supporting our drivers, protecting commuters, and ensuring that no Filipino is left to carry these challenges alone,” he added.Of the total, P2.49 billion was allocated to the Department of Transportation for the Fuel

Subsidy Program, providing direct relief to drivers and operators grappling with rising fuel costs.Meanwhile, P18.65 billion was released to the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to sustain infrastructure projects nationwide, ensuring continued employment, safer roads, and unhampered economic activity.Further, an additional P324.36 million was released to the DPWH to settle prior obligations for foreign-assisted infrastructure projects, ensuring their timely completion.

- 45 former, incumbent Fire officials face charges over 'rigged' firetruck deals (2026-03-19 08:08)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) announced Thursday that it would file a complaint-affidavit before the Office of the Ombudsman against 45 current and former officials of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) over allegedly rigged firetruck procurements spanning 2018 to 2024.The respondents include former BFP chiefs Leonardo Bañago and Louie Puracan, suspended Fire Director Jesus Fernandez, members of the Bids and Awards Committee, the Technical Working Group, and the Technical Specifications Committee.Private suppliers Palmer Asia Inc. and F. Cura Industries, along with other individuals suspected of involvement, were also named in the complaint.According to DILG, officials allegedly tailored technical specifications to favor only these two suppliers, effectively blocking competition.The complaint cited a dramatic rise in the cost of 1,000-gallon firetrucks—from P5.975 million per unit in 2014 to nearly P15 million in 2024—without any documented market study or justification.Serious lapses were also noted in the procurement process, including missing official deliberations, failure of oversight bodies to independently review specifications, and pre-bid conferences that did not address bidders’ queries or issue necessary bid bulletins.Bureau of Customs findings reportedly flagged the same suppliers for undervaluing import declarations by more than 30 percent and failing to present key financial documents during audits.The officials now face both administrative and criminal charges, including grave misconduct, serious dishonesty, gross neglect of duty, conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service, and violations of Section 3(e) of Republic Act 3019, the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.In a media briefing, DILG Secretary Jonvic Remulla emphasized the stakes involved. “The lives of our fellow citizens should never be put at risk because of irregularities. Every procurement must be aboveboard, transparent, and anchored on the public interest,” he said.The announcement came amid reports of a P900 million to P1 billion alleged bribery attempt tied to the BFP firetruck purchases.Remulla recounted that President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. personally warned him about the dangers of corruption. “You know that money from theft? You can’t feed that to your children,” Marcos reportedly said. “Karma will hit your kids. I would never, in my heart, feed my children money that came from this corruption.” Remulla, a father of five, said the president’s words struck a chord, reinforcing his belief that personal ethics must come first, especially when family is involved.The DILG also vowed to strengthen internal controls and institutional safeguards across its attached agencies to prevent similar incidents and restore public trust.

- LTFRB pushes e-wallet use to speed up fuel subsidy distribution (2026-03-19 07:49)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) ordered its regional directors to fast-track the updating and submission of beneficiary data as the government accelerates the rollout of fuel subsidies for public transport drivers and operators.In a statement on Thursday, LTFRB Chairman Vigor Mendoza II said the agency was encouraging beneficiaries to use e-wallet accounts to receive the subsidy, citing faster and more convenient transactions.He said digital disbursement would allow drivers and operators to avoid long queues at payout sites, adding that it remains the most efficient method of distribution being considered by the agency.For those without access to e-wallets or who prefer other modes, Mendoza said cash assistance would still be distributed through physical payout venues to be organized by local government units in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).The LTFRB has begun preparatory measures for the nationwide implementation of the Fuel Subsidy Program, including the selection of qualified electronic money issuers that will serve as payment channel providers to ensure secure and transparent transactions.Mendoza said the initial distribution started earlier this week in Metro Manila, covering tricycle drivers.He added that regional directors have also been instructed to coordinate closely with local governments and the DSWD to streamline the distribution process and ensure timely delivery of assistance.“Everything will move faster if we work together,” Mendoza said, noting that the government is implementing measures to speed up the release of subsidies to affected transport workers.

- DOLE sets pay rules for Eid’l Fitr (2026-03-19 07:45)

MANILA, Philippines — Employees in the private sector who will report to work on Friday, a regular holiday in observance of Eid’l Fitr, will get 200 percent of their basic salary, the labor department said in an advisory on Thursday.Labor Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma issued Labor Advisory 4, Series of 2026, prescribing the pay guidelines for employees who will work during a significant Islamic holiday that marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan.“Those who worked shall be paid 200 percent of their regular salary for the first eight hours, and if they worked overtime, they shall be paid an additional 30 percent of their hourly rate,” the advisory said.Moreover, employees who will not report to work on the said holiday shall be paid 100 percent of their salary for the day, provided they are on approved leave of absence on the day immediately preceding the regular holidayIf the day immediately preceding the regular holiday is a non-working day in the establishment or the employee’s scheduled rest day, they shall still be entitled to holiday pay if they worked or were on approved leave of absence with pay on the day immediately preceding the non-working day or rest day.If the regular holiday also falls on the employee’s rest day and work is rendered, they shall be paid an additional 30 percent of the basic wage of 200 percent (basic wage x 200 percent x 130 percent). Overtime work on the same condition shall likewise be paid with an additional 30 percent of the hourly rate on the said day (hourly rate of the basic wage x 200 percent x 130 percent x 130 percent x number of hours worked).Laguesma reminded employers to comply with the prescribed pay rules to ensure the proper payment of wages for employees during declared holidays.For clarifications, Laguesma advised employers and workers to contact the Bureau of Working Conditions (BWC),

through DOLE Hotline 1349, or coordinate with the DOLE Regional Office in their respective areas.

- DOTr to roll out 50% fare discount on MRT-3, LRT-2 starting March 23 (2026-03-19 06:45)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Transportation (DOTr) will implement a 50 percent fare discount for all passengers of the MRT-3 and LRT-2 beginning March 23.The fare reduction comes amid rising global oil prices linked to the conflict in the Middle East, which have driven up transportation costs and strained household budgets.Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez said the move was expected to generate significant savings for commuters, particularly as fuel prices continue to climb.“The government is doing everything it can to cushion the impact of the crisis in the Middle East. Affordable fares and reliable transport remain our priorities, which is why we are granting a 50 percent discount on MRT-3 and LRT-2 for all passengers,” Lopez said.He added that taking the train would allow commuters to save more compared to using private vehicles, given the high cost of fuel.The DOTr said the discounted fares would be automatically applied to passengers using blue Beep cards, while those without stored-value cards may avail themselves of the reduced rates through single-journey tickets.The existing 50 percent discount for senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and students using white Beep cards will remain in effect.Meanwhile, the DOTr said it was in talks with the private operator of LRT-1, Light Rail Manila Corporation, to explore the possibility of extending similar fare discounts.

- Govt eyes measures to cushion impact of rising oil prices in air transport (2026-03-19 04:54)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. met with members of the Private Sector Advisory Council (PSAC) to discuss measures to mitigate the impact of oil price fluctuations on the air transport sector, Malacañang said Thursday.The Presidential Communications Office (PCO) said Marcos and PSAC identified several measures to mitigate the immediate impact of rising fuel costs, including those affecting air transport, and to ensure affordability, operational stability, and minimal disruption to mobility and supply chains.“President Marcos also underscored the administration’s commitment to work closely with the aviation sector in pursuing other measures to secure a steady supply of oil and fuel amidst global tightening and to cushion the impact of price increases to the traveling public,” the PCO said.During the meeting, the Department of Transportation reported that the government, through the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), adopted a 15-day airfare price monitoring and implementation cycle for the imposition of passenger and cargo fuel surcharges on domestic and international flights.The CAB’s latest move is aligned with Marcos’ recent directive to create a more responsive mechanism to jet fuel price volatility and help temper fare adjustments.The Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines also approved the reduction of passenger service and airport navigation charges in government-operated airports.

- No stranded commuters amid transport strike — MMDA (2026-03-19 04:49)

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) on Thursday said no stranded commuters have been recorded so far amid the ongoing transport strike.The agency has been monitoring the situation since early morning through its Emergency Operations Center at Metrobase, where traffic conditions remained normal during the rush hour.In a Viber message, MMDA General Manager Nicolas Torre III said the agency has not deployed free ride vehicles as of 10 a.m. due to the absence of stranded passengers. “We are monitoring at the Emergency Operations Center since 5 a.m. Traffic is normal and we have not monitored any stranded commuters during the morning rush hours,” Torre said.He added that inter-agency monitoring efforts remained in place to ensure a coordinated response.The MMDA said it has been monitoring major roads under the directive of Chairman Don Artes, with Deputy Chairman Frisco San Juan Jr. and Torre leading operations.Authorities noted the presence of rallyists in several areas, including Roxas Boulevard northbound, E. Rodriguez Avenue near Welcome Rotunda, Philcoa, Monumento near MCU, Loyola Cemetery, and EDSA R. Simon northbound.Despite these, the agency said road conditions remained manageable and have not yet disrupted commuter movement.The MMDA added that free ride services were being withheld for now to avoid affecting drivers who chose not to participate in the strike.Motorists are advised to remain alert and expect possible traffic buildup in areas with protest activities throughout the day.

- Mail-order bride victim Intercepted at NAIA after posing as Chinese language student (2026-03-19 04:45)

MANILA, Philippines — Immigration officers at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) intercepted a 21-year-old woman, suspected of being a victim of a mail-order bride scheme.In a report submitted Thursday to Immigration Commissioner Joel Anthony Viado, officers from the Immigration Protection and Border Enforcement Section (I-PROBES) said the woman passenger was intercepted at NAIA Terminal 3 as she was preparing to board a Cebu Pacific flight to Guangzhou, China.The passenger claimed she was traveling to Guangdong province for language studies, citing enrollment at a public higher vocational engineering college.However, authorities found significant inconsistencies between her statements and the documents presented.The woman eventually admitted that her enrollment was fraudulent and that she was traveling for an arranged marriage set up by an agent with an unidentified individual, for which she was promised ₱50,000. “This attempt exposes how traffickers now use fraudulent study programs abroad as a cover for their illegal activities,” said Viado.

- Quezon City awarded Seal of Good Education Governance for second straight year (2026-03-19 02:43)

MANILA, Philippines – Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte on Thursday took pride in the latest achievement of the local government which was awarded, for the second straight year, the prestigious Seal of Good Education Governance (SGEG) from the Synergeia Foundation. “Our second Seal of Good Education Governance is a reflection of the efforts of our stakeholders, partners, and QCitizens who have made sure that our education programs truly reach every

child in the city,” Belmonte said.The award is given to local government units that demonstrate exceptional leadership and innovation in improving basic education that result in greater student retention and a decrease in non-readers, according to the foundation.The city’s Public Affairs and Information Service Department (PAISD) said the foundation was a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of basic education through community empowerment and local governance reform.It recognized the city government’s sustained efforts to strengthen support for learners through various education programs, improved learning facilities, and policies that promote accessible high-quality education, PAISD said.Belmonte reiterated that the back-to-back SGEG highlights the local government’s effective management of its many education initiatives.“Education remains one of our top priorities because educating our children means building a stronger Quezon City,” she told The Manila Times.Since 2019, the city government has exemplified transformative efforts in the education sector, including inclusive policies, enhanced transparency, and strong collaboration with various stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and civil society organizations."The Quezon City Council remains committed to crafting and updating policies that respond to the real needs of our learners," said majority leader Councilor Aly Medalla.Belmonte, together with Medalla, Schools Division Superintendent Carleen Sedilla, and acting Education Affairs Unit head Maricris Veloso, accepted the award during the 2026 Washington Sycip National Education Summit.“The second consecutive conferment proves that Quezon City is a leading city in terms of education governance,” the city chief executive declared.

- Transport group accuses police of harassment (2026-03-19 02:40)

MANILA, Philippines — A transport group leading a strike in Metro Manila on Thursday accused police officers of allegedly harassing its members, as protests against high fuel taxes disrupted traffic in several areas.In an interview, Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston) President Mody Floranda condemned the Philippine National Police (PNP) for allegedly dispersing its members from peaceful assembly points.Floranda specifically cited an incident in Sucat, Parañaque City, where he claimed police disrupted a gathering of striking drivers.“The police should only be observers and not engage in harassment,” Floranda said in Filipino, stressing that law enforcers are meant to ensure order, not interfere with peaceful protests.Floranda reported that the group had been staging around 20 “mass actions” across the metropolis since 4 a.m.He expressed frustration over the alleged police intervention, pointing out that the protest, which calls for the removal of excise taxes on petroleum products, is an issue that also affects ordinary police personnel.“This is a burden that even police officers feel,” he added.As of posting time, the PNP has not issued a response to the allegations of harassment.The transport strike is part of Piston’s ongoing campaign against rising fuel costs, which the group argues continue to cripple the public transportation sector.

- Marcos orders P10B fuel aid to farmers, fisherfolk (2026-03-19 02:30)

MANILA, Philippines — After rolling out the P5,000 fuel support program to public transport drivers, the government will soon be handing out gas assistance to farmers and fishermen as

part of the government's response to the effects of surging oil costs, Malacañang announced Thursday.In a statement, Executive Secretary Ralph Recto said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the tapping of a P10 billion fund to support farmers and fisherfolk affected by rising fuel prices.Recto said the plan to include "these food producers" stemmed from the fact that farming and fishing were heavily dependent on fuel."In this mechanized era, farmers rely on equipment from tractors to harvesters," the Executive secretary said."And fishermen no longer paddle out to sea. They are brought there by boats powered by gas or diesel engines. That is why as much as 75 percent of the market price of fish represent fuel cost," he added.

- MMDA defers free rides to give non-striking PUVs chance to operate (2026-03-19 02:13)

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) on Thursday said it was holding off the deployment of its libreng sakay (free ride) program to avoid competing with jeepney drivers who would not join a metrowide strike.In a Viber message on Thursday morning, MMDA Public Affairs Director Sharon Gentalian said the agency did not want its free ride service to affect the livelihood of drivers still serving commuters."The agency does not want the free rides to become competition to jeepney drivers who did not join the strike and continue to earn a living and serve commuters," Gentalian said.Transport groups, including PISTON, announced plans to stage a strike against rising fuel prices and push for fare increases, with multiple strike centers in Quezon City, Manila, Pasig, Marikina, Pasay, Parañaque, Caloocan, and Muntinlupa, where protests and activities are expected throughout the day.Gentalian added that no free rides have been dispatched so far as no stranded passengers have been reported.She said vehicles remained on standby and would only be deployed if and when commuters begin to experience difficulty securing transport.Motorists are advised to plan their routes accordingly and expect possible traffic buildup in areas near identified strike centers.

- Filipinos want govt to lower food prices, more jobs, curb corruption amid soaring fuel prices — survey (2026-03-19 01:21)

MANILA, Philippines — Soaring fuel costs driven by global conflicts have sharpened Filipinos' call for the government to bring down food prices, create more jobs, and curb corruption, according to a Pulse Asia survey released on Thursday.Results of the Feb. 27 to March 2, 2026 poll commissioned by Stratbase Institute showed that 41 percent of respondents identified making food more affordable—particularly staples such as rice, meat, and fish—as the most urgent action government leaders should take. The figure rose by three percentage points from 38 percent in December 2025.Support for this priority increased notably in Balance Luzon and Mindanao, where respondents, citing food affordability, climbed to 46 percent from 41 percent and 40 percent, respectively. The sentiment also grew strongest among Class E households, rising seven points to 40 percent.Addressing corruption ranked second, with 26 percent of respondents calling for efforts to lessen or eliminate it in order to improve public services. This marked a five-point drop from 31 percent in the previous survey.Meanwhile, demand for job creation continued to grow, with 24 percent of respondents urging the government to expand

livelihood opportunities, up from 21 percent in December. The increase was most pronounced in the Visayas, where the figure surged from 27 percent to 43 percent.Providing accessible education and healthcare services remained a less-cited concern at 10 percent, unchanged from the previous round.Victor Andres Manhit, president of Stratbase, said the findings reflected mounting public anxiety over food security and inflation, driven in part by rising global oil prices linked to the conflict in the Middle East. “What we are seeing is how geopolitical tensions are directly affecting Filipino households,” he said. “While corruption remains an important issue, ordinary citizens are now more focused on immediate economic pressures including food prices and income stability.” He said the results aligned with earlier Pulse Asia findings identifying inflation and corruption among the country’s most pressing national concerns. “Our commissioned survey’s findings reinforce concerns that Filipinos are overwhelmingly worried by the rising costs of goods,” Manhit said. “That there remains a high demand to eliminate corruption also shows that the public has stronger expectations for government accountability whenever food prices rise.” He urged authorities to respond decisively by stabilizing food and fuel prices, cracking down on profiteering, and expanding subsidies for vulnerable sectors. “Addressing rising food prices must go hand in hand with creating more jobs and ensuring that economic gains are felt at the local community level,” he added.The survey was conducted among 1,200 respondents using face-to-face interviews and had a margin of error of ±2.8 percentage points.The poll coincided with the escalating conflict involving Iran, which disrupted global oil supply routes and drove crude prices above $100 per barrel, triggering fresh increases in domestic fuel prices and raising concerns over their impact on inflation and basic commodities.

- Cyclist groups question MMDA’s EDSA bike user count figures (2026-03-18 22:08)

MANILA, Philippines — Transport advocacy groups have questioned the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority’s (MMDA) figures on the number of bicycle users along EDSA, citing a significant gap between official estimates and independent counts.The Move As One Coalition, in a statement released Wednesday evening, disputed the MMDA’s claim that only around 1,700 cyclists use EDSA daily. The figure was cited during the agency’s launch of free end-of-trip shower facilities in Pasig City on Tuesday, March 17.The group said a more comprehensive bike count conducted in 2024 recorded over 7,000 cyclists along key sections of EDSA within just four hours.The count was carried out by the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities, The Climate Reality Project Philippines, MNL Moves, 350 Pilipinas, and Pinay Bike Commuter across monitoring points in Quezon City, Mandaluyong, and San Juan.Celine Tabinga of the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities said the data highlights a clear disparity in how cyclist volume is being measured along the major thoroughfare.The coalition said the discrepancy raises concerns about the use of incomplete data in shaping transport policies, particularly those affecting bike lane infrastructure and road safety.It added that with rising fuel prices, more Filipinos are expected to shift to bicycles, making accurate data on bike usage critical for planning safe and inclusive road systems.The group also pointed to the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028, which states that pedestrians and cyclists should be

given the highest priority in the hierarchy of road users.The coalition reiterated that any move to reduce or remove bike lanes along EDSA would contradict national efforts to promote active transport as part of addressing the country’s transportation challenges.The Manila Times has reached out to the MMDA for comment but had yet to receive a response as of posting time.

- Pagasa sees no storm until weekend; ‘amihan’ affects only Northern Luzon (2026-03-18 21:59)

MANILA, Philippines – The state-run weather agency said Thursday that it has not monitored any low pressure area forming inside or outside the Philippine Area of Responsibility until the weekend while the ‘weakening’ northeast monsoon (‘amihan’) is only affecting Northern Luzon.In particular, the affected areas include Cordillera Administrative Region, Cagayan, Isabela, Quirino, Nueva Vizcaya, and Aurora at which cloudy skies with light rains would occur, said weather specialist Loriedin Dela Cruz-Galicia of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said.Amihan, which brings cool and dry winds, has also been affecting Ilocos Region and Batanes where partly cloudy to overcast skies with isolated light rains would prevail.Metro Manila and the rest of the country, meanwhile, would be experiencing partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms owing to the effect of the localized thunderstorms, the national weather bureau said.As to the heat index outlook, the Pagasa forecaster said the highest temperature which can be recorded in the day would be in Cotabato City, Maguindanao at 41 degrees Celsius, which is at ‘extreme caution’ category, while 32 degrees Celsius to 34 degrees Celsius over Metro Manila.

- Repatriation flights will continue, Palace says (2026-03-18 16:16)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the continued repatriation of Filipinos, especially migrant workers, affected by the war in the Middle East, Malacañang said on Wednesday.In a statement, Executive Secretary Ralph Recto noted Marcos’ directive for concerned agencies, particularly the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), to ensure government-arranged flights will bring home citizens from areas affected by the war.“The instructions of the president are clear. To keep the humanitarian airlift going. So, this ‘Air DMW’ by Secretary Hans will continue,” Recto said.To date, more than 1,000 Filipinos have been flown back to the country on repatriation flights.The flights, Recto noted, also served as a medical evacuation of Filipinos in dire need of assistance.The latest “mercy flight” ferried 343 Filipino workers and their dependents from Riyadh and Al Khobar in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain last March 15. Another chartered flight will bring more overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) home by the end of this month.Evacuation operations “that put premium on safety” are ongoing in Israel, Kuwait and Bahrain, Recto noted.Funding for the initiative is drawn from the “Agarang Kalinga at Saklolo para sa mga OFWs na Nangangailangan” fund of the DMW meant to aid Filipinos in distress.Apart from repatriation flights, assistance to affected citizens also includes food assistance, transportation support, temporary accommodation, psychosocial counseling and medical services, Recto said.On Tuesday, 125 OFWs returned home, the DMW and the Overseas

Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) said Wednesday.The DMW said the Filipinos arrived through five different flights, as part of the government’s intensified repatriation efforts.While two of the flights were not disclosed, the OWWA made three posts on their Facebook page on some of the returning flights.Late on Tuesday, Oman Airways Flight WY843 saw 20 OFWs from Oman and Israel arrive at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 1.It was later followed by 23 OFWs and one dependent, who was on board Cebu Pacific Flight 5J 741 from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.Around midnight, 45 OFWs, along with their dependents, touched down at NAIA Terminal 3, after disembarking from Doha, Qatar, through Qatar Airways Flight QR 928.“Amid fear and uncertainty in a foreign country, the government’s swift action and cooperation became their support in ensuring their safe return home,” OWWA said in Filipino.Meanwhile, both agencies reposted an advisory from the Philippine Embassy in Israel, directing Filipinos to head to a shelter should they receive any emergency alerts, as the armed group Hezbollah would launch rocket barrages toward Israel.

- Iran-friendly tankers cross Strait of Hormuz (2026-03-18 16:15)

HONG KONG — About 90 ships including oil tankers have crossed the Strait of Hormuz since the outset of the war with Iran and it is still exporting millions of barrels of oil at a time when the waterway has been effectively closed, according to maritime and trade data platforms.Many of the vessels that passed through the strait were so-called dark transits evading Western government sanctions and oversight that likely have ties to Iran, maritime data firm Lloyd’s List Intelligence said. More recently, vessels with ties to India and Pakistan have also successfully crossed the strait as governments stepped up negotiations.As crude prices spiked above $100 a barrel, United States President Donald Trump pressured allies and trade partners to send warships and reopen the strait, hoping to bring oil prices lower.Most shipping traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway for global oil and gas transport that supplies roughly one-fifth of the world’s crude oil, has been halted since early March, after the war started. About 20 vessels have been attacked in the area.However, Iran has still managed to export well above 16 million barrels of oil since the beginning of March, trade data and analytics platform Kpler estimated. Due to Western sanctions and associated risks, China has been the biggest buyer of Iranian oil.There has been “continued resilience” in Iran’s oil export volumes, said Kpler trade risk analyst Ana Subasic.Iran has managed to profit from oil sales and also “preserve its own export artery” by using control over the choke point, said Kun Cao, client director at consulting firm Reddal.Iran’s oil export data estimates are largely aligned with maritime traffic data.At least 89 ships crossed the Strait of Hormuz between March 1 and 15 — including 16 oil tankers, according to Lloyd’s List Intelligence, down from roughly 100 to 135 vessel passages per day before the war. More than one-fifth of the 89 vessels were believed to be Iran-affiliated, while Chinese- and Greece-affiliated ships are among the rest, it said.Other vessels also have been getting through.The Pakistan-flagged crude oil tanker Karachi, controlled by the Pakistan National Shipping Corp., passed through the strait on Sunday, Lloyd’s List Intelligence said.Shariq Amin, a spokesman for the Pakistan Port Trust, refused to confirm or deny which route the MT Karachi had used but he said the ship would soon safely reach

Pakistan.The India-flagged liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) carriers Shivalik and Nanda Devi, both owned by state-owned Shipping Corp. of India, also traveled through the strait around March 13 or 14, according to Lloyd’s List Intelligence. LPG is used as a primary cooking fuel by millions of Indian households.India’s foreign minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, told the Financial Times the two vessels were able to pass following talks with Iran. Iraq was also in talks with Iran to allow Iraqi oil tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, its state-run news agency reported.Vessels may be transiting “with at least some level of diplomatic intervention,” said Richard Meade, editor-in-chief of Lloyd’s List. So, Iran may have “effectively created a safe corridor” with some ships passing close to the Iranian coast.Some vessels near or in the strait were found to have declared themselves as China-linked or with all Chinese crew to reduce risks of being attacked, based on an earlier analysis on ship tracking platform MarineTraffic. Analysts believe they were taking advantage of China’s closer ties with Iran.Oil prices have jumped more than 40 percent to above $100 per barrel since the Iran war began, and Iran has threatened it won’t allow “even a single liter of oil” destined for the US, and Israel and their allies to pass through.To try to stabilize oil prices, the US said it was allowing Iranian oil tankers to cross the strait. “The Iranian ships have been getting out already, and we’ve let that happen to supply the rest of the world,” Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in an interview with CNBC on Monday.The US bombed military sites on Kharg Island off the Iranian coast, which is key for Iran’s oil network and exports, but President Donald Trump said he had left its oil infrastructure alone for now.The latest passages through the Strait of Hormuz show the strait was not simply “closed,” Cao said. “It is better understood as closed selectively against some traffic, while still functioning for Iranian exports and a narrow set of tolerated non-Iranian movements,” he said.However, if Iran’s plan is to “inflict pain through higher energy prices, the number of tankers it allows through the Strait of Hormuz may be very limited,” Dutch bank ING’s strategists Warren Patterson and Ewa Manthey wrote in a research note.

- Comelec: Marcoleta not guilty but his donors are (2026-03-18 16:14)

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) has ruled that Sen. Rodante Marcoleta is not liable for nondisclosure in his statement of contributions and expenditures (SOCE) of the P75-million contributions he received during the 2025 national and local polls.But in the same ruling, the commission en banc said that it is not the case for the three contributors of Marcoleta “due to their failure to submit their respective individual report of contributions within 30 days after the elections.” “File a complaint for election offense before the Law Department for the requisite conduct of preliminary investigation against the three contributors of the respondent,” the Comelec said.The three contributors were identified as Michael Tan Defensor, Joseph Varias Espiritu and Aristotle Baluyut Viray.The Comelec ruling was based on the recommendation of the Political Finance and Affairs Department of the Commission, which the en banc adopted.In his defense, Marcoleta cited the Peñera Doctrine, a landmark ruling issued by the Supreme Court in 2010, which reversed the Comelec decision that disqualified Sta. Monica, Surigao del Norte Mayor Rosalinda Peñera as candidate in the 2007 local elections for violation of Section 80 of the Omnibus Election Code which prohibits premature campaigning.The respondent

admitted receiving P75 million a month before the start of the campaign period for national candidates when he was not yet legally considered a candidate.Marcoleta also argued that should there be a failure of proper disclosure of election contributions, he acted in good faith in all his declarations in his SOCE, thus he cannot be accused of falsifying the entries in his SOCE nor could be held liable for any election offense.But the commission pointed out that contributions used during the campaign period should be reported in SOCE, saying that “the reason being is that a person who has filed his certificate of candidacy may receive and accept contributions not only during the campaign period but also before the start of campaign.” “In the case at bar, it is with more reason that respondent should have reported the said contributions because it funded his campaign,” it said.It said that under Section 262 of the Omnibus Election Code (OEC), violation of Section 109 constitutes an election offense.Section 109 of the OEC states: “The statement shall be in writing, subscribed and sworn to by the candidate or by the treasurer of the party, shall be complete as of the date next preceding the date of filing and shall set forth in detail (a) the amount of contribution, the date of receipt, and the full name and exact address of the person from whom the contribution was received; (b) the amount of every expenditure, the date thereof, the full name and exact address of the person to whom payment was made and the purpose of the expenditure; (c) any unpaid obligation, its nature and amount and to whom said obligation is owing; and (d) such other particulars which the Commission may require.” However, the commission said that due to a later law passed by the Congress, “it is one of the sections in the OEC that a violation of which, will no longer constitute an election offense.”Section 39 of Republic Act 7166 provides: “Section 107, 108 and 245 of the Omnibus Election Code are hereby repealed. Likewise, the inclusion in Section 262 of the Omnibus Election Code of the violation of Section[s] 105, 106, 107, 109, 110, 111 and 112 as among election offenses is also hereby repealed. This repeal shall have retroactive effect.” However, the commission said that the “contributors are covered by a different provision of the OEC — Section 39 — which is not affected by the repealing law.

- DA to distribute aid to farmers, fisherfolk (2026-03-18 16:13)

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) will provide cash assistance to farmers and fisherfolk nationwide through the Presidential Assistance for Farmers and Fisherfolk Program (PAFFP) amid the US-Iran war.The P10-billion program aims to provide P2,325 in unconditional cash assistance to eligible rice, corn, and sugarcane farmers and fisherfolk to mitigate increasing production costs and protect their productive capacity amid geopolitical unrest.On Wednesday, the DA released Memorandum Circular 11, Series of 2026, signed by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., detailing the implementing guidelines for the PAFFP.To be eligible for the program, rice farmers must be actively engaged in rice cultivation, till no more than 2 hectares of land and be registered under the DA’s Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA).Corn and sugarcane farmers must be actively engaged in cultivating corn or sugarcane and must be registered under the RSBSA.Fisherfolk must be registered under the RSBSA, and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources’ Boat Registration, and must actively engage in fishing operations.According to the DA, geopolitical developments in the

Middle East have caused volatility in global markets, resulting in higher prices for fuel, fertilizer, transportation and other agricultural production inputs. It noted that these rising costs directly affect domestic agriculture and fisheries, threatening the sustainability of agricultural production, the income stability of farmers and fisherfolk, and the country’s food security.” By extending timely and targeted financial relief, the PAFFP seeks to alleviate the impact of these developments on farm and fisheries production, strengthen farmers’ and fisherfolk’s resilience, and sustain local agricultural and fisheries production in the face of market volatility and rising production costs,” the DA said.The cash assistance will be distributed through the DA’s Interventions Monitoring Cards, which registered farmers and fisherfolk can use for identification, cash withdrawal, and purchasing goods and services via automated teller machines and online banking.The agency said the DA Field Operations Service will implement the program in coordination with DA regional field offices, concerned DA bureaus and attached agencies, local government units and other relevant government agencies.It added that implementation will begin immediately after the Notice of Cash Allocation by the Department of Budget and Management has been granted.The program will run within the fund’s validity period, as prescribed by the 2026 General Appropriations Act. This may be extended as necessary, subject to deliberations by the DA Field Operations Service.

- Labor groups push for P200 wage hike (2026-03-18 16:12)

LABOR groups urged Congress to immediately convene a special session for the passage of a long-delayed P200 legislated wage hike amid the economic impact of the war in the Middle East.The National Wage Coalition (NWC) — composed of the country’s largest labor federations, including the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino, Kilusang Mayo Uno, Nagkaisa Labor Coalition and the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) — issued the call on Wednesday. The appeal comes as diesel prices rose to more than P100 per liter and gasoline exceeded P90 per liter in some areas, with no end in sight for the Middle East crisis.The NWC said that with diesel exceeding P100 per liter and global oil prices continuing to surge, the economic shock is no longer imminent — it is already crushing Filipino workers.The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board has already approved fare increases for passenger jeepneys and buses in Metro Manila. Traditional public utility jeepney (PUJ) fares will rise by P1, bringing the minimum fare to P14, while modern PUJ fares will increase by P2 to P17. Both take effect on Thursday, alongside a TNVS flag-down rate increase from P45 to P65.Labor groups pointed out that because transport fare increases have been approved across the board, they will result in a chain reaction of higher commuting costs, rising food prices and deeper financial strain on underpaid workers.” Diesel is now over P100 per liter — yet workers still haven’t received a P200 raise. What are we waiting for — $200 oil prices? As fuel, fares and food costs climb, wages remain stuck. If workers are forced to work overtime just to survive, then Congress must be ready to do the same to pass this wage hike,” said TUCP Party-list Rep. Raymond Mendoza.The group also noted that the Maritime Industry Authority has allowed domestic shipping operators to increase passenger fares by up to 20 percent.FFW President Sonny Matula, a lawyer, said that while the government acted

swiftly to accommodate industry adjustments, it continues to delay decisive action on wages.” This imbalance is indefensible. Government cannot move quickly for fare hikes while dragging its feet on wage relief. A P5,000 subsidy for transport workers is necessary — but it is not a substitute for structural wage reform. More than five million minimum wage earners are being left behind,” the group said.” Workers are being squeezed from every direction — fuel, fares, food — yet wages remain frozen. This is no longer a debate; it is a policy failure. If Congress does not act now, it is effectively choosing to let millions of minimum wage earners absorb the full impact of this crisis,” the coalition added.The NWC said that stopgap aid is insufficient in the face of systemic inflation, stressing that immediate legislative intervention is required.” Every day of delay erodes the real income of workers. Every fare hike without a wage increase pushes families closer to the brink. Congress must stop deferring responsibility. Convene the special session. Pass the P200 wage hike. Deliver real relief — not rhetoric,” it said.The P200 legislated wage hike was approved by both the House and the Senate during the 19th Congress, but opposition from employer groups and government economic managers derailed its enactment.Under the current 20th Congress, more than 20 wage hike proposals are pending in the Senate and the House.In pressing for the approval of the proposed P200 increase, the NWC argued that the measure’s passage is the only logical and just path forward as a social, economic and moral imperative.” This wage hike is the only hope to rescue both present and future generations from the cruel absurdity and harsh reality of getting paid a minimum wage for working for a living yet wallowing in abject, record-high self-rated poverty and involuntary hunger, where they cannot even feed their family, send their children to school, go to the hospital for medical emergencies or even live with dignity,” the group said.” Workers across the nation are closely watching and placing their full trust in Congress to pass the P200 legislated wage hike before anything else because to do otherwise is not merely neglect of duty, but betrayal of trust,” it added.ComplicatedIn a related development, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said on Wednesday that exercising emergency power to suspend or reduce taxes on petroleum products depends on oil price trends, noting it is a “very complicated calculation.” Marcos issued the statement after Congress approved on third and final reading a bill authorizing the president to suspend or reduce excise taxes on petroleum products during national or global economic emergencies.” That depends. There are so many to consider. It’s a very complicated calculation. We will see,” Marcos said during a media interview.” It depends on the trends. We have to watch the trends on oil prices. We will just have to look. It’s very hard to say because it’s all speculation,” he added.Marcos said uncertainties in global supply routes, particularly in key choke points such as the Strait of Hormuz, were being considered in the government’s assessment.” We don’t know how long this will last for. We don’t know what the effects are. We don’t know what will happen at the Strait of Hormuz,” he said.The president earlier sought authority from Congress to suspend or reduce excise taxes on petroleum products to cushion the impact of rising fuel prices.The Senate version allows for the suspension or reduction of the excise tax on fuel when the average price of Dubai crude oil reaches or exceeds $80 per barrel for one month. The House version requires the president to declare a state of national emergency to justify the suspension or reduction.Marcos has also certified as urgent a bill seeking to amend the Biofuels Act of 2006 to help cushion the impact of

rising fuel prices and strengthen the country’s energy resilience.The Biofuels Act of 2006 established the government’s policy to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels by promoting the development and use of locally produced biofuels.Meanwhile, Executive Secretary Ralph Recto convened key frontline agencies to ensure full government coordination and accelerate the delivery of support in response to rising fuel prices.Acting on the president’s directive, Recto ordered the Department of Budget and Management to immediately release funds for cash assistance to transport drivers under the Department of Social Welfare and Development’s Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations program.He also directed the Department of Transportation to fast-track and expand relief measures, including the Libreng Sakay program, to ease the burden on commuters, workers, students and Filipino families.The Department of Agriculture has been instructed to keep food prices stable and supplies secure, especially for rice, while scaling up support for farmers and fisherfolk to protect livelihoods and sustain food production.

- Marcos: Food and fuel supply stable despite Middle East war (2026-03-18 16:11)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday said that “everything is normal” as he assured the public that there was sufficient supply of food and fuel products in the country despite the oil price shocks triggered by the war in the Middle East.Speaking to reporters after inspecting the Agora Market in San Juan City, Marcos said that the government was “able to keep everything at normal levels.” “Right now, we don’t have a problem on food supply. We don’t have a problem on supply of petroleum products, including fertilizer for the farmers,” Marcos said. “Everything is normal. No need to hoard,” he added.Marcos said government officials have been visiting public markets to ensure that food prices do not spike amid the war in the Middle East.He commended vendors for their cooperation, saying that the suggested price cap set by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) was being followed. “Our vendors are cooperating. They are keeping the prices at normal from what they were maybe a month ago. It’s the same. So that’s what we need to maintain,” the president said. “We thank the vendors for agreeing not to raise prices, not to engage in price gouging, and not to take advantage.” Despite this, the president said inspections would continue as uncertainty remained during the duration of the conflict in the Middle East. “Inspections will continue so that the livelihoods of our people are not heavily affected,” he said.During the event, Marcos, along with Trade Secretary Cristina Roque and Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, engaged with vendors and market stakeholders to gain firsthand insights on price trends and supply availability.Roque said manufacturers of basic goods, including canned sardines, bread, bottled water, instant noodles, coffee, canned meat and soap, have committed to maintaining current prices for the next 30 days. “We commend the proactive commitment of our manufacturers to sustain price stability within a changing cost environment,” Roque said.She said the collective effort was intended to keep basic goods affordable for Filipino families.Tiu Laurel, on the other hand, said the DA was studying the possible implementation of price caps on imported rice due to a reported increase in retail prices, which have reached P60 to P65 per kilo in some markets.The DA is considering a P50 per kilo price cap on imported rice to curb

rising costs driven by increased freight rates. “While price adjustments are understandable at a time when fuel and transport costs are rising, profiteering and hoarding are not,” Tiu Laurel said.Meanwhile, vendors and consumers praised Marcos for his hands-on leadership during his visit to the Agora Public Market in San Juan City.Agora vegetable vendor Ana Maguddayao said the president’s visit and monitoring efforts were beneficial in keeping prices of basic goods such as rice stable.Marketgoer Julian Atibagos also welcomed the president’s visit, saying it was encouraging to see him in person, helping people and extending support to those in need.The market also features a Kadiwa ng Pangulo stall offering P20 rice for vulnerable sectors, including senior citizens, persons with disabilities, solo parents, 4Ps beneficiaries, Indigenous peoples, minimum wage workers and other low-income families.

- Go warns of mental health crisis (2026-03-18 16:11)

SEN. Bong Go has called for immediate action to address the worsening mental health crisis among Filipino youth, citing alarming rates of anxiety, depression and suicidal behavior.During a public hearing on Tuesday led by the Senate Committee on Youth, Go emphasized the need for stronger safeguards and accessible support systems for teenagers facing mental health challenges.”Let us act now to ensure our youth are supported, heard and never abandoned in times of mental health crises,” Go said.The hearing tackled key provisions of Senate Bills 258 and 1948, collectively referred to as the proposed Youth Suicide Prevention Act. The measure seeks to institutionalize comprehensive suicide prevention programs, expand mental health awareness campaigns and improve access to counseling and intervention services nationwide.Go underscored the urgency of the measure by pointing to data indicating that 1 in 5 Filipino youth has contemplated suicide, while 7.5 percent — equivalent to around 1.5 million young individuals — have attempted to take their own lives.Health experts and youth advocates have long warned that untreated mental health conditions, social pressures and limited access to professional care continue to put young Filipinos at risk. The Covid-19 pandemic’s lingering social and economic effects have also been cited as contributing factors to the surge in mental health concerns.Under the proposed legislation, schools, local government units and community organizations would be required to implement early detection mechanisms, crisis-intervention programs and peer-support initiatives. The bill also aims to strengthen partnerships between educational institutions and mental health professionals to ensure timely and appropriate care.Go reiterated that protecting the mental well-being of the youth is a shared responsibility among families, schools, government agencies and society at large.”Our young people are the nation’s future. We must create an environment where they feel safe to speak up and seek help without fear or stigma,” he added.The measure remains under committee deliberation as lawmakers continue to gather input from stakeholders, with hopes of passing a more robust mental health framework that responds to the growing needs of Filipino adolescents.

- 9 out of 10 Filipinos take health supplements – study (2026-03-18 16:10)

A STUDY revealed that 9 out of 10 Filipinos take health supplements, but most lack confidence in whether they are making responsible supplement decisions.The study, released Monday by Herbalife, noted that while more Filipinos are taking proactive choices to improve their well-being through regular exercise, better diet and taking health supplements, one in four Filipinos say they lack confidence in whether they are making responsible supplement decisions.Dr. Alex Teo, director of Research Development and Scientific Affairs at Herbalife, said that making informed supplement choices involves understanding a product’s ingredient composition, quality, recommended dosage, consumption limits, and possible interactions with other supplements or medications.The research warned that 51 percent of Filipinos were unaware of the appropriate dosages and upper limits for the supplements they are taking, especially when taking a combination of supplements, and their potential harms.Without adequate knowledge, consumers may find it difficult to safely and effectively benefit from supplements and their preventive health care efforts, Teo said.However, despite these gaps, 70 percent of Filipinos are optimistic they will achieve their health goals.“Many also recognize their role in making responsible health decisions, with 94 percent recognizing the importance of making responsible decisions. The issue, however, is not just for consumers alone, as both supplement providers and consumers have a role to play,” the study noted.It added that consumers do not have adequate knowledge of how their supplements could interact with their medications.The study urged consumers to study labels and conduct their own research when considering a health supplement.“In parallel, consumers need more proactive input from trusted professionals who bring a science-based approach to supplementation,” it said.Herbalife also urged health care providers to offer clear labeling and transparent communication on the supplements, adding that stronger product quality control is necessary to guide the public.

- AI expert: Political will vital in advancing proactive health care (2026-03-18 16:09)

AN artificial intelligence (AI) expert emphasized the need for the government’s political will to advance P4 medicine — predictive, preventive, personalized, and participatory — an approach aimed at shifting the health care sector from reactive to proactive.Speaking at the 44th anniversary of the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (DOST-PCHRD) in Muntinlupa on Wednesday, Astrid Dita, head of AI and Innovation for Asia Pacific at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, highlighted that a lack of political prioritization and coordination among stakeholders has hindered progress.In an interview with The Manila Times, Dita said that while governments are struggling to prioritize measures — given the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and rising prices of goods — the health care sector should not be left out in their priorities.“The political leader’s mind would basically be pulled into a different direction. What is important is that, amid all external shocks, it’s really important for the government to still carry on with its core agenda at home. For the health sector agenda, P4 Medicine is something that is going to be what forms as a foundation for the future of the health care delivery in the country,” she said.One of the major barriers to advancing P4 medicine in the Philippines is the country’s low investment in health research

and development (R&D), which currently accounts for only 0.16 percent of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP).Dita acknowledged that, aside from competing priorities, limited resources also contribute to the low number.She urged the government to increase its allocation to catch up with other nations.“It’s just a matter of how we make sure that we can get more out of that constraint,” she said, emphasizing the need for strategic prioritization to maximize the impact of limited funds.Dita outlined actions for the Philippines to consider in its journey toward P4 medicine, beginning with the development of a clear and unified strategy.“That strategy will hopefully be able to rally stakeholders behind a singular coordinated direction,” she said.She also emphasized the importance of demonstrating quick wins to get the support of both political leaders and the public.For example, she pointed to affordable cervical cancer prevention kits as a tangible outcome that could save lives and build momentum for broader health care reforms.“To be able to connect that important agenda into a real result that the people can support early on, it would be super important,” Dita noted, adding that such initiatives could help demystify P4 medicine, which may seem abstract to some.The Philippines currently relies heavily on imported technology and foreign expertise for health care solutions.Dita believes that fostering local innovation is a strategic move that could reduce costs and address the country’s unique health care challenges.“By making that choice (to become a producer of medical innovation), the Philippines will also have the agency to drive down costs for diseases and challenges most pertinent to the country,” she said.Dita highlighted the role of AI in the shift from a reactive to a proactive health care system.While the country lags in establishing governance frameworks for AI, she argued that this should not prevent the country from leveraging AI for scientific advancements, such as genome analysis and protein research..“While the Philippines may need to catch up on AI governance, it doesn’t mean the country cannot immediately use AI for the advancement of science,” Dita said, stressing the need to adopt best practices from other countries to accelerate progress.

- CFO mulls offering specialized orientation (2026-03-18 16:08)

THE Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) has explored a partnership with the Goethe-Institut (GI) to develop an integration program for Filipinos migrating to Germany.Officials of the CFO and GI recently met to enhance pre-migration and cultural integration programs, including the possible integration of specialized pre-departure orientation seminars for Filipinos bound for Germany.CFO Secretary Dante Ang II met with GI representatives Jens Rösler and Erika Lei Dacurawat to discuss collaboration that would help Filipinos adopt German culture.The GI, as Germany’s global cultural arm, offers the expertise in German language and cultural promotion necessary to bridge the integration gap, the agency said.The CFO on Wednesday said that there are more than 60,000 Filipinos residing in Germany, some of whom are married to Germans.“Successful migration is the foundation of effective diaspora engagement,” Ang said during the meeting.“When our emigrants are well-integrated, they are better positioned to maintain strong economic, cultural and political ties with the motherland,” he said.The CFO in a statement said that historically, the Filipino community in Germany is dominated by nursing and health care professionals.But the

demographic “has expanded to include a growing number of spouses of foreign nationals and highly skilled workers under Germany’s modernized immigration laws,” it added.Ang said that the CFO’s mission extends beyond mere documentation.“It is rooted in the mandate to ensure that every Filipino moving abroad is equipped to succeed,” he said.The CFO said the partnership with GI is aligned with its role as the “premier government agency tasked with managing the welfare of permanent emigrants.”The agency said it focuses on the “permanent diaspora,” ensuring that Filipinos moving to Germany can navigate the transition from Philippine citizens to active members of the global Filipino community.By strengthening the “pre-departure” phase, the CFO fulfills its mandate to protect the interests of Filipinos overseas while fostering a sense of national identity that persists across borders, it added.

- CHR wants full reparation, justice for ‘Malaya Lolas’ (2026-03-18 16:06)

THE Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has called on the Philippine government to ensure full reparation and recognition for the so-called Malaya Lolas — Filipina survivors of wartime sexual slavery during the Japanese occupation in the Second World War (WW2).Based in Pampanga province, Malaya Lolas are a group composed of former “comfort women” or victims of sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army during its WW2 occupation in the country.CHR Chairman Richard Palpal-latoc told The Manila Times that the agency has issued a Gender Ombud Policy advisory formalizing its call for redress and an official apology for the Filipina survivors of wartime sexual slavery.“The advisory underscores that justice for the Malaya Lolas remains an urgent human rights obligation,” Palpal-latoc said.The CHR is the country’s National Human Rights Institution, and Gender and Development Ombud under the Magna Carta of Women.Its chief said that the commission monitors the Philippines’ compliance with international human rights obligations, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Cedaw).In March 2023, the United Nations-Cedaw Committee issued its views in Alonzo et al. v. Philippines, finding that the latter failed to adequately address the discrimination and suffering endured by the Malaya Lolas.The committee, according to CHR, recommended the establishment of a nationwide reparations program for victims of war crimes, the preservation of historical memory sites such as “Bahay na Pula” in Pampanga and the integration of the history of Filipina survivors of wartime sexual slavery into educational curricula.Through its advisory, the CHR reiterated the urgency of implementing these recommendations, especially given the advanced age of the remaining Malaya Lolas, Palpal-latoc said.He emphasized that reparations are not merely a form of humanitarian assistance, but a human rights obligation grounded in international law and the Philippines’ commitments under Cedaw.The CHR also acknowledged the government initiatives, including the creation of an interagency technical working group and the issuance of a joint memorandum circular, which reinforces humanitarian assistance for members of the Malaya Lolas.“While these steps are welcome, the CHR stresses the need for a comprehensive, rights-based reparations framework that meaningfully recognizes the harms endured by the survivors,” said Palpal-latoc, a lawyer.In line with the Cedaw Committee’s views, the top CHR official reiterated the agency’s call for urgent action from the concerned government

institutions.These include the enactment of legislation establishing a state-sanctioned nationwide reparations scheme, the provision of sustained medical and psychosocial support for survivors, the preservation and memorialization of sites linked to their experiences, and the integration of their stories into the national education system to promote remembrance and prevent the recurrence of such violations, the CHR said.

- ‘PH-US defense ties strong’ (2026-03-18 16:05)

THE Philippines and the United States have reaffirmed their robust defense ties amid evolving regional security challenges, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said.The AFP and the US Indo-Pacific Command (Usindopacom) on March 5-6 co-presided over the Mutual Defense Board-Security Engagement Board Standing Committees’ Meeting (SCM) at Camp Aguinaldo, upholding the strong bilateral alliance and enhancing cooperation under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty.Speaking on behalf of the Philippine delegation, Brig. Gen. Paulo Teodoro, Philippine Air Force assistant deputy chief of staff for plans, expressed his deep appreciation to the Usindopacom delegation led by Col. Andrew Dubois, US Air Force chief of the South/Southeast Asia Policy Division, for their participation and to all presenters for the clarity and professionalism of their briefings.The discussions produced a set of recommendations and deliverables that would be consolidated in a Memorandum for the Record and refined in preparation for the J5-led Executive Committee Meeting in June 2026 in Hawaii.Teodoro and Dubois underscored the importance of sustaining momentum through continuous coordination, emphasizing that close collaboration between AFP and US forces is essential to remain “equal and capable,” treating each other as equals amid rapid technological change, gray-zone activities and complex security concerns.Dubois expressed confidence that the outcomes of the SCM will translate into actionable plans and tangible results that further enhance interoperability, readiness and combined effectiveness.Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. earlier said that the Philippines cannot heed US President Donald Trump’s call to allies to send warships to the Strait of Hormuz to secure the critical maritime channel because the country does not have such capability.

- LTO admits it has no control over clinic fees (2026-03-18 16:04)

THE Land Transportation Office (LTO) admitted it does not regulate or monitor the miscellaneous fees charged by its accredited medical clinics, as lawmakers pressed for greater transparency in the costs imposed on driver’s license applicants.LTO Executive Director Martin Ontog said the agency has no oversight of additional charges, such as miscellaneous and computer fees collected by clinics. He clarified that proceeds from these fees do not go to the government.The disclosure came after the House Committee on Transportation, chaired by Quezon City 3rd District Rep. Franz Pumaren, raised concerns over reports that applicants are being charged around P140 in miscellaneous fees and P60 in computer fees on top of the P300 medical examination cost. Lawmakers noted that clinics have failed to clearly explain what these charges cover.Pumaren said the practice appears to be widespread and may be unnecessarily burdening the public, prompting the committee to examine whether current

accreditation policies allow excessive or redundant charges to persist.The lawmaker also questioned the role of multiple medical information technology providers accredited by the LTO, despite the agency already working with Stradcom Corp. and Dermalog Identification Systems GmbH for its Land Transportation Management System.One of the accredited providers, Edgecomm Total Solutions Inc., said it facilitates the electronic submission of medical results, a requirement implemented in 2019 under then-LTO chief Edgar Galvante. However, Pumaren argued that such providers may be acting as intermediaries, noting that some still transmit data through Stradcom, which he said could perform the same function.Ontog said the LTO would review all existing accreditations in a bid to streamline processes and remove unnecessary steps that could be contributing to added costs.The committee is expected to continue its inquiry as it seeks to determine whether stricter regulation or policy changes are needed to protect motorists from excessive fees.

- DHSUD, NBI join forces vs real estate scammers (2026-03-18 16:03)

THE Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) has joined forces with the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to go after unscrupulous groups and individuals involved in real estate scams.Through the partnership with NBI, DHSUD Secretary Jose Ramon Aliling said on Wednesday that this would boost the law enforcement campaign to protect the legitimate real estate buyers.Aliling said he was personally assured by NBI Director Melvin Matibag, who agreed to map out strengthened government efforts to combat real estate malpractices that victimize unsuspecting property buyers.The Manila Times was told that the DHSUD leadership decided to seek NBI’s help after confirming reports of groups or individuals posing as legitimate real estate agents to victimize prospective property clients.“This initiative is also in line with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s directive to ensure the protection of Filipinos aspiring to own safe, decent and affordable housing,” the DHSUD chief said.Aliling emphasized that the NBI’s expertise in investigation and law enforcement would significantly bolster DHSUD’s ongoing efforts to curb fraudulent real estate activities.The housing czar has reiterated the importance of interagency collaboration and a whole-of-government approach in addressing the issue.“We need to work together to safeguard the rights of real property buyers, ensuring that the government remains proactive in curbing fraudulent activities and in advancing safe, secure and legitimate housing for every Filipino,” he added.

- SSS partners with bank to boost rural services (2026-03-18 16:02)

THE MySSS Card will soon reach members in unbanked areas after a commercial bank agreed to be its first rural bank card issuer, the Social Security System (SSS) said on Wednesday.SSS President and CEO Robert Joseph de Claro said that he signed a memorandum of agreement with Sheila Marasigan Bajado, EastWest Rural Bank (EWRB) president, which would pave the way for the issuance of MySSS Cards primarily for members in rural areas while remaining accessible to qualified members nationwide.“This is the right move to expand financial inclusion in underserved communities,” de Claro said in a statement.The collaboration with EWRB would be a significant initiative that will simplify disbursement account enrollment and

improve convenience for members, highlighting the card’s dual role as an official SSS ID and debit card, he said. “The MySSS card also allows SSS to provide digital payment facilities for our registrants, members, pensioners and beneficiaries,” de Claro explained.Moreover, the state-run social insurance entity said it uses the National ID database checks to confirm that applicants are registered SSS members, ensuring secure card issuance by its partner bank and accurate benefit disbursement through the linked account.The card also enables members to manage their daily financial transactions with ease, it added.Bajado said that a streamlined MySSS Card application process will be available at EWRB’s 112 branches and branch-lites nationwide this year, most of which are in the provinces, particularly in Mindanao and the Visayas.The card may also be offered at cross-selling desks in EastWest Bank branches, their parent bank, and through a digital channel, Bajado said. “We will waive maintaining balance requirements for MySSS cardholders, who may also earn interest once their balance reaches at least P500, allowing them to grow their savings while enjoying flexible account features,” she pointed out.The SSS has maintained a decade-long collaboration with EWRB, which began in 2017 when the bank was recognized as the Best Collecting and Best Paying Partner in the rural category of the SSS Balikat ng Bayan Awards, according to the SSS chief. “We hope our collaboration will help SSS better serve members wherever they are,” he said.

- National petroleum reserve sought (2026-03-18 16:01)

SEN. Francis Escudero has filed Senate Bill 1993, which proposes the establishment of a government-owned crude oil storage facility.The initiative is designed to enhance the nation’s fuel security and provide a buffer against global oil market fluctuations, promoting economic stability.The proposal comes as the Philippines remains heavily dependent on imports, sourcing roughly 90 percent to 95 percent of its crude oil and refined petroleum requirements. This reliance, Escudero said, leaves the country highly exposed to geopolitical tensions and supply disruptions.Citing escalating instability in the Middle East — including attacks on energy infrastructure and threats to key shipping routes such as the Strait of Hormuz — Escudero warned that even temporary disruptions can trigger immediate fuel price spikes in the Philippines. These increases, he noted, ripple across critical sectors including transportation, food logistics and power generation.”A strategic crude oil stockpile is our shield,” Escudero said. “Every time tensions rise, our economy absorbs the shock within days. We need a national buffer that protects Filipino families and industries.” Under the bill, the government would construct a crude oil tank farm capable of storing between 90 and 180 days’ worth of national consumption. The estimated cost ranges from P30 billion for a 90-day reserve to P60 billion for a 180-day supply, with an initial P60 billion allocation proposed for the project.The Department of Energy, in coordination with the Philippine National Oil Co. or its subsidiaries, would oversee the acquisition of fuel reserves as well as the construction, operation and maintenance of storage facilities. Their responsibilities would also include fuel procurement, quality control, rotation and distribution.Energy Secretary Sharon Garin recently disclosed that the country’s current fuel inventory may only last until the end of April, with supply orders for May still being finalized — underscoring the urgency of establishing a long-term buffer.Beyond

infrastructure, the bill also proposes a Targeted Fuel Relief Program that would provide direct cash assistance or fuel vouchers to sectors most affected by supply disruptions or price surges. Beneficiaries would include small farmers, fisherfolk, public transport operators, delivery drivers, and micro and small enterprises reliant on fuel.Escudero identified Limay as the preferred site for the proposed facility, citing its logistical advantages. The coastal municipality hosts the Petron Bataan Refinery — the country’s only active oil refinery — as well as a deep-water port and existing crude-handling infrastructure.He emphasized that the planned depot would be built on government-secured land to ensure public control while leveraging the area’s established energy facilities.Escudero noted that many countries already maintain strategic petroleum reserves. Members of the International Energy Agency, along with nations like the United States, Japan and South Korea, hold reserves equivalent to at least 90 days of net imports.South Korea, for instance, operates a comprehensive reserve system managed by the Korea National Oil Corp., allowing it to respond swiftly to global supply disruptions.The Philippines, Escudero pointed out, remains one of the few major import-dependent economies in Asia without such a safeguard.The senator clarified that the proposed government reserve would not compete with private oil companies but would serve as a stabilizing mechanism during extraordinary circumstances. Strategic releases of crude oil during shortages or extreme price spikes, he said, would help protect essential sectors and improve the country’s bargaining position in volatile global markets.”We cannot continue living at the mercy of global events,” Escudero said. “A modern economy needs a modern safety net. We must catch up.”

- Erwin Tulfo files bill mandating itemized hospital billing (2026-03-18 16:00)

Sen. Erwin Tulfo on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, filed a measure seeking to strengthen transparency in hospital billing by requiring all healthcare providers to issue uniform and itemized statements of charges to patients.Filed as Senate Bill (SB) 1987, the measure seeks to amend Section 18 of the Universal Health Care Act to address persistent concerns about unclear and inconsistent hospital billing practices in the Philippines.In his explanatory note, Tulfo said many Filipinos continue to struggle with incomplete and non-standardized hospital billing statements, making it difficult to fully understand the costs of medical treatment.He also raised concerns over the lack of transparency in certain hospital charges, including professional fees, under the current implementation of the Universal Health Care law.“The absence of a uniform and itemized billing system not only makes it difficult for patients to understand the costs of their medical care, but also limits oversight,” Tulfo said.Key provisions of the bill Under the measure, all health care providers would be required to issue a clear and detailed statement of account—whether partial or final—covering all charges incurred during a patient’s treatment.The bill mandates that billing statements must include hospital or facility fees, laboratory and diagnostic services, medicines, and medical supplies, and professional fees of each attending health care provider, including their name, specialty, and services rendered.To ensure consistency, the Department of Health (DOH), in coordination with the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, will develop a standardized billing format.Strengthening oversight and patient protection Tulfo emphasized that standardized billing would improve PhilHealth's ability

to analyze hospital charging patterns and align reimbursements with actual costs.Without such data, he said, it remains difficult to determine whether professional fees and other charges are consistent with the benefits covered under the national health insurance program.The proposed law also seeks to protect patients from unexpected medical expenses by promoting transparency and accountability in the health care system.The bill is currently pending in the Senate during the First Regular Session of the 20th Congress.If enacted, the measure will take effect 15 days after publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two newspapers of general circulation.

- DPWH, LGUs to fast-track priority projects (2026-03-18 16:00)

PUBLIC Works Secretary Vince Dizon said Wednesday that he would meet with local government units (LGUs) to discuss the fast-tracking of priority projects.Dizon said the move was in line with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s directive to collaborate with local governments nationwide to resolve infrastructure-related problems and ensure that funds allocated for projects go to the concerned communities.”We really need to work with the mayors because mayors are the ones who know what the problems are. So, we are really going around; the president ordered us to talk to all the mayors,” Dizon said, following his inspection of infrastructure projects and Oplan Kontra Baha (OKB) sites in Naga City and Quezon City.The OKB aims to clean and widen waterways and deepen rivers to alleviate flooding in low-lying and flood-prone areas throughout the country.During his visit in Naga City, Dizon said that together with Robredo, they inspected areas where OKB is being implemented, including the Bicol River Esplanade. He added that they also discussed the implementation of priority projects in the city, including sidewalks and bicycle lanes.In Quezon City, Dizon said that he and Mayor Joy Belmonte also inspected the Matalahib Creek Pumping Station, which is expected to reduce flooding in Barangay Talayan and Sto. Domingo. The project has been suspended since August 2025 after the contractor’s license was revoked.Earlier, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) completed a larger drainage project on G. Araneta Avenue and ordered the installation of mobile pumps while the pumping station at E. Rodriguez Avenue is not yet finished. The department also ordered the continuous dredging and cleaning of the San Juan River.Dizon said the DPWH, together with local governments, continues to clean, dredge and desilt rivers, canals and other waterways in Metro Manila, Cagayan Valley, Naga, Cebu, Bacolod, Ilocos and Maguindanao as part of the OKB to ensure that waterways are smooth and free of obstructions before the rainy season arrives.”The government is working to expedite waterway improvement. Once completed, floodwaters are likely to recede faster,” he said.Dizon said the DPWH is undergoing similar works in many other parts of the country in line with government efforts to address perennial flooding in low-lying areas.”The president said we need to speed up the work because come June, it will rain again, there will be flooding again. So now, that’s what we are really doing; our work is continuous so that we can ensure that these projects are completed quickly,” Dizon added.”Oplan Kontra Baha not only focuses on dredging but also includes the implementation of science-based projects, clearing of illegal structures in waterways and the strict enforcement of proper solid waste management in collaboration with

local government units," he said.

- DSWD warns vs illegal fees in aid rollout (2026-03-18 16:00)

SOCIAL Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian warned Tuesday against illegal processing fees for the availment of cash relief assistance for tricycle drivers.Gatchalian issued the warning during an inspection of payout sites in Metro Manila.The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) chief began his rounds in San Juan City, where hundreds of beneficiaries received P5,000 each under the program.He said the initiative is in line with the directive of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to immediately assist public transport workers affected by rising fuel prices."We were instructed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to visit this morning... we know fuel prices are high, but do not worry because our department has been directed by the president to help drivers," Gatchalian said.Following his San Juan visit, Gatchalian proceeded to other payout sites, including locations in Manila, Quezon City, Mandaluyong and Pasay.He said tricycle drivers were prioritized due to the availability of their records with local government transport regulatory groups and their vulnerability to fuel price hikes."Their list is readily available through the transport regulatory groups of local government units, and while all are affected, they are among those most impacted as 40 to 50 percent of their income has already been reduced due to rising fuel prices," Gatchalian said.The DSWD said payouts for other public utility vehicle drivers — including jeepney, taxi, TNVS (transport network vehicle service) and service vehicle operators — will follow in the coming weeks.Gatchalian reiterated that the government may extend further assistance if fuel price increases persist while assuring that aid distribution will remain free of charge and based solely on valid documentation.

- Legarda seeks tax relief for families (2026-03-18 16:00)

SEN. Loren Legarda has urged her colleagues to pursue comprehensive tax reform anchored on equity, saying minimum wage earners should not subsidize the lifestyle of the wealthy.The senator also said tax reforms must bring relief to Filipino families while ensuring accountability in government spending.She said the revenue foregone from tax cuts can be recovered by addressing corruption, which "drains far more resources than the reforms would cost."Legarda on Tuesday delivered a privilege speech on three tax reform measures she filed: Senate Bill (SB) 1851, SB 1857 and SB 1963. The bills are designed to lower the cost of food, medicine and electricity for ordinary households.The senator said that while taxes are the national government's "lifeblood," they have turned into an "added burden for minimum wage earners and low-income families." She said SB 1851, or the proposed Differentiated VAT Rates Act, lowers the value-added tax (VAT) to 10 percent for essential goods and services while retaining the 12-percent VAT on luxury items such as expensive cars, real estate, cigarettes, vapes and alcohol.Under SB 1851, basic preventive maintenance service for vehicles would drop from a range of P5,000 to P7,000 to a range of P4,910 to P6,875. A mattress priced at P3,000 would fall to P2,946, while a luxury bag worth P350,000 would remain taxed at 12 percent.SB 1857, or the proposed Murang Bilihin at Serbisyong Medikal Act, removes VAT on basic commodities, medicines and medical services. This includes exemptions for over-the-counter

medicines, first aid supplies, canned goods, cooking oil, instant noodles, soap and professional medical services.For example, paracetamol priced at P50 would drop to P45, bandages from P60 to P54, instant noodles from P750 to P670 per box and cooking oil from P120 to P107 per liter.SB 1963 seeks to remove VAT on electricity charges such as systems loss and lifeline rate subsidies, which Legarda argued should not be taxed since they are already subsidies borne by consumers.She noted that inflation recently hit 2.4 percent, driven by a 1.8-percent increase in food and nonalcoholic beverages, further squeezing household budgets.Legarda said all of these bills were filed under normal circumstances because she believes reductions and exemptions are long overdue.The senator said these measures would serve as "a bridge toward genuine change and tangible relief at the household level."

- Full hearings on Duterte impeachment complaints set for next week (2026-03-18 16:00)

THE House Committee on Justice on Wednesday found sufficient grounds to proceed with hearings on two impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte, paving the way for full-blown proceedings starting March 25.The panel, chaired by Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro, approved without objection motions declaring that there are sufficient grounds to conduct hearings on the third and fourth impeachment complaints against the vice president.Four impeachment complaints were filed last month against Duterte. The committee set aside the first one, finding that it violated the rule against initiating impeachment proceedings against the same official more than once within a one-year period.The second one filed was withdrawn by the 17 people who filed it.The third impeachment complaint, also known as the Saballa et al. complaint and endorsed by ML Party-list Rep. Leila de Lima, includes allegations of misuse of confidential and intelligence funds, violations of the Constitution and betrayal of public trust.The fourth impeachment complaint was filed by lawyer Nathaniel Cabrera and endorsed by Manila 6th District Rep. Bienvenido Abante Jr., and Deputy Speaker and La Union 1st District Rep. Francisco Paolo Ortega V.It includes allegations of unexplained wealth, violations of statements of assets, liabilities and net worth requirements, bribery and a supposed threat against President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., first lady Liza Araneta-Marcos and former speaker Martin Romualdez.With the determination phase completed, the committee set the initial hearing dates on March 25, April 14, April 22 and April 29.Luistro said the evidence and witnesses to be presented during the hearings will be considered in determining probable cause in the next stage of the proceedings.The panel also confirmed it is authorized by the House plenary to continue impeachment proceedings during the congressional recess from March 21 to May 3.Luistro also placed on record motions filed by Akbayan Rep. Chel Diokno, including a March 5 request for a subpoena duces tecum and a March 17 petition for adequate protection, which may include transfer of custody, for witness Ramil Madriaga, identified as the alleged bagman of the vice president.She said the committee will act on the request for the issuance of a subpoena and the petition at the initial stage of the hearing proper on March 25.Before the vote, House Senior Deputy Majority Leader and Iloilo 3rd District Rep. Lorenz Defensor stressed the need to move swiftly, saying that part of due process is to conduct hearings so the vice president can present evidence, and that due process also requires

expediting impeachment proceedings. “The impeachment process should be speedy, because if Vice President Duterte is innocent, the complaint should be dismissed so that she won’t be inconvenienced and could return to her work,” Defensor said in Filipino. “And it should be speedy because if the respondent is guilty, the complaint should go to trial for the Senate to decide if she should stay in her post or removed,” he added.No more delaysMeanwhile, Deputy Speaker Ortega welcomed the House Committee on Justice’s announcement of the initial hearing dates on the impeachment complaints against Vice President Duterte. “No more delays. Let’s start the hearings of the committee so that the people can look at the evidence and hear the witnesses,” he said. “The committee has spoken, the dates are set, and the Filipino people expect action — not more procedural excuses,” he added.Ortega praised Luistro and the justice committee for moving swiftly to evidentiary hearings following their determination that there were sufficient grounds to hear the complaints. “These scheduled dates send a clear message: the time for technical maneuvers is over. The House is ready to hear evidence in open session, allow witnesses to testify, and let the facts speak for themselves. Transparency and accountability demand nothing less.” Ortega also called on all parties to respect the process and participate constructively as the nation watches the proceedings unfold starting March 25.Duterte responseDuterte filed an answer to the complaints, saying they should be dismissed, saying the charges against her “cannot withstand serious scrutiny.” “Since these imputations do not rest on any established facts or final findings of a competent tribunal or court, they remain mere conclusions at best,” she said in her response.The answer also said the complaints failed to show “any shred of proof” that a contract to kill ever existed. “Instead, complainants rely on exaggerated conclusions dressed up as fact,” it read.

- Marcos suspends fare adjustments (2026-03-18 16:00)

(UPDATE) PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday ordered the Department of Transportation (DOTr) to suspend scheduled fare hikes for public transportation, saying the government needs to support commuters, workers and students, and ”everyone who uses our transportation system” during difficult times.In a video message, Marcos acknowledged the hardships the public is already going through due to rapidly rising fuel prices because of the war in the Middle East. He reassured citizens that the government will ensure no one gets left behind. “You know, when I woke up this morning, I saw the headlines and what was being discussed was the approved fare hike.... In my opinion, because we still have a problem because of the war in the Middle East, I say maybe this is not the time to raise fares for our countrymen,” he said in Filipino. “So, I ordered the DOTr to suspend the fare hike and let’s defer it first. Let’s postpone that for now because we are now in the middle of this situation. We need to continue to support our commuters, workers and students, and everyone who uses our transportation system,” he said.The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) on Tuesday announced it approved the fare hike for most modes of public land transportation, an increase averaging 19 percent, which was supposed to take effect today, March 19.LTFRB Chairman Vigor Mendoza noted the fare increases were based on fuel prices at P75-P80 a liter, the rising cost of spare parts and minimum wage increase.Despite the

suspension, Marcos reassured transport workers that the government would expedite the distribution of assistance to cushion the impact of high pump prices. “I ordered the DOTr to roll out the free rides all over the Philippines and you can use it first to reduce your daily expenses. For the MRT and LRT, we will discount the fare. In addition to the toll roads, we also have an order for a discount so that fees for using toll roads are decreased,” the president said.Earlier this week, the president oversaw the distribution of P5,000 cash relief assistance to tricycle drivers and operators in the City of Manila as part of the government’s efforts to help transport workers keep up with the high prices of fuel.Simultaneous distributions across the country followed led by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, DOTr and local government units.In addition to the cash aid, the government is rolling out additional support measures to help the public cope with the high cost of fuel.The government, through the Department of Energy, is also continuing to talk with oil companies to implement a staggered fuel price increase. “We are always thinking of new ways to ensure that your life is normal, orderly and safe,” Marcos said. ‘Flip-flop’ But the public utility jeepney transport group Manibela criticized the suspension of a planned fare increase, calling it a “flip-flop” policy that reflects a lack of preparation and direction.In a statement, Manibela chairman Mar Valbuena said the move showed the government was unprepared to address the worsening transport crisis as fuel prices and the cost of basic goods continue to rise.The group said suspending the fare hike before it could even be implemented leaves both drivers and commuters in a difficult position, with operators facing losses while workers and passengers continue to struggle with rising costs. “This proves that the government has no preparedness,” Valbuena said.He said inconsistent policies are worsening the situation on the ground, warning that the transport sector continues to absorb the impact of rising prices for fuel and basic goods.Valbuena also urged authorities to consider suspending or reviewing fuel-related taxes and policies, including the excise tax, value-added tax and the Oil Deregulation Law, to ease the burden on drivers and operators. ‘Not an easy call’ House Transportation Committee Chairman and Quezon City Rep. Franz Pumaren said that the decision of the president to suspend the transport fare hike was “not an easy call” as it is about finding the right balance between increasing fares and making sure the economy will not be hurt. “It’s not an easy call, especially since things can change pretty quickly with what’s happening in the Middle East and how that affects fuel prices,” Pumaren said in a statement to The Manila Times.He added that he is trusting the teams handling finance, transportation and energy “are looking at all sides and trying to come up with the best solution given the situation.” “For my part as transportation chairman, the committee is trying our best to properly allocate and maximize all the available fuel subsidies and aid to the most in need,” Pumaren added.Meanwhile, Kabataan Partylist Rep. Renee Co said that Marcos overturning the fare hike would backfire on him. “If Marcos intentionally makes it so that drivers don’t earn enough, it’s possible no one will take to the roads anymore and commuters will be left with nothing to ride. This will only accelerate the jeepney phaseout,” Co added.He said that this is a “classic trapo tactic” aimed at stripping the poor of their livelihood and sprinkling them with a little aid so that they would feel indebted to him in the next election. “Drivers need a livelihood, not handouts. If diesel prices hit P120 a liter, a driver will spend around P3,600 daily.

There will be no income left to take home. That is why VAT and other fuel taxes must be removed and prices must be controlled,” Co said.Mody Floranda, president of Piston, a jeepney drivers’ union said his group was unhappy with the decision. “We are dismayed that the president of our country had ruthlessly recalled what his government has granted to us,” he said. WITH AFP

- VP's Impeach complaint built on "conclusions, speculation" - Defense (2026-03-18 15:39)

MANILA, Philippines - Vice President Sara Duterte's defense team reiterated that the impeachment complaints against her suffers from a "fundamental defect" despite being approved by the Justice Committee as being "sufficient in grounds".In a statement, the defense team said that while the "finding is merely preliminary. It is not a determination of truth, nor is it a finding of liability,""The complaints suffer from a fundamental defect. They are built on conclusions, speculation, and narratives that are not anchored on the ultimate facts required under the Constitution and the Rules," they said.They also said that what was being advanced are "accusations in search of evidence, not evidence in support of accusations,""Ultimately, the process must be governed not by any political agenda, but by the Constitution, the rules, and credible and competent evidence. On that basis, the defense stands on firm ground," they siad.Meanwhile, after House Justice panel chairman Gerville Luistro said that Duterte will be given the opportunity to present her evidence against the complainants but she would be required to be present during the hearings, Defense Team spokesman Michael Wesley Poa said that there is "no requirement under the applicable rules for her personal attendance,""Any decision in that regard will be made in accordance with her rights and upon the advice of counsel," Poa said.

- No winner in Grand lotto 6/55, Mega lotto 6/45 draws for March 18 (2026-03-18 14:27)

MANILA, Philippines — There were no winners in the Grand lotto 6/55 and Mega lotto 6/45 draws on Wednesday night, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) said.The winning combination for Grand lotto 6/55 was 05-06-15-53-17-55 which had a jackpot prize of P45,000,000.00.There was also no winner for the Mega lotto 6/45 draw, which drew a winning combination of 10-34-01-12-45-41 for a jackpot prize of P15,000,000.00.

- Sotto calls for responsible pet ownership (2026-03-18 13:33)

MANILA, Philippines -- Senate President Vicente Sotto III urged Filipinos to become responsible pet owners since they play a role in preventing rabies and protecting public health.The senator made the appeal on Wednesday in response to the privilege speech of Sen. Mark Villar on the rising rabies cases nationwide. “I was bitten by my father’s dogs in 1958 and 1959, and had to undergo 27 injections each time, 54 in total. Every ride to San Lazaro Hospital brought tears because of the pain,” Sotto said. Sotto said that treatment today is "far less painful and more effective."Villar called for stronger rabies prevention measures and improved animal welfare efforts amid the rising cases of animal bites incidence and rabies-related deaths in the country. “Rabies has a near 100 percent fatality rate once symptoms appear, but it is also 100

percent preventable," Villar said.He said that around 300 to 400 Filipinos die from rabies each year while roughly four million animal bite cases are recorded nationwide, placing the Philippines among nations with high rabies incidence.Villar underscored the need to pass legislation that would establish veterinary clinics in every city and municipality and promote the adoption of stray and impounded animals."Preventing rabies is not only a matter of policy. It is a shared responsibility between the government, communities, and every pet owner committed to both human and animal lives," he said.

- Frasco takes oath as adviser on sustainable communities (2026-03-18 13:13)

MANILA, Philippines- Former Tourism secretary Christina Frasco took her oath as Presidential Adviser for Sustainable and Resilient Communities, Malacañang said Wednesday.President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. administered the oath of office of Frasco in a ceremony in Malacañang. Prior to her new appointment, Frasco served as Tourism secretary from June 30, 2022 to March 12, 2026.Frasco was the former mayor of Liloan, Cebu and spokesman for Vice President Sara Duterte. She is the daughter of then-Cebu governor Gwendolyn Garcia, who backed Marcos presidential bid together with her One Cebu party.

- Marcoleta not liable for election offense but contributors are — Comelec (2026-03-18 10:50)

MANILA, Philippines — The Commission on Elections (Comelec) has ruled that Sen. Rodante Marcoleta was not liable for non-disclosure in his statement of contributions and expenditures (SOCE) of the P75 million contributions he received during the 2025 national and local polls but did not absolve his three contributors who are facing an election offense "due to their failure to submit their respective individual report of contributions within 30 days after the elections."The Comelec said a complaint would be filed before the Law Department "for the required conduct of preliminary investigation against Michael Tan Defensor, Joseph Varias Espiritu, and Aristotle Baluyut Viray.The Comelec ruling was based on the recommendation of the Political Finance and Affairs Department (PFAD) of the Commission which the En Banc adopted.Under Section 262 of the Omnibus Election Code (OEC), violation of Section 109 constitutes an election offense.

- Pasig serves over 2K drivers in Day 2 of ₱5K fuel aid payout (2026-03-18 10:41)

MANILA, Philippines — The Pasig City government on Wednesday continued its manual distribution of the P5,000 fuel subsidy for tricycle drivers for the second day on Wednesday, serving more than 2,000 beneficiaries as of 1 p.m. across two payout sites.Pasig local officials told The Manila Times that 1,182 of the 1,500 target beneficiaries in Pineda village had received the cash aid, while 1,009 of 1,500 in Santolan village were also served as of midday.The payout is being carried out in two venues, with one site in District 1 at Pineda village and another in District 2 at Santolan village, as the city aims to assist around 3,000 tricycle drivers on Wednesday.Officials urged identified beneficiaries to claim their fuel subsidy on their scheduled payout date, noting that there is still no definite schedule for unclaimed assistance.The

distribution is being supervised by the Department of Social Welfare and Development under its Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations or AICS program.In Pasig, the DSWD is being assisted by the City Social Welfare and Development Office and the Tricycle Operation and Regulatory Office in conducting the manual payout.

- 12 Filipino seafarers rescued from oil tanker attacked by explosive-laden Iranian boats, says PH Embassy in Iraq (2026-03-18 10:35)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Embassy in Baghdad has confirmed the rescue of the 12 Filipino crew members of the Safesea Vishnu, an oil tanker which was attacked off the coast of Iraq last March 11, 2026, allegedly by explosive-laden Iranian boats.Iraqi authorities rescued the Filipino seafarers "in the early hours of March 12, and provided immediate medical care once ashore," the embassy said on Wednesday.It was reported that explosive-laden Iranian boats attacked ships in Iraqi waters, including the Marshall Islands-flagged Safesea Vishnu.The Filipinos were brought to the Basra governorate in Southern Iraq, it added. Medical and welfare assistance were also extended to the seafarers.The embassy said it coordinated with Iraqi authorities and the shipping company to provide them with the documentary requirements necessary for their repatriation.Meanwhile, the Philippine Consulate General in Istanbul, in coordination with the embassies in Ankara and Baghdad, assisted in the repatriation of eight female Filipinos, who arrived in Istanbul on March 16 from Mardin, Türkiye.This marked the third repatriation operation of the consulate since the start of the United States-Israel war on Iran.The consulate said it has assisted a total of 31 Filipinos, majority of whom were female and included young children and elders. The Philippine Embassy in Tehran on March 14 assisted 16 Filipinos to exit Iran through Türkiye amid the ongoing security situation in Iran.Earlier on Wednesday, 125 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs)returned home via different flights as part of the government’s “intensified” repatriation efforts amid the Middle East crisis, according to the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA).While two of the flights were not disclosed, the OWWA made three posts on their Facebook page on some of the returning flights.Late on Tuesday, Oman Airways Flight WY843 saw 20 OFWs from Oman and Israel arrive at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 1.It was later followed by 23 OFWs and one dependent, who was on board Cebu Pacific Flight 5J 741 from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.Around midnight, 45 OFWs, along with their dependents, touched down at NAIA Terminal 3, after disembarking from Doha, Qatar through Qatar Airways Flight QR 928.“Amid fear and uncertainty in a foreign country, the government’s swift action and cooperation became their support in ensuring their safe return home,” OWWA said in Filipino. WITH ARIC JOHN SY CUA

- Former VP security head denies key witness claims on POGO, drug fund links (2026-03-18 09:57)

MANILA, Philippines — The former head of the Vice Presidential Security and Protection Group (VPSPG) denied anew his alleged links to Philippine Offshore Gaming Operations (POGOs) and drug money as alleged by a key witness.The statement of Army Col. Raymund Dante Lachica

comes after Ramil Madriaga, whom Vice President Sara Duterte sais was not part of her team, claimed that he received money from POGOs and drugs to be used in Duterte's 2022 campaign.This was stated in his affidavit released by Madriaga's lawyer, Raymund Palad.In a statement to The Manila Times, Lachica stressed that Madriaga's claims were "baseless.""These claims have been publicly repeated without credible evidence and were irresponsibly brought into the public arena before any competent authority had the opportunity to properly evaluate them," Lachica said.He added that serious accusations of criminal conduct should be handled with "responsibility and restraint.""Instead, these allegations were widely discussed in media platforms, creating a misleading narrative that wrongdoing had already been established. This kind of trial by publicity undermines fairness and damages reputations without due process," Lachica said.Lachica had filed a cyberlibel suit against Madriaga and Palad at Davao City Prosecutor's office last January.

- Some senators face more than one ethics complaint, says Ejercito (2026-03-18 09:48)

MANILA, Philippines — Some senators are facing more than one complaint before the Senate Ethics Committee, Sen. Joseph Victor Ejercito said on Wednesday.The ethics committee chairman said the panel convened to pass and adopt its rules, which included notifying the concerned senators of the cases filed against them.At least six senators are facing complaints, including Ronald Dela Rosa, Francis Escudero, Risa Hontiveros, and Ejercito himself."There are now nine [ethics] cases [before the committee]," Ejercito said, adding that some of the respondents face two complaints.Asked whether the case against Dela Rosa would be tackled first because of some calls to withhold his salary for his prolonged absence, Ejercito said, "We have to amend the rules because it is not in the rules of the Senate.""It might be dismissed if we will hear it now because the issue on 'no work, no pay' is not in our rules," Ejercito said."We can now move as a committee. We will publish [our rules] within 24 hours then we can act, send notice to respondents," he said in a press briefing."In the next hearing, we will determine if [the complaint] complied the form and substance. We will tackle each cases one by one," Ejercito added.A civil society group led by former Finance undersecretary Cielo Magno filed a complaint against Dela Rosa for his continued absence from official duties for more than three months.Ejercito was facing an ethics complaint for his alleged failure to act immediately on the case filed against Escudero who had been accused of accepting campaign fund from a contractor.Hontiveros has been accused of "witness tampering" in relation to her investigation on the alleged sexual and labor abuses of some members of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ by its founder Apollo Quiboloy.

- Public transport group hits govt ‘flip-flop’ on fare hike suspension, cites lack of preparedness (2026-03-18 09:17)

MANILA, Philippines — Public utility jeepney (PUJ) transport group Manibela on Wednesday hit the government’s suspension of a planned fare increase, calling it a “flip-flop” policy that reflects a lack of preparation and direction.In a statement, Manibela Chairman Mar Valbuena said the move showed the government was unprepared to address the worsening transport

crisis as fuel prices and basic goods continued to rise.The group said suspending the fare hike before it could even be implemented left both drivers and commuters in a difficult position, with operators facing losses while workers and passengers continued to struggle with rising costs.“This proves that the government has no preparedness,” Valbuena said.Valbuena said inconsistent policies were worsening the situation on the ground, warning that the transport sector continues to absorb the impact of rising fuel prices and basic goods.He said the government should instead address the root causes of the problem, particularly the continued increase in oil prices and the low wages of workers.Valbuena also urged authorities to consider suspending or reviewing fuel-related taxes and policies, including the excise tax, value-added tax, and the Oil Deregulation Law, to ease the burden on drivers and operators.He called for immediate interventions such as price controls on fuel and basic goods, a P200 wage relief for workers, and the proper distribution of subsidies for drivers and operators.Valbuena said long-term solutions were needed to stabilize the transport sector, stressing that livelihoods should not be treated as an experiment through inconsistent policies.

- China won't freeze fertilizer exports to Philippines, says Agriculture chief (2026-03-18 08:40)

MANILA, Philippines — China has assured the Philippines that it would not freeze exporting fertilizers to the country amid the war in the Middle East, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said Wednesday. Speaking to reporters in San Juan City, Tiu Laurel confirmed he had a meeting with Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Jing Quan on Tuesday to tackle agriculture cooperation between the two countries."We had information that China will freeze the exportation of fertilizers because they also need fertilizers. The Chinese ambassador said it's not true," Tiu Laurel said during a media interview. The Agriculture chief also said the government was talking to India, Russia, and even Belarus to ensure sufficient fertilizer supply for the country.

- Govt prepares aid programs, free rides after President defers fare hikes (2026-03-18 08:28)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Transportation (DOTr) announced on Wednesday that it was rolling out a series of assistance programs for commuters and public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive to defer fare increases amid the continued rise in global fuel prices caused by ongoing conflict in the Middle East.In a statement, the DOTr said the deferment was meant to ease the financial burden on passengers while oil prices remained unstable.As part of the support measures, the DOTr is preparing free ride initiatives for passengers, targeting key routes and heavily used public transportation lines.The agency said it was also fast-tracking the release of fuel subsidies for qualified PUV drivers and operators to help offset rising operational costs.The DOTr said Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez consulted with toll operators to explore possible toll discounts for motorists, adding another layer of relief for the commuting public.“DOTr and all its attached agencies are continuously working to ensure the swift delivery of all possible assistance and support to commuters, drivers, and transport operators,” the department said.“We aim to

provide immediate relief while ensuring the continuity of public transport services across the country.” The DOTr added that it was coordinating closely with local government units, transport cooperatives, and PUV operators to implement these programs efficiently.

- PH, US reaffirm strong defense alliance — AFP (2026-03-18 08:17)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines and the US have once again reaffirmed their robust defense alliance amid evolving regional security challenges. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the United States Indo-Pacific Command (USIndoPaCom) last March 5-6 co-presided over the Mutual Defense Board-Security Engagement Board Standing Committees’ Meeting (SCM) at Camp Aguinaldo upholding the strong bilateral alliance and enhancing cooperation under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty. Speaking on behalf of the Philippine delegation, Brig.Gen. Paulo Teodoro Philippine Air Force Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, expressed his deep appreciation to the USIndoPaCom delegation led by Col. Andrew Dubois US Air Force, Chief, South/Southeast Asia Policy Division for their participation and to all presenters for the clarity and professionalism of their briefings. The discussions produced a set of recommendations and deliverables that would be consolidated in a Memorandum for the Record and refined in preparation for the J5-led Executive Committee (EXECOM) Meeting in June 2026 in Hawaii.Teodoro and Dubois both underscored the importance of sustaining momentum through continuous coordination, emphasizing that close collaboration between AFP and US forces is essential to remain “equal and capable,” treating each other as equals amid rapid technological change, gray-zone activities, and complex security concerns.Dubois expressed confidence that the outcomes of the SCM will translate into actionable plans and tangible results that further enhance interoperability, readiness, and combined effectiveness.Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said that the Philippines could not follow US President Donald Trump’s call to allies to send warships to the Strait of Hormuz to secure the critical maritime channel because the country did not have such capability.

- Marcos orders suspension of new fare hikes for public transport (2026-03-18 06:48)

(UPDATE) MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday ordered the Department of Transportation (DOTr) to suspend the implementation of the new round of fare hikes amid the skyrocketing prices of petroleum products and other commodities caused by the war in the Middle East. In a video message, Marcos acknowledged the hardships the public was already going through due to the volatile situations outside the country and reassured citizens that the government would ensure no one gets left behind.“You know, when I woke up this morning, I saw the headlines and what was being discussed was the approved fare hike for our passengers. In my opinion, because we still have a problem because of the war in the Middle East, I say maybe this is not the time to raise fares for our countrymen,” he said in Filipino.“So, I ordered the DOTr to suspend the fare hike and let's defer it first. Let's postpone that for now because we are now in the middle of this situation. We need to continue to support our commuters, workers and students, and everyone who uses our transportation system,” he added.The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB)

announced it approved the fare hike for all modes of land transportation, an increase averaging 19 percent, which was supposed to take effect on March 19.

- LTO says no oversight on clinics’ extra fees but to review accreditations (2026-03-18 06:12)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Office (LTO) admitted it did not regulate or monitor the miscellaneous fees charged by its accredited medical clinics, as lawmakers pressed for greater transparency in the costs imposed on driver’s license applicants.According to LTO Executive Director Martin Ontog, the agency has no oversight over additional charges such as miscellaneous and computer fees collected by clinics.He clarified that proceeds from these fees did not go to the government.The disclosure came after the House of Representatives' Committee on Transportation headed by Quezon City 3rd District Rep. Franz Pumaren, raised concerns over reports that applicants were being charged around P140 in miscellaneous fees and P60 in computer fees on top of the P300 medical examination cost.Lawmakers noted that clinics have failed to clearly explain what these charges cover.Pumaren said the practice appeared to be widespread and may be unnecessarily burdening the public, prompting the committee to examine whether current accreditation policies allow excessive or redundant charges to persist.The lawmaker also questioned the role of multiple medical information technology providers accredited by the LTO, despite the agency working with Stradcom Corporation and Dermalog Identification Systems GmbH for its Land Transportation Management System.One of the accredited providers, Edgecomm Total Solutions Inc., said it facilitated the electronic submission of medical results, a requirement implemented in 2019 under then LTO chief Edgar Galvante.However, Pumaren argued that such providers may be acting as intermediaries, noting that some still transmit data through Stradcom, which he said could perform the same function.Ontog said the LTO would review all existing accreditations in a bid to streamline processes and remove unnecessary steps that could be contributing to added costs.The committee is expected to continue its inquiry as it sought to determine whether stricter regulation or policy changes were needed to protect motorists from excessive fees.

- Former DOH official fired after exposing alleged irregularities in mobile care facilities (2026-03-18 04:23)

MANILA, Philippines — A former Department of Health (DOH) undersecretary alleged that the agency removed him from his post for “advocating for an upgraded Mobile Primary Care Facility (MPCF).” In a letter obtained by The Manila Times on Wednesday, Dr. Greg Murillo, undersecretary of Health for Mindanao, wrote to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., stating that only 25 percent of the MPCF distributed in 83 provinces under Health Secretary Ted Herbosa were functional. “Findings in the report indicate that only 25 percent of the distributed MPCFs are functional or capable of providing the intended clinical laboratory, diagnostic, and imaging services, highlighting a deeply concerning level of inefficiency, wasted resources, and unmet health care needs among the Filipino people,” the statement reads.Despite these concerns,

Herbosa allegedly approved the Terms of Reference (TOR) without incorporating necessary upgrades—even after being made aware of the reported deficiencies.On March 6, a graft complaint was filed by “concerned DOH employees” against Herbosa over the rigging of the procurement of the MPCF, which is worth over P1.8 billion.The Manila Times reached out to the DOH for a comment but has yet to respond as of posting time.

- House panel declares impeach complaints vs Sara Duterte sufficient in grounds (2026-03-18 04:19)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives' Committee on Justice on Wednesday declared as sufficient in grounds the impeachment complaints filed against Vice President Sara Duterte after finding them sufficient in substance.The committee is expected to schedule a hearing on the complaints.Duterte is accused of violating the Constitution and betrayal of public trust, among others, for the alleged misuse of intelligence funds from the Office of the Vice President and Department of Education where she was once its secretary

- Labor calls for special session to pass P200 wage hike as prices of oil products surge (2026-03-18 02:49)

MANILA, Philippines — Organized labor groups have demanded that Congress convene a special session to pass the long-delayed ₱200 legislated wage increase, as commuters brace for higher fares in buses, jeepneys, and ferries driven by oil price spikes amid the Middle East conflict.The National Wage Coalition (NWC), composed of the country's biggest labor federations — Federation of Free Workers (FFW), Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP), Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), Nagkaisa Labor Coalition (NAGKAISA!), and the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) — issued the call on Wednesday as prices of diesel rose to more than P100/liter and gasoline more than P90/liter in some areas and with still no end in sight on the crisis.The NWC said that with diesel now exceeding ₱100 per liter and global oil prices continuing to surge, the economic shock was no longer imminent—it was already crushing Filipino workers.The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) has approved fare increases for passenger jeepneys and buses in Metro Manila. Traditional public utility jeepney (PUJ) fares will rise by ₱1, bringing the minimum fare to ₱14, while modern PUJ fares will increase by ₱2 to P17, both effective Thursday as the TNVS flag-down rate will increase from the current ₱45 to ₱65.The labor groups pointed out that as transport fare increases have been approved across the board, it would definitely result into a corresponding chain reaction in the form of higher commuting costs, rising food prices, and deeper financial strain on already underpaid workers. “Diesel is now over ₱100 per liter—yet workers still haven’t received a ₱200 raise. What are we waiting for—$200 oil prices? As fuel, fares, and food costs climb, wages remain stuck. If workers are forced to work overtime just to survive, then Congress must be ready to do the same to pass this wage hike,” said TUCP party-list Rep, Raymondoza.The group also pointed out that the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) has allowed domestic shipping operators to increase passenger fares by up to 20 percent.FFW President Sonny Matula said that while government acted swiftly to accommodate industry

adjuistments, it continues to delay decisive action on wages. “This imbalance is indefensible. Government cannot move quickly for fare hikes while dragging its feet on wage relief. A ₱5,000 subsidy for transport workers is necessary—but it is not a substitute for structural wage reform. More than five million minimum wage earners are being left behind," the group pointed out. “Workers are being squeezed from every direction—fuel, fares, food—yet wages remain frozen. This is no longer a debate; it is a policy failure. If Congress does not act now, it is effectively choosing to let millions of minimum wage earners absorb the full impact of this crisis,” it added.

- MMDA suspends number coding for Eid’l Fitr (2026-03-18 02:22)

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority will suspend the implementation of the expanded number coding scheme in observance of Eid’l Fitr, the agency said in an advisory on Wednesday.The MMDA said the suspension would take effect on Friday, a regular holiday marking the end of Ramadan.The MMDA said number coding was suspended during official and special non-working holidays.Motorists are advised to plan their trips ahead of the long weekend to avoid inconvenience.Authorities also reminded drivers to observe road safety measures.

- Govt boosts campaign vs real estate scammers (2026-03-18 02:17)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) joined forces with the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to go after groups and individuals involved in real estate scams.Through the partnership with NBI, DHSUD Secretary Jose Ramon Aliling said on Wednesday that this would boost the law enforcement campaign to protect legitimate real estate buyers.Aliling said he was assured by NBI Director Melvin Matibag of efforts to combat real estate malpractices that victimize unsuspecting property buyers.The DHSUD leadership decided to seek NBI’s help after it confirmed reports of groups or individuals posing as legitimate real estate agents to victimize prospective property clients. “This initiative is also in line with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s directive to ensure the protection of Filipinos aspiring to own safe, decent, and affordable housing,” the DHSUD chief said.Aliling stressed that the NBI’s expertise in investigation and law enforcement would significantly bolster DHSUD’s ongoing efforts to curb fraudulent real estate activities.The housing czar has reiterated the importance of interagency collaboration and a whole-of-government approach in addressing the issue. “We need to work together to safeguard the rights of real property buyers, ensuring that the government remains proactive in curbing fraudulent activities and in advancing safe, secure, and legitimate housing for every Filipino,” he added.

- Manufacturers: No price increases in next 30 to 60 days (2026-03-18 01:59)

MANILA, Philippines – Manufacturers of basic and prime commodities have committed to keep prices at current levels for the next 30 days, amidst the impact of higher oil prices.The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in a news release issued Tuesday night, said Secretary

Ma. Cristina Roque had a meeting with 21 manufacturers on Monday.It said the meeting was attended by those who were into the production of canned sardines, bread, bottled water, instant noodles, coffee, canned meat, toilet soap and candles. “Within the next 30 days, prices are expected to remain stable, with no increase anticipated for canned sardines such as Unipak, 555, Ligo, Lucky 7, Fresca, Morjon, Golden Town, and Mega; bread products such as Pinoy Tasty and Pinoy Pandesal; bottled water such as Wilkins and Nature’s Spring; toilet and laundry soaps such as Safeguard Pure White, Tide Bar Original Scent, and Green Cross Pure White; condiments such as Datu Puti’s soy sauce and vinegar, and Lorins’ Patis; processed canned meat of CDO; and candles from Liwanag,” the DTI said.It also announced that “prices of brands such as Lucky Me, Ho-Mi, Argentina, Lucky 7, 555, Swift Premium, Wow! and Shanghai will remain at their prices for 60 days.” Also, officials of companies such as Kopiko, Nescafe, San Mig coffee 3-in1 and Export candle “have pledged to maintain current prices with no price increase for the time being.” The DTI said that “the latest Suggested Retail Price Bulletin released by the DTI last February 2025, covers a total of 191 Shelf-Keeping Units (SKUs).” “We recognize the financial strain faced by consumers while also acknowledging the cost pressures confronting manufacturers. Our priority remains to ensure fair and reasonable pricing. We thank our manufacturing partners for their commitment and shared concern for Filipino consumers,” Roque said.

- Marcos says lowering, suspending fuel tax 'depends on trends' (2026-03-18 01:49)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday said exercising the emergency power to suspend or reduce tax on petroleum products depends on the trends on oil prices, admitting that it is a "very complicated calculation."Marcos issued the statement after the Senate approved on third and final reading, the measure granting him emergency powers to suspend or reduce the excise taxes on petroleum products to temper the impact of the surging fuel prices."That’s a very complicated calculation. We will see. Depends on the trends. We have to watch the trends on oil prices. We just have to look. It's very hard to say because it's all speculation. We don't know how long this will last for," Marcos said. "We don't know what the effects are. We don't know what will happen in the Strait of Hormuz. So, you know, right now, we are just adjusting to the situation. And when the situation calls for it, then we will see when to exercise that power and by how much," he added.

- Marcos on food, fuel supplies: 'Everything is normal' (2026-03-18 01:23)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday said that "everything is normal" as he assured the public that there was sufficient supply of food and fuel products in the country despite the oil price shocks triggered by the war in the Middle East.Speaking to reporters after inspecting the Agora Market in San Juan City, Marcos said that the government was "able to keep everything at normal levels" as of this moment."Right now, we don't have a problem sa supply with food. We don't have a problem sa supply with petroleum products, including fertilizer for the farmers," Marcos said."So that's our main concern. So far, we've been able to keep everything at normal levels. Everything is normal. No need to hoard. Our vendors

are cooperating," he added.

- Hotter days ahead as ‘amihan’ continues to weaken – Pagasa (2026-03-17 23:17)

MANILA, Philippines – The Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said on Wednesday that hotter days would be likely in the coming days, which may also see the declaration of the onset of the dry months, as the northeast monsoon season, locally known as ‘amihan’, was about to end. Weather specialist Chenel Dominguez, in a 5 a.m. briefing, said that the cool, dry winds brought by amihan were only being experienced in Central Luzon and Northern Luzon, particularly over Batanes, Cagayan, and Isabela, where cloudy skies with light rains would prevail. The same weather system is also affecting Metro Manila, Cordillera Administrative Region, Ilocos Region, Central Luzon, and the rest of Cagayan Valley, bringing partly cloudy to overcast skies with isolated light rain. The rest of the country, meanwhile, would experience partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers due to localized thunderstorms. Without any low-pressure area monitored inside or outside the Philippine Area of Responsibility, most parts of the archipelago could expect a generally fair weather, it added.

- Private sector urged to adopt flexible work schemes (2026-03-17 16:12)

THE Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) encouraged the private sector to adopt flexible work arrangements to conserve energy and reduce fuel consumption in the face of rising oil prices due to the war in Iran.Labor Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma on Monday said private enterprises may either adopt the four-day compressed workweek or work-from-home schemes to ease operational costs while protecting workers’ welfare.“This initiative aligns with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s directive to conserve energy and reduce fuel consumption in response to Middle East oil price hikes, to cut down on operational costs and help conserve energy,” Laguesma said.The chief executive earlier ordered the temporary implementation of a four-day workweek in some government offices as part of efforts to conserve energy and reduce fuel use.The same flexible work arrangements were implemented in both public and private sectors at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.DOLE spokesman Assistant Secretary Lennard Constantine Serrano said such flexible work schemes should be voluntary and mutually agreed upon by employers and workers.Bureau of Working Conditions (BWC) Director Alvin Curada said that compliance with the Labor Code and occupational safety and health (OSH) requirements is mandatory, and the schemes must in no case reduce workers’ wages or benefits.Under the compressed workweek, the standard 40-hour workweek is distributed across four days instead of five.On the other hand, the work-from-home/hybrid scheme allows employees to work remotely, for instance, on one day (like a Friday) after completing a regular four-day onsite schedule, depending on the nature of their work.DOLE has provided guidelines on flexible work arrangements, including the compressed workweek, since 2004. Work-from-home was later institutionalized under Republic Act (RA) 11165 (the Telecommuting Act) and reinforced by Department Order 237, series of 2022.DOLE said the feasibility of these setups is industry-dependent, noting that sectors like mining, agriculture,

and manufacturing may face operational limitations.Employers who implement flexible work arrangements must submit a report through DOLE’s online compliance portal once the mutual agreement with employees is finalized.Workers with concerns about alternative work arrangements can seek assistance from DOLE’s regional and provincial offices or contact the department’s frontline service, Hotline 1349, open Monday to Friday, 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

- Govt to augment oil buffer by 2M barrels as risks rise (2026-03-17 16:11)

THE government is moving to buy up to 2 million barrels of oil to strengthen the country’s buffer stock, as global uncertainties and elevated fuel prices prompt a more proactive economic response, Finance Secretary Frederick Go said Tuesday.“PNOC-EC (Philippine National Oil Company Exploration Corp.) has the resources to be able to acquire 2 million barrels of oil as a precautionary measure to add to our oil buffer stock,” Go told reporters.“I believe that they have a lot of offers on the table so they’re just selecting which ones they will procure from,” he added.The procurement is expected to begin anytime this week, Go said, and will be implemented in batches through global sourcing.He said the staggered buying strategy allows the government to tap multiple suppliers while managing price risks, adding that the buffer system will function as a rolling stockpile, with inventories replenished after being offloaded to oil companies.“The primary objective, of course, is to create that additional buffer stock,” Go said. “And also when you put out a big order into the global market, the beneficiary should be able to get some economies of scale and procure at lower prices.” On Tuesday, crude oil prices surged over 3 percent, with Brent crude surpassing $102-$103 per barrel as several countries pushed back against US President Donald Trump’s demand that they help secure the key Strait of Hormuz, while Iran continued to target crude-producing neighbors.No fuel tax cut yetDespite the sharp rise in gasoline prices, Go said it was “too early” for the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) to recommend reducing excise taxes on fuel to the president.Any reduction would require a three-step process, he said: legislative authorization, certification of a national urgent situation by the Department of Energy, and a recommendation from the DBCC to the president.Estimates showed that under a scenario where Dubai crude futures reach around $100 per barrel in March, diesel prices could climb to 74.22 percent in March and 67.33 percent in April.If the government suspends the excise tax from March to May 2026, the increase would ease slightly to 67.50 percent and 60.61 percent, respectively.However, the policy would significantly cut government revenues. A three-month suspension could result in total revenue losses of about P43.3 billion, including foregone excise taxes and related value-added tax (VAT) collections.If extended to seven months, the revenue loss could widen to about P105.9 billion, reflecting nearly P97.7 billion in lost excise tax collections and P12 billion in foregone VAT, partially offset by higher VAT from rising prices.For now, Go said it is too early to trigger such measures, noting that policymakers are still assessing the duration and impact of elevated oil prices driven by global developments.“My understanding is that Congress has already passed the bill and the Senate already has a draft bill,” Go said.“The Senate draft bill is completely aligned with the position of the Department of Finance. So we would be very supportive of the draft bill when the Senate is coming

forward," he added.Go also said they are stepping up efforts to generate additional revenues by accelerating the disposal of government assets, adding that potential assets have already been identified in coordination with the Privatization Management Office, with progress expected by the second quarter.Cash assistance to driversMeanwhile, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. led the distribution of P5,000 cash assistance to drivers of public utility vehicles (PUVs) affected by the spike in oil prices due to the war in the Middle East, beginning with tricycle drivers in Metro Manila.Speaking to reporters after the distribution of cash relief assistance in Sta. Mesa, Manila, Marcos said more beneficiaries would receive aid in the coming days. "This is just the beginning of the distribution. This is something that we have to do because of the sudden increase in oil prices," Marcos said. "We will start, we will do 30,000 of the tricycle drivers. The jeepney drivers and TNVS (transport network vehicle service) will come next," he added.The president said that distribution of cash aid to jeepney drivers would start this week or early next week.The P5,000-fuel assistance distribution to public transport drivers will cover ride-hailing motorcycles and cars, taxis, jeepneys and buses.Marcos assured the public that the government would ensure that Filipinos continue to earn a living amid the oil price shocks. "We are here, the government is here, and we are closely monitoring the new developments and what may happen next to ensure that our fellow citizens can continue to earn a living and that our commuters can continue going to work," he said.Marcos also expressed optimism that the ongoing crisis in the Gulf region would not significantly affect the Philippines. "We hope that this war in the Middle East will not cause too much difficulty. Rest assured that we are watching closely and are ready to support all of our fellow citizens," he said.A total of 139,000 tricycle drivers in Metro Manila will receive P5,000, at a cost of P695 million under the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation Program.The DSWD coordinated with the Department of Transportation and local government units (LGUs) to identify the beneficiaries.The cash aid will be released at designated payouts in Metro Manila to expedite the process and allow drivers to return to work after receiving the subsidy.In addition to cash assistance, the government is rolling out additional support measures to help the public cope with rising fuel prices.The government is also talking to oil companies to implement staggered fuel price increases, as well as other ways to help ease the burden of the public.Meanwhile, Executive Secretary Ralph Recto said the government would expand the distribution of P5,000 in fuel assistance to PUV drivers nationwide by April.In a statement, Recto said the expanded program would benefit a total of 396,352 PUV drivers in Metro Manila, including TNVS drivers, motorcycle taxi drivers, bus drivers and jeepney drivers. The total cost would come to P1.98 billion. "Two wheels, three wheels, four wheels, six wheels. As long as you are driving, we will try to include you in the program," Recto said. "It is the president's priority to immediately assist our drivers affected by the Middle East conflict. That is why this transport aid was launched right away," he added.Recto said the nationwide rollout would begin once the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Transportation, and the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board finalize the list of beneficiaries.He also said that the government would launch a Libreng Sakay Program so that commuters, especially students and workers, could save money amid the rise in the prices of basic goods. "We are doing an inventory of what we can

deploy, and who can participate," Recto said. "There will be various modalities. We can deploy government-owned vehicles, for example. Or even contract buses and designate these as fare-free rides," he said. "We can ask also LGUs (local government units) who run free bus services to extend the operating hours." No national emergencyDespite the sharp rise in fuel prices, the Palace said there was no need for the president to declare a national emergency to take over the operations of the oil industry.In a press briefing in Mandaue City, Cebu, Palace Press Officer Claire Castro assured the public that the situation remains manageable, stressing that the government continues to exercise control over developments affecting the oil sector.Castro made the assurance amid calls for stronger intervention to address rising fuel prices. "At present, we are not yet in that kind of situation," she said, when asked to react to calls for Marcos to invoke emergency powers under Republic Act (RA) 8479 or the Oil Deregulation Law governing the oil industry. "The president and the government are still in control of the situation." Castro noted that the Department of Energy (DOE) is maintaining close coordination with oil companies to monitor supply and pricing movements.She said the engagement with oil firms helps ensure stability in the market despite external pressures affecting global oil prices.Castro issued the statement following calls from Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) Representative and House Deputy Speaker Raymond Democrito Mendoza for Marcos to consider declaring a state of national emergency to allow temporary government takeover of oil companies' operations.Mendoza said that under Section 14(e) of RA 8479, the DOE may temporarily take over or direct the operations of entities in the oil industry during emergencies.Castro, however, said current conditions do not warrant such measures, given existing mechanisms in place to manage the situation.She also appealed to the public to remain calm and avoid spreading fear.

- Bernardo: I received P130M 'balato' from Zaldy Co (2026-03-17 16:10)

FORMER Public Works undersecretary Roberto Bernardo testified Tuesday that he received P130 million from the fugitive former congressman Zaldy Co between 2023 and 2025 as a "balato" or token of gratitude for making sure that anomalous flood control projects would go smoothly. Testifying as a state witness before the Sandiganbayan Sixth Division, where Co and 14 others are facing malversation charges over an anomalous flood control project in Oriental Mindoro, Bernardo said he received P40 million in 2023, P40 million in 2024, and P20 million in 2025 from former district engineer Henry Alcantara of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH). He also testified that he received P10 million a year from 2023 to 2025 from the driver of former DPWH regional director Gerald Pacanan, who is an accused in the case.Bernardo, who said he was afraid to turn the kickback down, said Pacanan told him the money was from Co. He said he has since turned over the money to the government.When Associate Justice Sarah Jane Fernandez, division chairman, asked Bernardo what the money was for, he said it was "a token of gratitude" for guaranteeing Alcantara to Co.Tuesday's hearing centered on an anomalous P289-million flood control project in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, that was awarded to Sunwest, a company that Co founded.The Commission on Audit (COA) had flagged the project for "serious structural deficiencies," noting it was not built according to specifications.Co is the primary

accused in the case, but was declared a fugitive from justice in December 2025 after failing to return to the Philippines from abroad.Nine former regional DPWH officials are also on trial: Pacanan, Gene Ryan Altea, Ruben Santos Jr., Dominic Serrano, Felisardo Casuno, Lerma Cayco, Juliet Calvo, Dennis Pelo Abagon, and Montrexis Tamayo.Five Sunwest officials were also accused: Aderma Angelie Alcazar, Cesar Buenaventura, Consuelo Dayto Aldon, Noel Yao Cao, and Anthony Ngo.Bernardo and Alcantara, who were implicated in the broader flood control scandal, are now testifying as state witnesses under the Witness Protection Program.

- Body-worn camera bill gains traction (2026-03-17 16:09)

THE Senate has approved on third and final reading a bill requiring law enforcement officers to wear body-worn cameras during official operations, a measure aimed at strengthening transparency and accountability in policing.Sen. Bong Go expressed support for Senate Bill 1908, also known as the proposed Law Enforcement Body-Worn Camera Act, which he co-sponsored. The measure was approved by the Senate on Monday, March 16.The bill seeks to mandate the use of body-worn cameras by law enforcement personnel during arrests, searches, and other official operations to ensure that interactions with civilians are properly documented through audio and video recordings.Supporters of the measure said the requirement would help provide an objective record of law enforcement activities, potentially protecting both civilians and officers while improving accountability.Go emphasized the importance of clear documentation during police operations. He said the use of body-worn cameras would help ensure that law enforcement procedures are transparent and that there is a reliable record of events in case incidents are later questioned or investigated.The measure sets rules on the storage, retention, and handling of recorded footage to ensure that the recordings are preserved and may be used as evidence in investigations or court proceedings when necessary.The bill provides penalties for violations, including the improper use of body-worn cameras or failure to activate them during operations.Go said the measure could help reinforce public confidence in law enforcement institutions while protecting officers who properly carry out their duties. “If the operation was carried out properly, it will be evident in the recordings. If there is something that needs to be investigated, there will be clear evidence to study,” the senator said in Filipino.The measure will next be transmitted to the House of Representatives for consideration before it can be sent to the president for approval.

- Health expert urges more telemedicine, support for OFWs in Middle East (2026-03-17 16:09)

A HEALTH expert on Tuesday urged the government to expand telemedicine and psychosocial support services for Filipinos affected by conflict in the Middle East.The call follows a Department of Health (DOH) announcement that it would offer telemedicine services via the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH) crisis hotline to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the region.In an interview with The Manila Times, Dr. Veronica Ramirez, a professor at the University of Asia and the Pacific, said that while the government response is already in place — such as through repatriation efforts — it is equally important to address mental health

concerns beyond basic migrant welfare.She explained that many Filipinos trapped in conflict-affected areas are experiencing “a state of prolonged anticipatory fear.” “OFWs themselves experience daily exposure to repeated warnings, sirens, explosions, uncertainty, disrupted communication, and extreme fear for survival,” Ramirez said. “They have sharply elevated risks of depression, anxiety, and other trauma-related disorders.” She added that the uncertainty surrounding the conflict can make it difficult for workers to make rational decisions.“They have many questions in mind, such as, ‘Will our building be attacked next? Should I wait until the war is over, or should I go back to the Philippines now? Can my family still communicate with me?’” she said.Ramirez stressed that even if OFWs eventually return to the country, many may continue to carry psychological trauma. This, she said, highlights the importance of proactive measures to mitigate the long-term effects of armed conflict.According to the World Health Organization, one in five people in conflict settings will develop a mental health condition. Ramirez said the situation requires a broader crisis-response model rather than the standard hotline operation currently offered by the DOH.“The current conflict conditions demand a scaled crisis model rather than an ordinary hotline operation,” Ramirez said. “The following should be increased in the country of work: embassy-linked psychosocial desks, trained embassy personnel for psychosocial support, active outreach, field-linked psychosocial support, psychological first aid during evacuation, post-arrival counseling, and referral pathways for severe trauma cases.” However, Ramirez noted that a study she conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic found that help-seeking behavior tends to be weak during global crises. She said family members play an important role in improving this behavior.“Family members can help the OFWs who are in conflict-affected parts of the Middle East by saying consoling words in a calm voice during phone calls,” she said.She advised families to avoid statements that could heighten anxiety, such as repeatedly expressing fear or demanding that workers immediately return home.Ramirez also suggested the DOH expand its services by extending call durations for trauma-related consultations and clustering calls at the NCMH to better manage the volume of distress.“To elevate their assistance, NCMH can cluster their calls by hours [and] extend conversation hours because of complex trauma,” she said, noting that when connectivity is poor, families often panic and transfer their distress back to the worker.She added that telemedicine services could be temporarily expanded through the support of trained psychologists, guidance counselors, and volunteer psychiatrists. Aside from institutional support, Ramirez encouraged OFWs to adopt self-help strategies, such as maintaining regular meals, staying physically active, and limiting exposure to alarming news or conflict videos.She emphasized, however, that professional help should be sought immediately if individuals experience severe symptoms such as prolonged sleeplessness, panic attacks, confusion, or thoughts of self-harm.

- Rise in unemployment seasonal, DOLE says (2026-03-17 16:08)

THE Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has attributed the sudden rise in unemployment rate to the transition of workers out of temporary employment arrangements as holiday-related jobs ended.According to the latest Labor Force Survey (LFS) of the Philippine

Statistics Authority (PSA), unemployment rate rose to 5.4 percent in January 2026, equivalent to 2.96 million Filipinos without jobs, up from 4.4 percent or 2.26 million in December 2025.Underemployment surged to 13.2 percent or 6.35 million workers in January, a steep rise from 8 percent or 3.93 million in December. “The data reflect the seasonal normalization of labor market conditions following the heightened economic activity during the holiday period,” the Labor Department said on Tuesday.It said the 1.489 million decline in employment from December to January 2026 was driven mainly by reductions in wholesale and retail trade (888,000) and among service and sales workers (772,000) — sectors typically associated with short-term hiring during the peak holiday season.DOLE said the rise in unemployment rate also reflected seasonal factors, including the agricultural off-season and softer demand in sectors such as construction.The department said the rise in underemployment was a reflection of the reduced working hours following the peak retail and tourism season, with some workers returning to part-time or intermittent work while seeking additional or more stable employment.Despite the seasonal shifts, it pointed out that the number of wage and salary workers increased significantly by 2.408 million — from 30.555 million in January 2025 to 32.963 million in January 2026 — indicating continued progress toward more stable and formal employment. “Overall, the Philippine labor market remains supported by sound macroeconomic fundamentals and sustained employment generation across sectors. Employment and poverty outcomes continue to outperform targets under the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028,” it said.Labor Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma said DOLE will intensify labor market programs under the Philippine Labor and Employment Plan and the Trabaho Para sa Bayan Plan.The programs, Laguesma added, include expanded reskilling and upskilling initiatives, youth employability programs, targeted job fairs in construction and other key sectors, and strengthened livelihood and entrepreneurship support.

- Duterte's counsel withdraws ICC appeal on Filipino lawyers' disqualification (2026-03-17 16:07)

THE defense counsel of former president Rodrigo Duterte has withdrawn his bid to appeal the dismissal by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of his request to disqualify Filipino lawyers representing victims.In a notice filed on March 16, Nicholas Kaufman formally withdrew his Feb. 20 request for leave to appeal an earlier decision by ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I.Kaufman had sought to challenge the chamber’s ruling that denied his motion to disqualify Filipino lawyers Joel Butuyan and Gilbert Andres, as well as their appointed case manager Nicolene Arcaina, from representing victims in the case. “Pursuant to the order of the Pre-Trial Chamber on 13 March 2026, the Defense for Mr. Rodrigo Roa Duterte hereby formally notifies Pre-Trial Chamber I of the withdrawal by the Defense of its Request for Leave to Appeal,” the notice stated.While withdrawing the appeal, Kaufman noted that the Pre-Trial Chamber had not yet ruled on the original request. He also indicated that the move does not prevent the defense from raising the issue again in the future. “The present notification is without prejudice to any further recourse available to the Defense in order to raise the issue of what it perceives to be an impediment to representation on the part of the Common Legal Representatives for Victims

(CLRVs),” Kaufman said.The withdrawal comes after Butuyan and Andres previously called out Kaufman for filing what they described as “frivolous” appeals that waste the court’s time and resources.In an earlier filing responding to Kaufman’s appeal bid, the two lawyers urged the defense to act in good faith.“The Defense bemoans the lack of time it has had to raise issues for appeal on this matter and denies responsibility for the timing of its submissions. Yet, Counsel can indeed be held responsible for making frivolous leaves for appeal, particularly as it implicates the solemn undertaking by all counsel before the Court,” their filing read.“The external CLRVs beseech the Defense to act in good faith, acknowledge when the decisions made by the Chamber are definitive and comprehensive, and refrain from further wasting the time and resources of the Court in adjudicating non-issues.” Duterte is facing charges before the ICC in connection with the deadly drug war during his presidency, which left thousands dead according to human rights groups.The former Philippine leader was transferred to The Hague in March 2025 after his arrest by Philippine authorities following an ICC warrant.

- Senate approves bill on veterans month (2026-03-17 16:06)

THE Senate passed on third and final reading Senate Bill (SB) 1719 declaring April of every year as Philippine Veterans Month to honor their legacy and include their heroism in the basic education curriculum.There are 464 living veterans of World War II, 41 surviving members of the Philippine Civic Action Group who served in Vietnam, and 29 veterans of the Philippine Expeditionary Forces to Korea.The measure “responds to the urgency of honoring them while they are still alive,” said Sen. Loren Legarda, who authored and sponsored SB 1719.The senator said the bill’s approval on Monday affirmed the nation’s “solemn duty to honor those who fought for freedom.” “Our veterans carried the burden of war so that future generations could live in peace. This Act ensures that their courage is remembered in the way we care for them and in the lessons we pass on to our youth,” Legarda said.SB 1719 mandates nationwide activities to honor the veterans and promote public awareness of their contributions.It also directs the Department of Education (DepEd) to integrate veterans’ stories in the basic education curriculum, encourages youth volunteer programs, and ensures improved access to benefits and health services.The Philippine Veterans Affairs Office and Department of National Defense are tasked to implement the programs for veterans’ welfare in coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Health, and DepEd.Legarda said that by declaring April as Philippine Veterans Month, the proposed law turns commemorations into concrete programs, channeling gratitude through education, health care and public service.

- Unified 911 system filters AI-generated prank calls (2026-03-17 16:05)

THE Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) said Tuesday that the country’s modernized Unified 911 system can now detect and block artificial intelligence (AI)-generated and automated prank calls to improve response time for legitimate emergencies.The upgraded capability enables emergency operators to focus on real distress calls by filtering out suspicious communications, including robo-dialed and AI-generated reports that could disrupt operations,

it said. “Reports regarding AI-generated calls have reached us. With our modernized Unified 911 system, we can filter these robocalls and fake communications,” Emergency 911 National Office Executive Director Francis Fajardo said during the DILG Kapihan on Tuesday.Fajardo said that the system can validate whether a call is likely AI-generated, allowing operators to detect and manage suspicious activity.Data from the National Call Center showed that prank and abandoned calls declined by 98.3 percent since the system’s rollout in September 2025.However, the DILG noted that non-emergency and suspicious calls continue to consume valuable system capacity and may still delay assistance to callers in genuine distress.The department warned that prank and automated calls can congest emergency lines and slow response to critical incidents such as accidents, crimes, fires and medical emergencies.To address this, the system now tracks phone numbers that repeatedly make suspicious or non-emergency calls.Numbers exhibiting patterns of prank reporting are automatically assigned lower priority, ensuring that verified emergency calls are handled first.Fajardo urged the public to use the 911 hotline responsibly, warning that unnecessary calls could delay assistance for those in life-threatening situations.The DILG reiterated that Unified 911 is strictly for emergencies and asked the public to help safeguard the system’s efficiency by avoiding non-essential use so that responders can reach those in danger without delay.

- MMDA workers secure health services deal with Pasay City General Hospital (2026-03-17 16:03)

FIELD workers of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) will get access to medical services under a new agreement with Pasay City General Hospital (PCGH), an arrangement to support workers exposed to risks while on duty.The memorandum of agreement was signed on Tuesday, March 17.MMDA Chairman Don Artes and PCGH Chief of Hospital Dr. Jonathan Victor De Gracia led the signing of the agreement.Under the deal, MMDA employees, particularly those assigned to field operations, will have immediate access to medical services and treatment at Pasay City General Hospital.The MMDA said the agreement covers personnel, including traffic enforcers, road emergency responders, and other frontline workers who are exposed to dangerous roads while maintaining order and safety in Metro Manila.Artes said the initiative recognizes the risks faced by MMDA personnel, including traffic enforcers, road emergency responders, and other frontline workers.De Gracia thanked the agency and said he expects the agreement will strengthen further the relationship and cooperation between the two institutions.Also present during the signing ceremony were MMDA Deputy Chairman Frisco San Juan Jr., MMDA General Manager Nicolas Torre III, Assistant Secretary Maria Carolina Salgado, several MMDA directors, and representatives from Pasay City General Hospital.The new hospital arrangement comes a day after the MMDA re-imposed its “heat stroke break” policy for traffic enforcers and street sweepers and began regularly distributing drinking water to field personnel until May 31.

- Palace names new BFP officer-in-charge (2026-03-17 16:02)

FIRE Chief Supt. Wilberto Rico Neil Kwan Tiu has been designated as the officer-in-charge of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Malacañang said Tuesday.Tiu takes over from Director Jesus Fernandez, whom the Office of the Ombudsman placed under preventive suspension following complaints filed by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) for alleged corruption.“Confirmed,” Executive Secretary Ralph Recto said in a text message to reporters after Tiu’s appointment paper, signed March 16, was released.Tiu’s appointment was to “ensure the continuous and effective delivery of public service.” He will lead the BFP “until a replacement is designated” by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.Fernandez was accused of violating the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, direct bribery, and malversation of public funds. The charges stemmed from a P14.7 million kickback he supposedly received in connection with the procurement of 132 ambulances for the BFP in 2024.DILG Secretary Jonvic Remulla earlier lamented the alleged misuse of public funds and vowed to “pursue the truth and ensure full accountability” of those involved.

- QC eyes in-city vertical housing for over 2K fire victims (2026-03-17 16:02)

QUEZON CITY Mayor Joy Belmonte revealed Tuesday that the local government has partnered with the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) and National Housing Authority (NHA) to build in-city vertical housing for thousands of families displaced by the March 6 Barangay Pinyahan fire.Belmonte assured the displaced residents, particularly along the NIA Road in the village, that the city government “is moving quickly to provide permanent, dignified housing within the city.” “We are working closely with DHSUD to develop an in-city vertical housing project. We want to assure affected families that they will be prioritized and will benefit from the housing we are planning to build,” Belmonte said.Under the national government’s expanded Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino (4PH) program, the project will be implemented as part of the flagship housing initiative of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the local chief executive said.During a joint site inspection with DHSUD Secretary Jose Ramon Aliling and NHA General Manager Joeben Tai, the officials agreed to develop multi-story residential buildings in the area as part of an in-city resettlement plan for the fire victims.“With the construction expected to begin soon, the first batch of housing units is targeted for turnover by the end of 2027,” Belmonte told The Manila Times, adding that they are now in the process of finalizing the project’s development plan, including the number of buildings and floors.“This project will ensure that families affected by the fire can return to a safe, secure and dignified home in our city,” she added.According to the city’s Housing, Community Development and Resettlement Department (HCDRD), the community currently has 847 structures housing 2,232 informal settler families, including owners, co-owners, renters, caretakers and sharers.While the housing project is being developed, the city government will provide rental subsidies to help affected families secure temporary shelter, the HCDRD said.Additional financial assistance has also been pledged by DHSUD, NHA, and the Department of Social Welfare and Development to help cover rental expenses.At present, the city government has opened seven evacuation centers near the affected area, while the local and national government agencies are providing assistance to displaced families, Belmonte said.

- Escudero asks for name to be removed from surveys (2026-03-17 16:01)

SEN. Francis Escudero has requested that polling organizations exclude his name from national election surveys, his office said Tuesday.In a statement, Escudero reiterated that he has “repeatedly and unequivocally” ruled out plans to seek a higher elective position, including the presidency or vice presidency. Despite this, his name has continued to appear in early preference surveys, which typically gauge potential candidates years ahead of formal declarations.The senator said his inclusion in such polls risks creating a “misleading public narrative” about his political intentions and may distort the accuracy of survey results. He emphasized that removing his name would help ensure that polling data reflects only “actual or highly probable candidacies,” thereby protecting both public understanding and the credibility of survey research.Political analysts note that preelection surveys in the Philippines often influence public perception and can shape early political alignments. As such, listing candidates — or noncandidates — prematurely may generate speculation or unintended momentum.Escudero stressed that his priority remains legislative work rather than electoral ambition. He said his focus is on advancing key economic measures, strengthening support for micro, small and medium enterprises, and preparing Filipino farmers and workers for potential global financial challenges.

- MMDA opens toll-free shower facilities for bikers (2026-03-17 16:01)

THE Metropolitan Manila Development Authority on Tuesday, March 17, opened toll-free shower facilities for cyclists at its Motorcycle Riding Academy to support workers using bicycles to report for work.The facility includes four shower rooms with hot and cold water options for male, female, and all-gender users, along with changing and bike parking areas.Cyclists can find the shower rooms at the MMDA Motorcycle Riding Academy, along Julia Vargas Avenue, corner Meralco Avenue in Pasig City.MMDA Chairman Don Artes said the agency will open similar facilities across Metro Manila to encourage more workers to shift to cycling.“We at the MMDA are implementing programs, and you can expect that we will install similar facilities all over Metro Manila to help our countrymen who cycle, especially those going to work and offices,” Artes said.“The goal here is simple — to protect the welfare of cyclists,” said MMDA General Manager Nicolas Torre III.Cycling representative Pio Fortuno Jr. of Siklista Pilipino thanked the agency for recognizing cyclists’ needs and pushing for more bike-friendly facilities.“I would like to thank the MMDA for recognizing cyclists. I hope a lot of private companies will take MMDA’s lead in installing bike-friendly facilities,” he said.Cyclists need to scan the QR code to register before using the facility, which also provides free soap and shampoo.

- House panel to discuss impeachment preliminaries (2026-03-17 16:00)

THE House Committee on Justice will discuss preliminary matters Wednesday regarding the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte.Batangas 2nd District Rep. Gerville Luistro, the committee chairman, said in a mix of Filipino and English during a radio interview Tuesday that the panel will "discuss preliminary matters" on Wednesday.Duterte filed her answer to the complaints Monday."I understand that the complainants still have a period of

three days to file [a reply]... upon receipt of which our vice president has three days to file [a] rejoinder," Luistro said."So on Wednesday, because we want to take advantage of the opportunity that this is the last session day, we will be discussing some preliminary matters like, for example, what is the appreciation of House members with respect to the motion... is there something that needs to be changed among the ground rules? We need to seek the permission also of the plenary with respect to the intention to hold session during recess," she said.Duterte’s answer stated that the complaints must be dismissed."Absent any statement of ultimate facts in any of these impeachment complaints, there is nothing for respondent to answer. Respondent thus only admits averments therein insofar as they allege her election, assumption to the Office of the Vice President, appointment as secretary of education, and her prior offices as mayor and vice mayor of Davao City," it read."The rest of the allegations, including the annexes and so-called evidence attached to the impeachment complaints, are specifically denied for being false, misleading, impertinent, and mere conclusions of fact and law," it read.Meanwhile, Navotas Rep. Toby Tiangco said the impeachment case against Duterte should not be used as an "escape" for those accountable in the flood control issue, noting that some lawmakers may want Duterte impeached because they are "scared" of her becoming president."And if she becomes president, if today they can get off and not be able to be answerable for their mistakes, they think that they will not get away if VP Sara [becomes president]. So if VP Sara wins, they will be answerable," Tiangco told reporters Tuesday."With VP Sara, one million percent they cannot settle. So if you did wrong, do you want someone who will not settle for a million percent to win? What I am saying is that she cannot be settled. I know that and they know that," Tiangco added.Tiangco said that he wants "the same standards" followed in the impeachment case against President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to be followed in Duterte’s case. He earlier voted that the case against Marcos was "insufficient in substance." He stressed that the notice of disallowance from the Commission on Audit was not yet final and is still appealable to the Supreme Court. Tiangco said Duterte's threats against President Marcos, first lady Liza Marcos, and former speaker Martin Romualdez should be filed at the Department of Justice by the individuals who were threatened.He said Duterte, as vice president, is not immune from suit, unlike the president.Tiangco also questioned the use of Duterte’s Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN) as evidence in her impeachment."You accuse a person with problems on her SALN, but congressmen are hiding in a technicality? So why are the SALNs of congressmen not being released?" said Tiangco, who was among the first lawmakers to release his SALN. In a related development, Michael Wesley Poa, spokesman for Duterte’s defense team, said even if the vice president does not answer the charges against her, the issues raised have been deemed "controverted." "But we saw the need to file an answer to show respect to the institution," Poa said in a radio interview.He said their reply addresses the "double standards" in the examination of sufficiency of form and substance in the impeachment complaints between Marcos and Duterte."We are not saying that the standards are wrong; what we are saying is that there should not be different standards if both impeachable officials are on equal footing," Poa said.

- Govt approves higher public transport fares (2026-03-17 16:00)

THE government on Tuesday approved fare hikes for jeepneys, buses, airport taxis, and ride-hailing services beginning this week, citing sustained increases in fuel prices, maintenance costs and wages.For traditional jeepneys, the minimum fare was increased to P14 from P13 for the first four kilometers, formalizing a provisional hike granted in 2023. The per-kilometer rate beyond the base distance also rose by P0.20.Modern jeepneys will continue to charge about 20 percent more than traditional units, with their minimum fare now at P17.In Metro Manila, the base fare for ordinary city buses was raised from P13 to P15 for the first five kilometers, while the per-kilometer rate increased from P2.25 to P2.49. Air-conditioned buses will maintain fares about 20 percent higher than ordinary buses.For provincial buses, previously approved adjustments took effect over the weekend, with per-kilometer increases averaging P0.30 to P0.45 depending on the type of service, translating to fare hikes of about 14 to 16 percent.The LTFRB also approved a P40 increase in the flag-down rate for airport taxis, raising it from P75 to P115, while maintaining existing distance and waiting time charges.For ride-hailing platforms such as Grab and inDrive, base fares increased by P20 across vehicle types. Sedan base fares rose to P65 from P45, AUVs to P75 from P55, hatchbacks to P55 from P35, and premium services to P165 from P145.A new P15 pick-up fee was also introduced, replacing a higher temporary charge implemented during the holiday season. However, per-kilometer and time-based rates for transport network vehicle or ride-hailing services remain unchanged.Point-to-point (P2P) bus services were granted a 15-percent fare increase across all routes.Erratic fuel pricesThe Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) said the decision to raise fares came after extensive deliberations, public consultations, and cost analyses, as regulators sought to strike a balance between protecting commuters and ensuring the financial viability of transport operators. “The difficulty here is that the price of fuel is so erratic. Every week we see substantial changes,” said LTFRB Chairman Vigor Mendoza II during a press briefing, noting that the board repeatedly recalculated fare levels due to volatility in global oil prices.The adjustments, guided by the Department of Transportation (DOTr) under Secretary Giovanni Lopez and supported by data from the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development, form part of a broader government response to rising petroleum prices linked to the ongoing wars in the Middle East and Ukraine.Cost drivers and calibrationThe LTFRB said fare increases were based on fuel prices ranging from P75 to P88 per liter, a roughly 14-percent rise in spare parts and maintenance expenses, and an average 19-percent increase in minimum wages from 2022 to 2025.Mendoza said the board deliberately set fare hikes below wage growth levels to cushion the impact on commuters, while acknowledging that operating costs in the transport sector had risen sharply — with some estimates placing maintenance and operational increases at over 50 percent since 2022. “These compelling circumstances prompted the board to allow a reasonable rate of increase,” the LTFRB said.Mendoza said the fare adjustments will take effect as early as Thursday once the LTFRB order is published and operators secure and display official fare guides inside their vehicles.Operators have until June to obtain full fare matrices for permanent implementation. Until then, the increases will be treated as provisional.The LTFRB also reiterated mandatory discounts, including 20-percent reductions for senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and students during school days.The board said it may also consider fare reductions if fuel prices fall below P75 per liter, subject to

further review and public hearings.Meanwhile, several petitions remain under evaluation, including those filed by operators of regular taxis, UV Express vans, tricycles, and motorcycle taxis.Transport groups welcome decisionTransport groups welcomed the fare adjustments, describing them as long-overdue relief for drivers struggling with rising costs.Walter Lugay, spokesman of TNVS Community Philippines, said the new rates would help sustain driver participation in ride-hailing platforms. “This decision is a vital recognition of the challenges faced by ordinary drivers and operators in today’s volatile economic climate,” Lugay said, adding that the adjustment would help prevent drivers from leaving the sector due to unsustainable earnings.The United Transportation Coalition Philippines Inc. (UTCPI) also expressed support, saying the move reflected government recognition of the financial strain on transport workers.However, UTCPI said the fare adjustments, while necessary, should be accompanied by stricter government oversight of fuel pricing and broader reforms to protect both drivers and commuters from what it described as uneven market practices.UTCPI President Lisza Buscaino-Redulla said transport workers continue to bear the brunt of successive oil price increases, noting that even small adjustments in diesel and gasoline prices immediately reduce drivers’ daily take-home income. “Public transport drivers feel the impact first and the hardest,” Buscaino-Redulla said. “Every increase in fuel directly eats into their earnings, and for many of them, that spells the difference between bringing home enough for their families or not.” UTCPI also said fare adjustments alone are not enough to address the financial strain on the transport sector, pointing out that many drivers continue to operate on thin margins despite the approved increases.Citing data from its members, the group said motorcycle taxi riders working up to 10 hours a day typically earn between P1,700 and P2,200 in gross income. However, after deducting platform commissions, fuel expenses, vehicle amortization, maintenance, food, and mobile data costs, their net earnings could drop to as low as P160 to P660 daily. “This is the reality on the ground,” Buscaino-Redulla said. “What appears to be a reasonable income on paper is significantly reduced once all operational expenses are accounted for.” The coalition warned that without timely adjustments to fare structures and better regulation of fuel pricing, more drivers may be forced to leave the industry, potentially affecting service availability for commuters.UTCPI also emphasized the growing importance of motorcycle taxis in providing first-mile and last-mile connectivity, especially in urban areas where commuters rely on flexible and faster transport options. “Yet the riders who provide this essential service continue to operate under an outdated fare matrix that no longer reflects present economic realities,” Buscaino-Redulla said.The group confirmed that it filed a petition before the LTFRB on March 12, 2026, seeking an updated fare structure for motorcycle taxis, adding that it is prepared to participate in public consultations and hearings.UTCPI said it is also open to working with the Department of Transportation and other agencies to push for long-term reforms, including more transparent fuel pricing mechanisms and sustainable fare policies. “At the end of the day, drivers and commuters should not be treated as shock absorbers of oil price volatility,” Buscaino-Redulla said. “Both sectors need protection to ensure a stable and reliable public transport system.”

- Right to info bill passes committee level (2026-03-17 16:00)

PARAÑAQUE 2nd District Rep. Brian Yamsuan hailed the approval of the proposed Right to Information (RTI) Act by the House Committee on Public Information as a crucial step toward a culture of transparency and accountability in the government.In a statement Tuesday, Yamsuan, who heads the technical working group on the proposed RTI Act, said the bill would finally be passed into law under the current Congress after more than three decades. He added that the proposal was among those identified as priority measures of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr."This measure, which our freedom-of-information champions have described as ’30 years in the making,’ would not only prove to be beneficial to our citizens but also to the government," said Yamsuan, who is vice chairman of the committee.He added that the bill would help leaders avoid situations in which they face unfounded accusations if decisions and actions are documented and accessible to the public.Among the notable features of the substitute bill is a provision mandating proactive disclosure and data accuracy by government agencies. Under Section 25 of the bill, all government agencies and instrumentalities shall have the duty to "proactively disclose data through their official websites." These include regularly updated information on programs, projects, and names of third-party contractors; procedures in decision-making processes, including channels of supervision and accountability; service standards; statistical data on accomplishments; and details on annual procurement plans, budgets, expenditures, and disbursements.Another provision includes the disclosure of the Statements of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALNs) of public officials and employees.To protect personal information, home addresses, dates of birth, and ages of unmarried children below 18 years old living in the declarant’s household will be redacted from released SALN copies. Signatures and government-issued identification numbers of declarants and co-declarants will also be protected.The measure also stresses the legal presumption in favor of access to information and shifts the burden of proof to the government agency in identifying the legal basis for denying disclosure.“We want transparency; we want people to know the right information. It is a bill that would lessen the proliferation of fake news. Fact-checking would be easier,” Yamsuan said.The substitute bill also provides for the creation of an RTI Commission, an independent and quasi-judicial body tasked to oversee the implementation of the measure. The commission will have the authority to direct government agencies to provide access to requested information, as well as investigate, hear, and decide cases involving violations of the RTI Act.The bill aims to integrate RTI, media and information literacy, and the principles of governance into the education curriculum to promote transparency, civic engagement, and the responsible use of information.Cagayan de Oro Rep. Lordan Suan, chairman of the House Committee on Public Information, thanked Yamsuan for his work in overseeing the technical working group.“The technical working group was very competently and efficiently chaired by our vice chair, congressman Brian Yamsuan, who led the discussions on the core provisions of the bill in its more contentious sections,” Suan said.

- PNP warns against fake AI-generated videos (2026-03-17 15:43)

MANILA, Philippines - The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Tuesday reminded the public to be vigilant against artificial intelligence (AI)-generated videos circulating online including police

officers being impersonated and other misleading content created to appear real and spread false information.Police General Jose Melencio C. Nartatez Jr., Chief PNP, reminded everyone not to easily fall for such content and cautioned against sharing videos or posts not from official PNP channels. “We urge the public to verify information from official sources and think twice before sharing. Your cooperation helps protect the integrity of the police and the safety of our communities,” Nartatez said. This initiative is part of the PNP Focused Agenda under Enhanced Managing Police Operations, strengthening safeguards against misinformation. The PNP through Anti-Cybercrime Group is closely monitoring these AI-generated content activities and will file appropriate charges against violators.

- Lone bettor wins P100M in Ultra lotto 6/58 draw for March 17 (2026-03-17 15:31)

MANILA, Philippines — A lone bettor won the ₱100,331,631.91 jackpot prize in the Ultra lotto 6/58 draw on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office announced.The winning combination was 29-52-49-55-25-09.According to PCSO, the winning ticket was purchased at a lotto outlet in Cebu.Meanwhile, no bettor won the Lotto 6/42 jackpot worth ₱15,639,575.61.The winning combination for the 6/42 draw was 17-36-05-07-08-38.

- Lacson expresses gratitude to Tomas Cloma descendant over KIG legacy (2026-03-17 14:49)

MANILA, Philippines -- The Commission on Appointments (CA) on Tuesday confirmed the promotion of 57 senior officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) -- including the wife of a descendant of Tomas Cloma who discovered the Kalayaan Group of Island (KIG).The CA approved the ad interim appointment of Jacquelyn Cloma to the rank of colonel in the AFP Nurse Corps, whose husband is a great-granson of the KIG discoverer.Sen. Panfilo Lacson thanked Cloma's husband for his ancestor's role in discovering, occupying and eventually donating the KIG to the Philippines."Please extend my regards and I’d like to thank him on behalf of his lolo-sa-tuhod (great grandfather), Tomas Cloma, for discovering and occupying and owning and donating to the Philippine government the Kalayaan Island Group," Lacson told her when she faced the CA's committee on defense.In February, Lacson rejected Sen. Rodante Marcoleta’s suggestion that the Philippines give up the KIG, which he maintained belongs to the Philippines by virtue of a long-standing legal principle of “res nullius."The Senate president pro tempore said under “res nullius,” whoever discovers and occupies the land is recognized as its owner. In the case of the Spratly Islands, Tomas Cloma discovered the Spratly islands and occupied them. He later turned over the ownership of the land to the Philippine government, Lacson said.There are currently Filipino families occupying the KIG, a town in Palawan which Lacson visited in 2021.

- Complainants waive reply to VP Duterte's answer to impeach complaint (2026-03-17 13:56)

MANILA, Philippines - Lawyer Nathaniel Cabrera has waived his right to reply to Vice President Sara Duterte's answer to the impeachment complaint he filed against her.Cabrera said in a manifestation dated Mar. 17 that Duterte's answer "raises no new factual matters and consists

mainly of general denials, legal conclusions, and procedural objections.""Notably, respondentfailed to specifically deny the material allegations of the complaint", he said.The complainantsof the other impeachment complaint filed against Duterte have also waived reply. Lawyer VirgilLigutan, who represented these complainants, said in a document filed before the HouseCommittee on Justice that the complainants "deem it unnecessary to file a reply" to her answer "[c]onsidering that respondent's 15-page Consolidated Verified Answer conspicuously failed tospecifically deny each and every material allegation in the 98-page impeachmentcomplaint".Yesterday, Duterte filed her answer to the two complaints.Her answer stated thatthe complaints must be dismissed."Absent any statement of ultimate facts in any of theseImpeachment Complaints, there is nothing for respondent to answer. Respondent thus onlyadmits averments therein insofar as they allege her election, assumption to the Office of theVice President, appointment as Secretary of Education, and her prior offices as Mayor and ViceMayor of Davao City", it read."The rest of the allegations, including the annexes and so-calledevidence attached to the Impeachment Complaints, are specifically denied for being false,misleading, impertinent, and mere conclusions of fact and law", it read.The House justicecommittee has yet to determine whether there are sufficient grounds supporting the twocomplaints. "And if the decision of the justice committee is in the affirmative, that's the onlytime that we will be proceeding to the hearing proper", Batangas 2nd District Rep. GervilleLuistro, the committee chairman, has said.The House has authorized the committee to conduct,during the House's break, proceedings in connection with the impeachment complaints.

- Lacson: Chavit Singson offers to testify on flood control mess (2026-03-17 13:18)

MANILA, Philippines -- Former Ilocos Sur governor Chavit Singson has offered to testify on the reported corruption behind some flood control projects, Sen. Panfilo Lacson said on Tuesday.Lacson, Senate Blue Ribbon Committee chairman, said he has tentatively scheduled on Apr. 14 the next hearing on anomalous flood control projects.But the Senate president pro tempore said this could be held "much earlier."In a chance interview, Lacson said Singson has sent him a letter. "He indicated he wanted to testify. "I said [to him], 'Yes. If you are testifying on flood control projects, we will schedule a hearing,'" Lacson said."Tentatively we scheduled it for April 14. But if we can hold it much earlier, why not?" Lacson said.According to Lacson, Singson went to his Senate office on Monday to express his intention to testify. Singson did not immediately give an affidavit, he said.When asked if Singson would submit an affidavit before the hearing, Lacson said, "He may or he may not.""He’s a former governor. I leave it up to him to justify his presence. You will see the credibility or incredibility of his statements, whichever the case may be," Lacson said in Filipino and English.With regard to the 18 former soldiers who allegedly delivered kickbacks to certain personalities, Lacson said he still need have to consult fellow senators. Lacson earlier said he is open to inviting them as long as their testimonies will reflect reality.

- Group seeks gov’t action to cushion impact of soaring energy costs (2026-03-17 12:54)

MANILA, Philippines—Consumer advocacy group ILAW Pilipinas on Tuesday urged the government to adopt urgent measures to shield consumers from rising energy costs as the Philippines faces a surge in electricity prices.The group issued the call after projections from the Department of Energy (DOE) indicated that electricity rates could rise by as much as 16 percent in the coming months, largely driven by higher global fuel prices associated with the war between the United States and Iran. ILAW Pilipinas said the potential increase demonstrates the vulnerability of the country’s power sector, which remains heavily dependent on imported oil and fuel for electricity generation.With the Philippines relying significantly on foreign energy supplies, disruptions in the Middle East can quickly translate into higher electricity costs for consumers. The group warned that the projected increase could further strain Filipino households and businesses already coping with rising living expenses.“The potential increase in electricity prices shows how quickly international conflicts can translate into higher costs for households and small businesses,” said Francine Pradez, youth convenor of ILAW Pilipinas. “Young Filipinos are inheriting an energy system that remains highly vulnerable to global shocks.”ILAW Pilipinas also cautioned that higher electricity prices could contribute to broader inflationary pressures, noting that energy costs affect almost every sector of the economy. If the conflicts in the Middle East persist, economic analysts expect higher fuel and electricity prices to push up the cost of manufacturing, transportation, and other goods and services, as energy remains a fundamental component of the supply chain.To cushion the potential impact on consumers, the group urged the government to consider immediate policy interventions, including the temporary suspension or reduction of taxes and tariffs on fuel and electricity. Earlier this month, the House of Representatives of the Philippines approved on second reading a bill granting special powers to Ferdinand Marcos Jr. that would allow the temporary suspension of the oil excise tax during periods of extraordinary fuel price spikes.The group also appealed to consumers to adopt energy-efficient practices to help manage potential increases in electricity bills.“We call on our fellow member consumer owners to use electricity wisely, conserve energy by unplugging unused appliances, and perform electricity-dependent chores during off-peak hours,” said Beng Garcia, national convenor of ILAW Pilipinas.Garcia also urged key government agencies involved in the power sector — including the National Electrification Administration, Energy Regulatory Commission, and the DOE — to ensure efficient use of public funds while protecting the interests of electricity consumers.While acknowledging the need for short-term relief measures, ILAW Pilipinas emphasized that the government must pursue long-term strategies to strengthen the country’s energy security and reduce dependence on imported fuel.Pradez said accelerating the transition toward more stable and locally available energy sources could help protect the country from future global supply shocks.“While the government explores immediate measures to ease consumer burdens, such as a four-day workweek, the country should also push for an accelerated transition to more stable and locally available energy sources,” she said.“Energy security is not just a policy issue; it is about protecting the future of Filipino families.”

- Vape bans spur illicit market – experts (2026-03-17 11:41)

MANILA, Philippines—Studies show that attempts to control or prohibit smoke-free nicotine products unintentionally encourage underground sales and protect the cigarette industry, experts said.Speaking at a conference in Dubai, Dr. David Khayat of Pierre et Marie Curie University said measures such as taxation and warnings are no longer effective, adding that prohibitionist strategies have historically been inefficient.“When you try to prohibit it, what's going to happen is mobs, mafia, illicit trade, and everything,” Khayat said. In Southeast Asia, for example, e-cigarette bans in Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam have not stopped illegal trade and black market activity.Meanwhile, for Dr. Lorenzo Mata Jr., president of the Philippines-based advocacy organization Quit for Good, the World Health Organization’s (WHO) prohibition-focused approach has also failed to significantly reduce the number of smokers worldwide.He said the global smoking population has remained at more than one billion people. According to the WHO, global tobacco use increased to 1.25 billion people in 2022, despite the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control having been in effect for nearly two decades.“Smoking rates remain high, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where smokers are denied better alternatives to cigarettes due to the strategy promoted by the WHO. This also results in widespread smuggling and illicit trade,” Mata said. Meanwhile, in African countries, the lack of adequate cessation programs, along with the persistence of illicit cigarette markets, poses a significant barrier to reducing smoking, said International Harm Reduction advocate and Vaping Saved My Life (VSML) co-founder Kurt Yeo. Some countries, such as the United States and New Zealand, have begun incorporating vaping products into smoking cessation strategies.However, researchers warned that Asian countries considering stricter bans—including the Philippines—could face challenges in addressing tobacco use.Dr. K. Michael Cummings, a researcher at the Medical University of South Carolina, said comparative findings from the United States, England, and Sweden showed that market-based access to lower-risk nicotine products has been associated with faster declines in cigarette consumption.JP Solis, president of Science and Innovation Nicotine Advocacy Group or Sinag, noted a growing divide in global health policy, with the UK and New Zealand embracing vaping as a cessation tool while many Asian governments continue to enforce bans. According to the Global State of Tobacco Harm Reduction report, tobacco use is responsible for around eight million deaths annually. The report also noted that tobacco consumption remains high in many low and middle-income countries.It warned that heavy taxation and bans may blur the distinction between smoke-free alternatives and combustible cigarettes, potentially fueling a “misconception of harm” and discouraging smokers from switching to less harmful options.

- Cebu Pacific at 30: Fly as low as P19.96 (2026-03-17 10:49)

MANILA, Philippines — Cebu Pacific (CEB) returned to its1996 roots with a fresh round of seat sales to celebrate its founding year.In a statement, the airline announced that from March 17 to 22, travelers may book flights to domestic and international destinations for as low as a P19.96 one-way base fare, exclusive of fees and surcharges. The travel period runs from Nov. 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027."Travelers flying to Manila, Cebu, Davao, and Iloilo can easily explore the Philippines with CEB. From Manila's diverse dining scene and Cebu's island tours to Davao's

nature escapes and Iloilo's well-loved local delicacies, each destination offers something to discover. From these hubs, travelers can also reach Puerto Princesa to enjoy its pristine beaches and the world-famous Underground River," Cebu Pacific said.The budget carrier added that beyond the Philippines, travelers can head to Hong Kong, Japan, or Thailand via CEB's major hubs to enjoy city sights, cultural landmarks, and street food adventures.Travelers can also fly directly from Manila to Taiwan and China, both of which offer a mix of historic heritage, stunning natural scenery and famous cityscapes.Aside from the seat sale, CEB is offering 30 percent off partner hotel bookings made from March 8 to 31. The promo is valid for stays from April 1 to Dec. 31, 2026, at the following partner hotels: - Amorita Resort (Bohol)- Discovery Resorts- Discovery Primea (Makati)- Go Hotels- Go Hotel Plus- Grand Summit Hotel General Santos- Summit Hotels and ResortThe Funny Lion Guests may avail of the offer by entering a special code found in their itinerary receipt after booking a CEB flight. The code can be used when booking directly through the participating hotel partners' official website http://bit.ly/CEBat30HotelPartners.

- New Bureau of Fire Protection officer-in-charge named (2026-03-17 10:34)

MANILA, Philippines — Malacanang named on Tuesday an officer-in-charge for the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) to replace the incumbent who was suspended due to alleged corruption.Fire Chief Supt. Wilberto Rico Neil Kwan Tiu replaced Director Jesus Fernandez, who was placed under preventive suspension by the Office of the Ombudsman following complaints filed against him by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) for alleged corruption.“Confirmed,” Executive Secretary Ralph Recto said in a text message to reporters after Tiu’s appointment paper, signed on March 16, 2026, was released.The complaint against Fernandez stemmed from the P14.7 million kickback he supposedly received in connection with the procurement of 132 ambulances for the BFP.

- Witness in 18 Marines’ statement on cash deliveries defends absence from NBI despite subpoena (2026-03-17 09:12)

MANILA, Philippines — A religious leader behind a sworn statement signed by 18 former members of the Philippine Marines said that he was in the United States when the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) issued a subpoena to him last week.In a statement on Facebook early on Tuesday, Bishop Efraim Tendero, who served as a “witness” during the signing, confirmed the statements to NBI Director Melvin Matibag but that he did not show up last Friday because the subpoena was “delivered to our Quezon City residence on March 9 at 2:30 p.m. The server learned I was in the US attending conferences and couldn't attend, and stated I could be represented by a lawyer.”Tendero requested that he be represented by lawyer Jordan Pizarras and submit an affidavit that he executed regarding his witnessing of the execution of the affidavit.“They [former Marines] approached me as a non-partisan religious leader advocating transparency, accountability, and governance integrity. The responsibility for the statement's truthfulness remains with the 18 individuals. I signed as a witness in my personal capacity only,” he said.The Christian leader said he would return home this week and was

ready to comply with Matibag’s directives and subpoenas

- Duterte counsel withdraws appeal to disqualify Filipino lawyers from ICC case (2026-03-17 07:35)

MANILA, Philippines — The defense counsel of former president Rodrigo Duterte withdrew his appeal to the chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to dismiss his request to disqualify Filipino lawyers representing alleged victims of the illegal drugs campaign of the former leader who is charged with crimes against humanity.In a notice filed on March 16, 2026, defense lawyer Nicholas Kaufman withdrew his Feb. 20 petition for leave to appeal a decision by the Pre-Trial Chamber I that denied his motion to disqualify Filipino lawyers Joel Butuyan and Gilbert Andres, as well as their appointed case manager Nicolene Arcaina, from representing victims in the case."Pursuant to the order of the Pre-Trial Chamber on 13 March 2026, the Defense for Mr Rodrigo Roa Duterte hereby formally notifies Pre-Trial Chamber I of the withdrawal by the Defense of its Request for Leave to Appeal," according to the notice.While withdrawing the appeal, Kaufman noted that the Pre-Trial Chamber had not yet ruled on the original request. He also indicated that the move did not prevent the defense from raising the issue again in the future."The present notification is without prejudice to any further recourse available to the Defense in order to raise the issue of what it perceives to be an impediment to representation on the part of the Common Legal Representatives for Victims (CLRVs)," Kaufman said.The withdrawal comes after Butuyan and Andres previously called out Kaufman for filing what they described as "frivolous" appeals that waste the court's time and resources.In a filing responding to Kaufman's appeal bid, the two lawyers urged the defense to act in good faith."The Defense bemoans the lack of time it has had to raise issues for appeal on this matter and denies responsibility for the timing of its submissions. Yet, Counsel can indeed be held responsible for making frivolous leaves for appeal, particularly as it implicates the solemn undertaking by all counsel before the Court," read their filing."The external CLRVs beseech the Defense to act in good faith, acknowledge when the decisions made by the Chamber are definitive and comprehensive, and refrain from further wasting the time and resources of the Court in adjudicating non-issues."Duterte is facing charges before the ICC in connection with the deadly drug war during his presidency, which left thousands dead according to human rights groups.The former Philippine leader was transferred to The Hague in March 2025 after his arrest by Philippine authorities following an ICC warrant.

- PH has no capacity to escort tankers through Strait of Hormuz - Teodoro (2026-03-17 05:25)

MANILA, Philippines — Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. on Tuesday said the Philippines cannot heed US President Donald Trump’s call on allies to help secure the Strait of Hormuz because the country does not have the capability to escort oil tankers in maritime channel. “We do not have the capability to escort oil tankers. To me, it’s moot and academic,” Teodoro told reporters on Tuesday.He however said the Philippines is strongly participating in efforts to de-escalate tensions because the lives of Filipino seafarers and overseas Filipino workers are at

stake.

- LTFRB announces fare hikes for public transport amid rising fuel, operating costs (2026-03-17 02:11)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) announced on Tuesday a new round of fare adjustments for public transportation nationwide, citing the continued surge in fuel prices, higher maintenance costs, and increases in the minimum wage.LTFRB chairman Vigor Mendoza II said the decision was among the most difficult taken by the board, as regulators sought to balance the financial sustainability of public transport operators with the ability of commuters to absorb higher fares.Speaking during a press briefing, Mendoza said the board repeatedly recomputed the fare adjustments because of volatile oil prices and other operating costs. “The difficulty here is that the price of fuel is so erratic. Every week we see substantial changes,” Mendoza said.Factors considered in fare adjustmentsThe LTFRB said the new rates were based on several cost drivers affecting transport operators and drivers.Mendoza said the board considered fuel prices ranging from about P75 to P88 per liter, a roughly 14-percent increase in spare parts and maintenance costs, and an average 19-percent rise in the minimum wage between 2022 and 2025. “These numbers would still have to be revalidated later on,” he said, noting that the adjustments were designed to remain below the overall increase in minimum wages to keep fares within the reach of low-income commuters.Jeepney faresFor traditional jeepneys, the LTFRB raised the minimum fare to P14 for the first four kilometers from the current P13, making permanent a provisional P1 increase granted in 2023.The adjustment represents an eight-percent increase in the base fare.The per-kilometer rate after the first four kilometers was also increased by P0.20.Modern jeepneys will continue to charge fares that are about 20 percent higher than traditional jeepneys.Using the Cubao–Divisoria route as an example, Mendoza said a 10-kilometer trip that currently costs about P23.80 will rise to around P26, equivalent to roughly a nine-percent increase.Metro bus faresFor ordinary city buses in Metro Manila, the base fare for the first five kilometers was raised from P13 to P15, representing a 15-percent increase.The succeeding per-kilometer rate was adjusted from P2.25 to P2.49, or a 10-percent increase. Air-conditioned buses will continue to charge about 20 percent higher than ordinary buses.Under the new rates, a 10-kilometer trip such as the SM Fairview route will increase from about P24.25 to around P27.45, or about 13 percent higher.Provincial bus faresThe LTFRB also confirmed earlier fare adjustments for provincial buses that took effect over the weekend.On average, fares rose by P0.35 per kilometer, translating to increases of roughly 14 to 16 percent.For example, Mendoza said a 105-kilometer trip to Batangas that previously cost about P200 will rise to roughly P230 for ordinary buses.Air-conditioned buses on the same route will see fares increase from about P220 to around P257.Meanwhile, the Manila–Baguio route will increase from around P469 to about P542, or roughly a 15-percent increase.Airport taxis and ride-hailing servicesAirport taxis will also see higher flag-down rates. The LTFRB approved a P40 increase, raising the flag-down fare from P75 to P115.A sample trip from Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 to SM Megamall would increase from around P229 to about P269, or a 17-percent jump.The board

also approved higher base fares for transport network vehicle services such as Grab and inDrive.The base fare for sedans will rise from P45 to P65, while SUVs will increase from P55 to P75. Hatchbacks will also see a P20 base fare increase.However, the LTFRB said per-kilometer and time-based rates for ride-hailing services will remain unchanged. A new pick-up fee of P15 was also introduced, replacing a temporary P24 pick-up charge allowed during the Christmas season.Point-to-point bus faresFor point-to-point (P2P) buses, the board approved a 15-percent fare increase across routes.For example, the Ortigas–Makati route currently priced at P60 will increase to P69, while higher-priced P2P routes costing P400 will rise to around P460.Mendoza said the fare adjustments are expected to take effect as early as Thursday once the LTFRB publishes the order and operators secure the necessary fare guides.Operators may begin collecting the new fares once they receive the official fare guide and post it inside their vehicles. They will have until June to secure the full fare matrix required for permanent implementation. “At the moment, these are provisional adjustments,” Mendoza said. “Once they obtain their fare matrices, these will effectively become permanent.” The LTFRB said it may also order provisional fare reductions if fuel prices drop significantly.Mendoza said the board could initiate a new review if fuel prices fall below around P75 per liter, adding that a provisional reduction could be issued after further study and hearings.Several other fare petitions remain under review, including requests from operators of regular taxis, UV Express vans, motorcycle taxis, and tricycles.Mendoza said the board would evaluate those applications separately through public consultations and hearings.

- Marcos distributes P5,000 cash aid to PUV drivers (2026-03-17 01:43)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday led the distribution of P5,000 cash assistance to drivers of public utility vehicles (PUVs) affected by the spike in oil prices due to the war in the Middle East, beginning with tricycle drivers in Metro Manila.Speaking to reporters after the distribution of cash relief assistance in Sta. Mesa, Manila, Marcos said that more beneficiaries would receive aid in the coming days as the war in the Middle East continues.He said the government would prioritize first the tricycle drivers, followed by the drivers of jeepneys and the TNVS."This is just the beginning of the distribution. This is something that we have to do because of the sudden increase in oil prices," Marcos said."We are here, the government is here, and we are really monitoring what the new developments are to ensure that our countrymen can continue to earn a living," he added.A total of 139,000 tricycle drivers in Metro Manila will receive P5,000 under the Department of Social Welfare and Development’s Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation Program.

- Quezon City Mayor Belmonte announces construction of new homes for 2K fire victims (2026-03-17 01:08)

MANILA, Philippines — Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte said on Tuesday that the local government has partnered with the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) and National Housing Authority (NHA) to build homes for families who were affected by fire last Mrch 6, 2026.Belmonte assured the displaced residents, particularly

along NIA Road in Pinyahan Village, that the city government was “moving quickly to provide permanent, dignified housing within the city.” “We are working closely with DHSUD to develop an in-city vertical housing project. We want to assure affected families that they will be prioritized and will benefit from the housing we are planning to build,” Belmonte said.The housing project will be implemented under the national government’s expanded " Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino" (4PH) program, the flagship housing initiative of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the local chief executive said.During a joint site inspection with DHSUD Secretary Jose Ramon Aliling and NHA General Manager Joeben Tai, officials agreed to develop multi-storey residential buildings in the area as part of an in-city resettlement plan for the fire victims.“With the construction expected to begin soon with the first housing units targeted for delivery by the end of 2027, Belmonte told The Manila Times that they are now in the process of finalizing the project’s development plan, including the number of buildings and floors.“This project will ensure that families affected by the fire can return to a safe, secure, and dignified home in our city,” she added.According to the city’s Housing, Community Development and Resettlement Department (HCDRD), the community currently has 847 structures housing 2,232 informal settler families, including owners, co-owners, renters, caretakers, and sharers.While the housing project is being developed, the city government will provide rental subsidies to help affected families secure temporary shelter, the HCDRD said.Additional financial assistance has also been pledged by DHSUD, NHA, and the Department of Social Welfare and Development to help cover rental expenses.At present, the city government has opened seven evacuation centers near the affected area while local and national government agencies continue to provide relief and assistance to displaced families, according to the city mayor.

- MMDA field workers to get medical care under Pasay hospital deal (2026-03-16 23:52)

MANILA, Philippines — Field personnel of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) will get access to medical services under a new agreement with Pasay City General Hospital, an arrangement aimed at supporting workers exposed to risks while on duty.The memorandum of agreement was signed on Tuesday at the MMDA New Building in Pasig City.MMDA Chairman Don Artes and PCGH Chief of Hospital I Dr. Jonathan Victor De Gracia led the signing of the agreement, which would provide MMDA employees, particularly those assigned to field operations, immediate access to medical services and treatment at Pasay City General Hospital.The MMDA said the arrangement covered personnel such as traffic enforcers, road emergency responders and other frontline workers regularly exposed to dangerous situations while maintaining order and safety on Metro Manila roads.Artes said the initiative recognized the risks faced by MMDA workers in the field as they carried out their duties.De Gracia, for his part, thanked the agency and hoped the agreement would further strengthen the relationship and cooperation between the two institutions.

- Fair weather in most of PH; 'amihan' still affecting Luzon (2026-03-16 22:07)

(UPDATE) MANILA, Philippines — Most parts of the archipelago will experience fair weather as the effect of the northeast monsoon locally known as "amihan" continues to weaken, the state-run weather agency said on Thursday.Weather specialist Veronica Torres of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said in a 5 a.m. briefing that it has not monitored any weather disturbance inside or outside the Philippine Are of Responsibility in the coming days.Torres said the cool, dry winds brought by amihan has been affecting Batanes, Cagayan, Isabela, Apayao, and Aurora where cloudy skies with light rains would occur.The same weather system will also prevail over Manila and the rest of Luzon where partly cloudy to overcast skies with isolated light rains will be likely, the national weather bureau said.The rest of the country, meanwhile, will likely be partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms due to the localized thunderstorms, it added.Pagasa said that it would soon declare the onset of the dry season, popularly known as "summer" in the Philippines following the continued weakening of the northeast monsoon.On the heat index outlook, Cotabato City, Maguindanao is forecast to experience the "highest temperature" of the day at 40 degrees Celsius - an extreme caution category - while Metro Manila will have 30 to 31 degrees Celsius, the weather agency said.

- Premium gas, diesel to hit P100 a liter this week (2026-03-16 16:13)

THE cost of diesel and premium gasoline will shoot up to more than P100 a liter at some gas stations this week as oil companies impose another massive round of price hikes due to supply disruptions from the ongoing war in the Middle East.The sizable price hikes will be accompanied by an increase in jeepney and bus fares, which the government said would stay within a 19-percent ceiling.The Department of Energy (DOE) on Monday said the oil companies agreed to stagger the second hefty round of price increases in so many weeks as the war in the Middle East showed no signs of abating.The department said prices of gasoline will increase by P12.90-P16.60 per liter and diesel by P20.40-P23.90 per liter. The cost of kerosene will go up by P6.90-P8.90 per liter.Shell said it will raise gasoline prices by P16.60 per liter, diesel by P23.90 per liter, and kerosene by P6.90 per liter. The increases will be staggered over three days starting March 17.Seaoil said it will hike gasoline prices by P16.30 per liter, diesel by P23.30 per liter, and kerosene by P6.90 per liter. The increases will be staggered over two days, from March 17 to March 18.Petron will increase gasoline prices by P12.90 per liter, diesel by P20.40 per liter, and kerosene by P8.90 per liter. Flying V will implement the same prices hikes.Both companies will stagger the increases over three days starting on March 17.Jetti Petroleum said it will increase gasoline prices by P14.70 per liter, and diesel prices by P23.30 per liter. It will stagger the increases over two days, starting on March 17.Total said that it will hike gasoline prices by P14.10 per liter, and diesel by P20.70 per liter. The increases will be staggered over two days, starting March 17.Unioil said that it will increase diesel prices by P21.90 per liter, and gasoline by P13.80 per liter. It will stagger the increases over three days starting March 17.Before this week’s increases, premium gasoline was selling for P67. 99 to P84.50 a liter. An increase at the high end of the range would push the price to P101.10 per liter this week.Unleaded gas was selling at P58.15 to P69.44. An increase at the high end would push unleaded gas to P86.04 per

liter.Diesel was selling for P56.74 to P84.54 a liter before this week’s increases. An increase at the high end would push diesel to P108.44 per liter this week.This will be the ninth consecutive week where all fuel prices will increase.Last week, gasoline prices increased by P7-P13 per liter, diesel prices jumped by around P17.50-P24.25 per liter, while kerosene prices spiked by around P32.00-P36.00 per liter as local oil companies implemented different price hikes.Meanwhile, Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said the government has been seeking other sources to augment the country’s current fuel supply, in case the war drags out for much longer. “We have been continuing to reach out to other countries such as Thailand, China, South Korea, Japan, Singapore despite some of their announcements saying that they have closed off oil exports for now. We have also tried reaching out to Russia as well. Talks are progressing, to various degrees, but I can assure that we have ample supply to last until the end of April,” Garin said.She declined to comment on how high fuel prices might go if the war continues.Jeepney and bus faresThe Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) said it would announce new fares for jeepneys and city buses on March 17.LTFRB chairman Vigor Mendoza II said the proposed increases will be guided by a 19-percent ceiling, taking into account the recent minimum wage hike and the need to help public transport drivers cope with rising fuel expenses. “We try as much as we can to work around that 19-percent increase in minimum wage,” Mendoza said in an interview, explaining that the board is trying to ensure that transport fares keep pace with the rising cost of living.He acknowledged, however, that any fare adjustment would add to commuters’ financial burden, noting that transportation costs are only one component of a typical Filipino household’s expenses.Mendoza said the LTFRB is coordinating with other government agencies to mitigate the broader effects of inflation on both commuters and transport workers.While fare hikes for jeepneys and city buses are still being finalized, provincial bus fares have already increased following an earlier LTFRB order. The adjustment took effect on Saturday, March 14, after the board approved new rates on March 13 in response to rising fuel costs linked to the Middle East war.Under the revised fare matrix, air-conditioned, super deluxe, and deluxe provincial buses will charge an additional P0.35 per kilometer, while luxury provincial buses will increase fares by P0.45 per kilometer. Ordinary provincial buses will see a P1 increase in the base fare, with an additional P0.30 for each succeeding kilometer. The LTFRB said the adjustments aim to help operators manage mounting fuel expenses amid global price volatility.Multi-agency assistanceDuring a joint media briefing, Transport Secretary Giovanni Lopez and Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian detailed a multi-agency approach to support public transport drivers and operators, combining immediate cash relief with fuel subsidies and complementary programs.The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) will begin rolling out its Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AIS) program today, March 17. The initial phase prioritizes Metro Manila tricycle and jeepney drivers, covering about 139,000 beneficiaries with a total cost nearing P700 million. “The cash relief will be delivered promptly to avoid delays, prioritizing those struggling to continue working amid rising fuel costs,” Gatchalian said. The program will coordinate with local government units to reach drivers and operators who may not be under LTFRB regulation, ensuring broader coverage.The AIS program has a total allocation of P60 billion for 2025, with P30 billion earmarked for fuel-related relief efforts. Separately, the Department of

Transportation has allocated P2.5 billion for a P5,000 fuel subsidy that will be given directly to drivers and operators regulated by the LTFRB. This includes provincial, metro, and point-to-point (P2P) buses, traditional and modern jeepneys, taxis, ride-hailing services, and school service vehicles.Lopez emphasized that this program is separate from the DSWD cash relief and addresses past complaints that subsidies were primarily given to operators rather than drivers.Lopez also clarified that drivers and operators may receive aid from both programs, as they are funded from separate sources and address different needs.The fuel subsidy rollout is expected by the fourth week of March, pending the release of the notice of cash allocation (NCA) from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). Once funded, distribution could occur simultaneously across all transport modes.In other developments:– The House of Representatives on Monday approved on third and final reading House Bill 8418 aiming to authorize the country’s president to suspend or cut fuel excise taxes during national or global economic emergencies. “This measure is in direct response to the ongoing crisis in the Middle East that has a direct effect on fuel prices and the cost of basic goods in the Philippines,” Speaker Faustino Dy III said in a statement on Monday. “If the president can temporarily lift the excise tax, that is up to P10 per liter for gasoline and P6 per liter for diesel that can be taken off the price that people pay,” Dy said.– Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian called on the government to adopt belt-tightening measures such as limiting official travel and suspension of vehicle purchases or upgrades to conserve energy and reduce operational costs, warning that the war in the Middle East could lead to economic instability. He said conservation measures could include energy-saving methods on top of the four-day workweek that many government agencies have begun to implement. He said the government could also devise an arrangement that would encourage carpooling and a return to virtual meetings adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic. WITH REINA C. TOLENTINO AND BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

- Global energy crisis looms as Iran throttles shipping (2026-03-16 16:12)

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Fears of a global energy crisis rose Monday as the war in the Middle East raged on, with more US-Israeli strikes on the Iranian capital and Israel’s bombardment of Lebanon. An Iranian drone strike temporarily shut Dubai’s airport, a crucial global travel hub, underscoring the threats to the world economy.Since the United States and Israel attacked Iran more than two weeks ago, Tehran has regularly fired on Israel, American bases in the region, and Gulf Arab countries’ energy infrastructure with drones and missiles.It has also effectively stopped shipping traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world’s oil is transported, dramatically increasing the price of oil and putting pressure on Washington to do something to ease the pain consumers are feeling.Brent crude, the international standard, remained stubbornly over $100 a barrel on Monday. It was at $104 in early trading, up nearly 45 percent since the US and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28. It has spiked as high as about $120 during the conflict.US President Donald Trump said he has demanded that about seven countries send warships to keep the Strait of Hormuz open, but his appeals have brought no commitments.Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called claims that his country may be seeking a negotiated end to the war “delusional,” saying in a social media post early Monday

that Iran was seeking neither “truce nor talks.” Dubai airport hitAs morning broke Monday, a drone hit a fuel tank near Dubai International Airport, the world’s busiest for international passenger traffic, causing a large fire.Firefighters contained the blaze and there were no injuries reported, but the airport suspended all flights before resuming them a few hours later.Later, a person was killed in the capital of the United Arab Emirates when an Iranian missile hit a vehicle, the Abu Dhabi media office said. Fire also broke out at an oil facility in Fujairah, one of the UAE’s seven emirates, following a drone attack.Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, said it intercepted a wave of 35 Iranian drones sent to its eastern region, home to major oil installations.Iran has fired hundreds of missiles and drones toward countries in the region hosting US military assets since the war began. Emirati authorities say most have been intercepted by air defenses, though debris and some drones have fallen inside the country.Israel’s military said early Monday that Iran launched missiles toward Israel as well.The war is battering the world economy, driving up energy and fertilizer prices; threatening food shortages in poor countries; destabilizing fragile states; and complicating efforts by central banks to drive down prices for consumers. Much of the difficulty stems from the virtual shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz.Another Trump threatTrump said Sunday he wants to police the strait to make it safe for shipping, with his party increasingly concerned that rising prices for American consumers will hurt the Republicans in elections this fall.He did not identify the countries he said he asked to help with those efforts, but he said he won’t forget the countries that decline. He has previously appealed to China, France, Japan, South Korea and Britain. “Whether we get support or not, but I can say this, and I said to them: We will remember,” Trump said.Ahead of a meeting in Brussels, the European Union’s foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said the bloc’s foreign ministers would discuss possibly extending a naval mission that protects ships in the Red Sea to the Strait of Hormuz, without giving any details.Europeans have been critical of the US and Israel for failing to provide clarity on their objectives in the war, and German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul on Sunday questioned EU involvement, saying security for the strait can only come “if there is a negotiated solution.” “Europe always gives constructive support when it comes to securing sea routes, but I see neither an immediate necessity nor above all Germany participating,” he said on ARD television.Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told parliament Monday that her government “has not heard anything” from Washington about Trump’s call for help protecting the strait. Still, she said there had been discussions about what could be done to protect Japanese ships, but Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said he has no plans to send warships to the strait under current conditions.Japan, which imports more than 90 percent of its crude oil from the Middle East, began releasing its oil reserves Monday to address supply shortages and rising prices.Israel hits BeirutMassive explosions were heard in Beirut as Israel launched new attacks on the Lebanese capital before dawn, saying it was striking infrastructure related to the Iran-linked Hezbollah militia group.The Israeli army has issued evacuation orders for many neighborhoods in Beirut as well as southern Lebanon. To date, more than 800,000 people have been displaced by Israel’s campaign in Lebanon.In southern Lebanon, one person was killed in an Israeli airstrike early Monday and then two paramedics were killed as they arrived at the scene, Lebanon’s state-run National News Agency At least 850 people have been killed by

Israeli strikes so far. APNot long after Israel’s military announced it had launched new strikes on Tehran targeting infrastructure, explosions were heard in the Iranian capital and outlying areas.More than 1,300 people have been killed in Iran so far, according to the Iranian Red Crescent.Israel has carried out some 7,600 strikes on Iran so far, knocking out 85 percent of its air defenses, military spokesman Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani told reporters Monday. It has also destroyed 70 percent of Iran’s missile launchers, but Shoshani said Israel still has thousands of targets to hit and would continue attacks “for as long as needed.” In Israel, 12 people have been killed by Iranian missile fire. At least 13 US military members have been killed.

- Marcos certifies changes to Biofuels Act as urgent (2026-03-16 16:11)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. certified as urgent a measure seeking to amend the Biofuels Act of 2006 to address the high cost of petroleum products.In a letter to Senate President Vicente Sotto III dated March 16, Marcos called for the immediate enactment of Senate Bill 1965, which seeks to tweak Section 5 of the law.The amendments would temporarily suspend or adjust the mandatory biofuel blending requirements to permit the use of lower-cost imported bioethanol, which is often cheaper than domestic alternatives.The bill also allows the president to reduce or waive the mandatory 10-percent bioethanol (E10) and 2-percent biodiesel (B2) blending requirements if the blended fuel is at least 5 percent more expensive than pure petroleum.It also allocates proceeds from tariffs on petroleum products during the period to be used for social amelioration programs for farmers and workers in the domestic biofuels industry.The Biofuels Act of 2006 prescribes the blending of bioethanol with gasoline and biodiesel with diesel to promote renewable energy, support local agriculture, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.Earlier this month, Marcos also certified as urgent a proposed measure in the House of Representatives, House Bill 8418, that would grant him emergency powers to suspend or reduce excise taxes on fuel during national or global emergencies for not longer than six months. It also authorizes the government to address “extraordinary fuel price volatility and stabilize domestic fuel prices during the period of severe economic disruptions.” The war in the Middle East, launched by the United States and Israel against Iran on Feb. 28, has spread across the region and caused global pump prices to spike in double-digits.

- Filipina-American Autumn Durald Arkapaw makes Oscar history (2026-03-16 16:10)

(UPDATE) FILIPINA AMERICAN cinematographer Autumn Durald Arkapaw made history by becoming the first woman to win the Oscar for Best Cinematography at the 98th Academy Awards held Sunday night in Los Angeles (Monday morning in Manila). She is also the first Filipina and the first Black person to win the award. Arkapaw won for her work on “Sinners,” Ryan Coogler’s genre-bending hit, which entered the Oscars with a record 16 nominations and went on to win four awards, including Best Actor for Michael B. Jordan, Best Original Screenplay for Coogler and Best Original Score for Ludwig Göransson. During her acceptance speech, Arkapaw asked the women in the audience to stand, acknowledging the support she received throughout her career and the film’s awards run. “I’m so honored to be here, and I really want all the women in the room to stand up because I feel like I wouldn’t be here without you

guys," she said. "I really, really, truly mean that." She also thanked the cast, crew and her family, and paid tribute to Coogler, with whom she had previously worked on "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever." "Whenever I get to thank Ryan, he replies and says, 'No, thank you. Thank you for believing in me and thank you for trusting me,'" she said. "That's the kind of guy that I get to make films with." Arkapaw is only the fourth woman ever nominated in the cinematography category. The previous female nominees were Rachel Morrison for "Mudbound," Ari Wegner for "The Power of the Dog," and Mandy Walker for "Elvis." Before the Oscars, she had already emerged as one of the season's most celebrated cinematographers, winning critics' awards from the New York Film Critics Circle and the National Society of Film Critics. She was also nominated for the BAFTA Awards, the Critics' Choice Awards, and the American Society of Cinematographers Awards. Born in Oxnard, California, and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, Arkapaw is of Filipino descent on her mother's side and African American Creole on her father's. Her win places her alongside Matthew Libatique as another cinematographer of Filipino heritage recognized by the Academy in the category. Her work on "Sinners" had drawn notice even before awards season. Arkapaw became the first woman to shoot a feature film on IMAX film, using large-format IMAX 65mm and Ultra Panavision 70 for the production. Other major winners at the ceremony included "One Battle After Another," which took Best Picture, Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay for Paul Thomas Anderson. Jessie Buckley won Best Actress for "Hamnet," Amy Madigan won Best Supporting Actress for "Weapons," and Sean Penn won Best Supporting Actor for "One Battle After Another." "KPop Demon Hunters" won Best Animated Feature and Best Original Song for "Golden," while "F1" won Best Sound. The 98th Academy Awards was livestreamed in the Philippines via Disney+.

- Pag-IBIG sets housing fair in Pampanga (2026-03-16 16:09)

A HOUSING fair in Central Luzon set on March 18 and 19 can help aspiring homebuyers as more than 20,000 affordable housing units will be made available for them, Pag-IBIG Fund CEO Marilene Acosta said on Monday.To be held at LausGroup Event Centre in Pampanga, the two-day event will also feature housing units with monthly payments as low as P3,411 through the expanded Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino (4PH) Program's 3-percent subsidized interest rate, allowing families earning at least P11,443 a month to qualify for a housing loan, Acosta said.Mainly organized by the Home Development Mutual Fund (HDMF) or Pag-IBIG, the program is being rolled out in partnership with the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) while more than 40 developers and housing agencies are expected to join. "This will allow prospective buyers to explore thousands of house-and-lot and socialized housing options from across the region in one venue, with on-site assistance for housing loan applications," the top Pag-IBIG official said.Housing Secretary Jose Ramon Aliling, who also chairs Pag-IBIG's board of trustees, said the housing fair supports the government's continuing push to make decent and affordable housing more accessible to Filipinos. "Through the Expanded Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino Program, we are making home ownership more accessible to more Filipino families. By bringing developers,

financing institutions and government agencies together in one venue, the Pag-IBIG Housing Fair gives aspiring homeowners an easier way to explore affordable options that match their needs and financial capacity,” Aliling said.During the fair, the agency said selected house-and-lot units priced at up to P1.8 million will also be offered. Over 3, 000 acquired assets will also be offered at discounted prices during the event, Pag-IBIG said.The event is open to the public free of charge starting at 8 a.m. on both days. The agency said attendees are encouraged to bring one valid identification card and proof of income such as a recent pay slip or income tax return, for initial on-site evaluation.

- Cayetano calls for national plan to protect OFWs amid global crisis (2026-03-16 16:08)

SENATE Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano urged Malacañang to create a national contingency plan (NCP) to protect overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) from the impact of conflicts, such as the raging war in the Middle East.The Senate recently adopted Resolution 343, which Cayetano authored, calling on the Executive branch to develop an NCP to strengthen the country’s preparedness for major domestic and international crises.The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has said that as of Feb. 28, there are over 2.4 million OFWs in the Middle East, some of them affected by the United States-Israel war against Iran.“Instabilities, armed conflict, and war directly affect the welfare and employment of millions of OFWs across the Middle East and other regions, potentially affecting the livelihoods of millions of Filipino families dependent on remittances,” Cayetano said on Monday.He noted that millions of OFWs are deployed across the world, many of them in regions vulnerable to political and economic disruptions.A national contingency plan will help ensure that government agencies “can coordinate quickly and effectively during crises affecting Filipinos abroad,” he said.He underscored the OFWs’ contribution to the national economy. Citing data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, he said total cash remittances from OFWs reached a record $35.63 billion in 2025.He said the government must ensure that OFWs are protected and supported during emergencies, including situations that may require evacuation, repatriation, or economic assistance.The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) meanwhile wants President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to consider declaring a state of national emergency amid escalating tensions in the Middle East that have triggered a series of steep oil price hikes, worsening the cost-of-living crisis for Filipino workers and their families.The TUCP issued the call on Monday as another round of price increases for gasoline and diesel loomed this week, ranging from P15 to P20 per liter.It also proposed laws to suspend the collection of VAT and excise taxes on fuel.“Mr. President, when a conflict thousands of kilometers away suddenly dictates how much a Filipino family pays for food, transportation, and daily necessities, it stops being just a global crisis — it becomes a national emergency at home,” said TUCP in a statement.“You have already asked Congress for emergency powers to suspend or reduce fuel excise taxes. But hunger and poverty do not wait for the legislative calendar. Workers are already cutting back on essentials, transport groups are bracing for fare hikes, and small businesses are struggling to stay afloat,” it added.The group said the government is not powerless under the Oil Deregulation Law, which allows fuel industry players to control the prices of their products,

without government intervention.Section 14(e) of the Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Act of 1998 (Republic Act 8479) allows the Department of Energy (DOE), in times of national fuel emergency, to temporarily take over or direct the operations of entities engaged in the downstream oil industry when the public interest requires it.“Once a national emergency is declared, oil companies — especially the biggest players — can be required to disclose their supply inventories and acquisition costs to the DOE under confidentiality, and to moderate their margins so Filipino consumers are not crushed by excessive price spikes,” TUCP said.“This is not about punishing oil companies. It is about sharing the burden in a national emergency. Workers have long absorbed the impact of rising prices while wages lag behind. The government is already stretching its limited fiscal space through subsidies and possible tax suspensions. The question is whether oil companies are willing to give up a portion of their double-digit earnings growth and record profits reported just weeks ago,” it said.TUCP also called on the president to convene a National Emergency Summit bringing together labor groups, transport operators, agriculture, business, consumer organizations, and the academe.“The government should not confront this crisis alone. Workers are tired of the blame game while prices keep rising. Filipinos need decisive action to stabilize costs,” it said.

- Senators dismayed PH world’s bullying capital (2026-03-16 16:07)

SENATORS deplored the report that the Philippines remained as the "bullying capital" in the world, with one out of three Filipino students being bullied every day.Sen. Raffy Tulfo expressed concern over the uptick in bullying cases, with some leading to suicide.Tulfo said that from 1,158 cases in 2013 when Republic Act (RA) 10627, or the Anti-Bullying Act, was passed, bullying cases rose to over 20,000 in 2018."We are faced with this reality," he said.Sen. Bam Aquino said that according to the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics, over 50 percent of Grade 5 students in the Philippines experienced bullying more than once every month in 2024.Aquino, chairman of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, on Monday led a public hearing on Senate Bill (SB) 441 and SB 1582 which sought to expand the coverage of RA 10627.He expressed concern at how schools and other public spaces are slowly becoming breeding grounds for bullying.“This is not the first time we are discussing bullying, and we already have an existing law. But why was it that it seemed that nothing has changed and the situation has turned to worse?" Tulfo asked. "The time to answer these questions is now. There is no better time to act than now.” Aquino raised the need to come up with solutions to end bullying in schools and protect the well-being of students.He cited a report from the Second Congressional Commission on Education (Edcom 2), which tagged the Philippines as the “Bullying Capital of the World."The report said that bullying is directly related to low literacy rates, low academic performance and absenteeism among learners."When our children are bullied, we are creating a generation full of trauma. Instead of embracing education, young people today are afraid of the very space dedicated for learning," Aquino said.Sen. Win Gatchalian pushed for the installation of CCTV cameras in schools to prevent bullying and violence.Gatchalian noted that having CCTVs installed is a key factor in schools that have low cases of bullying."This (bullying) has been a problem for a long time, and there is a real need to discuss the reforms being

undertaken by the Department of Education and the community on how to reduce, eliminate and prevent bullying in our schools," he added.Tulfo cited the case of a student with a disability who took his own life by jumping from the 4th floor of the Quezon City Memorial High School. He reportedly experienced bullying.The senator, who authored SB 441, proposed stricter penalties for schools that failed to act on bullying.

- When gas prices go up, changing the way you drive can stretch your fuel a bit farther (2026-03-16 16:06)

DETROIT — When gas prices spike, filling up gets more painful. But consumers can do something to stretch their fuel just a little farther: Change the way they drive. “It’s a hard one to swallow, right? You gotta put gas in to go about your day and get to work and pick the kids up from school,” said Michael Crossen, Consumer Reports’ manager of auto testing.Here are seven tips from experts for drivers looking to use less gas:Drive slower, or use cruise controlVehicles are designed for maximum efficiency around highway speeds, said Sean Tucker, managing editor for compact and full-size vehicles at Kelley Blue Book. “Stick to 65 (mph, 105 kph) on the highway,” Tucker said. “Today’s cars are geared to be most efficient at that speed, and you lose quite a bit of fuel efficiency the faster you go.” Some estimates suggest slowing down increases gas mileage as much as 14 percent. “If you have a hard time doing that, cruise control is your friend,” Tucker said. This maintains a set vehicle speed, which cuts the need to press on the gas pedal and avoids fluctuations like jerky acceleration or hard braking.Experts also recommend coasting to stoplights, whether there is a red light ahead or a green light that is likely to change soon.Limit idlingUse a vehicle’s automatic start-stop ignition, experts say. This shuts off the engine at stoplights or when idling, and restarts it once the accelerator is pressed. “If you’re stuck in traffic and you see it bumper to bumper for a while and you have start-stop, don’t turn that off,” said David Bennett, AAA senior automotive manager. “Allow the engine to turn on and off as it’s needed.” That’s especially true when drivers don’t need to blast the air conditioning while waiting for long periods of time.Reduce your car’s drag and drop extra weightMany drivers have roof racks on top of their vehicles or bike racks on the back. It takes extra fuel to push that structure through the air — experts have found it can cost several miles per gallon. “If you’re not actually using those devices, it’s like dragging a parachute behind your car,” Crossen said. “Any other type of accessories that basically cause drag, you want to lose those.” If you’re carrying heavy items in your back seat, trunk or truck bed, and you don’t need them, leave them at home.Check your tire pressure and look to other maintenance, tooExperts say it’s important that tires are properly inflated, based on what the vehicle’s manual recommends. Checking tire pressure every other fill-up is one suggestion. “Lower-inflated tires will increase the resistance on the road, so properly inflated, the vehicle is going to drive a little bit smoother and be able to accelerate properly,” Bennett said. Expect an impact on gas mileage by as much as 10 percent, estimates say.Auto shops might also be able to make some simple changes to improve a vehicle’s fuel economy. “If you’re finding that you are not getting close to what you’re supposed to, then you need to go to the mechanic,” Tucker said.For example, they might

replace the air filter or oxygen sensors that tell the engine how rich to make the fuel mixture.Consider carpooling and combining tripsFigure out a carpool if you can, and you’re effectively splitting costs with the other participants.And be more thoughtful in planning and organizing your driving to make fewer trips overall.“Don’t make unnecessary stops. Don’t drive all the way across town just to save a dollar on eggs,” Crossen said. “Plan your trips. Don’t drive if you don’t have to.”What fuel are you buying, and where?Some cars require more expensive premium gas, and that’s what they should get, experts say. But sometimes drivers are filling up with premium when their vehicle doesn’t need it — and will do just fine on cheaper regular gas, they say.Regardless of your octane choice, you can be mindful of the quality of your gas. Consider whether a local station carries what’s called “Top Tier gas” — gas developed with additives aimed at clearing carbon deposits from your engine. During periods of high prices or shortages, it isn’t a requirement, but it’s good for vehicles long term.Apps such as GasBuddy are great resources to compare local gas prices or prices along a driver’s route back home.Experts say to also start thinking about getting gas when you’re around half a tank. That gives you some flexibility to watch for lower prices.If it’s time for a new car, consider a hybridThe average age of a vehicle on the road these days is about 12 years, and newer vehicles are more fuel-efficient than older ones. Not everyone can afford a new vehicle, but when it’s time, shoppers can consider a hybrid if they’re not ready to go fully electric.And if you’re ready to get off gas entirely, EVs — including plenty of used models — are out there.

- Filipinos’ trust in Japan remains high – OCTA survey (2026-03-16 16:05)

FILIPINOS continue to express exceptionally high levels of trust in Japan and its people, reflecting more than seven decades of stable and strong relations between the Philippines and Japan, a nationwide survey conducted by OCTA Research showed.The findings were drawn from the Tugon ng Masa (TNM) survey commissioned by the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines and released as a public service to gauge public sentiment on bilateral ties between the two countries.The survey was conducted from Dec. 3 to 11, 2025, through face-to-face interviews with 1,200 respondents aged 18 and above across the country.Researchers used probability sampling methods, and the poll carried a ±3 percent margin of error at the 95-percent confidence level.Subnational estimates for Metro Manila, Balance Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao had a margin of error of ±6 percent.OCTA Research said the results indicate that Filipinos' trust in Japan and the Japanese people remains “exceptionally high,” reflecting the enduring strength of Philippines–Japan relations that have developed over the past 75 years.The Philippines and Japan normalized diplomatic relations in 1956 and have since expanded cooperation in trade, infrastructure, security and cultural exchanges.According to OCTA, the Tugon ng Masa survey is an independent and non-partisan nationwide public opinion poll regularly conducted to measure Filipino views on key national and international issues.

- Sara impeach cases must have ‘clear, compelling, credible proof’ (2026-03-16 16:05)

THE National Unity Party (NUP) on Monday stood firm that impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte must be based on "clear, compelling, and credible evidence."The hearings of the House Committee on Justice on the two impeachment complaints "should produce specific evidence from [the Anti-Money Laundering Council] or similar authorities, showing confidential funds being deposited or used by the Vice President for personal consumption purposes during her incumbency as Vice-President," NUP Chairman and Antipolo 1st District Rep. Ronaldo Puno said in a statement on Monday.Puno said if proof of that does not surface, then the NUP will vote against her impeachment.He said one of the allegations in the two complaints concerned Duterte’s "supposed misuse of confidential funds.""By their very nature, confidential expenditures do not allow for the public disclosure of operational details or the identities of recipients. Because of this, allegations of misuse must be supported by evidence that clearly establishes that public funds were diverted from their lawful purpose,” Puno said.There should be compelling evidence that the confidential funds “were deposited into the personal bank accounts of or accounts controlled by the Vice President, members of her immediate family, agents, or nominees; or evidence that the confidential funds were used to purchase or acquire any asset, or invest in businesses, industries, or other similar endeavors under the Vice President's, her agents', or nominees' name for personal use," he said."The National Unity Party stands firm in its position that impeachment must be grounded on clear, compelling, and credible evidence," he said at a press conference on Monday.“We will look at the evidence. If the evidence is strong, we will support the impeachment complaint. But if it is not, we will not."The vice president had until the end of office hours Monday to file her response.Puno said the NUP’s observations “are not intended to interfere with or preempt the Committee's work. Rather, they are offered in the spirit of helping clarify the issues and the evidentiary threshold that will guide members of Congress when the time comes to cast their judgment."Four impeachment complaints were filed last month against Duterte. The House committee set aside the first one, ruling that it violated the rule against initiating impeachment proceedings against the same official more than once within a one-year period.The second one was withdrawn by the 17 complainants themselves.The third complaint alleges that Duterte committed culpable violation of the Constitution and betrayed public trust in connection with confidential funds allocated to the Office of the Vice President (OVP) and the Department of Education (DepEd)."We are prepared to confront these allegations squarely through the proper constitutional processes, confident that a fair and impartial review will demonstrate that the accusations are devoid of both factual and legal basis," Michael Poa, speaking for Duterte's defense team, said in a statement last month.The fourth complaint was filed on Feb. 18, 2026 by lawyer Nathaniel Cabrera and endorsed by Manila 6th District Rep. Bienvenido Abante Jr., chairman of the House Committee on Human Rights, and Deputy Speaker and La Union 1st District Rep. Francisco Paolo Ortega V.It alleged that Duterte " betrayed the public trust and committed acts of graft and corruption by grossly abusing discretionary authority over confidential funds appropriated to the" OVP and DepEd.

- Comelec to resolve Marcoleta case this week (2026-03-16 16:05)

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) is expected to decide this week if Sen. Rodante Marcoleta violated the campaign finance rules for not including campaign donations in his 2025 statement of contributions and expenditures (SOCE).The commission en banc's ruling is also expected to settle the legal issue arising from a similar case against Marcoleta earlier referred to the Comelec legal department by the Office of the Ombudsman.The poll body's Political Finance and Affairs Department has submitted the results of its fact-finding investigation and recommendations on the case.Comelec Chairman George Erwin Garcia said on Monday Marcoleta's case was deliberated by the commission en banc during its regular session last week."Our discussion there in the en banc was quite heated. This Wednesday, expect that the commission will come out with a decision," Garcia said.Marcoleta declared P51.9 million in his statement of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALN), but his SOCE indicated that he spent P112. million during last year’s midterm elections.Marcoleta declared having received no campaign contributions, but spent P112.8 million, an amount which far exceeded his P51.9 million declared assets. He admitted having received a campaign donation but did not disclose it in his SOCE because his donors requested anonymity.Garcia said the senator admitted having received the undeclared donation after the filing of certificate of candidacy (COC) in October 2024, when he was not yet legally considered a candidate.Marcoleta cited the Peñera Doctrine, which refers to the Supreme Court resolution in the case of Peñera versus Comelec. In 2010, the court reversed the Comelec decision disqualifying Sta. Monica, Surigao del Norte Mayor Rosalinda Peñera as candidate in the 2007 elections for violation of Section 80 of the Omnibus Election Code which bans premature campaigning.Section 80 of the code states that “it shall be unlawful for any person, whether or not a voter or candidate ... to engage in an election campaign or partisan political activity, except during the campaign period.” Under Section 99, candidates must declare all their expenses during the campaign period, and submit their SOCE within 30 days after election day.The legal basis for requiring candidates and political parties to submit “full, true and itemized” SOCEs is Section 14 of Republic Act 7166, or the Synchronized National and Local Elections Law.The election code and RA 7166 set specific limits the campaign expenses of candidates and political parties to avoid undue influence by wealthy individuals, corporations, or special interest groups.Under Section 14 or RA 7166, failure to file the SOCE within the prescribed period is punishable by permanent disqualification to hold public office and fines.Deliberate falsification or misrepresentation of the SOCE is a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment and/or fines.Comelec spokesman John Rex Laudiangco earlier said that Section 39 of RA 7166 effectively repealed the penal provision under Section 107 of the OEC, in effect decriminalizing the nonfiling or inaccurate filing of SOCE as an election offense.Laudiangco also pointed out that SOCE is a sworn document, and any material misrepresentation may be charged with perjury as provided under the Revised Penal Code.Under Article 183 of the penal code, perjury is punishable by six years to eight years in prison.If the offender is a government officer or employee, the penalty is imprisonment of from 10 to 12 years.A fine of up to P1 million and perpetual disqualification from holding appointive or elective position in government may also be imposed.

- Filipinas seek abortions online (2026-03-16 16:04)

JANE had been bleeding heavily for days before finally seeking help, not from a hospital but from the man who sold her the pills meant to end her six-week pregnancy.Abortions are strictly outlawed in the mainly Catholic Philippines, forcing women to turn to a patchwork of providers operating in the online shadows.While rare in practice, Philippine law allows for prison terms of up to six years for abortion patients and providers, leaving thousands of Filipinas to search for solutions in online forums where unlicensed sellers promote abortifacients.“It was very painful, as if my abdomen was being twisted,” Jane, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, told Agence France-Presse (AFP), describing the visit where the seller, a purported doctor, inserted a pill into her cervix without anesthesia.Jane was warned not to disclose the abortion if anything went wrong, she said.“I heard stories that some women were reported to the police, ignored or left to die when they reached the hospital,” the 31-year-old added.While post-abortion care has been legal for over a decade, many health workers remain hesitant to provide it over fears of being arrested or losing their licenses, said Junice Melgar, whose Likhaan Center for Women’s Health serves Manila’s poorest.“I believe that a lot of providers... would like to help. They might find it ethical, but it’s a scary proposition for them,” she said.‘A chilling effect’As women have flocked to online sources, authorities have taken notice.In January, a lawmaker filed a resolution calling for an investigation into the growing number of Filipinas resorting to social media for help in ending their pregnancies.The Senate last year also urged the Department of Health and the Food and Drug Administration to crack down on what a top lawmaker called “brazen crimes.”But Jane, while acknowledging the potential safety issues, said she feared targeting online sources would only further limit access to a much-needed medical procedure.“There might be a chilling effect, and we won’t know where else we can get the proper information,” she said.A reproductive health services law passed in 2012 aimed to normalize comprehensive sex education and free contraceptives across the country.But the measure faced fierce opposition from the Catholic Church and conservative legislators, who weakened its implementation.Funding was slashed, health care workers were allowed to refuse services, and access to emergency contraceptives like Plan B was heavily restricted.“The Catholic Church will always oppose abortion and its applications,” priest Dan Cancino of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines told AFP, citing its commitment to the preservation and dignity of human life.In rare situations, such as ectopic pregnancies that threaten a woman’s life, interventions that might lead to fetal death can be morally permissible, he said.But the Church’s position against “intentional abortions” is absolute, he said, even in cases of rape or on grounds of mental health or financial hardship.Cancino said the Church provides support to mothers and children facing unintended pregnancies, though he admitted those efforts remain “very fragmented.”Lawyer Clara Padilla of the Philippine Safe Abortion Advocacy Network (Pinsan), meanwhile, said even legal exceptions for rape, incest or health risks would “not be enough,” noting most abortions were sought by married women with at least three children.‘People need this’More than 250 women are hospitalized every day due to complications from unsafe abortions, according to a Pinsan study. About three of them die.Padilla said her group has documented cases of women binding their stomachs, inserting wire hangers into their cervix, or even asking people to kick them in attempts to induce abortion.“Some people are opposing (abortion) because it’s

against their morals,” Padilla said. “We’re just saying that people need this, and you shouldn’t be barring them from accessing health care that can save their lives.” Even if contraceptives were easily available, abortion would remain a necessary backstop for women for whom an unplanned pregnancy can mean sliding further into poverty and violence, said the Likhaan Center’s Melgar. “There will be rapes; there will be other circumstances where protection simply does not work,” she said.Jane, who said she suffered from abdominal pain, weakness and loss of appetite for up to three months after the procedure, told AFP she would make the same decision if forced to do it over. “When you talk about abortion in the Philippines, the discussion is reduced to whether it is legal or moral. People forget that abortion is a health issue,” she said. “This is my body, my health, my life, and it’s up to me to decide what happens to it.”

- DOLE relaunches online legal query portal (2026-03-16 16:04)

THE Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has relaunched its online legal query portal, which has been upgraded to make the agency’s services more accessible, responsive, and efficient through digitalization.Labor Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma on Monday said the portal serves as the official online platform where workers, employers, labor groups, and the public can submit questions and concerns related to labor laws and policies.The portal is managed by the DOLE's Legal Service and can be accessed at query.dole.gov.ph.The upgraded system enables more efficient client management, organized documentation, and better tracking of submitted inquiries, allowing the department to provide clearer policy guidance and technical assistance in line with existing labor laws, rules, and regulations."Through this system, DOLE’s Legal Service can more effectively deliver policy guidance, legal clarification, and technical assistance based on existing labor laws, implementing rules and regulations, and established government policies," Laguesma said.He said the portal does not replace formal complaint filing, inspection procedures, or adjudication processes under the law. Instead, it offers preliminary guidance and clarification to help clients better understand their concerns.He assured the public that face-to-face consultations remain available through the Public Assistance and Complaints Unit (PACU) desks in DOLE offices nationwide."These face-to-face consultations continue to provide an accessible avenue for individuals who require immediate assistance, clarification, or help navigating labor-related processes," Laguesma said.Around 400,000 workers have benefited from the department’s expanded digitization, he said."Through the strengthened operations of the DOLE's digital systems and initiatives, the labor department is making government help faster, simpler, and more accessible for millions of Filipino workers and various stakeholders," added Laguesma.DOLE’s Assistance for Request Management System platform logged nearly 101,000 requests for assistance during the first 10 months of 2025, and reduced the average settlement time from 15.87 days in 2024 to 8.39 days this year, an almost 50 percent improvement.Laguesma said the said online platform is used for submitting, tracking, and managing requests for assistance utilized by all offices implementing the Single Entry Approach (SEnA) program.SEnA is an administrative approach that provides a speedy, impartial, inexpensive, and accessible settlement procedure for all issues or complaints

arising from employer-employee relations to prevent them from developing into full-blown disputes.Under this method, all labor and employment disputes undergo a 30-day mandatory conciliation-mediation process to settle with the contending parties.For workers seeking advice or information, DOLE Hotline 1349 continues to serve as a lifeline. From January to Dec. 15, 2025, it had received more than 156,261 calls, Facebook messages, and e-mails, responding to over 162,412 queries.The department also continues to answer questions through its Labor and Employment Assistant (LEA), the website chatbot that gives netizens access to reliable labor information anytime.To ensure that establishments comply with general labor standards, DOLE’s Bureau of Working Conditions has also introduced online systems such as the Online Technical and Advisory Visit and the DOLE Online Compliance Portal.

- MMDA reactivates heat stroke breaks for Manila traffic personnel (2026-03-16 16:03)

THE Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) on Monday reimplemented its heat stroke break policy for traffic enforcers and street sweepers.The breaks aim to protect field personnel from extreme heat while keeping traffic management and road-clearing operations uninterrupted.The policy took effect on Monday and will remain in force until May 31.There will be 30-minute heat stroke breaks for field personnel assigned along major thoroughfares during the hot months when they are exposed to prolonged heat while doing their duties.MMDA said the breaks would be implemented alternately among personnel assigned in the same area, so visibility on the ground and field operations would not be hampered.Traffic aides, metro aides and street sweepers will follow specific break windows, depending on their shifts.Traffic aides on the 5 a.m. to 1 p.m. shift will take their break either from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. or from 10:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.Those on the 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. shift will take their break either from 2:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. or from 3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.Traffic aides on the 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. shift will take their break either from 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. or from 11:30 a.m. to 12 noon.Those working from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. will take their break either from 3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. or from 3:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.Metro aides and street sweepers on the 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. shift will take their break either from 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. or from 11:30 a.m. to 12 noon.Those assigned to the 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. shift will take their break either from 2:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. or from 3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.Personnel on the 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. shift will observe their regular break from 12 noon to 1 p.m.There will be an additional 15-minute break when the heat index in Metro Manila reaches 40 degrees Celsius or higher.MMDA said the extra break is meant to further reduce the risk of heat exhaustion, heat stroke and heat cramps among workers exposed to high temperatures while on duty.At the MMDA Timog Base in Quezon City, Chairman Don Artes led the distribution of drinking water and insulated reusable water bottles to field personnel as part of the agency’s heat mitigation measures.The agency said the distribution of drinking water to field personnel will be done on a regular basis until May 31.The water assistance was made possible through the partnership of water concessionaires Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Company Inc. with the MMDA.MMDA General Manager Nicolas Torre III said all MMDA satellite offices would also be provided with water for field personnel.Torre said around 4,000 traffic enforcers are expected to benefit from the initiative.“This will help ensure the health and wellness of all our field

officers while also making sure that they will still be able to effectively perform their duties on the road," Torre said.

- Caloocan digitalizes city health centers (2026-03-16 16:02)

CALOOCAN Mayor Dale Gonzalo Malapitan has begun transforming the city's health centers into digitalized facilities to ensure a more efficient delivery of basic medical programs to constituents.Malapitan said the local government has distributed various digitalization equipment, including laptops, desktop computers and printers, to the health centers in the city's 193 barangay (villages). "These would largely help in the local administration's advocacy of shifting towards the digitalization of services for its residents, especially in its remote villages," Malapitan said.He said the administrative aspects of the delivery of basic medical and health services in local communities will become more efficient and streamlined, including the processing, filing and disposal of patient information, and the faster inventory of prescription drugs and other medical supplies.He reminded city residents that the health centers' services are still free.

- Senators push for passage of fuel tax relief measure (2026-03-16 14:42)

MANILA, Philippines — Several senators on Monday sponsored a bill seeking the suspension of excise taxes on fuel during extraordinary circumstances.Senate Bill (SB) No. 1982 was sponsored by Senators Pia Cayetano, Joseph Victor Ejercito, Loren Legarda, Francis Pangilinan, Erwin Tulfo and Joel Villanueva.Senate President Vicente Sotto III said the chamber is expected to approve the measure on Tuesday after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. certified it as urgent.The House of Representatives earlier on Monday approved its counterpart fuel tax relief bill.The senators co-sponsored SB 1982 under Committee Report No. 48, which provides for the automatic suspension of excise taxes on petroleum products during extraordinary increases in global oil prices.The measure, principally authored by Ejercito, seeks to amend Section 148 of the National Internal Revenue Code to allow the President to suspend or reduce excise taxes on petroleum products under defined conditions. "Every peso added to the price of fuel means less food on the table, less money for school, and more hardship for families already struggling to get by," said Cayetano, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Energy. "I believe that the revenues foregone by suspending excise taxes in these extraordinary times are incomparable to the extraordinary relief that we can provide for our people," Ejercito said in his co-sponsorship speech.Legarda said the measure is needed amid the rapid and continuing rise in fuel prices triggered by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. "As we have seen time and again, this situation triggers a domino effect," she said.

- House okays Presidential Merit Scholarship Program bill (2026-03-16 14:37)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives on Monday approved the proposed Presidential Merit Scholarship Act.House Bill No. 8477 hurdled third and final reading with 259 lawmakers voting in favor of the measure during the plenary session. One lawmaker abstained. "By institutionalizing the Presidential Merit Scholarship Program, we are making

sure that the country’s brightest senior high school graduates will have the opportunity to pursue college in priority fields, regardless of their financial situation,” House Majority Leader and Ilocos Norte 1st District Rep. Ferdinand Alexander Marcos said in a statement.The bill seeks to institutionalize the Bagong Pilipinas Merit Scholarship Program and is considered a priority measure.

- House okays bill to expand free tertiary education (2026-03-16 14:12)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives has approved a bill aimed at expanding access to free tertiary education.House Bill No. 8476 hurdled third and final reading with 257 lawmakers voting in favor of its passage during Monday’s plenary session.“This measure is meant to make sure qualified students from the poorest households can actually reach tertiary education,” House Majority Leader Ferdinand Alexander Marcos said in a statement.The bill seeks to reform the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) program by creating a voucher system for beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) who want to study in private schools.Under the measure, students from households under the 4Ps will be automatically prioritized and included in the TES once they qualify for admission to higher education institutions recognized by the Commission on Higher Education.“The rationale is straightforward: If a student already belongs to a household officially recognized by the government as among the poorest in the country, then that student should not have to struggle through additional layers of verification simply to receive support for education,” Tingog Rep. Jude Acidre, chairman of the House Committee on Technical and Higher Education, said during the plenary.

- Marcos inspects venues, preparations for ASEAN Summit (2026-03-16 14:02)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday inspected venues that will be used for the 48th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Leaders’ Summit and related meetings in Cebu this May.Among the sites is the Mactan Expo Center, which will host summit delegates and is also expected to become a landmark that could boost tourism and business events in the province.Marcos also led the inauguration of the convention facility in Lapu-Lapu City, highlighting its role in strengthening the country’s tourism and meetings industry.“It’s my pleasure to be back here in Cebu, to be with you again. This is one of the places I really want to visit again and again,” the President said.The new facility, Marcos said, will help position Cebu as a major hub for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE).“Travelers look for destinations that are easy to reach, equipped with facilities such as this. And of course, the beauty that all of the Philippines is able to offer. But alongside that, our infrastructure must continue to improve so that every visitor’s experience becomes smoother and more memorable,” he added.Costing P1.5 billion, the convention center was developed by Megaworld Corp. as part of the Mactan Newtown township. It will serve as the main venue of the ASEAN Summit two months from now.Also present during the event were Megaworld President Kevin Tan, Lapu-Lapu City Mayor Maria Cynthia “Cindi” King Chan, Lapu-Lapu City Lone District Representative Junard “Ahong” Chan, and other local officials and business

leaders in Cebu.

- House bill amending Biofuels Act hurdles 3rd reading (2026-03-16 13:46)

MANILA, Philippines — Voting 209–5, the House of Representatives on Monday approved on third and final reading House Bill No. 8469, which seeks to amend the Biofuels Act.In a statement, the office of Speaker Faustino Dy III said the measure, also known as the proposed Oil Price Stabilization Act, aims to allow the president to suspend mandatory biofuel blending if blended fuel prices are at least five percent higher than pure fuel, easing pump prices.President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has certified the measure as urgent.“The President’s certification makes clear that this is an urgent matter affecting every Filipino household and the entire economy. The House stands ready to act swiftly on this measure so we can give government the flexibility to stabilize fuel prices,” Dy said.“Our priority is to protect consumers, keep transport and production costs manageable, and ensure that energy supply remains stable,” he added.

- Dy says door is always open to fellow House lawmakers (2026-03-16 13:29)

MANILA, Philippines—Speaker Faustino Dy III said his door "is always open" to members of the House of Representatives who may want to consult him or discuss their concerns.Dy issued the statement following the criticism aired Monday by Antipolo 1st District Rep. Ronaldo Puno, one of the House's deputy speakers, that the speaker has not been talking to lawmakers. t5 "My door is always open to our colleagues in the House. The strength of this institution lies in our ability to talk openly, resolve concerns constructively, and work together despite differences," Dy said.Puno said in a press conference earlier on Monday that the National Unity Party (NUP) would meet when Congress is in recess to discuss issues at the House."He is our leader, he should lead," Puno said. "But he does not talk to the members of congress to find out what the problems are. It seems like he is distancing himself,” Puno said."We will look into whether we should remain with the majority or just transfer to the minority," the NUP chairman added."Our problem is we face our people, our [village] captains every day. They ask us, 'What happened? Why is there no help for our people now?' We have no answer. We ask here, we hear no answer. Only promises that do not get fulfilled," he said.

- VP Duterte says impeach complaints must be dismissed (2026-03-16 13:13)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte said the two impeachment complaints against her must be dismissed.Duterte filed her answer to the complaints on Monday, saying she was doing so “without waiving any jurisdictional and/or other objections she has to these proceedings and her right to exhaust legal remedies.” The House Committee on Justice received the answer. In a notice dated March 4, 2026, the panel directed Duterte to submit her response within 10 calendar days from receipt of the notice.In her filing, Duterte said “these Impeachment Complaints must be dismissed.” The answer said the complaints “recycle the same accusations against the Vice President as those contained in the nullified Fourth Impeachment Complaint filed by the 19th House of Representatives, including conjectures, speculations, and conclusions of fact and law which do not constitute ultimate facts.” The 19th

House of Representatives refers to the previous Congress. “Absent any statement of ultimate facts in any of these Impeachment Complaints, there is nothing for respondent to answer,” the filing read. “Respondent thus only admits averments therein insofar as they allege her election, assumption to the Office of the Vice President, appointment as Secretary of Education, and her prior offices as Mayor and Vice Mayor of Davao City,” it added. “The rest of the allegations, including the annexes and so-called evidence attached to the Impeachment Complaints, are specifically denied for being false, misleading, impertinent, and mere conclusions of fact and law,” the answer read.

- Money swindled online can be recovered if scam is reported early - CICC (2026-03-16 11:37)

MANILA, Philippines—Money swindled through any form of online scam can be recovered if the incident is reported early, the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center (CICC) said on Monday.The CICC signed a partnership agreement with the Presidential Anti Organized Crime Commission to further strengthen the government’s fight against all forms of online scams and forms of organized crimes on the internet. “Because of this partnership, there’s now a chance [that you can retrieve your money.] You have to remember that CICC is also a signatory to the Data Sharing Agreement with BSP (Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas) Consumer Account Protection Office because under the Anti-Financial Account Scamming Act law there’s a chance that we can recover it we were able to report it fast,” Renato “Aboy” Paraiso, CICC executive director, said. “For example if you transacted money and you were able to report it quickly, the CICC can instruct the BSP CAPO to void the transaction,” Paraiso said.

- Senate approves bill improving school access in remote areas (2026-03-16 11:31)

MANILA, Philippines—The Senate on Monday approved on third and final reading Senate Bill (SB) 1937 which seeks to ensure that quality education reaches every Filipino child, even those in remote areas. The Senate passed SB 1937 which will institutionalize support for public basic education schools in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDA).The senators approved the proposed GIDA School Act, two days before Congress adjourns for a two month break.The bill supports learners attending schools which lack electricity, have makeshift or multigrade classrooms, or require more than an hour of travel to reach.Sen. Loren Legarda, SB 1937 principal author, said the measure ensures that children in remote communities will have schools "within reach" or would not have to walk over three kilometers to attend school."Education is a fundamental right and a powerful equalizer. No child should be denied learning opportunities simply because of geography," Legarda said in explaining her "yes" vote. “Through this measure, we ensure that learners in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas are given the same opportunities to learn and thrive as any other student,” she said.She said the measure addresses these persistent barriers by strengthening support for public basic education schools in GIDAs and "ensuring that learners in remote and marginalized communities are provided with accessible, safe, and adequate school facilities."The Second Educational Commission found that learners in GIDA or “last mile

schools," suffer from acute proficiency gaps. For instance, in the Grade 10 and Grade 12 National Achievement Tests these students are heavily concentrated in the low and not-proficient bands, with almost none achieving proficiency, and a staggering 81.59 percent below the minimum proficiency threshold.

- Acop takes oath as House member (2026-03-16 11:27)

MANILA, Philippines—Antipolo 2nd District Rep. Philip Conrad Acop took his oath as a member of the House of Representatives on Monday.Speaker Faustino Dy III administered the oath during the plenary session.Acop won the special election held last week. His father Romeo, died while serving as the district's representative last year.

- Senate approves bill overhauling outdated remittance system (2026-03-16 11:25)

MANILA, Philippines—The Senate on Monday approved on third and final reading a bill that protects the remittances of over two million overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) from "sudden and unilateral" fees.Sen. Joel Villanueva said Senate Bill (SB) 1917 or the proposed Overseas Filipino Workers' Remittance Protection Act overhauls the country's remittance system for OFWs.The senator said the measure, which he authored, addresses long-standing abuses that have "quietly eaten into the earnings of millions of migrant workers and their families.""Many OFWs remain trapped in an outdated remittance system — one that quietly chips away at their hard-earned income through excessive fees, hidden charges, and unclear foreign exchange practices," Villanueva said. The chairman of the Senate Committee on Banks, Financial Institutions, and Currencies, said the bill "is not intended to target the industry.""This bill is not anti-business. It advances a balanced system — one that allows fair returns for service providers, while ensuring strong protection for those whose only capital is their labor, time, and sacrifice," Villanueva said.It seeks to streamline remittance charges and requires full disclosure of fee structures, and mandate stakeholder consultations before any adjustments to fees are made, he added.

- VP Sara: Marcos has many shortcomings (2026-03-16 09:05)

MANILA, Philippines—Vice President Sara Duterte again criticized President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday, saying he has many shortcomings."He has many shortcomings as President. Not just in giving sympathy and empathy to our countrymen. More than that is the problem and scandal in the use of public funds," Duterte said in an interview in Digos City.The vice president made the statement after she expressed solidarity with overseas Filipino workers affected by the Middle East conflict."Whatever the Office of the Vice President can do to help, we will do it. Just tell us how we can help," she said.Duterte said that her office can extend aid to Filipinos affected by the war in the Middle East through the Relief for Indigents and Individuals in Crises and Emergencies program.

- Oil firms to stagger new big-time fuel price hike (2026-03-16 06:08)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Energy (DOE) on Monday said that oil companies have agreed to stagger another big-time price as the war in the Middle East showed no signs of abating.The department said that the prices of gasoline will increase by P12.90-P16.60 per liter and diesel by P20.40-P23.90 per liter.The cost of kerosene will go up by P6.90- P8.90 per liter.The price adjustments will take effect on Tuesday, March 17.Shell said it will raise gasoline prices by P16.60 per liter, diesel by P23.90 per liter, and kerosene by P6.90 per liter. The increases will be staggered for three days starting March 17. The price adjustment will be fully implemented in March 19.Meanwhile, Seaoil said it will hike gasoline prices by P16.30 per liter, diesel by P23.30 per liter, and kerosene by P6.90 per liter. The increases will also be staggered for two days from March 17 then fully implemented on March 18.Petron will increase gasoline prices by P12.90 per liter, diesel by P20.40 per liter, and kerosene by P8.90 per liter. Flying V will implement the same prices adjustments.Meanwhile, Total said that will hike gasoline prices by P14.10 per liter, and diesel by P20.70 per liter.This will be the 9th consecutive week of fuel price increases.Last week, gasoline prices increased by P7-P13 per liter, P17.50-P24.25 per liter for diesel, and P32.00-P36.00 per liter for kerosene.

- Palace team, UN peace experts discuss support for Barmm development initiatives (2026-03-16 05:41)

MANILA, Philippines—Initiatives connected to the Bangsamoro peace process were discussed during recent engagements in New York between the Office of the Special Assistant to the President (OSAP) and representatives of the United Nations (UN).A delegation led by Special Assistant to the President (SAP) Anton Lagdameo Jr. held a courtesy call and briefing with peace experts of the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations along with officials of various UN agencies following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s working visit there.The discussions were part of efforts to strengthen international partnerships supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), which serves as the framework for long-term peace and development in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Barmm).Talks centered on opportunities to mobilize international technical assistance, partnerships, and resource support to help accelerate key components of the Bangsamoro peace process. The meeting also aimed to identify practical entry points for deeper engagement with the UN system and member states in support of peacebuilding initiatives.Lagdameo noted the Marcos administration’s efforts to strengthen coordination among national government agencies and international partners to support the implementation of programs tied to the Bangsamoro peace process.The OSAP convened national government agencies to advance the socio-economic component of the normalization program, including initiatives under the Camps Transformation Plan.A coordination meeting was held earlier this month in Malacañang to review the status of government interventions in former camps of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as part of the broader normalization program under the peace agreement.Lagdameo said the meeting sought to consolidate baseline data on socio-economic interventions already delivered in these areas and identify remaining targets for implementation between 2026 and 2028.The Camps Transformation Plan forms part of the

normalization program’s socio-economic component, which focuses not only on assistance to decommissioned combatants and their families but also on development initiatives in communities located within six previously acknowledged MILF camps. The program includes infrastructure projects and community development initiatives aimed at improving living conditions and supporting the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life.Government officials said stronger coordination among agencies is essential in accelerating the implementation of development programs in the Bangsamoro region as the national government works to fulfill key commitments under the peace agreement in the coming years.

- Pasig City to start P5,000 fuel aid payout for tricycle drivers (2026-03-16 03:26)

MANILA, Philippines — Pasig City will begin releasing the P5,000 fuel subsidy for tricycle drivers this week under the national government’s financial assistance program for public utility vehicle drivers.Mayor Vico Sotto announced on Monday, March 16, that tricycle drivers would be the first to receive the aid, to be followed by jeepney, UV, and TNVS drivers.The city government said the manual payout for tricycle drivers will be held from March 17 to 20 in selected venues.The payout schedule is as follows: • March 17, Tuesday — Purok 3, Pineda Covered Court, Pineda village; Damayan Multipurpose Hall, Pinagbuhatan village • March 18, Wednesday — Purok 3, Pineda Covered Court, Pineda village; Ilaya Multipurpose Hall, Santolan village • March 19, Thursday — Purok 3, Pineda Covered Court, Pineda village; Ilaya Multipurpose Hall, Santolan village • March 20, Friday — Amphitheatre, Kapitolyo village The distribution will be done in two batches daily, from 6 a.m. to 12 noon and from 12 noon to 5 p.m.The city government advised beneficiaries to coordinate with their respective TODA presidents for their assigned schedule and to check the advisory for the requirements they need to bring.Pasig said the payout will be handled by the Department of Social Welfare and Development with assistance from the City Social Welfare and Development Office and the Tricycle Operation and Regulatory Office.

- Four persons die, one injured in Rizal car accident (2026-03-16 02:56)

MANILA, Philippines—Four persons died while another was injured in an accident triggered by a speeding car driven by a 60-year-old woman in Angono, Rizal Sunday afternoon.Police investigators said that one of the victims, a 69-year old homeless woman died on the spot, while the three others, a 15-year old boy, a 23-year old man and his girlfriend died while being treated in the hospital.A 13-year-old boy was also injured but is now out of danger.The incident took place past 1 p.m. along Metro East Road in Barangay San Isidro. Based on the CCTV footage installed in the area, the speeding car hit the motorcycle being driven by the 23-year-old victim who had his girlfriend as passenger. After hitting the motorcycle, the car hit the two teenagers who were buying bread in a bakery store and the homeless woman who was just sitting in front of bakery. The driver of the speeding car was arrested immediately. Charges of reckless imprudence resulting in multiple homicide and serious physical injury are being readied against her.

- Pasig hospital’s ER temporarily closed for upgrade (2026-03-16 02:20)

MANILA, Philippines — The emergency room of the Pasig Hope Medical Center has been temporarily closed to give way to renovation and expansion works.Pasig City Mayor Vico Sotto made the announcement on Monday, March 16. He said the hospital’s outpatient and the physical medicine and rehabilitation departments will operate beginning Monday, March 16.The hospital, formerly known as Pasig City Children’s Hospital, is being upgraded. Sotto said the renovation, upgrading and conversion work covers the entire city hospital.He added that a separate project has also been lined up for the expansion of the emergency room at Pasig City General Hospital.

- P1.7 billion cash assistance released in Manila (2026-03-16 01:26)

MANILA, Philippines — Over 330,000 residents in Manila or 15 percent of the city’s population will receive P1.7 billion in cash assistance, Manila City Mayor Isko Moreno said Monday.Speaking at the flag-raising ceremony, Moreno said the cash aid will help “cushion” the impact of rising fuel and electricity prices amid the war in the Middle East.Of that amount, P594.76 million will come from the city’s General Fund, while P1.165 billion will be released from the Trust Fund, bringing the total amount to P1,760,163,485.42.Moreno said the assistance will help residents cope with higher living costs while also supporting the local economy, noting that when people have purchasing power, businesses in the city will continue to prosper."If we can raise the buying capacity or purchasing power of our community, then the businesses will benefit from it, the jobs will be protected, and the economy will continue to evolve—what you call the velocity of money effect," he explained

- Labor group seeks reintegration program for OFWs affected by war (2026-03-15 23:54)

ORGANIZED labor has expressed concern that the country's employment and underemployment rates will be further aggravated by the war in the Middle East unless the government takes immediate decisive action to bolster job opportunities.The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), the largest national trade union group in the country, said that based on the latest Labor Force Survey (LFS) of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), unemployment rate rose to 5.4 percent in January 2026, equivalent to 2.96 million Filipinos without jobs, up from 4.4 percent or 2.26 million in December 2025.Meanwhile, underemployment surged to 13.2 percent or 6.35 million workers in January, a steep rise from 8 percent or 3.93 million in December.“The sudden rise in unemployment and underemployment reflects not only the end of holiday seasonal jobs, but the deeper vulnerabilities of our labor market that will be further aggravated by the conflict in the Middle East which threatens the lives and livelihoods of Filipinos both at home and abroad," the group said in a statement.It stressed that beyond bringing overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) away from danger, the government must ensure that repatriated OFWs can rebuild their lives with dignity through real opportunities for decent work.Earlier, Economic Planning and Development Secretary Arsenio Balisacan acknowledged the risks confronting the OFWs in the Middle East.“Given elevated geopolitical tensions and global uncertainties, strategic policies are needed to bolster labor market resilience. The government continues to pursue a

comprehensive response to support affected workers in the short term while fostering a dynamic and robust labor market in the medium and long term," Balisacan said."Our priority is clear: create more and better jobs at home, strengthen industries, equip our workers with the skills needed for higher-value employment, and ensure that those affected by global disruptions, including OFWs, can transition smoothly into productive opportunities here in the Philippines," he added.TUCP said that workers deserve far more decisive strategic policies than temporary excise tax suspension and fuel subsidies. What the country urgently needs are bolder structural reforms to raise wages, reduce taxes, and reintegrate returning OFWs, it said."We cannot speak of labor market resilience when, in the span of just one month, hundreds of thousands more Filipinos have lost their jobs and more than two million more have become underemployed while thousands of our kababayan in the Middle East are now seeking repatriation amid escalating tensions," TUCP said.The group urged the government to immediately implement a comprehensive reintegration program, such as skills inventory and profiling of returning OFWs, job-matching programs with domestic industries and employers, upskilling and re-skilling initiatives, including in emerging sectors, and enterprise and livelihood support, among others."Our priorities must be clearer and more concrete: remove the burdensome VAT on electricity to lower power costs, attract investors, strengthen industries, and generate employment, as well as raise wages so that Filipino workers no longer need to work two or three jobs just to survive. With the right policies and stronger political will, we can transform this moment of crisis into an opportunity to rebuild a stronger economy that creates decent work and ensure that every Filipino working family lives with dignity," the group said.

- Lacson defends AMLC's independence, urges protection from political pressure (2026-03-15 16:12)

SEN. Panfilo Lacson said the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) should remain insulated from political or private pressure given its critical role in safeguarding the country's financial system.Any attempt to influence AMLC's operations could expose those involved to legal consequences, Lacson said.He said the AMLC has been performing well and should not be disrupted by attempts to manipulate its leadership.Lacson said he had not heard of the reported attempt by a private businessman to influence the AMLC's board composition. But he said that such interference would violate the law."That's not acceptable. The Anti-Money Laundering Council is covered by law. It has a mandate under the law," Lacson said in a radio interview last Saturday.He expressed hope that Eli Remolona Jr., Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas governor and AMLC chairman, would press charges against individuals attempting to undermine the council's independence.Lacson, who had backed amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001, said that failing to defend the integrity of the institution under Remolona's watch could be seen as a disservice to the country's financial oversight system.He noted that the Senate has been trying to further strengthen the powers of the AMLC to improve its capacity to trace suspicious financial transactions and combat illicit financial flows.Lacson said the Senate Committee on Accountability of Public Officers and Investigations, widely referred to as the Blue Ribbon Committee, has made recommendations to enhance the

council’s authority and operational capability.We have several recommendations to further strengthen the Anti-Money Laundering Council, especially its powers. These are meant to be incorporated into amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering Law,” he said.Lacson pushed for a higher AMLC budget during deliberations on the 2026 national budget.He said the AMLC’s workload — monitoring vast numbers of financial transactions across the banking and financial system — requires stronger institutional support.He proposed restoring funds that had been cut from the agency’s allocation under the National Expenditure Program.The additional funding would allow the AMLC to upgrade its technology, strengthen investigative capabilities, and better monitor suspicious financial activities, he said.Lacson said protecting the integrity of the AMLC is essential in maintaining public trust and ensuring that anti-money laundering enforcement remains impartial and effective.

- ‘Protect Gulf oil route’ ‘Protect Gulf oil route’ (2026-03-15 16:12)

MANAMA — US President Donald Trump called for other nations’ warships to help protect world oil supplies passing through the Strait of Hormuz, still virtually blocked Sunday by the threat of Iranian attacks.Despite sustaining heavy bombardments since US-Israeli forces launched a war against Iran on Feb. 28, Tehran has defied Trump’s assertion that its military capability has been “100%” destroyed.Iran’s attacks and threats have nearly halted shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital route normally used for one-fifth of world oil supplies, sending petroleum prices soaring 40 percent and roiling the global economy.Its military has deployed drones and missiles against Israel, Gulf energy facilities, and other targets across the Middle East region.AFP journalists heard blasts in Bahrain’s capital Manama, and saw black smoke belching from a major oil terminal in the United Arab Emirates port city of Fujairah. Security sources said the US Embassy in Iraq was struck by a drone.“Many Countries, especially those who are affected by Iran’s attempted closure of the Hormuz Strait, will be sending War Ships, in conjunction with the United States of America, to keep the Strait open and safe,” Trump posted on social media Saturday.“Hopefully China, France, Japan, South Korea, the UK, and others, that are affected by this artificial constraint, will send Ships to the area,” he added.“In the meantime, the United States will be bombing the hell out of the shoreline, and continually shooting Iranian Boats and Ships out of the water.”US forces struck Iran’s Kharg Island on Friday — from which nearly all of the country’s oil exports flow — with Trump saying they had “obliterated every MILITARY target” while sparing energy facilities.Iran threatened US-linked oil and energy firms would be “turned into a pile of ashes” if its oil facilities were hit.More than 1,200 people have been killed by US and Israeli strikes, according to Iranian health ministry figures that could not be independently verified.The UN refugee agency says up to 3.2 million people have been displaced in Iran, most of them fleeing the capital and other cities to seek safety.The Pentagon says more than 15,000 targets in Iran have been hit by US and Israeli forces.US media reported that the Pentagon has dispatched the amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli and around 2,500 Marines to the region.The United Nations earlier warned of significant risks to global trade and development, including prices of food and cost of living, if the Strait of Hormuz is closed.“The resulting ripple effects go far beyond the

region, affecting energy markets, maritime transport, and global supply chains," the UN Conference on Trade and Development said in a report."Higher energy, fertilizer and transport costs — including freight rates, bunker fuel prices and insurance premiums — may increase food costs and intensify cost-of-living pressures, particularly for the most vulnerable," it said.'Leave now' Tehran has also shown a capacity to strike at Israel and across the region, firing missiles and dispatching drones in a string of attacks over the weekend.AFP journalists heard blasts over Jerusalem after the military detected missiles launched from Iran, while the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia reported new missile or drone interceptions.Clouds of black smoke rose over the UAE port of Fujairah, home to a major Emirati oil storage and export terminal, shortly after Iran's military warned UAE civilians to avoid port areas.Washington's embassy in Iraq was hit by a drone, security sources told AFP — the second such strike during the war — while the Emirati consulate in Iraqi Kurdistan was targeted for the second time in a week.US officials in Baghdad urged citizens to "leave now." In Kuwait, a drone strike damaged the international airport's radar system but caused no injuries, the civil aviation authority said.Qatar evacuated parts of downtown Doha and intercepted two missiles. Blasts were heard by AFP journalists.Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had launched missiles at US forces stationed at the Al-Kharj base in Saudi Arabia, a close US ally that hosts a large number of American troops.The kingdom did not confirm the attack but said earlier it had intercepted six ballistic missiles headed toward Al-Kharj.

- 'Protect Gulf oil route' (2026-03-15 16:12)

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facilities were hit.More than 1,200 people have been killed by US and Israeli strikes, according to Iranian health ministry figures that could not be independently verified.The UN refugee agency says up to 3.2 million people have been displaced in Iran, most of them fleeing the capital and other cities to seek safety.The Pentagon says more than 15,000 targets in Iran have been hit by US and Israeli forces.US media reported that the Pentagon has dispatched the amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli and around 2,500 Marines to the region.The United Nations earlier warned of significant risks to global trade and development, including prices of food and cost of living, if the Strait of Hormuz is closed.“The resulting ripple effects go far beyond the region, affecting energy markets, maritime transport, and global supply chains,” the UN Conference on Trade and Development said in a report.“Higher energy, fertilizer and transport costs — including freight rates, bunker fuel prices and insurance premiums — may increase food costs and intensify cost-of-living pressures, particularly for the most vulnerable,” it said.‘Leave now’Tehran has also shown a capacity to strike at Israel and across the region, firing missiles and dispatching drones in a string of attacks over the weekend.AFP journalists heard blasts over Jerusalem after the military detected missiles launched from Iran, while the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia reported new missile or drone interceptions.Clouds of black smoke rose over the UAE port of Fujairah, home to a major Emirati oil storage and export terminal, shortly after Iran’s military warned UAE civilians to avoid port areas.Washington’s embassy in Iraq was hit by a drone, security sources told AFP — the second such strike during the war — while the Emirati consulate in Iraqi Kurdistan was targeted for the second time in a week.US officials in Baghdad urged citizens to “leave now.” In Kuwait, a drone strike damaged the international airport’s radar system but caused no injuries, the civil aviation authority said.Qatar evacuated parts of downtown Doha and intercepted two missiles. Blasts were heard by AFP journalists.Iran’s Revolutionary Guards said they had launched missiles at US forces stationed at the Al-Kharj base in Saudi Arabia, a close US ally that hosts a large number of American troops.The kingdom did not confirm the attack but said earlier it had intercepted six ballistic missiles headed toward Al-Kharj.

- Karl Yulo wins gold in FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Cup Antalya leg (2026-03-15 16:11)

KARL Eldrew Yulo seized the gold medal in the floor exercise event of the FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Cup Series Antalya leg in Turkey Saturday night.Yulo, the younger brother of Olympic champion Carlos, racked up 14.100 points (5.300 in difficulty, 8.800 in execution) for his first gold medal in the seniors division.The 18-year-old has competed in just two tournaments, already reaching three final rounds.He reached the finals of floor exercise and horizontal bar in the Baku leg of the World Cup series last week in Azerbaijan.He couldn’t make a podium finish there, but made sure to bounce back in Antalya.“The power trio got the gold,” wrote the Gymnastics Association of the Philippines (GAP) on a Facebook post, captioning a photo of Yulo, his coach Reyland Capellan, and federation chief Cynthia Carrion.“After performing with a stellar score of 14.100, we are proud of you Eldrew!” Yulo scored 13.666 points in the qualification, which was good for fourth place.The 4-foot-11 gymnast dazzled the crowd with his twirls and tumblings, and landed well after every set of

routines.Sitting and waiting for his scores on the screens, Yulo stood up and raised his hand after realizing he had posted the highest score.He then sent flying kisses to the crowd. Eamon Montgomery of Ireland took the silver with 13.833 points, and Rayderley Zapata of Spain took the bronze with 13.333 points.Yulo is expected to compete in the next leg of the World Cup series in Cairo, Egypt, from April 3 to 6.

- VP Sara Duterte has until today to answer impeach complaints (2026-03-15 16:10)

VICE President Sara Duterte has until today, March 16, to respond to the impeachment complaints that the House Committee on Justice has found to be sufficient in substance.Bicol Saro Rep. Terry Ridon, a member of the committee, told a news forum on Saturday the panel would wait for Duterte’s reply until the end of office hours, “and then we will have to decide what the next step will be.” On March 4, the committee served a notice giving Duterte 10 days to answer the two impeachment complaints.“Failure on your part to file the Verified Answer within the period herein provided shall be deemed a waiver of your right to file the same, and you shall be considered to have interposed a general denial to the allegations contained in the Impeachment Complaints,” the notice stated.Ridon said the process would be “shortened, abbreviated” if Duterte does not file an answer by today.“So that means, I think as early as the final weeks of this month, it can proceed to a determination of sufficiency in grounds, and then we can proceed to the hearing proper,” he said.Batangas 2nd District Rep. Gerville Luistro, the committee chairman, said that the vice president’s answer will be forwarded to the complainant, who has three calendar days to file a reply.Duterte has three days to file a rejoinder.Four complaints were filed last month against Duterte. The House committee set aside the first one, saying it violated the rule against initiating impeachment proceedings against the same official more than once within a one-year period.The second complaint was withdrawn by the 17 people who filed it.The third alleged that Duterte violated the Constitution and betrayed public trust in connection with confidential funds allocated to the Office of the Vice President for 2022 and 2023, and confidential funds allocated for 2023 to the Department of Education.

- Lawmakers seek P52.8 billion aid for workers affected by Middle East war (2026-03-15 16:09)

FOUR lawmakers filed House Bill 8495 which sought supplemental funding of P52.8 billion to protect transport workers, farmers and overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) from the economic effects of the conflict in the Middle East.The amount consists of P12 billion in fuel subsidies for public utility vehicle drivers and other transport workers; P2.8 billion in agricultural subsidies for farmers and fisherfolk; P18 billion for the repatriation of OFWs affected by the conflict; and P20 billion for reintegration programs for displaced OFWs.HB 8495 was filed by Akbayan Representatives Chel Diokno, Perci Cendaña, and Dadah Kiram Ismula with Dinagat Islands Rep. Kaka Bag-ao.“Given the indispensable role of petroleum in transportation, agriculture, industry, and other essential economic activities, the risk of supply disruptions has already contributed to a sharp increase in global and domestic fuel prices,” they said in the bill’s

explanatory note.The disruptions “threaten to significantly raise the cost of transportation, food production, and basic goods, placing substantial economic pressure on Filipino households and sectors most sensitive to energy price fluctuations,” they said.The agricultural sector is particularly vulnerable, since fertilizer prices are closely tied to global energy markets, they said.Last Wednesday, the House approved on second reading HB 8418, which seeks to authorize the president to suspend or reduce fuel excise taxes during national or global economic emergencies.House Majority Leader and Ilocos Norte 1st District Rep. Ferdinand Alexander Marcos, one of HB 8418’s authors, said the bill was made for times when global disruptions quickly drive prices up and Filipino families need quick and precise government action.“This bill gives the president a measured tool to cushion that shock, with clear triggers, clear limits and clear reporting when the prices of fuel and basic commodities get too high,” Marcos said.In a speech at the plenary, Marikina 2nd District Rep. Miro Quimbo, the chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means, called the proposal a necessary sacrifice on the government’s part to extend “a lifeline” to workers and the poor.“This is simply a delegation of a legislative power, which Congress has done many, many times. In fact, in that very same provision on Section 148 [of the Internal Revenue Code], there’s already a delegation there,” Quimbo said during the committee hearing.Under the bill, the president “may, upon the recommendation of the” Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), “in coordination with the” secretary of the Department of Energy (DOE), “suspend the imposition of, or reduce the excise taxes on fuel,” subject to conditions.These conditions are: when the average Dubai crude oil price based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MoPS) has reached or exceeded $80 per barrel for a month immediately preceding the issuance of the suspension or reduction order, when the president has declared a state of national emergency or calamity, “and such condition has resulted in extraordinary increases in domestic pump prices of petroleum products”; the suspension or reduction of the tax can only last for up to six months, unless Congress extends it or ends it earlier through a joint resolution.The president must submit to Congress a report within 15 days from the suspension order’s issuance and every month afterward on the estimated foregone revenues, and the impact on “inflation, fuel prices, and other economic activity.”The DBCC is composed of the Department of Budget and Management, Department of Finance, Department of Economy, Planning, and Development, and Office of the President.The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas serves as adviser to the DBCC.

- ‘Oil tax relief must also cover motorcycle riders’ (2026-03-15 16:08)

SEN. Erwin Tulfo called on the Executive branch to ensure that the proposed tax relief on petroleum products would also cover gasoline to protect the welfare of the country’s 8.5 million motorcycle riders.Tulfo made the appeal after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. certified as urgent the bill granting him authority to suspend or reduce excise taxes on oil products.During the Senate Ways and Means Committee hearing last week, Tulfo warned against limiting tax relief solely to diesel-based sectors.“Let us not leave the motorcycle-riding public behind. They use gasoline for their motorcycles, so we cannot limit the excise tax

suspension on diesel alone," Tulfo said.He noted that there are 8.5 million Filipinos who use motorcycles on a daily basis. "Many of them use it to go to work, and others use it for their livelihood. What will happen to them if we do not include gasoline in the suspension?" he said.In response, Finance Undersecretary Karlo Adriano said the Development Budget Coordination Committee and the Department of Energy (DOE) are preparing a recommendation for the president's approval that will consider these concerns.Tulfo, chairman of the Senate Committee on Social Justice, Welfare, and Rural Development, also warned against the politicization of government aid.He said that with fuel subsidies currently reaching public utility vehicle drivers and fisherfolk, there must be "zero tolerance for political grandstanding." "We have policies in place prohibiting the intervention of politicians. Those who will be caught using this crisis as a tool for political motives must be punished," Tulfo said. "The money being used for these subsidies is from hard-earned taxpayers' money; there shall be no intervention of any politician in the distribution," he said.Tulfo has filed Senate Bill 1750, which seeks to "bar elected officials and candidates from participating in the actual distribution of government financial aid."

- Philippine Army reservist ranks 11th in international drone tournament (2026-03-15 16:07)

A PHILIPPINE Army reservist finished 11th out of 76 elite drone pilots who competed in the final round of the Military International Drone Racing Tournament in Sydney, Australia, on March 14.The victory of reservist Private First Class Rex Froilan Gil showcased the growing competence of the Philippine Army's unmanned aerial systems (UAS) operators.Competing in high-speed First-Person View (FPV) drone events that tested piloting agility, precision targeting and tactical maneuvering, the feat highlighted the Army's commitment to keep pace with the rapidly evolving field of drone warfare.Gil's performance builds on the Army drone team's 5th-place finish in the 2025 Military International Drone Racing Tournament at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the United Kingdom.The team, composed of an officer, two enlisted personnel and two reservists, was invited to the competition as part of the Australian Army's 125th founding anniversary celebration.

- Reintegration program for OFWs sought (2026-03-15 16:06)

ORGANIZED labor has expressed concern that the country's employment and underemployment rates will be further aggravated by the war in the Middle East unless the government takes immediate decisive action to bolster job opportunities.The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), the largest national trade union group in the country, said that based on the latest Labor Force Survey (LFS) of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), unemployment rate rose to 5.4 percent in January 2026, equivalent to 2.96 million Filipinos without jobs, up from 4.4 percent or 2.26 million in December 2025.Meanwhile, underemployment surged to 13.2 percent or 6.35 million workers in January, a steep rise from 8 percent or 3.93 million in December. "The sudden rise in unemployment and underemployment reflects not only the end of holiday seasonal jobs, but the deeper vulnerabilities of our labor market that will be further aggravated by the conflict in the Middle

East which threatens the lives and livelihoods of Filipinos both at home and abroad," the group said in a statement.It stressed that beyond bringing overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) away from danger, the government must ensure that repatriated OFWs can rebuild their lives with dignity through real opportunities for decent work.Earlier, Economic Planning and Development Secretary Arsenio Balisacan acknowledged the risks confronting the OFWs in the Middle East."Given elevated geopolitical tensions and global uncertainties, strategic policies are needed to bolster labor market resilience. The government continues to pursue a comprehensive response to support affected workers in the short term while fostering a dynamic and robust labor market in the medium and long term," Balisacan said."Our priority is clear: create more and better jobs at home, strengthen industries, equip our workers with the skills needed for higher-value employment, and ensure that those affected by global disruptions, including OFWs, can transition smoothly into productive opportunities here in the Philippines," he added.TUCP said that workers deserve far more decisive strategic policies than temporary excise tax suspension and fuel subsidies. What the country urgently needs are bolder structural reforms to raise wages, reduce taxes, and reintegrate returning OFWs, it said."We cannot speak of labor market resilience when, in the span of just one month, hundreds of thousands more Filipinos have lost their jobs and more than two million more have become underemployed while thousands of our kababayan in the Middle East are now seeking repatriation amid escalating tensions," TUCP said.The group urged the government to immediately implement a comprehensive reintegration program, such as skills inventory and profiling of returning OFWs, job-matching programs with domestic industries and employers, upskilling and re-skilling initiatives, including in emerging sectors, and enterprise and livelihood support, among others."Our priorities must be clearer and more concrete: remove the burdensome VAT on electricity to lower power costs, attract investors, strengthen industries, and generate employment, as well as raise wages so that Filipino workers no longer need to work two or three jobs just to survive. With the right policies and stronger political will, we can transform this moment of crisis into an opportunity to rebuild a stronger economy that creates decent work and ensure that every Filipino working family lives with dignity," the group said.

- Malacañang reaffirms support for LGUs (2026-03-15 16:05)

MALACAÑANG reaffirmed its commitment to further strengthen and develop local government units (LGUs) so they could better serve their communities.Executive Secretary Ralph Recto, representing President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., issued the statement at the 2026 General Assembly of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) held last week in Pasay City.During the assembly, mayors and municipal officials from across the country discussed local governance issues and the review of government programs affecting their communities.Last month, Marcos increased the Local Government Support Fund (LGSF), an initiative that would fund the implementation of national programs and projects at the local level.Among the programs are food security and infrastructure and development initiatives that directly benefit LGU constituents.Under the 2026 General Appropriations Act (GAA), the LGSF was increased by P34.87 billion, bringing the total allocation to P57.872 billion, the highest in its

history.Recto stressed that the government continues to strengthen the LGUs' capacity building and delivery of services to the people at the grassroots level, particularly in smaller municipalities with limited fiscal resources.The league also presented him its policy recommendations on proposed reforms to the Local Government Code, which would further enhance local autonomy and improve coordination between national and local governments.The LMP is made up of more than 1,400 municipal governments.

- Foreigner at NAIA yields P28M 'shabu' (2026-03-15 16:05)

A FOREIGNER was arrested at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) after authorities discovered in her possession more than four kilograms of suspected methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu concealed in her luggage.Authorities found the illegal drug in an inspection at the arrival area of NAIA Terminal 3 in Pasay City on March 14.According to the Philippine National Police (PNP), the interception stemmed from routine baggage screening, as airport authorities flagged a suspicious image inside a beige suitcase belonging to a 48-year-old Croatian woman arriving from Johannesburg, South Africa, with a connecting flight through Hong Kong. Operatives from the PNP Aviation Security units and partner agencies immediately conducted further verification. A K9 narcotics detection dog later confirmed the presence of illegal drugs in the luggage. Upon inspection, authorities discovered three improvised pouches wrapped in black duct tape hidden inside a false compartment of the suitcase. The packages contained white crystalline substances that tested positive for shabu.The seized illegal drugs weighed more or less 4,156 grams with an estimated standard drug price of P28,260,800.00.The suspect, who was traveling alone, was immediately arrested.

- BOC seizes P262M illegal drugs, smuggled cigarettes (2026-03-15 16:05)

BUREAU of Customs (BOC) operatives intercepted over the weekend P27 million worth of illegal drugs inside a hotdog roller machine in an interdiction operation conducted at a warehouse in Pasay City.Customs Commissioner Ariel Nepomuceno on Sunday said the operation, conducted in coordination with the NAIA Inter-Agency Drug Interdiction Task Group, resulted in the discovery of a parcel, hidden inside a hotdog roller machine, which was found to contain 3,962 grams of white crystalline substance suspected to be methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu, valued at P26,941,600."The shipment was described as a hot dog roller machine. But upon physical examination, four heat-sealed transparent plastic bags wrapped in aluminum foil containing a white crystalline substance suspected to be 'shabu' were found concealed in it," Nepomuceno said.Nepomuceno added that a series of successful drug interdiction operations conducted by Customs operatives was in line with the directive of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to stop the entry of illicit goods into the country.He commended NAIA District Collector Yasmin Obillos-Mapa and Special Deputy Collector Dr. Siegfried Manaois for exceptional dedication in monitoring and enforcement cooperation, in coordination with partner agencies.Nepomuceno also led the inspection of P235 million worth of smuggled cigarettes from the United Arab Emirates bound for the Port of Batangas.From January 1 to March 6, 2026, the bureau recorded 127 cigarette-related interdictions, resulting in the seizure of

approximately P2 billion worth of contraband nationwide.As part of its intensified enforcementefforts, the BOC chief said the agency continues to strengthen coordination among lawenforcement agencies under a whole-of-government approach to combating illicit tobaccotrade."Central to these efforts is strengthened intelligence gathering by the bureau, which led tothe discovery of 637 master cases of cigarettes during the operation," he said.

- Sen. Bong Go urges 24/7 support for OFWs amid Middle East conflict (2026-03-15 16:03)

SEN. Bong Go called on Philippine foreign and labor officers abroad to be ready “24/7” to assist distressed overseas Filipinos (OFs) amid the war in the Middle East. The senator on Wednesday urged government representatives to be accessible to Filipinos seeking help, including those requesting repatriation to escape the United States-Israel war with Iran.Your offices abroad must remain open 24/7 and you should be ready anytime to assist our migrant workers, our OFWs (overseas Filipino workers),” Go said in Filipino.He made the appeal during the Commission Appointments deliberation on the nomination of former Energy secretary Raphael Lotilla as the Philippine ambassador to the Holy See as well as the ad interim appointments of three foreign service officials.Go said that Philippine embassies and consular offices should ensure readiness to respond to the needs of OFWs, who often face difficult circumstances far from home.He reminded them of the responsibility carried by Philippine representatives abroad, particularly in safeguarding the interests and welfare of Filipinos working and living outside the country.“To the new appointees, as you take on these vital roles in representing the Philippines on the international stage, I encourage you to remain steadfast in prioritizing the interests, protection, and welfare of our overseas Filipinos,” Go said.The Middle East hosts over 2.2 million Filipino workers, many of whom are based in Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, and Bahrain.

- PAO starts 4-day workweek to save energy (2026-03-15 16:02)

THE Public Attorney’s Office (PAO) on Sunday said it will implement a 40-hour compressed workweek starting March 16, 2026, for its personnel, particularly its public lawyers, as part of the government’s energy conservation measures.PAO Chief Persida Rueda-Acosta said, however, that the temporary work scheme will not cover personnel of the agency’s Executive Service, Administrative Service, Special and Appealed Cases Service, and Utility and Contract of Service, all at its central office in Quezon City.“They shall continue to render five days of on-site work at their respective offices and observe regular working hours,” said Rueda-Acosta as she stressed that PAO is a frontline government agency that provides legal assistance to indigent and marginalized sectors of society.She said the four-day on-site workweek will be observed at PAO’s regional and district offices, adopting the compressed 40-hour workweek arrangement provided in a Civil Service Commission circular.Deputy Chief Ana Lisa Soriano told The Manila Times that the PAO chief’s memorandum circular directed public attorneys whose offices were declared closed by their respective local government units (LGUs) on Fridays to remain on call to render legal assistance, especially for inquest proceedings, custodial investigations, and posting of bail bond, among others.“For PAO offices located in areas where

LGUs have not declared office closures on Fridays, at least one PAO lawyer and one staff member shall render regular duty hours,” said Deputy Chief Erwin Erfe in a separate interview.Also, Erfe said that all PAO personnel assigned to render duty on Fridays shall not report for work on Thursdays of the same week to maintain the four-day work schedule.The chief public attorney said that PAO lawyers assigned at the Sandiganbayan would continue to observe the full five-day workweek, “considering that the Supreme Court has required the Sandiganbayan employees to observe the regular on-site workweek without special work arrangements.” “All PAO personnel are enjoined to remain on call beyond regular working hours within their respective jurisdictions and urgent legal needs of clients and inquest proceedings,” she added.PAO said the order would remain in force until the Office of the President lifts the energy conservation directive through an issuance.

- DOTr, MRT-3 management belie claims on train safety (2026-03-15 16:01)

THE Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the management of the Metro Rail Transit Line 3 (MRT-3) denied the allegation that the rail line’s four-car trains are unsafe for commuters.According to the management, the allegation was raised in a vlog by Kamanggagawa party-list Rep. Eli San Fernando and members of the MRT-3 Employees Association.In a statement issued on Sunday, the DOTr emphasized that all MRT-3 train sets undergo thorough technical evaluations and neither the department nor its maintenance provider, Sumitomo Corp., would compromise passenger safety.“The safety of commuters remains our top priority,” the agency said.The department clarified that the MRT-3 signaling system is fully capable of supporting four-car trains running from North Avenue to Taft Avenue. The system has also been validated by the international rail consultancy Systra, which confirmed its safety for daily operations.The DOTr also refuted claims that the newly acquired Dalian trains are not ready for deployment or that train operators lack proper training. All trains, it said, undergo the necessary technical inspections and operational assessments before being approved for service. Coordination meetings are continuously held to ensure operational readiness and compliance with safety standards.The department noted that MRT-3 had sent a detailed letter to San Fernando on Feb. 13, explaining the results of the technical and safety evaluations. The lawmaker’s office received the letter on Feb. 18, but no response has been made yet. Regarding train operator schedules, MRT-3 management reiterated that work shifts adhere to the guidelines set by the Civil Service Commission.DOTr also urged commuters and vehicle owners to use the public rail services amid rising fuel prices, noting that “this is not the time for politics” and emphasizing the need to support the public during the ongoing global crisis.

- Flood control probe to continue — Palace (2026-03-15 13:07)

MANILA, Philippines — Malacañang on Sunday said investigations into alleged multibillion-peso flood control corruption will continue even after the conclusion of the Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI).Palace Press Officer Claire Castro issued the statement following criticism from Mamamayang Liberal Party-list Rep. Leila de Lima and Akbayan political

party, which condemned the impending closure of the fact-finding body.Castro said the ICI has already completed its work and forwarded its findings to the proper authorities.“The fact-finding body, ICI, already turned over its report to the Ombudsman for further investigation. The mandate to pursue those responsible will continue,” Castro said.She stressed that the ICI’s conclusion does not end the investigation.“The Ombudsman and DOJ (Department of Justice) are still conducting preliminary investigations into the cases submitted or recommended to be filed,” she said.Castro added both the Office of the Ombudsman and the DOJ have the authority to conduct additional investigations motu proprio, or on their own initiative.The ICI was created as a fact-finding body last year to look into alleged irregularities in flood control projects, which have drawn scrutiny following claims of corruption involving billions of pesos in government funds.The ICI earlier said it will remain operational only until March 31 as it begins to “wind down” its functions almost six months after its creation.Meanwhile, Philippine National Police chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said they will continue to assist in tracking down individuals involved in anomalous infrastructure projects.

- Four politicians want to be part of VP Sara’s Senate slate (2026-03-15 11:17)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte said four politicians want to be part of her senatorial slate."Four already," she said in Filipino in an ambush interview in Davao City on March 14 when asked how many people had approached her."I am allergic to politicians right now," she added. "So i-consider lang nila ako (they will consider me)."Last month, Duterte announced that she will run for president in the 2028 elections.

- Leandro Leviste buys house in Germany where Rizal lived (2026-03-15 09:16)

MANILA, Philippines — Batangas 1st District Rep. Leandro Leviste has bought the house in Germany where Jose Rizal lived and wrote the last portions of the novel Noli me tangere.Leviste said in a post on Facebook on Sunday that he bought the property, located in Wilhelmsfeld, "for the preservation of the house and support for the history of the Philippines."Leviste had a signing ceremony last week with Franz Hack Ullmer, representatives of the Protestant church that owned the house, Wilhelmsfeld Mayor Tobias Dangel, and Herbert Eiss who was identified as the commander of the Knights of Rizal's German chapter.Rizal lived in the house in 1886 upon the invitation of Ullmer's great grandfather Pastor Karl Ullmer.

- NTF-Elcac urges universities: Elevate discourse on insurgency (2026-03-15 08:25)

MANILA, Philippines — The National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-Elcac) called on universities to raise the level of discourse on insurgency, youth recruitment, and academic freedom.Undersecretary Ernesto Torres Jr., NTF-Elcac executive director, stressed that honest and responsible debate, not propaganda or slogans, must guide discussions in campuses if the nation is to achieve just peace and genuine nation-building.He said recent social media debates triggered by a forum held last year at the University of Santo Tomas highlighted the continuing tension between academic freedom and the need to openly

confront the realities of insurgency and the recruitment of young people into armed struggle. “Universities have always been spaces where ideas collide. Here, convictions are tested and difficult national questions are debated,” Torres said. “Our aim should always be to elevate discourse in ways that promote peace and academic freedom while steering conversations away from propaganda and toward just peace and nation-building.” Torres said that the government respects the vital role of academic institutions as venues for critical thinking and intellectual exchange, where students and faculty members can challenge each other’s views and examine even the most contentious national issues.The forum held at UST, he said, was part of this longstanding academic tradition.However, Torres said individuals who speak about insurgency and youth recruitment, particularly former rebels and scholars with firsthand knowledge, should not automatically be dismissed as enemies of academic freedom. “Many of those who speak candidly about these matters do so precisely because they have witnessed how young lives can be drawn into cycles of violence through ideological manipulation or what can be described as terror grooming,” he said.Torres said that professors and resource persons who raise these concerns deserve to be heard even when their views are strongly contested. “Passionate debates are part of university life,” he said. “But the manner in which we engage each other—whether with respect or dismissal—ultimately determines whether dialogue enlightens or divides.” For decades, Torres said, the Communist Party of the Philippines and its so-called national democratic organizations have invested significant effort in organizing within major universities and schools across the country with the end goal of indoctrinating the youth to embrace armed violence —a reality acknowledged by former members and even by the movement itself.He said that this historical reality does not mean universities are to blame when some students join armed insurgent groups. “Many former rebels now working in peace-building recount how their political journeys began inside campuses where narratives romanticized armed struggle while downplaying its human cost,” Torres said.Because of this history, he said, discussions about recruitment, radicalization, and protecting the youth are necessary. “The challenge before us is not to silence debate but to elevate it, and not to dismiss legitimate concerns with catchphrases like ‘red-tagging,’” he added.Torres urged students and educators to ensure that academic spaces remain arenas for respectful but rigorous debate. “Students must feel free to express dissenting views without fear of intimidation, just as educators and resource persons must be able to raise legitimate concerns about recruitment and insurgent influence without being automatically accused of malicious labeling,” he said.Torres said the NTF-Elcac would continue engaging universities with openness and respect as part of the broader effort to strengthen democratic dialogue and safeguard Filipino youth. “Our shared objective is to ensure that Filipino youth are equipped with truth, critical thinking, and opportunity,” he said. “They must not be drawn into conflicts that only prolong suffering and division.”

- Parts of Metro Manila, Rizal, Bulacan and Cavite to have water interruptions this week due to maintenance works (2026-03-15 05:12)

MANILA, Philippines — Some areas in Metro Manila and the provinces of Rizal, Bulacan and Cavite will have water interruptions this week due to maintenance works and high demand, Manila Water Company Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. said on Sunday.Manila Water said that in Taguig City, some areas in Brgy. Western Bicutan will have no water on March 16-17 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of a line meter replacement at Bayani Road corner Lawton Ave.In Marikina City, some parts of Brgy. Fortune will have service interruptions on March 17-18 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of the replacement of a water system line meter at Champaca St. corner Venus St.Some parts of Brgy. Concepcion Dos will also have water interruptions on March 18-19 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of the installation of a pressure reducing valve.In Quezon City, some places in the villages of Culiat, Vasra, Bagong Pag-asa, Central, and UP Campus will have service interruptions on March 18-19 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of step testing activities to detect possible system leaks.In Mandaluyong City, some areas in the villages of Plainview, Hulo, and Barangka Drive will have no water on March 18-19 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of zero pressure testing works to check on system integrity.In Manila, some areas in the villages of 876, 877, and 878, will have no water on March 18-19 between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. because of step testing activities.Also, some areas in the villages of 798, 802, and 803 will have service interruptions on March 19-20 between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. because also of step testing works.In Rizal, some places in the villages of Kalawaan, Darangan in Binangonan will have no water on March 16-17 and on March 17-18 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of line maintenance activities and zero pressure testing works. Some areas in Brgy. Pantok, Binangonan will have water interruptions on March 17-18 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of zero pressure testing activities.Meanwhile, some places in Brgy. Manggahan in Rodriguez will have service interruptions also on March 17-18 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of the replacement of a water system line meter.Some locations in Brgy. Mahabang Parang and Brgy. Mambog in Binangonan will have no water on March 18-19 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of line maintenance, and zero pressure testing activities.Also, some areas in Brgy. Libid Brgy Libis, Brgy. Layunan and Brgy. Lunsad in Binangonan will have service interruptions on March 19-20 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. due to leak repairs at a water system in Poblcaion.Some parts of Brgy. Pinugay in Baras will have water interruptions on March 19-20 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of looping works for a new water service connection to improve water pressure.Maynilad meanwhile said that some locations in the villages of Gen. T. De Leon Karuhatan, Malinta, Marulas, Maysan, and Parada in Valenzuela City will have service interruptions on March 16 between 12:01 a.m. and 4 a.m. because of network maintenance.Some places in the villages of Arkong Bato, Balangkas, Bisig, Coloong, Dalandanan, Gen. T. De Leon, Isla, Karuhatan, Mabolo, Malanday, Malinta, Marulas, Maysan, Palasan, Parada, Pariancillo Villa, Pasolo, Poblacion, Polo, Rincon, Tagalag, Viente Reales, and Wawang Pulo in Valenzuela City; and some parts of the village of Paco in Obando, Bulacan will have water interruptions on March 18-19 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. due to network maintenance activities.In Caloocan City, some areas in the villages of 36, 39, 189, 190, 191, 193, 194 and 196 will have no water on March 16-22 between 11:01 p.m. and 3 a.m. due to leak exploration activities.In Manila, several villages in Binondo, Pandacan, Sampaloc, Santa Cruz, and Tondo will have water interruptions on March 16-22 between 11:01 p.m. and 3 a.m.

because of leak exploration activities.In Cavite, several places in the villages of Alapan I-C, Anabu I-A, Anabu I-B, Anabu I-C, Anabu I-D, Anabu I-E, Anabu I-F, Anabu II-A, Anabu II- B, Anabu II-C, Anabu II-D, Anabu II-E, Bayan Luma I, Bayan Luma II, Bayan Luma III, Bayan Luma IV, Bayan Luma V, Bayan Luma VI, Bayan Luma VII, Bayan Luma VIII, Bayan Luma IX, Bukandala III, Bukandala IV, Bukandala V, Carsadang Bago I, Carsadang Bago II, Malagasang 1-A, Malagasang I-B, Malagasang I-C, Malagasang I-D, Malagasang I-E, Malagasang I-F, Malagasang I-G, Medicion I-B, Poblacion III-B, Poblacion IV-B, Poblacion IV-D, and Tanzang Luma VI will have no water on March 16-18 between 5 a.m. and 12 a.m. because of issues of high demand at the Patindig Araw pumping station.

- Grab, Move It roll out fuel discount, incentives for drivers amid soaring pump prices (2026-03-15 03:14)

MANILA, Philippines — Ride-hailing and motorcycle taxi platforms Grab Philippines and Move It announced the rollout of a financial support package for their driver-partners as soaring fuel prices threaten the livelihood of transport workers who depend on the platforms for daily income.The companies said the program would provide fuel discounts, rebates, and additional incentives for tens of thousands of driver-, delivery-, and rider-partners nationwide as global oil prices continue to climb.The assistance comes as local pump prices recorded sharp increases in recent weeks amid supply disruptions linked to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, with gasoline marking its ninth consecutive weekly increase and diesel posting double-digit price hikes in a single week. “Our immediate priority is to help ensure that our drivers continue to earn viably and fairly for their families, while preserving service reliability for passengers and the sustainability of the platform as we collectively navigate volatility in the global fuel market,” said Ronald Roda, Grab Philippines managing director.Roda said that maintaining driver earnings is critical as more commuters may turn to ride-hailing and shared mobility to cope with the rising cost of using privately-owned vehicles.Fuel discounts and rebatesUnder the program, driver-partners using four-wheel and two-wheel vehicles will be able to access fuel discounts of up to P4 per liter through partnerships with Seaoil Philippines, Caltex, and Blu Energy at participating stations nationwide.In addition, Grab Finance will offer a fuel rebate program for nearly 20,000 eligible drivers and riders using the Shell Fuel Card. Starting March 16 until the end of the month, partners who refuel using the card will receive a P3-per-liter rebate credited directly to their accounts.The companies are also introducing new incentives aimed at stabilizing drivers’ take-home pay despite rising operating costs.GrabCar drivers will receive commission rebates under a revised incentive structure designed to return more value to drivers through per-trip cashback and targeted rebates during peak periods.Meanwhile, motorcycle delivery partners working with GrabFood will receive a P3 spot bonus for every completed delivery nationwide, regardless of the number of hours they spend online.Move It, which operates a motorcycle taxi service, is launching a separate initiative called Power Pasada, a fuel-resilience program tailored for rider-partners. The program includes monthly fuel allowances for consistently active riders and additional incentives during morning and evening peak hours.The platforms said they are also coordinating with regulators, including the Land

Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board and the Department of Transportation (Philippines), to address the impact of the fuel price surge on ride-hailing and motorcycle taxi operators.The government recently announced a P5,000 fuel subsidy for transport workers to be distributed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development in coordination with the transportation department. Transport network vehicle service (TNVS) drivers are among the beneficiaries.“We thank the DOTr and DSWD for recognizing TNVS professionals as equal partners in keeping the country’s transport ecosystem alive,” said Lisza Buscaino-Redulla, United Transportation Coalition Philippines president.Transport sector leaders also urged continued cooperation between government and private platforms as fuel prices remain volatile.“It is imperative that the entire transport ecosystem works together in finding the right support programs as we collectively try to survive this oil challenge,” said Romeo Maglunsod, Motorcycle Taxi Community Philippines chairman.Grab and Move It said they will continue monitoring developments in global oil markets and may adjust their support programs as fuel prices evolve.

- Biazon summons Maynilad executives anew over water interruptions in Muntinlupa (2026-03-15 01:48)

MANILA, Philippines — Muntinlupa City Mayor Ruffy Biazon has again summoned the top officials of Maynilad Water Services Inc. to explain recurring water service interruptions affecting residents in the city.In separate letters dated March 11, Biazon asked the concessionaire’s senior management to attend a meeting with the local government and present a plan to address the problem.The letters were addressed to Maynilad President and Chief Executive Officer Ramoncito Fernandez and Chief Operating Officer Christopher Lichauco.Biazon said the water provider failed to give timely and adequate notice to customers about service interruptions, leaving residents unprepared.“It is lamentable that Maynilad is unable to properly inform its customers about the service interruption in a timely, efficient, and effective manner,” he said. “The uncertainty of service restoration also causes undue stress, inconvenience, and lost productivity.”The mayor also called on the concessionaire to provide compensation to affected consumers.“At the very least, there should be a rebate to customers who have been deprived of the quality of service Maynilad is obligated to deliver to the people,” he said.Biazon further criticized the company’s lack of coordination with the city government, saying local officials are often left unaware of the situation on the ground.“Government itself is not spared from this failure to communicate by Maynilad. We are also in the dark on what is going on, which necessitates us to initiate contact with Maynilad instead of Maynilad proactively engaging the local government,” he said.The mayor noted that the interruptions persist even as the company operates two water treatment plants drawing from Laguna de Bay.While Maynilad has said it deploys water tankers for emergency distribution during outages, Biazon said the measure has not been enough to serve affected residents.“While Maynilad claims to deploy tankers to provide emergency distribution, it definitely is not sufficient to support all subscribers and the impact is not significantly felt,” he said.Last month, Biazon convened a town hall meeting with Maynilad officials to discuss similar

service disruptions. During the meeting, company representatives attributed the interruptions to operational challenges at one of its treatment facilities.

- Some areas in Metro Manila, 5 provinces to have power interruptions this week due to maintenance works (2026-03-15 01:39)

MANILA, Philippines — Meralco said on Sunday that some areas in Metro Manila, Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Quezon, and Rizal will have power interruptions this week because of maintenance works.In Metro Manila, some parts of Brgy. Pasong Putik in Novaliches, Quezon City, and some areas in Camarin, Caloocan City will have no power on March 17 between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. because of line reconductoring works and the replacement of electricity facilities along Malamig Drive in Maligaya Park Novaliches Subd.Also, some areas in Brgy. Sauyo, Quezon City will have power interruptions on March 18-19 between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. because of line reconductoring works and the replacement of electricity poles.In Pasay City, some places in Metropolitan Park and its surrounding areas will have no electricity on March 19 between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. because of the installation of primary line facilities in Metropolitan Park.In Parañaque City, some locations in Brgy. Don Bosco will have power interruptions on March 19 between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. due to the replacement of an electricity pole and the installation of additional primary facilities.In Batangas, several areas in the villages of San Agustin, San Felix, San Joaquin, San Jose, San Juan, San Vicente, Sta. Ana and Sta. Elena will have no electricity on March 15-16 between 11 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of the installation of electricity facilities and line reconstruction works along Maharlika Highway in Poblacion, Alaminos, Laguna, and also because of the relocation of electricity poles due to a road widening project along Maharlika Highway in San Pablo City, Laguna.In Laguna, several locations in the villages of Del Carmen, Palma, San Agustin, San Andres, San Benito, San Gregorio, San Ildefonso, San Juan, San Miguel, San Roque and Sta. Rosa in Alaminos; some places in Brgy. Bitin in Bay and in Brgy. Limao in Calauan; and several areas in the villages of San Crispin, San Nicolas, San Rafael, San Roque, and the city proper in San Pablo will have no power on March 15-16 between 11 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of the installation of electricity facilities and line reconstruction works along Maharlika Highway in Poblacion, Alaminos, and the relocation of electricity poles due to a road widening project along Maharlika Highway in San Pablo City. In Quezon, some places in the villages of Bukal Norte and Bukal Sur in Candelaria will have power interruptions on March 16 between 10:30 p.m and 11:59 p.m. because of line maintenance works and the installation of electricity poles and primary lines in Brgy. Bukal Sur. In Cavite, some parts of Brgy. Bayan Luma 2, Brgy. Bayan Luma 3, Brgy. Bayan Luma 5, Brgy. Bayan Luma 6, and Brgy. Bucandala III in Imus will have power interruptions on March 17-18 between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m. because of line reconstruction works.Some areas in Brgy. Bancal, Carmona will have no power on March 21 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. because of line reconstruction works.In Rizal, some locations in Brgy. San Jose, Antipolo City will have no electricity on March 17-18 between 11:30 p.m. and 4:30 a.m. because of line reconductoring works.Also, some places in the villages of Macamot, Tatala, and Kalawaan in Binangonan will have power interruptions on March 17 between 12:01 a.m. and 5 a.m. because of line conversion works.

- Use of local gas to stabilize price of electricity - group (2026-03-15 01:33)

MANILA, Philippines — The Petroleum Association of the Philippines (PAP) urged power generation companies to maximize the use of domestic natural gas to help stabilize electricity prices, saying the country still has untapped indigenous capacity that could reduce dependence on costly fuel imports.Speaking during a Senate hearing on March 11, PAP Chairman Donnabel Kuizon Cruz said fully utilizing locally produced gas could significantly lower electricity generation costs for consumers. “There is an opportunity to fully implement the downstream Natural Gas law by maximizing the use of indigenous gas,” Cruz said. “We still have capacity there that we can use and push into our power generation companies so we can help reduce the price.” Cruz also serves as president and chief executive officer of Prime Energy, the operator of Service Contract No. 38 covering the Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power Project, the country’s largest indigenous natural gas source and a critical supplier of fuel to several power plants in Luzon.The group called for the complete implementation of Republic Act 12120, or the Philippine Natural Gas Industry Development Act, which aims to strengthen the country’s downstream natural gas industry and encourage greater use of local gas resources.PAP noted that Section 38 of the law exempts the sale of indigenous natural gas and electricity generated from it from value-added tax (VAT), a provision that could deliver additional savings for electricity consumers if fully implemented.The group made the appeal as policymakers consider proposals to temporarily suspend petroleum taxes in response to rising global fuel prices and geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.Industry leaders say maximizing domestic natural gas use would provide a more sustainable and long-term solution to price volatility than temporary tax relief.Local gas cheaperCruz said that electricity generated from gas supplied by Malampaya costs around ₱4.80 per kilowatt-hour, significantly lower than the ₱10.30 per kilowatt-hour cost of power generated from imported liquefied natural gas (LNG). “That’s how big the difference between our own fuel in the country is, compared to imported gas today,” Cruz told senators.Malampaya has been supplying natural gas to major Luzon power plants since 2001, providing fuel for facilities that account for a significant share of the island’s electricity supply. However, as the field matures and domestic production fluctuates, the Philippines has increasingly relied on imported LNG to meet growing energy demand.Cruz said recent geopolitical developments, including the war in Iran, highlight the need for the Philippines to strengthen domestic fuel supply and reduce vulnerability to global market shocks. “The Iran conflict underscores the importance of having our own resources—our own indigenous or domestic fuel sources such as indigenous gas, oil, and indigenous coal,” she said.She added that the government’s decision in 2022 to extend the Malampaya service contract enabled new upstream exploration efforts. “The government’s move to extend the license was very timely. This allowed us to start drilling for new wells, and we already had one discovery—with hopefully more to come.” Cruz also credited the Department of Energy for continuing efforts to expand the country’s indigenous energy resources, including awarding additional petroleum service contracts aimed at boosting domestic production and reducing reliance on imported oil and gas.Energy stakeholders are now coordinating with the DOE to manage the country’s fuel mix as global energy markets

remain uncertain. “Under the leadership of the DOE, members of the energy sector have started to coordinate in this crisis and see how we can balance the fuel mix to help consumers during this time,” Cruz said.

- Philip Acop wins in Antipolo’s 2nd District special election (2026-03-15 00:45)

MANILA, Philippines—Philip “Dok Bong” Acop was proclaimed the winning candidate in the special election for the Second Legislative District of Antipolo City on Sunday, a day after the polls were held.The Commission on Election's District Board of Canvassers declared Acop the winner after completing the canvass of votes from the March 14 special election.Based on the Certificate of Canvass, Acop obtained 60,051 votes, the highest among the six candidates who contested the seat. He was followed by Reden Llaga with 12,054 votes, Paulo Tapales with 10,080, Nathaniel Lobigas, 754, Dandin Infante, 412, and Maria Trinidad Cafirma, 199.The votes were canvassed from three Statements of Votes. Acop is the son of former representative Romeo Acop, whose death in December 2025 prompted the holding of the special election to fill the vacant congressional seat.

- Cool, dry winds due to ‘amihan’ likely in most parts of PH (2026-03-15 00:13)

MANILA, Philippines — The state-run weather agency said on Sunday that the northeast monsoon or ‘amihan’ would continue to prevail at least over the next two to three days in most parts of the archipelago.Weather specialist Aldczar Aurelio of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said it has not monitored any low-pressure area inside or outside the Philippine Area of Responsibility.He said in a 5 a.m. briefing that Bicol Region, Batanes, Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Apayao, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Ifugao, Northern Samar, and Eastern Samar would experience cloudy skies with light rain due to amihan.The same weather system is affecting Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, the rest of Visayas, Northern Mindanao, Caraga, and Zamboanga Peninsula, where partly cloudy to overcast skies with isolated light rain would occur.Meanwhile, the rest of Mindanao will likely have partly cloudy skies with rain showers or localized thunderstorms, according to Pagasa.For the day's heat index, Pagasa said the highest temperature would be in Cotabato City and Maguindanao at 39 degrees Celsius, and 29 to 30 degrees Celsius may be recorded over the National Capital Region in the same period.

- Antipolo Special Election: Comelec ensures tight security for ballot transport (2026-03-14 19:58)

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) reported that election security and ballot transport during Saturday’s special election in Antipolo City’s second district proceeded without incident, ensuring the integrity of the vote-counting process.Comelec Chairman George Garcia said strict protocols were implemented to guarantee the safe and simultaneous transport of ballots and election results from individual precincts to the city’s canvassing centers. “All Election Returns were collected and sealed with paper seals to prevent any tampering,” he noted, adding that no incidents of lost or compromised ballots were reported.The measures

included coordinated departures from precincts, with teachers and electoral staff accompanied by security personnel to safeguard ballots throughout the journey to canvassing centers. Garcia emphasized that the system was designed to prevent mishandling or unauthorized access, ensuring transparency and accountability. “These procedures were part of our commitment to maintain the highest standards of election integrity,” Garcia said. He also confirmed that the meticulous handling of ballots contributed to the smooth conduct of the manual election, even in precincts located far from the city center.The Comelec chairman assured the public that all election paraphernalia, including ballots and Election Returns, were properly accounted for and delivered on time.

- US bombs rain on Iran's main oil hub (2026-03-14 16:14)

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump said Friday that the United States had heavily bombed military targets on Iran's oil hub Kharg Island and the US Navy would soon begin escorting tankers through the Strait of Hormuz.Several top Iranian officials joined a defiant pro-government rally in Tehran, meanwhile, marching alongside demonstrators waving banners reading "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."As the United States intensified its bombing of Iran, Tehran launched a new wave of drone and missile attacks on Israel and its Gulf neighbors.The war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon continued to rage and the Lebanese health ministry said an Israeli strike on a primary health care center in southern Lebanon had killed at least 12 medical personnel on Friday.According to the Lebanese authorities, at least 773 people have been killed by Israeli attacks in Lebanon aimed at wiping out Iranian ally Hezbollah.In a post on Truth Social, Trump said military targets on Kharg Island, which handles almost all of Iran's crude exports, had been "totally obliterated" in "one of the most powerful bombing raids in the History of the Middle East."He said he had chosen not to target oil infrastructure on the island for now."However, should Iran, or anyone else, do anything to interfere with the Free and Safe Passage of Ships through the Strait of Hormuz, I will immediately reconsider this decision," the US president said.With oil prices spiking, Trump was asked when the US Navy would begin escorting tankers through the Gulf's critical Strait of Hormuz. "It'll happen soon, very soon," he said.The United States and Israel have tread carefully around Kharg Island until now, but US officials have been reported as saying that capturing the island was potentially on the table.The Wall Street Journal and New York Times reported on Friday that the Pentagon had dispatched the Japan-based amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli to the region along with its complement of some 2,500 Marines.Heavy blasts shook Tehran late Friday after the United States vowed to step up air strikes and Iranian state media said a fresh round of missiles had been launched toward Israel. Israeli rescue workers said no casualties were reported.Blasts were heard in Doha early Saturday and Qatar's defense ministry said its military had intercepted missiles targeting the Gulf state.Saudi Arabia's defense ministry said its forces had intercepted dozens of drones on Friday and Turkey said NATO forces shot down a ballistic missile launched from Iran — the third such interception in the war.The Islamic republic is intent on showing it will come through the war intact and in control, despite its supreme leader Ali Khamenei being killed at the start of the US-Israeli campaign on Feb. 28.Khamenei's son Mojtaba Khamenei was named the new

supreme leader, but has been absent from public view and is said to be wounded.The US government unveiled a $10-million reward for information about Mojtaba Khamenei's whereabouts.$100 a barrelUS Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told a news conference the US military would bombard Iran more heavily on Friday than any other day so far in the war.According to the Pentagon, the US and Israel have struck more than 15,000 targets in Iran over the past two weeks.Israel's military said it conducted 7,600 strikes on the country, most of them against its missile program.The conflict has sparked chaos in global markets and sent oil prices soaring.Brent contracts for a barrel of crude have soared more than 42 percent, leaving markets and governments everywhere skittish about energy supply and higher inflation. On Friday, oil stayed above $100 a barrel.Within Iran, the Revolutionary Guards have warned of an even stronger response to any anti-government protests, after ones in January in which several thousand people were killed.Iranian authorities have maintained an internet blackout since the war started.Iranians speaking to AFP under cover of anonymity have described a grim picture of cities in ruins and cash running short.A woman in Kermanshah, western Iran, told AFP that " countless" people from Tehran had come to seek refuge from the air strikes, adding to demand for food and scarce medicine, with prices "nearly doubling."The UN refugee agency has estimated that up to 3.2 million people have been displaced inside Iran since the war started.Iran's health ministry said on March 8 that more than 1,200 people have been killed, a figure AFP has not been able to verify independently.The US military has lost 13 personnel since the war started — including six members of a refueling aircraft that crashed in Iraq after an incident officials said was not caused by hostile fire.Iran’s biggest weaponLong before the US and Israel attacked Iran, the Islamic Republic had devised its own weapon: holding the world’s main oil lifeline hostage to offset its foes' military superiority, three regional sources familiar with Iranian planning said.For decades Iran has signaled that if pushed into a confrontation, it would restrict tanker traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, the choke point where its adversaries are most exposed because disruptions there reverberate instantly through global energy markets.With the Gulf’s main export artery in the crosshairs, Tehran has turned the region’s greatest economic asset into its most powerful deterrent, the sources said.About a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas normally passes through the vital Strait, and Iran, which lies on its northern coast, has now effectively closed it.Traffic via the strait has dropped by 97 percent since the war against Iran began on Feb. 28, according to United Nations data.Iran has used similar tactics before. In the “Tanker War” of the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq conflict, attacks on vessels turned the Gulf into one of the world’s most dangerous waterways, forcing Washington to escort tankers through the strait.But Iran now wields far more potent tools, including large arsenals of cheap missiles and drones capable of threatening shipping across a far wider area. Its attacks this month have shown how quickly Tehran can disrupt traffic through the strait without heavily mining it.Trump will blink first"Iran is outgunned — there is no way it can defeat them in a direct confrontation,” said Ali Vaez, the International Crisis Group’s Iran project director.Anticipating further US-Israeli strikes after a 12-day war in June last year, Tehran examined how to extend any conflict “in time and space.” “If Iran takes the global economy hostage, Trump would blink first,” added Vaez.The regional sources, who declined to be identified as they were not authorized to speak publicly, said Iran’s powerful

Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) had long prepared for a showdown with Israel and Washington.The Guards' plan, which seeks to protect Iran's 47-year-old system of rule by fiercely anti-Western Islamic clerics, was activated on Feb. 28, after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed on the first day of the conflict.The core of the strategy is a recognition of Iran’s military limits against superior forces, the sources said.Tehran’s planners instead seek to pressure oil flows while inflicting asymmetric attacks on US assets stationed across the region.The strategy seeks to conjure economic pressures — both at home and overseas — on President Donald Trump to halt the war."This is asymmetric warfare par excellence, in which Iran achieves outsized, even global effects through a small number of attacks that impose painful costs,” said Michael Eisenstadt of the Washington Institute.“The goal is to create economic pain, further undermining support for the war in the United States and increasing pressure on Washington to end it.”Rather than concentrate forces on a single battlefield, Tehran is dispersing its campaign with waves of low-cost missile and drone strikes across the Gulf, of the kind once outsourced to Iran-allied forces in Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon.The approach reflects a doctrine shaped over decades by the IRGC, built on the assumption that a stronger foe would try to decapitate Iran’s leadership and command structure at the outset of any war, the sources said.The Guards are applying lessons from years of shadow conflict with the US, they said. But this time, instead of relying mostly on regional proxies that once formed its forward line of defense, Tehran is now executing the playbook itself.Wishful thinkingAli Vaez said the US had entered the war unprepared, driven by “a lot of wishful thinking and not a lot of well-thought-through strategies.”Washington, he said, failed to anticipate drone attacks on Gulf states, disruptions to shipping lanes or the need to evacuate citizens, shortcomings he said reflected a failure to absorb lessons from the risk of drones in modern warfare.By contrast, Iran’s decentralized “Mosaic” doctrine — dispersing command and control to withstand decapitation — remains in place, under one coordinating hub.Even after Khamenei's death, two sources said Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, a former Guards commander, and Ali Larijani, head of Iran's national security council, continued to direct the war effort from Tehran.Vaez argued that while the US can significantly weaken Iran, total defeat would need a land invasion involving up to a million troops operating in unforgiving terrain, a commitment Washington has shown “it doesn’t have the stomach for.”Trump, who once promised to keep the US out of "stupid” military interventions, is now pursuing what many experts see as an open-ended war of choice that could be the biggest military campaign since those in Iraq and Afghanistan.Iran’s immediate objective is survival, Vaez said. Beyond that, its broader aim is to force Washington to accept that coercion, whether through military force, economic pressure or diplomatic isolation, does not work.Whether such a lesson is learned remains uncertain. But by weaponizing the world’s most critical energy corridor and stretching the battlefield far beyond Iran’s borders, Tehran is betting it can endure longer than a far stronger enemy.

- '3 months too long to wait before cutting fuel taxes, Lacson says (2026-03-14 16:13)

SENATE President Pro Tempore Panfilo Lacson is calling for amendments to the country’s tax laws to allow the government to immediately suspend excise taxes on fuel, warning that the current system could delay relief for consumers amid rising global oil prices.Lacson said a key safeguard under the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Law, or Train Law, that allowed the suspension of fuel excise tax increases when global oil prices reached a certain threshold had already expired in 2020.Under Article 148 of the National Internal Revenue Code of the Philippines, the scheduled increase in excise tax on petroleum products could be suspended from 2018 to 2020 if the average price of Dubai crude oil reached or exceeded $80 per barrel for three months before the scheduled increase. The provision, however, is no longer in effect.In a radio interview on Saturday, Lacson said the government must now establish a faster and more flexible mechanism to address volatile oil prices, particularly with the war in the Middle East affecting global energy markets.“I am not just pushing for emergency powers but for a permanent amendment to the NIRC to shorten the ‘wait time’ to suspend excise taxes, especially with the situation now in the Middle East. We cannot wait three months before suspending the imposition of an excise tax,” he said in English and Filipino.Lacson said that under the current framework, authorities must wait for a three-month monitoring period before suspending the excise tax on fuel, a delay he said could render the measure ineffective during sudden spikes in oil prices.Instead, he proposed amending the law to grant the Department of Finance the authority to immediately suspend the excise tax when global oil prices breach critical levels.“This process should not be automatic. The proposed amendment should empower the Department of Finance to act right away rather than wait for three months. Waiting that long could be too late,” Lacson said.Meanwhile, the government has begun implementing measures to cushion travelers from rising transportation costs as global fuel prices spike amid the ongoing war in the Middle East, with regulators moving to ease pressure on airline passengers while probing a steep ferry fare increase in Zamboanga.The Department of Transportation (DOTr) said it was coordinating with the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) and the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) to mitigate the impact of soaring jet fuel prices on airline fares.Government monitoring showed that jet fuel prices nearly doubled in recent weeks, rising from $90.87 per barrel on Feb. 19 to $188.20 per barrel on March 9.To help airlines manage higher operating costs, Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez directed CAAP to reduce Passenger Service Charges (PSC) and airport navigation fees at airports operated by the aviation authority.The move is intended to lower operational expenses for carriers and help temper potential increases in ticket prices.

- Victims' lawyers urge ICC to reject defense appeal (2026-03-14 16:12)

(UPDATE) LAWYERS representing victims in the crimes against humanity case against Rodrigo Duterte have asked the International Criminal Court (ICC) to reject another attempt by the former president’s defense team to bar them from the proceedings, accusing them of dilatory tactics.In a response filed on March 13, 2026 before ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I, victims’ lawyers Joel Butuyan and Gilbert Andres urged the chamber to deny the defense’s application for leave to appeal its earlier decision rejecting a bid to disqualify them as external common legal

representatives for victims.The lawyers argued that the defense filing failed to meet the strict requirements for an interlocutory appeal under Rome Statute Article 82(1)(d), which allows appeals only when a ruling involves a clear legal issue that could significantly affect the fairness or outcome of proceedings. “The bulk of the defense’s arguments focus on its disagreements with the submissions of Mr. Butuyan and Mr. Andres,” the filing said. “Given this stark lack of reference to the actual, relevant parts of the impugned decision, the defense merely expresses its disagreement with the outcome of the Chamber’s deliberation.” The dispute traces back to a motion filed by Duterte’s defense team on Feb. 11, seeking the disqualification of Butuyan and Andres after the ICC Registry appointed them as external lawyers representing victims in the case.On Feb. 20, the Pre-Trial Chamber rejected that request, ruling that the defense had failed to establish a sufficient legal basis for removing the two lawyers. Just hours later, Duterte’s lead counsel, Nicholas Kaufman, filed an application asking the chamber to certify the issue for appeal before the Appeals Chamber.The defense’s challenge centers on Nicolene Arcaina, who serves as case manager for the victims’ legal team.According to the defense filing, Arcaina previously worked at CenterLaw, the law firm where Butuyan and Andres are partners, raising what the defense described as a potential conflict of interest.

- Asean calls for ceasefire in Mideast war, diplmacy (2026-03-14 16:11)

FOREIGN ministers from Southeast Asia expressed serious concern over the escalating war in the Middle East and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities during a special virtual meeting convened by the Philippines on Friday, March 13.Ma. Theresa Lazaro, secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, said the Philippines organized the Special Asean Foreign Ministers’ Meeting on the situation in the Middle East in its capacity as chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).The meeting gathered foreign ministers from Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, along with senior officials representing Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Timor-Leste.Call for a ceasefire and diplomacyIn a media briefing, Lazaro said Asean members emphasized the urgent need for de-escalation and diplomacy as violence in the Middle East continues to affect global stability. “We expressed serious concern over the situation in the Middle East and its impacts,” Lazaro said. “We emphasized the importance of the immediate cessation of hostilities and called on all parties to exercise utmost self-restraint.” The ministers also urged all parties involved in the conflict to resolve disputes through dialogue and diplomacy while respecting international law, including the principles of the United Nations and its charter.Asean officials agreed to continue monitoring developments in the region and to coordinate responses to any potential effects on Southeast Asia.Concerns over energyDuring the meeting, ministers also discussed the broader economic implications of the war, particularly disruptions to energy markets and global shipping routes.Lazaro said Asean members underscored the importance of maintaining stable and reliable energy supply chains and keeping maritime trade routes open, as tensions in the Middle East could affect global oil supplies and transportation networks.To mitigate potential disruptions, the bloc highlighted existing regional cooperation mechanisms, including the Asean Framework Agreement on Petroleum Security, the Asean Power Grid and

the Trans-Asean Gas Pipeline.Officials also emphasized the need to strengthen intra-Asean trade and expand the use of renewable energy as part of long-term strategies to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.The ministers further agreed to improve coordination between Asean’s foreign and economic sectors to enable faster and more coordinated responses to regional crises.Protection of Asean nationalsAnother key topic discussed during the meeting was the safety of Southeast Asian nationals living or working in the Middle East.Asean members are committed to improving coordination and information sharing among diplomatic missions in third countries to ensure timely assistance during emergencies.This cooperation will follow existing regional guidelines, including the Asean Declaration on the Guidelines on Consular Assistance by Asean Member States’ Missions in Third Countries to Nationals of Other Asean Member States and the Guidelines for the Provision of Emergency Assistance by Asean Missions in Third Countries to Nationals of Asean Member Countries in Crisis Situations.Lazaro also acknowledged the support extended by Asean member states in assisting citizens from neighboring countries when crises occur abroad.

- PH firm on economic reforms, Marcos tells IMF (2026-03-14 16:10)

THE Philippines remains committed to pursuing reforms and sound economic policies to ensure stability and resilience amid global uncertainties, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said on Saturday.On a Facebook post, Marcos shared details of his meeting with International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva to discuss the Philippines’ economic outlook and reforms aimed at keeping the country’s growth trajectory stable.Marcos said the discussions covered the country’s economic priorities and ongoing efforts to sustain growth.He said cooperation with international partners, such as the IMF, plays an important role in supporting the country’s economic agenda.“With discipline, sound policy and cooperation with partners such as the IMF, we will keep the Philippine economy stable and growing,” he said.Marcos said the meeting also touched on the Philippines’ priorities for its chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).He stressed that policy discipline, structural reforms and strong international partnerships will help make the Philippine economy more robust.“I met with International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva to discuss the Philippines’ economic outlook, our priorities for our Asean chairship, and the reforms we continue to pursue to keep our nation on a steady path of growth,” Marcos said.In an exclusive interview with the Philippine News Agency, Georgieva said the IMF expects the Philippine economy to outperform the regional average growth of 4.3 percent, citing ongoing reforms that could unlock stronger long-term expansion.The IMF is a global financial institution that aims to promote international monetary cooperation, ensure financial stability, and facilitate sustainable economic growth among its 191 member countries.

- Slain OFW home from Israel (2026-03-14 16:09)

(UPDATE) THE remains of a Filipino caregiver who was killed by an Iranian missile strike in Israel at the start of the war in the Middle East arrived early Saturday, the government said.The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration

(OWWA) said Mary Ann De Vera's husband, Bernie Lavarias, along with DMW Undersecretaries Barnard Olalia, Felicitas Bay, Dominique Rubia-Tutay; OWWA Administrator Patricia Yvonne Caunan; Deputy Administrator Ryan Vincent Uy; Israel Ambassador to the Philippines Dana Kursh; and Agimat party-list Rep. Bryan Revilla were present for the Filipina who died from shrapnel wounds in Tel Aviv.Kursh also offered her condolences to De Vera’s husband. She met with Lavarias at the OWWA office in Pasay City.“Mary Ann De Vera, our kababayan who tragically lost her life in Israel, is remembered with profound respect. As her family mourns her passing, the people of Israel share in their grief. We extend our deepest sympathies and stand in solidarity with her loved ones during this time of sorrow,” the Israeli Embassy said on a Facebook post on Saturday.The OFW’s remains, which arrived in the country at 4:30 a.m. on Saturday, were transported to Pangasinan, her hometown, where she will be brought to her family.In Israel, Lavarias met on Thursday with the country’s president, Isaac Herzog, who expressed his condolences.“We are devastated by the terrible loss of Mary Ann. On behalf of the State of Israel, I send my deepest condolences to her family and the entire nation of the Philippines,” Herzog said in a statement.He then told Lavarias that Israel was grateful to Filipinos like De Vera.“Mary Ann was an angel. She was a hero, as she saved Mrs. Rachel Shihror during the missile attack. So many Israelis were hurt by and took to heart the loss of Mary Ann,” Herzog said.“I cannot change this terrible fate, unfortunately, but as a word of some remorse and condolences, I say thank you to you Bernie, and to what you have done. I also want to extend my deepest appreciation for the incredible work and contribution of the Filipino community in Israel. You are deeply respected and loved by the Israeli people,” he added.De Vera was taking care of Mrs. Shihror before the missile attack at an apartment complex in Tel Aviv.House Overseas Workers Affairs Committee chairman and Agimat Partylist Rep. Bryan Revilla hailed Filipino caregiver De Vera for her heroism and care for others."While we mourn her passing, we honor her heroic act to save a life. Like many other OFWs, she deserves to be welcomed with dignity, respect and honor," Revilla said.He added that De Vera's death underscores the growing risks faced by Filipinos working in regions affected by armed conflict and geopolitical tensions.Amid the ongoing war in the region, Revilla stressed the need to strengthen safety protocols and crisis response mechanisms for overseas Filipino workers deployed in high-risk areas.

- Rising Fish and Vegetable Prices in Manila Spark Calls for Ethical Trading (2026-03-14 16:08)

SEN. Bong Go urged traders to avoid hoarding and overpricing that could further burden consumers as a fuel crisis becomes imminent due to rising tensions in the Middle East.Go issued the appeal on Friday as food prices reportedly began increasing in several public markets ahead of major fuel price adjustments.At the Bulungan Seafood Market, the per-kilo price of lapulapu rose from P300 to P400, while bakoko increased from P250 to P400 per kilogram (kg). Similar developments were observed at Balintawak Market, where the price of a container of fish reportedly went up by P500.Go said that while higher fuel costs may affect the transport of goods, some traders may take advantage of the situation by prematurely raising prices or

manipulating supply — practices that ultimately hurt ordinary consumers. “In times like these, we need to work together. Let’s not take advantage of the situation to make a lot of money while our people are struggling,” Go said. “Every peso, every cent is important, especially for families with low incomes.” The senator reiterated his long-standing stance against hoarding and supply manipulation, which he said contribute to price instability in the market. “As a member of the Committee on Agriculture, we must do two things. First, we must fight and go against hoarders and smugglers. Smugglers should not benefit from this,” he said in a previous interview.Some vendors have reportedly started selling fish in bundles instead of by the kilo so that customers can still afford them.Meanwhile, vegetable prices have also increased in some markets. The price of eggplant rose from P250 to P400 per pack, squash from P27 to P35/kg and calamansi from P100 to P120/kg.Traders said some produce is sourced from the Ilocos Region and warned that transportation expenses could rise further if fuel prices continue to climb.Transport groups have also cautioned that shipping fees may increase by as much as 20 percent to 30 percent, citing the heavy reliance of trucking operations on petroleum products.Despite these developments, Go called on traders, suppliers and other stakeholders in the food supply chain to practice fairness and responsibility in pricing.He emphasized that ethical trading practices are especially important during periods of economic strain when many households are already struggling to stretch their daily budgets. “Many families are tightening their spending. Some are buying only half a kilo, or just a few pieces so their money will be enough,” Go said. “I hope traders will also consider the situation of ordinary citizens.” Go added that food and other basic goods are necessities, making fair pricing a matter that directly affects people’s daily survival.The senator encouraged the public to remain mindful of their spending and to support vendors who continue to keep prices reasonable despite market pressures.

- Gatchalian calls for Senate probe into Anti-Hazing Law enforcement (2026-03-14 16:07)

SEN. Sherwin Gatchalian has called on the Senate to conduct an inquiry into whether the country’s anti-hazing law is being properly implemented.The senator raised concerns after 19-year-old maritime student Kenneth Alcedo died from injuries reportedly sustained during a hazing incident. Authorities said several members of the Tau Gamma Phi fraternity, which has been linked to the case, have surrendered to investigators.Gatchalian noted that despite the ban imposed under Republic Act (RA) 11053, hazing incidents continue to occur and are reported almost every year, raising concerns about gaps in the law’s enforcement.Gatchalian, one of the law’s co-authors and co-sponsors, said the continued occurrence of hazing-related violence highlights the need to review how the legislation is being implemented and whether stronger safeguards are needed.The senator said the proposed inquiry should also examine hazing incidents occurring within government-run institutions, including the Philippine National Police Academy and the Philippine Military Academy.” It’s sad to think that hazing is happening right within our own government institutions that should be setting a good example,” Gatchalian said. “If our own institutions are violating our own laws, we have a big problem.” He added that institutions tasked with upholding the law should be the first to

comply with it.” I think this time we should also focus on our own government institutions. This shouldn’t be happening in the institutions we trust to enforce the law against hazing,” the senator said.RA 11053 strengthened earlier laws against hazing by imposing stricter penalties, regulating initiation rites, and holding fraternity officers and school officials accountable for violations.Despite the measure, several hazing-related deaths and injuries have continued to surface in recent years, prompting renewed calls from lawmakers and advocacy groups for stricter enforcement and cultural reforms within fraternities and similar organizations.

- CPD: New Legislation Needed to Curb Rising Philippine Teenage Pregnancies (2026-03-14 16:06)

THE Commission on Population and Development (CPD) on Saturday urged Congress to pass legislation aimed at curbing the rising number of teenage pregnancies in the country.According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, the birth rate among girls ages 10 to 14 increased to 8.9 percent in 2024, with a total of 3,612 registered births. Data also showed that of that number, two girls were only 10 years old.In a statement, CPD Undersecretary Lisa Grace Bersales said such cases highlight the need for stronger measures to prevent adolescent pregnancies.” Preventing adolescent pregnancy is about protecting the future of young Filipinas — ensuring that they can become the leaders, professionals and changemakers our nation needs,” Bersales said.The highest numbers of adolescent births were recorded in Region 4A (Calabarzon), with 474; Region 3 (Central Luzon), 445; National Capital Region, 374; and Region 12 (Soccsksargen), 302. These regions, which are among the most populous in the country, face significant challenges in providing young people with access to age-appropriate information and health services.” These numbers tell us that the problem is widespread and deeply rooted. Population size partly explains the numbers, but they also show where we must intensify information campaigns and youth-friendly health services,” Bersales said.As the nation celebrates National Women’s Month, Bersales told Congress it is high time to fast-track and pass the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Bill, which aims to institutionalize comprehensive reproductive health education and expand adolescent-friendly health services in remote areas.The commission is also supporting a proposal to create a quintet committee to harmonize the various versions of the bill.Besides legislative measures, Bersales stressed that preventing adolescent pregnancies starts at home.” We need parents who can talk openly with their children. We need teachers who are trained and supported. We need communities that choose to protect their young people. It really takes a village to raise a child. We cannot allow more children to lose their childhood because they were forced into motherhood,” Bersales said.

- MMDA eyes ‘sponge city’ systems vs flood (2026-03-14 16:05)

(UPDATE) THE Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) is advancing the Metro Manila Sponge City Project to improve flood management in parts of the capital region through nature-based solutions and integrated sponge city systems.The agency announced on Friday evening that MMDA Chairman Don Artes and Finance Secretary Frederick Go led discussions on

next steps and preparations before the project implementation, with support from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).In the past few days, the AIIB and the MMDA conducted discussions, site visits and courtesy calls with partner local governments to gather insights into flooding and possible solutions under the sponge city approach.The sponge city concept integrates distributed green-blue systems with existing drainage infrastructure to help absorb, store and control rainwater from heavy rainfall.Artes described the concept as a “new approach” to flood management that allows rainwater to be managed more naturally through landscape-based interventions while easing pressure on conventional drainage systems.The initiative is anchored on building resilient, integrated infrastructure systems aligned with the Philippine Development Plan.Officials said the project is expected to run for about five years and is targeted to begin next year.The program will include several components, such as water-retention interventions and the development of green public spaces, designed to help manage stormwater.As part of these efforts, the MMDA is developing a linear park along the San Juan River easement, wherein nature-based flood management solutions will be incorporated.The agency is also coordinating with various sectors to identify locations for rainwater-impounding facilities for excess rainwater during periods of heavy rainfall.

- PH commits to peaceful use of nuclear energy (2026-03-14 16:04)

THE Philippines reaffirmed its commitment to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and the peaceful use of nuclear technology during the recent meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board of governors held from March 2 to 6, 2026.The statement came as the Philippines continues its two-year term as a member of the IAEA’s 35-seat governing board, following its election in September 2025.During the meeting at the agency’s headquarters in Vienna, Evangelina Bernas, the country’s permanent representative and ambassador to the IAEA, highlighted the Philippines’ ongoing efforts to promote the safe and peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology.“These initiatives demonstrate the country’s commitment to advancing the safe, secure, and peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology,” Bernas said.New nuclear safety lawBernas cited the enactment of Republic Act (RA) 12305, signed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in September 2025, as a key milestone in strengthening the country’s nuclear governance framework.The law establishes the Philippine Atomic Energy Authority (PhilATOM), an independent regulatory body tasked with overseeing all nuclear and radiation-related activities in the country.PhilATOM will ensure that nuclear energy development in the Philippines complies with the highest international safety and security standards set by the IAEA.The legislation forms part of the government’s broader effort to explore nuclear power as a potential source of clean and secure energy as the country transitions toward more sustainable energy resources.Bernas also highlighted the Philippines’ hosting of the International High-Level Forum on Nutec Plastics held on Nov. 23–24, 2025, in Pasay.The forum gathered more than 400 participants, including 140 delegates from 59 countries and high-level representatives from Indonesia, Hungary, Kuwait, South Africa and Thailand.The event focused on the use of nuclear science and related technologies to address plastic pollution, including techniques that can track microplastics in marine environments and

improve plastic recycling processes.Officials said the forum also promoted partnerships among governments, scientists and industry stakeholders in advancing circular economy practices and environmental sustainability.

- Comelec to release teacher honoraria on election day, scrap 15-day wait (2026-03-14 16:03)

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) said it will adopt a policy to ensure teachers receive their honoraria on election day, rather than waiting 10 to 15 days after the polls close.” In fact, in the next elections, that is what we will do. The 10 to 15 days will be gone. At the time that the equipment is being delivered, the teachers’ honoraria should also be given,” Comelec Chairman George Erwin Garcia said on Saturday during the special election for the 2nd Congressional District of Antipolo City.Election officials and teachers began preparing precincts before dawn Saturday, as the special polls aimed to fill the congressional seat left vacant following the death of former representative Romeo Acop in December 2025. While voting continues to be conducted manually in the district, Garcia emphasized that the timely release of honoraria reflects the commission’s commitment to modernizing administrative processes without compromising election integrity.Garcia assured public school teachers serving in the Antipolo special election that their honoraria would match what they received during the May 2025 National and Local Elections.” We decided that whatever honoraria the teachers received during the previous election last May 12 of the National and Local Elections, that is also what our teachers here in the special election in Antipolo will receive,” Garcia said.He added that the initiative is part of broader efforts to refine election procedures and improve operational efficiency. By ensuring that election personnel are promptly compensated, the poll body hopes to encourage participation and maintain high standards of professionalism among teachers who serve as board members.

- Some Pasay, Manila roads to close early Sunday for running event (2026-03-14 16:02)

SEVERAL roads in Pasay City will be temporarily closed today, March 15, for the 2026 Sante Barley Trilogy Run, according to the city’s Traffic and Parking Management Office.Road closures will take effect from 1:30 a.m. until 7 a.m. to ensure participants’ safety and for the smooth conduct of the event.Among the roads affected in Pasay are SM MOA Block 16/20, Seaside corner Macapagal Avenue, Diokno Avenue, Buendia Extension with zipper lane, Jalandoni Street northbound, Sotto Street with zipper lane, Roxas Boulevard southbound going to Manila and Atang Dela Rama Street with zipper lane on the PICC side.The Manila Police District Public Information Office said additional road closures will also be implemented on several major Manila roads that form part of the race route.These include the northbound lane of Roxas Boulevard from Quirino Avenue to Katigbak Drive and the southbound lane from P. Ocampo Avenue to Katigbak Drive.Also affected are the westbound lanes of Quirino Avenue from Adriatico Street to Roxas Boulevard and TM Kalaw Avenue from MH del Pilar Street to Roxas Boulevard, as well as portions of P. Burgos Avenue from Roxas Boulevard to Jones Bridge southbound.Other roads included on the list of closed roads are Bonifacio Drive from Anda

Circle to Katigbak Drive, Maria Orosa Street from P. Burgos Avenue to Kalaw Avenue, Finance Road from P. Burgos Avenue to Taft Avenue, Victoria Street from P. Burgos Avenue to Muralla Street, the southbound lane of Jones Bridge and Magallanes Drive fronting the Bureau of Immigration.The MPD-PIO said the closing and reopening of affected roads will depend on the actual traffic situation during the event.Authorities also released rerouting measures for motorists traveling through the affected areas.Vehicles coming from the McArthur and Quezon bridges, intending to use Roxas Boulevard southbound, will be diverted to P. Burgos Avenue toward Taft Avenue, while vehicles from Kalaw Avenue heading to Roxas Boulevard southbound will be directed to turn left to MH del Pilar Street.Motorists coming from Maria Orosa Street and A. Mabini Street will be directed to Kalaw Avenue toward Taft Avenue, while vehicles from UN Avenue intending to use Roxas Boulevard will be diverted to the Roxas Boulevard service road.Vehicles from Bonifacio Drive will be required to turn around at Anda Circle, and those coming from Plaza Cervantes intending to use Jones Bridge will be redirected through the Escolta underpass or San Vicente Street toward MacArthur Bridge.Authorities also advised heavy vehicles coming from Osmeña Highway northbound or Roxas Boulevard northbound to turn right onto President Quirino Avenue.Truck drivers coming from Mel Lopez Boulevard (R-10) heading to Roxas Boulevard will be diverted via Capulong Street, Yuseco Street and Lacson Avenue, which authorities identified as the old truck route.In a Facebook post, the MPD advised motorists to familiarize themselves with the road closures and the routing schemes during the event.It added that the opening and closing of the roads will depend on vehicular traffic flow.

- PH, Singapore to boost trade, investment, AI, clean energy (2026-03-14 14:15)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines and Singapore have agreed to strengthen cooperation in trade, investment, and key industries such as artificial intelligence (AI) and clean energy, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said Saturday.The President issued the statement after meeting with Singaporean Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry Gan Kim Yong in Malacañang on Thursday. “I had a productive meeting with Singapore Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry Gan Kim Yong on how the Philippines and Singapore can work more closely in trade, investment, and emerging industries such as artificial intelligence and clean energy,” Marcos said in a Facebook post. “As ASEAN works toward a more integrated and competitive region, closer cooperation between our countries helps strengthen our economies, create more opportunities for Filipinos, and keep the Philippines ready for the future,” he added.

- Minor irregularities in Antipolo polls not expected to affect outcome, Comelec clarifies (2026-03-14 13:51)

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) said Saturday’s special election in Antipolo City’s 2nd District proceeded smoothly, with all complaints and reported irregularities properly documented and addressed to uphold the integrity of the vote.Comelec Chairman George Garcia said allegations of election offenses were immediately referred to the city election officer and the Comelec Law Department. “Minutes of all incidents and complaints were carefully

recorded. Only documented incidents can form the basis for legal proceedings," Garcia said, emphasizing that the system ensures accountability while distinguishing minor procedural issues from substantive offenses.Garcia cited several reported irregularities during the day, including the alleged distribution of sample ballots inside precincts despite rules prohibiting electioneering on election day. Children were also prevented from distributing ballots in line with Republic Act 7166 and the Omnibus Election Code.Poll watchers also filed complaints regarding voter conduct and the actions of supporters, which were immediately referred to the city election officer for verification and documentation.Concerns were likewise raised over voter registration, particularly deactivated voters whose names were missing from precinct lists after missing previous elections or whose registration had yet to be approved by the Election Registration Board.Garcia clarified that isolated incidents—such as improper handling of campaign materials or disputes over voter eligibility—do not invalidate the election."Only substantial irregularities that could affect the outcome of the vote may lead to legal action," he said.He stressed that all complaints submitted by poll watchers or observers were incorporated into the official minutes, ensuring proper documentation that could serve as evidence if legal action becomes necessary."It's important that issues are formally recorded rather than discussed informally," Garcia said, warning that unrecorded incidents have no legal weight.Garcia added that the Comelec Law Department would review all complaints and pursue appropriate action when warranted. Election offenses detected during the day may lead to sanctions, including possible prosecution."The procedures we implemented ensure transparency, accountability, and fairness," Garcia said. "All voters can be confident that complaints are treated seriously and the integrity of the election is maintained."

- 340 Filipinos from Riyadh to arrive aboard 2nd govt-chartered flight on March 15 (2026-03-14 12:35)

MANILA, Philippines – The second batch of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) repatriated from the Middle East amid the ongoing war is scheduled to arrive in Manila on Sunday, March 15, Malacañang said Saturday. Acting Presidential Communications Secretary Dave Gomez said Philippine Airlines flight PR8502 from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia is expected to land at Ninoy Aquino International Airport at 6:35 a.m.It will be the second one to be chartered by the Philippine government since the Middle East conflict broke out on Feb. 28, 2026."Authorities and support teams will be on standby at the airport to assist the arriving passengers. The repatriates will also be provided with assistance to facilitate their return to their respective home provinces," Gomez said in a statement.The first flight carrying repatriated Filipinos from Dubai arrived on March 5.At a press briefing at NAIA Terminal 3 in Pasay City on Saturday, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration head Patricia Yvonne Caunan said on top of those stranded due to flight disruptions, majority of the OFWs on board were tagged as "distressed."A total of 16 crossed Saudi Arabia from Bahrain."Authorities and support teams will be on standby at the airport to assist the arriving passengers," the PCO said."The repatriates will also be provided with assistance to facilitate their return to their respective home provinces." The repatriation of the displaced Filipinos from the Middle East is part of the Philippine government's continuing

efforts to assist those affected by heightened tensions in the region.More flightsThe Sunday arrival of the 340 will bring the total number of OFWs assisted by the government to over 1,000.Cuanan said commercial and chartered flights for next week were being organized for 400 more OFWs awaiting repatriation. “They are being prepared for the flight home, meaning those who need visa and those who need to cross to pick up points,” she said. “Ito talaga ‘yung (This really is the) core government repatriation. From addressing their welfare needs up to purchasing their tickets, renting the bus from point A to the airport, then bringing them home.” Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac said pre- and post-repatriation assistance would be provided to all returning Filipinos, including psychosocial services and government-funded airfare to their provinces.The first Philippine government chartered flight carrying 442 Filipinos from the United Arab Emirates, including OFWs and stranded tourists, arrived at NAIA Terminal 3 in Pasay City on Saturday afternoon.

- 442 Filipinos touch down in Manila from Dubai (2026-03-14 11:30)

MANILA, Philippines — Over 400 Filipinos arrived home from the Middle East on Saturday, amid the ongoing war in the region, Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac said in a Facebook post on the same day.Cacdac was on board a government-chartered Boeing 747-400 flight from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.Among the Filipinos on board were 200 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). “We have landed. [Some] 442 Filipinos from the UAE on the PHL Government-chartered B747-400 flight, as directed by President [Ferdinand Marcos Jr., are home,” he wrote.Cacdac’s short video showed himself with some of the Filipinos thanking the government.The DMW said their chief and the Filipinos landed at Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 at noontime on Saturday.

- Congress urged to pass measures to curb rising teenage pregnancies (2026-03-14 05:25)

MANILA, Philippines—The Commission on Population and Development (CPD) on Saturday urged Congress to pass legislation aimed at curbing the rising number of teenage pregnancies in the country.According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the birth rate among girls aged 10-14 years old has increased to 8.9 percent in 2024, with a total of 3,612 registered births. The data also showed that of that number, two of them were only 10 years old.In a statement, CPD Undersecretary Lisa Grace Bersales said such cases highlighted the need for stronger measures to prevent adolescent pregnancies. “Preventing adolescent pregnancy is about protecting the future of young Filipinas—ensuring that they can become the leaders, professionals, and changemakers our nation needs,” Bersales said.

- Govt moves to cushion airline passengers from jet fuel spike (2026-03-14 05:23)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine government has begun implementing measures to help ease the burden on airline passengers following a sharp increase in global jet fuel prices triggered by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.According to the Department of Transportation (DOTr), it is working with the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) and the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) to mitigate the potential impact of rising fuel costs on

airfares.Government monitoring showed that the price of jet fuel nearly doubled in recent weeks, climbing from $90.87 per barrel on Feb. 19 to $188.20 per barrel on March 9.In response, Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez directed CAAP to reduce Passenger Service Charges (PSC) and airport navigation charges in all airports operated by the aviation authority. The move is intended to help airlines lower operating costs amid the surge in fuel prices.The CAB has also shortened the evaluation and implementation period for adjustments in fuel surcharges. The process, which previously took about a month, has been reduced to 15 days to allow faster reflection of any decline in jet fuel prices in airline fares.The government said it continued to monitor developments in the global fuel market and was coordinating with stakeholders in the aviation industry to ensure that air travel remained safe, reliable, and affordable for the public.

- ‘Sponge city’ systems eyed to improve Metro Manila flood control (2026-03-14 05:17)

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority is advancing the Metro Manila Sponge City Project aimed at improving flood management in parts of the capital through nature-based solutions and integrated sponge city systems.The agency announced on Friday evening that MMDA Chairman Don Artes and Finance Secretary Frederick Go led discussions on the next steps and preparations before the project moves toward implementation with support from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.In the past few days, the AIIB and the MMDA conducted discussions, site visits and courtesy calls with partner local governments to gather insights on flooding problems and possible solutions under the sponge city approach.Artes described the sponge city concept as a “new approach” that integrated distributed green-blue systems with conventional drainage infrastructure to help absorb, store and control rainwater brought by heavy rains and typhoons.The project is expected to run for about five years and is targeted to begin next year.Officials said the program would include several components such as water retention interventions and the development of green public spaces.The MMDA is also developing a linear park along the San Juan River easement that will incorporate nature-based solutions.

- Counsel for drug victims ask ICC to reject Duterte defense appeal vs 2 external lawyers (2026-03-14 05:12)

MANILA, Philippines — The common legal representatives for victims (CLRVs) in the case against former president Rodrigo Duterte have called on Pre-Trial Chamber I to reject the defense’s application for leave to appeal a decision that denied the disqualification of two external lawyers, describing the request as "hasty" and legally deficient.In a response filed on March 13, 2026, lawyers Joel Butuyan and Gilbert Andres urged the Chamber to deny the defense request, arguing that it failed to meet the stringent requirements for an interlocutory appeal under Article 82(1)(d) of the Rome Statute.The dispute stemmed from a defense motion filed on Feb. 11, 2026, seeking the disqualification of Butuyan and Andres, who were appointed by the Registry as external CLRVs in the case. On Feb. 20, 2026, the Chamber rejected that disqualification request. The defense filed its request for leave to appeal that rejection just

hours later on the same day.In their response, Butuyan and Andres argued that the defense has not identified an appealable "issue" arising from the Impugned Decision. They noted the Chamber’s own established jurisprudence, which defines an appealable issue as one that requires a decision for its resolution, not merely a question of disagreement."The bulk of the defense's arguments focus on its disagreements with the submissions of Mr. Butuyan and Mr. Andres," the filing stated. "Given this stark lack of reference to the actual, relevant parts of the impugned decision, the defense merely expresses its disagreement with the outcome of the Chamber's deliberation."The victims’ lawyers further contend that the defense's continued challenges to the victims' choice of counsel are dilatory and unfair to the victims, who have a right to expeditious access to justice. They noted that the confirmation of charges hearing has already been delayed for five months."Without having gone through the substance of the pre-trial proceedings... defense counsel has revealed a penchant, or perhaps more fittingly a strategy, for tactics that simply delay and dramatize the proceedings, before they even occur," the response reads.The filing specifically takes issue with the defense's argument regarding potential conflicts of interest involving a team member of the external CLRVs. The victims’ lawyers maintain that the defense has not substantiated any actual conflict under the relevant provisions of the Code of Professional Conduct for counsel."The defense does not substantiate how the distinction between case manager and associate of counsel... is 'artificial' based on any illustrative facets of the working roles," the document stated.Butuyan and Andres also criticized the defense for referencing Article 64 of the Statute, which pertains to the functions of a Trial Chamber, rather than Article 57, which applies to the Pre-Trial Chamber. They argued this indicated the defense was attempting to adjudicate trial-specific issues that have not yet arisen.The external CLRVs also invoked Article 27 of the Code of Professional Conduct, beseeching the defense to "act in good faith, acknowledge when the decisions made by the Chamber are definitive and comprehensive, and refrain from further wasting the time and resources of the Court in adjudicating non-issues."

- Pasay roads closed early Sunday for running event (2026-03-14 05:00)

MANILA, Philippines — Several roads in Pasay City will be temporarily closed on Sunday for the 2026 Sante Barley Trilogy Run, according to the city’s Traffic and Parking Management Office.The closures will take effect from 1:30 a.m. to 7 a.m. to ensure the safety of participants and allow the event to proceed smoothly.Affected roads include SM MOA Block 16/20, Seaside corner Macapagal Avenue, Diokno Avenue, Buendia Extension with zipper lane, Jalandoni Street northbound, Sotto Street with zipper lane, Roxas Boulevard going to Manila southbound, and Atang Dela Rama Street with zipper lane on the PICC side.Pasay traffic officials advised motorists to plan their trips ahead and take alternative routes during the temporary road closure.Normal traffic flow is expected to resume once the roads reopen at 7 a.m.The Santé Barley Trilogy Run, according to its website, was formerly known as RUNRIO Trilogy.It made its debut in the Philippines in 2010 under Rio de la Cruz, the president and founder of Runrio Inc."With a goal of igniting and nurturing passion for running in the country, the series focused on progressive running and training," according to the website.Trilogy Run Asia has "

strategically designed its distances, guiding participants from 5k to 42k races. This approach ensures that runners remain injury-free and enjoy every step of their journey," it said."Since its inception, Trilogy Run Asia has become a celebrated platform, reviving the popularity of running in the Philippines. As the Trilogy expands its influence, it now aims higher, setting its sights on new territories in Southeast Asia," it said.

- Comelec: Antipolo special elections rolled out, to serve as testing ground for nationwide polls (2026-03-14 04:37)

MANILA, Philippines — The special election in Antipolo City’s second district on Saturday rolled out smoothly and was expected to be a testing ground for improvements that could be applied in future nationwide elections, according to Commission on Elections (Comelec) Chairman George Garcia.Teachers and poll watchers arrived at the polling precincts as early as 3 a.m.. While teachers prepared election materials, watchers from political parties and candidates set up for the expected arrival of voters.Garcia noted, however, that preparations were also made to assist elderly voters and persons with disabilities (PWDs).He said that 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. had been set aside primarily for vulnerable sectors, including senior citizens and PWDs, to allow them to vote without facing long lines or overcrowding.“This early voting window is critical for our elderly and voters with disabilities,” Garcia said, noting that the arrangement helped them avoid the usual problems experienced in previous elections such as long queues, congestion and heat.Garcia said many seniors and PWDs were already able to cast their ballots early in the day, benefiting from cooler weather and more orderly polling conditions.In some cases, however, election officials also allowed other voters to cast ballots earlier than scheduled if there were no queues at polling stations.Garcia said the Comelec had instructed members of the electoral boards that if polling places were already open and there were voters present who might not be able to return later — such as those heading to work — they could be allowed to vote even before the 7 a.m. opening to the general public.“If there is no crowd and the polling place is already open, there is no reason to prevent someone from voting,” he said, adding that the main purpose of opening schools early was to make voting more accessible and efficient.Garcia also pointed to the use of Priority Polling Places (PPP) designed to make voting easier for seniors and PWDs who may have difficulty climbing stairs to upper-floor classrooms where precincts are usually located.Under the system, vulnerable voters may stay at the PPP, typically located on the ground floor, while a designated assistant retrieves their ballot from their assigned precinct.To ensure security, ballots are not stored at the PPP. Instead, the voter signs a waiver authorizing an election assistant to collect the ballot from the proper precinct. The ballot is then brought to the PPP where the voter fills it out.Once accomplished, the ballot is either returned by the assistant to the designated precinct for insertion into the vote-counting machine or, if the voter prefers, the voter may personally bring the ballot to the precinct with assistance from support staff.Garcia acknowledged that minor confusion sometimes would arise when some senior citizens or PWDs would insist on personally bringing their ballots to their assigned precincts despite using the PPP.“Some of them still want to personally drop their ballots into the machine,” he said, adding that election

staff continue to assist them in doing so safely if they prefer.OpportunitiesGarcia said the Comelec treated special elections as opportunities to refine procedures and identify adjustments that could make future polls more efficient and orderly.“Special elections help us study what changes we need to make so that future elections will run more smoothly,” he said.He cited a previous special election in Cavite that followed the vacancy created when Ombudsman Jesus Crispin Remulla left his congressional seat after being appointed secretary of the Department of Justice.Voting across polling precincts in the second district of Antipolo proceeded without major problems as of Saturday morning, with election officials monitoring developments through the commission’s operations center.Unlike regular national and local elections in the Philippines, the Antipolo special election used manual vote counting, a system Garcia acknowledged would take longer than automated elections.He said canvassing of votes was expected to begin around 6 p.m. after voting ends and may continue through the night.Despite the manual process, Garcia expressed confidence that the results would be known quickly because only one position is being contested.“Manual elections are slower, although it helps that there is only one position being contested,” he said, adding that the commission expects to proclaim the winning candidate by Sunday morning.Garcia also sought to address concerns about the integrity of manual vote counting, saying extensive security measures were in place to safeguard the process.Personnel from the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines were deployed across the province to secure polling areas, while poll watchers from political parties and candidates were present in precincts.“With the presence of security forces and watchers from the parties and candidates, it is impossible for irregularities to happen,” Garcia said.He also noted that elections in Rizal Province have historically been peaceful and that the province has never been classified as a critical election hotspot.

- Body of slain OFW returns home from Israel (2026-03-14 03:49)

MANILA, Philippines — The remains of a Filipino caregiver who was killed by an Iranian missile strike in Israel at the start of the war in the Middle East arrived early Saturday, the government said.The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) said Mary Ann De Vera's husband, Bernie Lavarias, along with DMW Undersecretaries Barnard Olalia, Felicitas Bay, Dominique Rubia-Tutay, OWWA Administrator Patricia Yvonne Caunan, Deputy Administrator Ryan Vincent Uy, Israel Ambassador to the Philippines Dana Kursh, and AGIMAT party-list Rep. Bryan Revilla were present for the Filipina who died from shrapnel wounds in Tel Aviv.The OFW’s remains were transported to Pangasinan, her hometown.Lavarias met on Thursday with Israeli President Isaac Herzog who expressed his condolences.