



PHILIPPINES SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: March 20, 2026 - March 27, 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 concerns from March 20 to March 27, 2026, primarily driven by escalating tensions in the South China Sea and a significant focus on bolstering national cybersecurity defenses. Confrontations with China intensified, marked by a Chinese navy ship targeting a Philippine vessel with fire control radar and Manila's firm rejection of Beijing's territorial claims. Concurrently, the nation actively strengthened its alliances, with the conclusion of the "Salaknib" exercises with the United States and preparations for the largest-ever "Balikatan" drills involving the US, Japan, and Australia. Domestically, the uncovering of alleged Chinese espionage involving Filipino nationals underscored persistent intelligence threats, while a nationwide push to enhance cyber resilience addressed advanced digital threats. These developments collectively highlight the Philippines' strategic pivot towards a more assertive defense posture and deepened security partnerships amidst a complex geopolitical landscape.

Key Security Developments

- South China Sea Confrontation: Chinese Radar Targeting

On March 20, 2026, the Philippines accused a Chinese navy ship of directing its fire control radar towards one of its vessels in the disputed South China Sea, labeling the act as "provocative." This specialized radar provides precise targeting coordinates to a ship's weapons systems, significantly escalating the nature of maritime encounters. The incident underscores the persistent and dangerous interactions between Chinese and Philippine vessels in the waterway, which Beijing claims almost entirely despite an international ruling invalidating its assertions.

- Rejection of Chinese Claims in South China Sea

Throughout the period, the Philippines firmly rejected renewed assertions by China over sovereignty in the South China Sea, particularly concerning Scarborough Shoal and the Spratly Islands. Philippine foreign ministry spokesperson Rogelio Villanueva stated that the Philippines possesses "indivisible, incontrovertible and longstanding sovereignty" over these features. This diplomatic pushback highlights Manila's assertive stance and its reliance on international law, contrasting with Beijing's consistent rejection of the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling.

- Enhanced Cybersecurity Initiatives and Threats

The Philippines launched "I AM SECURE 2026" on March 20, 2026, a platform aimed at strengthening cybersecurity efforts through coordination between government and the private sector against advanced threats, including those linked to artificial intelligence and automation. This initiative comes as the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Cyber Command chief, Brigadier General Joey Fontiveros, reported persistent cyberattacks from China-based malicious actors, characterized by malware intrusions, DDoS attacks, and data leaks, often linked to West Philippine Sea tensions. Cybersecurity threats are now officially treated as national security risks, with incidents escalated to Cabinet and even Presidential attention.

- Completion of "Salaknib" Military Exercises with US

The annual "Salaknib" exercises between Filipino and American military units concluded on March 24, 2026, having commenced on March 5. These drills, meaning "shield" in Ilocano, involved troops from various Philippine Army units and their counterparts from the United States Army Pacific Command (USARPAC). The exercises are a testament to the enduring ties between the two armies and aim to enhance capabilities for effectively dealing with the fast-changing security landscape of the Indo-Pacific region.

- Preparations for Largest "Balikatan" Exercises with US, Japan, and Australia

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) announced that the 2026 "Balikatan" (shoulder-to-shoulder) military exercises, scheduled for April to May, will be the largest yet, expanding in scope and intensity. For the first time, Japanese combat forces will actively participate, alongside Australian troops, moving beyond observer roles. These drills will feature a wider range of activities, including disaster response, noncombatant evacuation operations, cyber defense, and space-related exercises, signifying a broader strategic pivot towards tighter regional security networks.

- Uncovering of Alleged Chinese Espionage

On March 22, 2026, the Philippine military revealed the arrest of at least three Filipinos with ties to the country's military on suspicion of spying for Beijing. These individuals allegedly leaked information that sparked maritime confrontations in the South China Sea, marking a new strategy by China to recruit Filipinos for espionage. The National Security Council (NSC) confirmed these "foreign-directed malign activities" and called for new legislation, including an Anti-Espionage Bill and an Anti-Foreign Malign Influence and Interference Act, to strengthen national security.

- Push for Defense Modernization Financing Reforms

The Philippines' Department of National Defense (DND) is advocating for the removal of restrictions on both foreign and local financing for defense acquisitions and the abolition of the 15-year timeline governing the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) modernization program. This push aims to lift the existing \$300-million ceiling on foreign loans and secure authorization for local financing options, enabling the

acquisition of high-cost systems crucial for the Horizon 3 phase of modernization, which includes multi-role fighter aircraft and submarines.

- Diplomatic Dialogue with China Amidst Tensions

Despite escalating maritime disputes and public exchanges, the Philippine and Chinese foreign ministries held talks in Beijing from February 27 to 28, 2026, to ease tensions and explore "mutually beneficial cooperation." While details remain confidential, the dialogue aimed for an "open and candid exchange of views" on bilateral concerns, including maritime issues, demonstrating a commitment to managing the situation peacefully while asserting Philippine interests. However, a South China Sea expert warned on March 2, 2026, that a Code of Conduct for the contested waters is "simply not achievable" this year, given the Philippines' ASEAN chairmanship and its stance on the arbitration ruling.

- Maritime Advisory for Middle East High-Risk Zones

On March 3, 2026, the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) issued an urgent directive (Advisory No. 2026-08) to the Philippine-Registered Overseas Fleet (PROF), mandating them to bypass high-risk zones in the Middle East due to escalating regional hostilities. This measure aims to ensure the safety and welfare of Filipino seafarers, who constitute a significant portion of the global maritime workforce, and the security of vessels operating in or transiting affected areas.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

The period from March 20-27, 2026, underscored the Philippines' pivotal role in the evolving Indo-Pacific security architecture, largely shaped by its intensifying maritime disputes with China and its deepening alliance with the United States and other like-minded partners. The direct confrontation involving a Chinese navy ship's radar targeting a Philippine vessel near Scarborough Shoal highlights the persistent and dangerous flashpoints in the South China Sea, which continue to be a primary driver of regional instability. Manila's firm rejection of Beijing's expansive claims, grounded in international law, reinforces the rules-based international order but also contributes to the "war of words" and hardening of positions between the two nations. This dynamic places the Philippines at the forefront of efforts to counter China's assertiveness, influencing other ASEAN claimant states and potentially encouraging a more unified regional response.

The strengthening of the Philippines-US alliance is a central theme, with the conclusion of "Salaknib" and the upcoming "Balikatan" exercises demonstrating an "ironclad" commitment to mutual defense and regional security. The inclusion of Japan and Australia as active participants in "Balikatan" signifies a strategic shift towards "minilateral" security coordination, expanding the network of partners

capable of supporting deterrence and capacity-building beyond traditional bilateral arrangements. This enhanced multilateral cooperation, particularly as the Philippines chairs ASEAN in 2026, aims to bolster deterrence in the "first island chain" and ensure freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea. However, this deepening alignment with Western powers is viewed by China with suspicion, further complicating the prospects for a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, which a Chinese expert deemed "simply not achievable" this year.

The revelations of alleged Chinese espionage involving Filipino nationals add another layer of complexity to the geopolitical dynamics. Such activities, aimed at undermining the Philippines' military defenses and security posture, highlight the multi-faceted nature of the competition in the region, extending beyond conventional military and maritime domains into intelligence and cyber warfare. While the Philippines maintains diplomatic channels with China to manage tensions, the overall trend points towards a more robust and externally-oriented security strategy for Manila, driven by the imperative to protect its sovereign rights and territorial integrity in the face of persistent external pressures. The broader strategic landscape sees the Philippines actively shaping an Indo-Pacific where alliances are critical for maintaining a balance of power and deterring aggression.

Military and Defense Analysis

The Philippine military is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by the Revised Armed Forces of the Philippines Modernization Program, particularly its Horizon 3 phase (2023-2028). This period has seen a sustained push to enhance the nation's defense capabilities, primarily in response to escalating maritime challenges in the South China Sea. The Department of National Defense (DND) is actively advocating for critical reforms, including the removal of the \$300-million ceiling on foreign loans and the 15-year timeline for the modernization program, to facilitate the acquisition of high-cost, advanced defense systems. This reflects an urgent need to procure platforms such as multi-role fighter aircraft, airborne early warning systems, long-range patrol aircraft, frigates, corvettes, and even submarines, with South Korea emerging as a key partner in these ambitious projects.

The force posture of the Philippines is increasingly geared towards external defense, moving beyond its traditional focus on internal security. The ongoing and upcoming military exercises, such as the recently concluded "Salaknib" and the impending "Balikatan" drills, are central to this shift. These exercises, particularly the expanded "Balikatan" with the active participation of US, Japanese, and Australian combat troops, are designed to enhance interoperability, joint capabilities, and readiness for contingencies across various domains, including maritime, cyber, and space. The deployment of US missiles and uncrewed systems, coupled with an additional \$144

million investment for infrastructure under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), further strengthens the Philippines' collective defense and deterrence capabilities, especially in the first island chain.

Defense spending trends indicate a consistent increase, with a landmark proposal to raise the defense budget for fiscal year 2026 to PHP 299.3 billion (roughly USD 5.2 billion), marking the third consecutive year of double-digit growth. This substantial allocation is aimed at accelerating Horizon 3 acquisitions, including multirole fighter aircraft, airborne early warning platforms, and aerial refueling tankers, which are crucial for extending detection ranges and enhancing air superiority. On the maritime front, the planned acquisition of offshore patrol vessels, corvettes, and potentially submarines, alongside the deployment of BrahMos coastal defense batteries, will significantly boost the Philippine Navy's anti-ship strike capabilities and maritime patrol. These modernization efforts, coupled with robust alliance-building, are transforming the AFP into a more credible and capable force for territorial defense and regional security.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, the Philippines is expected to continue its assertive stance in the South China Sea, likely leading to further maritime encounters and diplomatic exchanges with China. The upcoming "Balikatan" exercises in April-May 2026, set to be the largest iteration yet with expanded participation from the US, Japan, and Australia, will be a major focus. These drills will likely involve complex scenarios aimed at enhancing interoperability and collective defense in the West Philippine Sea, potentially drawing strong reactions from Beijing. Concurrently, the nation will intensify its cybersecurity efforts, with ongoing initiatives like "I AM SECURE 2026" and the push for new anti-espionage legislation, as cyber threats from state-sponsored actors are expected to persist. The DND's efforts to reform defense acquisition financing will also likely gain momentum in legislative discussions.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: The Scarborough Shoal (Bajo de Masinloc) remains a critical flashpoint, as evidenced by the recent radar targeting incident and China's continued presence. Any further aggressive actions or attempts to restrict Filipino access to traditional fishing grounds could quickly escalate tensions. The broader West Philippine Sea, encompassing areas like the Spratly Islands, will also remain a high-risk area for maritime incidents, given the overlapping claims and increased patrols by both sides. The potential for miscalculation during close encounters between naval and coast guard vessels is a constant concern. Furthermore, the ongoing revelations and investigations into espionage activities involving foreign actors, particularly China, pose a significant internal security risk, potentially

undermining national defense secrets and critical infrastructure.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the frequency and nature of maritime incidents in the South China Sea, particularly around Scarborough Shoal and Second Thomas Shoal. The rhetoric and actions from both Philippine and Chinese officials regarding these disputes will be crucial. Progress in the "Balikatan" exercises, including the level of participation and the types of drills conducted, will signal the strength and direction of the Philippines' alliances. Domestically, legislative developments concerning the Anti-Espionage Bill and defense modernization financing will indicate the government's commitment to strengthening its security framework. Lastly, any public reports or official statements regarding cyberattacks or espionage arrests will reflect the evolving threat landscape in the digital and intelligence domains.

Strategic recommendations: The Philippines should continue to diversify and deepen its security partnerships beyond the traditional US alliance, actively engaging with countries like Japan, Australia, and European Union members to build a robust network of support for a rules-based international order. It is crucial to accelerate the modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, prioritizing maritime domain awareness, naval, and air defense capabilities to create a credible deterrence in the West Philippine Sea. Simultaneously, Manila should invest heavily in national cybersecurity infrastructure and human capital development, implementing a "whole-of-nation" approach to counter sophisticated cyber threats and protect critical information. Diplomatically, while maintaining open channels with China to de-escalate tensions, the Philippines must consistently and publicly assert its sovereign rights based on international law, leveraging its ASEAN chairmanship to foster regional consensus on maritime security. Finally, strengthening counter-intelligence capabilities and enacting modern anti-espionage legislation are vital to protect against foreign malign influence and intelligence gathering.

Structured Assessment

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## ANNEX: COLLECTED ARTICLES BY SOURCE

### Source: GMA Network

- [Nationwide transport strike generally peaceful so far -- PNP](#) (2026-03-27 05:48)

The Philippine National Police (PNP) said Friday morning the two-day nationwide transport strike amid tensions in the Middle East has remained generally peaceful despite reports of stranded commuters in Metro Manila.

- [Closed gas stations due to fuel price hikes now 425](#) (2026-03-27 05:18)

Closed gas stations due to fuel price hikes now 425

- [Marcos to PNP: No room for cops who break the law](#) (2026-03-27 04:53)

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. called on Friday the Philippine National Police to ensure a zero tolerance policy for corrupt practices as well as human rights abuses in the organization.

- [Madriaga not a 'polluted source,' Luistro says](#) (2026-03-27 04:50)

Madriaga not a 'polluted source,' Luistro says

- [LIST: Tips to safeguard your home during a Holy Week vacation](#) (2026-03-27 03:45)

LIST: Tips to safeguard your home during a Holy Week vacation

- [Marcos: ASEAN Summit to push through in May, to focus on oil, food, migrant workers](#) (2026-03-27 03:45)

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. said Friday the scheduled ASEAN Leaders' Summit in May would push through despite energy challenges brought by the Middle East conflict.

- [Robin Padilla calls for revival of PH's claim over Sabah amid oil crisis](#) (2026-03-27 03:33)

Senator Robin Padilla has urged President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. to revive the

Philippines" claim over Sabah--a Malaysian state known to be rich in oil and gas--as prices of petroleum products continue to shoot up due to the Middle East crisis.

- [EXPLAINER: How long will PH oil supply last amid Middle East tensions?](#) (2026-03-27 03:30)

As the conflict in the Middle East continues to affect global petroleum flows, concerns have been raised about the Philippines' fuel security, particularly how long its oil supply can meet consumer and industry demand.

- [PNPA Class 2026 top cadet driven by promise to late mother](#) (2026-03-27 03:01)

A 24-year-old female cadet from Baybay City, Leyte has emerged as the top graduate of the Philippine National Police Academy (PNPA) "Silang Paglaom" Class of 2026.

- [Teves wants Madriaga dead? Sara Duterte's lawyer says claim 'comical'](#) (2026-03-27 02:31)

A lawyer of Vice President Sara Duterte on Friday dismissed the allegation that former Negros Oriental representative Arnolfo "Arnie" Teves was supposedly behind the threats to Ramil Madriaga's life.

- [Marcos: PH has enough crude oil until June 30, 2026](#) (2026-03-27 00:58)

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. said Friday that the country has sufficient crude oil supply until June 30, 2026.

- [Transport strike vs fuel price surge resumes on Day 2](#) (2026-03-27 00:34)

Transport strike vs fuel price surge resumes on Day 2

- [LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East \(March 27, 2026\)](#) (2026-03-27 00:11)

Here are the latest news and updates on the conflict in the Middle East and related developments.

- [Duterte's defense team dismisses concern over confidential information](#) (2026-03-26 21:21)

A public redacted version of the response of former President Rodrigo Duterte's legal team regarding the issues of the prosecution on confidential information was released by the International Criminal Court (ICC) early Friday morning.

- [Cardinal David presides over Mother Ignacia's cause for beatification relaunch](#) (2026-03-26 19:18)

The cause for the beatification and canonization of the Religious of the Virgin Mary (RVM) congregation foundress, Venerable Mother Ignacia del Espiritu Santo, was relaunched on Wednesday, according to a CBCP News report.

- [PH Navy vessel avoids collision with China's PLA Navy ship --WESCOM](#) (2026-03-26 16:32)

The Philippine Navy's BRP Benguet escaped a potential collision near Pag-asa Island after a People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy missile frigate of China performed a dangerous maneuver on Wednesday, March 25, the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Western Command (WESCOM) said.

- [No tsunami threat following strong Japan quake, says PHIVOLCS](#) (2026-03-26 16:21)

There is no tsunami threat to the country following the recorded magnitude 6.5 earthquake off the coast of Sanriku in Japan, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) reported.

- [VP Sara announces cost-cutting measures to aid public amid oil crisis](#) (2026-03-26 15:37)

The Office of the Vice President (OVP) will take cost-cutting measures to ensure that more funds will be redirected to programs that would help the public amid the rising prices of commodities, said Vice President Sara Duterte on Thursday.

- [PPA expects more passengers in Holy Week despite high fares](#) (2026-03-26 14:07)

The Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) is expecting that there will be more sea-bound passengers leaving for the provinces this year for the Holy Week despite the fare hike.

- [DOE faces criticism from Marcoleta over lax fuel price monitoring](#) (2026-03-26 13:05)

Senator Rodante Marcoleta on Thursday fumed over the Department of Energy's (DOE) supposed inadequate monitoring of the soaring prices of fuel products.

- [Langis na mula sa Russia, dumating sa Pilipinas na nahaharap sa 'energy emergency'](#) (2026-03-26 12:41)

Isang barko na may kargang mahigit 700,000 bariles ng krudong langis mula Russia ang dumating sa Pilipinas, ayon sa isang source na may nalalaman sa usapin ang nagsalita sa

Agence France-Presse nitong Huwebes. Nangyari ito ilang araw matapos ideklara sa bansa ang national energy emergency dahil sa nangyayaring kaguluhan sa Middle East.

- [Philippines urged to cut ASEAN hosting budget to P10B amid fuel crisis](#) (2026-03-26 12:04)

Batangas Representative Leandro Leviste has called on President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. to reduce the budget for the country's hosting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) Summit and other related meetings this year from P22 billion to P10 billion.

- [VP Sara impeachment hearings part of due process SC required, says solon](#) (2026-03-26 11:17)

The hearings on the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte are part of the due process the Supreme Court required from the House of Representatives when it declared her impeachment in 2025 unconstitutional, a member of the House Committee on Justice said on Thursday.

- [72-year-old jeepney driver meets DSWD chief after viral ayuda exclusion incident](#) (2026-03-26 10:58)

Jaime Ricafrente, the 72-year-old jeepney driver who went viral online after his name was not included in the list of cash assistance beneficiaries, met Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) chief Rex Gatchalian on Thursday.

- [House rolls out Suporta sa Bayan public assistance desk](#) (2026-03-26 10:07)

The House of Representatives has rolled out a public assistance program that aims to help individuals seeking assistance from certain government agencies.

- [Marcos bares successful testing of Camago-3 well](#) (2026-03-26 10:06)

Amid the energy challenges, President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. on Thursday announced the successful drilling and testing of the Camago-3 well, a second major milestone under the \$893 million Malampaya Phase 4.

- [DepEd eyes direct farm-to-school supply to feed students, help farmers](#) (2026-03-26 09:23)

Education Secretary Sonny Angara on Thursday pushed for a simpler idea: buy vegetables directly from farmers and serve them in public schools.

- [Marcos may issue EO on reduced fuel tax by mid-April, says DOF](#) (2026-03-26 08:46)

President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. may issue the executive order whether to suspend or reduce the excise tax rate on petroleum products by April 12 or April 13, the Department of Finance (DOF) said Thursday.

- [SC affirms conviction of ex-Agusan del Norte mayor for malversation](#) (2026-03-26 08:17)

The Supreme Court (SC) has affirmed the conviction of a former mayor of a municipality in Agusan del Norte for malversation of public funds due to her failure to liquidate cash advances from municipal development funds.

- [Palace defends DOE's Garin amid energy challenges](#) (2026-03-26 08:03)

Malacañang on Thursday defended Department of Energy Secretary Sharon Garin amid the energy challenges in the country brought about by the Middle East crisis.

- [Ombudsman moves to end 'parking' of cases involving high-ranking officials](#) (2026-03-26 07:54)

The Office of the Ombudsman is cracking down on the alleged “parking” of cases after discovering at least 350 complaints involving high-ranking officials pending before the agency prior to Ombudsman Jesus Crispin Remulla's assumption of office in October 2025, Assistant Ombudsman Mico Clavano said Thursday.

- [Wealth tax? Palace says all suggestions being considered](#) (2026-03-26 07:34)

Wealth tax? Palace says all suggestions being considered

- [Universities shift to hybrid classes, work setups to save energy](#) (2026-03-26 07:17)

Universities across Metro Manila are rolling out energy conservation measures--from hybrid learning to compressed workweeks--as global fuel supply pressures linked to the Middle East conflict begin to affect operations in the Philippines.

- [LIST: Who are qualified for coding, truck ban exemption amid fuel disruption](#) (2026-03-26 07:03)

LIST: Who are qualified for coding, truck ban exemption amid fuel disruption

- [Russian oil arrives as Philippines battles 'energy emergency'](#) (2026-03-26 06:55)

A ship carrying more than 700,000 barrels of Russian crude oil has arrived in the Philippines, a source with knowledge of the matter told Agence France-Presse Thursday, days after the country declared a national energy emergency over the Middle East war.

- [PNP urges public to stay safe from drowning during summer vacation activities](#) (2026-03-26 06:48)

PNP urges public to stay safe from drowning during summer vacation activities

- [UP, Ateneo, La Salle hold ground in 2026 QS rankings](#) (2026-03-26 06:10)

Philippine universities held steady positions in the 2026 QS World University Rankings by Subject, with leading institutions maintaining their global brackets in English and improving placements in broader fields such as Arts and Humanities.

- [Ombudsman Remulla on filing flood control raps: Ngayong tag-init, iinit](#) (2026-03-26 05:32)

Ombudsman Jesus Crispin Remulla said Thursday that his office is set to file high-profile flood control related cases that would make the dry season even hotter.

- [Ombudsman: Assets of flood control kickback suspects remain frozen](#) (2026-03-26 05:10)

Ombudsman Jesus Crispin Remulla on Thursday assured the public that the assets of individuals allegedly involved in the flood control kickback scheme remain frozen.

- [Ombudsman to comply with House subpoena on VP Duterte SALNs](#) (2026-03-26 04:04)

The Office of the Ombudsman will comply with the House Committee on Justice's subpoena for documents requiring the submission of Vice President Sara Duterte's Statements of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALNs) covering all her years in public office, Assistant Ombudsman Mico Clavano said Thursday.

- [Recto to essential offices: Ensure uninterrupted services](#) (2026-03-26 03:13)

Malacanang on Thursday reminded public offices rendering essential services to ensure that their operations would be uninterrupted amid the present challenges caused by the Middle East conflict.

- [HPG names Rommel Batangan as new acting director](#) (2026-03-26 03:09)

Police Brigadier General Rommel Batangan is the new acting director of the Philippine National Police (PNP) - Highway Patrol Group (HPG), according to police officials.

- [Gov't lacks capacity to take over oil firms -- DOE's Garin](#) (2026-03-26 02:43)

Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said Thursday it is not a good idea for the government to temporarily take over the operations of oil companies in the country, even as fuel prices continue to rise amid tensions in the Middle East.

- [PH-China oil exploration talks made 'positive progress,' embassy says](#) (2026-03-26 02:12)

PH-China joint oil exploration talks made 'positive progress,' embassy says

- [Transport groups kick off two-day nationwide strike vs rising fuel prices](#) (2026-03-26 00:08)

Transport groups kick off two-day nationwide strike vs rising fuel prices

- [LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East \(March 26, 2026\)](#) (2026-03-25 23:14)

Here are the latest news and updates on the conflict in the Middle East and related developments.

- [Luzon, Mindanao grids stable; Visayas may face yellow alert in Q2](#) (2026-03-25 18:40)

The power grids of Luzon and Mindanao are expected to remain stable, but the Visayas grid may face a yellow alert in the second quarter of 2026, a study said.

- [Marcos vows to strengthen support, promote healthcare workers' welfare](#) (2026-03-25 17:38)

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday assured that the government will continue to beef up its support for healthcare workers through better training and improved safety and well-being initiatives.

- [CPD: Reproductive health education age-appropriate, aims to protect vs. sex abuse](#) (2026-03-25 16:41)

The Commission on Population Development (CPD) on Wednesday said reproductive health education in schools is age-appropriate and intends to protect minors from sexual abuse.

- [Delivery service riders in NCR to get P5k cash aid in 3-day payout](#) (2026-03-25 15:58)

Over 137,700 delivery service riders in Metro Manila will receive their P5,000 cash relief assistance from the government on March 26, 27, and 30, 2026 to help them cope with the recent surges in pump prices.

- [One bettor wins Megalotto P15M jackpot on March 25, 2026 draw](#) (2026-03-25 13:57)

A lone bettor won the Megalotto jackpot prize of P15 million in Wednesday night's draw, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) said.

- [CICC warns vs. staycation scam](#) (2026-03-25 13:09)

This vacation season, the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center (CICC) warned the public against the "staycation scam."

- [Seafarer who won P45M Grand Lotto 6/55 jackpot says he no longer needs to leave family for work](#) (2026-03-25 12:44)

After a decade of playing lotto, a seafarer won the P45 million from the Grand Lotto 6/55 draw on March 9, 2026. With his winnings, the lucky bettor will no longer set sail to be closer to his family.

- [DepEd: 3-term school calendar won't add to teachers' workload](#) (2026-03-25 12:24)

DepEd pushed back against concerns over its planned shift to a three-term school calendar, insisting the reform will not add to teachers' workload and will instead improve learning time.

- [Marcos OKs law resetting BARMM polls to September 14](#) (2026-03-25 11:37)

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday signed the law resetting the first regular elections in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) to September 14, 2026.

- [US Embassy advises American citizens to stay alert amid two-day transport strike](#) (2026-03-25 11:31)

The United States Embassy in the Philippines advised American citizens to stay alert and make necessary adjustments to their schedules ahead of the scheduled nationwide transport strike on March 26 and 27, 2026.

- [Justice panel chair: Impeachment proceedings vs. VP Sara constitutional](#) (2026-03-25 11:26)

The ongoing impeachment proceedings against Vice President Sara Duterte are in accordance with the Constitution, House justice panel chairperson Gerville Luistro said.

- [Spotted a Philippine deer? Don't make it a pet, says DENR](#) (2026-03-25 11:17)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Wednesday advised the public that endangered species like the Philippine deer (*Rusa marianna*), which was recently sighted in Marinduque after it was thought to be extinct, are not allowed to become pets.

- [BJMP prepares for heat and dry-season diseases, increases hazard pay](#) (2026-03-25 10:41)

The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) said on Wednesday that it is continuing decongestion efforts in its facilities to prevent the spread of diseases connected to the dry season.

- [Edgardo Vistan reappointed as UP Diliman chancellor](#) (2026-03-25 10:36)

Edgardo Carlo Vistan II has been reappointed as chancellor of the University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman and will serve for another three years until 2029.

- [DepEd, DOLE roll out one-stop job fairs to aid SHS, ALS graduates](#) (2026-03-25 10:16)

The government is rolling out nationwide “one-stop” job fairs in schools to help senior high school (SHS) and Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates secure employment faster while reducing the cost of applying for work.

- [SET junks quo warranto petition vs Erwin Tulfo](#) (2026-03-25 10:10)

The Senate Electoral Tribunal (SET) has dismissed the quo warranto petition seeking the removal of Senator Erwin Tulfo from office due to his supposed citizenship issues.

- [DepEd: Private schools not required to adopt 3-term calendar](#) (2026-03-25 09:33)

Private schools will not be required to adopt the planned three-term school calendar, and will continue to enjoy flexibility in setting their own academic schedules, DepEd said.

- [PH secures AU\\$45-M Aussie grant to improve ease of doing business](#) (2026-03-25 09:32)

The Philippine government, through the Department of Finance (DOF), has secured a grant from the Australian government to support an initiative aimed at improving the country's policy and business environment.

- [SP Sotto: All senators expected to attend possible special session amid oil crisis](#) (2026-03-25 09:26)

Senate President Vicente “Tito” Sotto III acknowledged Wednesday that the Senate may conduct a special legislative session even when it's on a break to respond to the problems resulting from the global oil crisis.

- [SC: DSWD certification required in adopting surrendered children](#) (2026-03-25 09:23)

Individuals who seek to adopt surrendered children must first secure a certification from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) that the child is legally available for adoption, the Supreme Court (SC) said.

- [VP Duterte in PH despite skipping House impeach hearing - lawyer](#) (2026-03-25 08:55)

Vice President Sara Duterte is in the country even as she decided not to attend the first hearing of the House justice committee on the impeachment complaints against her, her lawyer Michael Poa said on Wednesday.

- [Marcos brushes aside 'discussion' on gov't takeover of PH oil industry](#) (2026-03-25 08:36)

"We don't want to get into that discussion." This was the response of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. on Wednesday when asked if the government would temporarily take over the oil industry amid the Middle East crisis that resulted in oil price shocks in the country.

- [Marcos: Gov't can intervene to prevent power rate hikes](#) (2026-03-25 08:24)

Following the declaration of a state of national energy emergency, President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. on Wednesday said the government can intervene to ensure that electricity rates will not spike.

- [PH says talks with China for joint oil, gas exploration 'may be forthcoming'](#) (2026-03-25 05:43)

The Philippines is not currently engaged in joint oil and gas exploration with China, although such an arrangement is possible in the future to ensure energy security amid supply concerns

due to the Middle East conflict, Manila's top diplomat said Tuesday.

- [Marcos: PH resetting ties with China amid Middle East conflict](#) (2026-03-25 05:34)

Marcos: PH resetting ties with China amid Middle East conflict

- [House panel issues subpoena for VP Sara's SALNs, NBI probe on death threat](#) (2026-03-25 05:21)

The House justice committee has issued a subpoena or compelled the submission of the Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net (SALN) worth of Vice President Sara Duterte during her tenure as Davao City mayor and as Vice President.

- [Teachers 'surprised' by three-term school calendar --ACT](#) (2026-03-25 04:43)

Teachers' group Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) on Wednesday disputed the Department of Education's (DepEd) claim that educators were "widely consulted" on the shift to a three-term school calendar.

- [NAPOLCOM: HPG chief faces admin raps over alleged sexual harassment](#) (2026-03-25 03:51)

A senior official in the Philippine National Police (PNP) is facing an administrative complaint for alleged sexual harassment filed before the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM).

- [Sara Duterte skipping impeach hearing is constitutional violation --Luistro](#) (2026-03-25 03:43)

House justice committee chairperson Gerville Luistro questioned Wednesday Vice President Sara Duterte's faithfulness to her oath of office to follow the Constitution amid her absence in the impeachment proceedings.

- [Ferry and bus fares to remain unchanged during Holy Week, Marcos says](#) (2026-03-25 03:28)

Ferry and bus fares to remain unchanged during Holy Week, Marcos says

- [Filipinos trust Marcos due to his anti-corruption efforts, Pulse survey shows](#) (2026-03-25 03:07)

Filipinos trust Marcos due to his anti-corruption Efforts, Pulse Survey shows

- [Sara Duterte skips impeachment hearing, says complaints should be junked](#) (2026-03-25 03:03)

Vice President Sara Duterte on Wednesday did not attend the initial hearing of the House committee on justice on the impeachment complaints against her, insisting that no policy requires respondents to do so.

- [PH says working with Washington to obtain oil from US-sanctioned countries](#) (2026-03-25 02:41)

The Philippines is working with Washington to secure waivers and exemptions so it can obtain oil from US-sanctioned countries to ensure supply, its ambassador to the United States said.

- [PNP heightens security for energy sites after energy emergency declaration](#) (2026-03-25 01:53)

The Philippine National Police (PNP) has heightened security measures in key energy facilities following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s declaration of a national energy emergency amid rising fuel prices.

- [Commuters stranded in Metro Manila amid transport workers' aid payout](#) (2026-03-25 01:46)

Commuters were reported stranded in parts of Metro Manila on Wednesday morning amid limited public utility vehicle (PUV) operations, according to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

- [LIVE UPDATES: VP Sara Duterte impeachment hearing \(March 25, 2026\)](#) (2026-03-25 01:37)

The House Committee on Justice on Wednesday, March 25, 2026, will start its hearings on the impeachment complaints filed against Vice President Sara Duterte. Here are the latest news and updates.

- [Jeepney, PUV drivers, operators get cash aid from DSWD, DOTr](#) (2026-03-25 01:14)

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) has started distributing fuel subsidies to public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers and operators amid the rising fuel prices due to the Middle East tensions.

- [LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East \(March 25, 2026\)](#) (2026-03-24 23:27)

Here are the latest news and updates on the conflict in the Middle East and related developments.

- [House panel begins Sara Duterte impeachment hearings](#) (2026-03-24 22:30)

Batangas 2nd District Rep. Gerville Luistro, the committee chairperson, described this stage as similar to the preliminary investigation phase in a criminal complaint. During the hearing, the complainants and the defense are given the chance to present their respective documentary evidence and witnesses.

- [TIMELINE: Middle East conflict and its impact on global oil prices](#) (2026-03-24 16:32)

The beginning of Week 4 of the conflict in the Middle East has been marked by a roller coaster-like series of events with US President Donald Trump on March 22, threatening to “obliterate” Iran’s power plants if the Tehran government failed to reopen the Strait of Hormuz-where a substantial portion of the world’s supply of oil passes-in 48 hours. The following day, oil prices went down after Trump announced on Truth Social that he has ordered the postponement of military action against Iran, claiming the US and the Islamic republic had very good and productive conversations for a complete resolution of the conflict. Iran has since denied negotiating with US, calling it fake news. Please refresh the following article for updates on the Middle East conflict and its impact on global prices of oil.

- [DSWD warns vs fake news on online applications for fuel aid](#) (2026-03-24 16:29)

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) on Tuesday warned the public against falling for supposed online applications for fuel assistance from the agency.

- [Xavier University grad tops electronics engineers licensure exam](#) (2026-03-24 15:51)

A graduate of Xavier University was the top scorer in the electronics engineers licensure exam, while two test takers shared the top spot in the licensure exam for electronics technicians.

- [DSWD: Jeepney drivers to get P5k cash aid on March 25](#) (2026-03-24 15:40)

Public utility jeepney (PUJ) drivers in Metro Manila are next to receive the P5,000 cash relief from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to help them cope with rising prices of fuel products amid the Middle East crisis.

- [PH strengthens halal tourism to attract Muslim travelers, visitors](#) (2026-03-24 14:59)

The Philippines had made significant leaps to accommodate Muslim visitors and is now ready to accommodate the Halal tourism industry.

- [How Pinoys will benefit from the State of Energy Emergency](#) (2026-03-24 14:50)

What does the declaration mean to the Filipinos, and which tasks are assigned to government departments for implementation? The UPLIFT Committee will be led by the President, with key departments tasked to focus on overseeing the implementation of the emergency measures and coordination across sectors.

- [VP Sara Duterte to skip House hearing on impeachment complaints against her](#) (2026-03-24 14:32)

Vice President Sara Duterte will not attend the House Committee on Justice's hearing on Wednesday regarding the impeachment complaints against her.

- [PCSO: No winners of major lotto jackpot draws on March 24, 2026](#) (2026-03-24 14:04)

There were no winners of the major jackpot prizes drawn by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) on March 24, 2026.

- [DOT to aid Filipino tourism sector affected by Middle East conflict](#) (2026-03-24 14:01)

The Department of Tourism (DOT) stands ready to assist Filipinos in the tourism sector who would be affected by the effects of the Middle East conflict.

- [Worst case scenario for PH is if fuel supply 'runs dry' --DOE chief](#) (2026-03-24 11:54)

“The worst case is we run dry. This country runs dry,” Garin said. “Ang good news niyan (the good news) is we have about a month or a month and a half to prepare for this,” she added.

- [Marcos declares state of national energy emergency](#) (2026-03-24 11:25)

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Tuesday declared a state of national energy emergency and ordered the adoption of a Unified Package for Livelihoods, Industry, Food, and Transport (UPLIFT) for affected sectors.

- [DepEd earmarks record P25.6B for school feeding program, targets 4.6M learners](#) (2026-03-24 11:00)

The Department of Education (DepEd) is ramping up its fight against classroom hunger, allocating a record P25.6 billion for its School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) in School Year 2026-2027 --more than double last year"s budget, as it aims to reach 4.63 million learners nationwide.

- [TNVS drivers lose up to P700 daily due to surging fuel prices -- group](#) (2026-03-24 10:13)

Transport network vehicle service (TNVS) drivers are losing P500 to P700 a day due to the hefty fuel price hikes amid the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, a transport group said Tuesday.

- [Value autonomy, seize opportunities, SC Justice Singh tells women in judiciary](#) (2026-03-24 10:02)

“Let no one tell you what you can and cannot do.” This is the advice Supreme Court (SC) Associate Justice Maria Filomena Singh gave to women who are part of or aspiring to join the judiciary.

- [DENR reviewing memo on earth-balling, mangrove relocation for infra projects](#) (2026-03-24 09:32)

Amid concerns from environmental groups, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is reviewing a memorandum that permits “earth-balling” and the relocation of mangroves to give way for infrastructure projects.

- [PCG: Don't travel on unsafe 'colorum' boats](#) (2026-03-24 09:06)

With the summer vacation approaching, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) on Tuesday reminded the public not to travel using colorum boats as these pose risks to passenger safety.

- [DENR to pilot marine spatial planning for mangrove conservation](#) (2026-03-24 08:58)

DENR to pilot marine spatial planning for mangrove conservation

- [MWSS: Angat Dam expected to remain at safe water level amid hotter weather](#) (2026-03-24 08:55)

The water level of Angat Dam is expected to remain at a safe level in the coming months as hotter temperatures are expected with the end of the Northeast Monsoon (Amihan), the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) said Tuesday.

- [SC Justice Singh urges gender equality laws in government appointments](#) (2026-03-24 08:49)

Supreme Court (SC) Associate Justice Maria Filomena Singh on Tuesday pushed for laws and ordinances that would take into consideration the proportionate appointment of males and females in government.

- [Ombudsman begins case inventory for improved efficiency](#) (2026-03-24 08:40)

The Office of the Ombudsman has launched a physical inventory of all its pending cases to ensure efficient case monitoring and disposition.

- [Gov't Plans to use P20-B Malampaya Fund for Middle East conflict response](#) (2026-03-24 08:34)

Gov't Plans to use P20-B Malampaya Fund for Middle East conflict response

- [Congress transmits bill granting Marcos emergency powers to Palace](#) (2026-03-24 08:20)

Congress on Tuesday transmitted to the Office of the President (OP) the enrolled bill which would grant President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. the powers to suspend or reduce the excise tax on petroleum products.

- [Vlogger Jack Argota files counter-affidavit on raps over fake Marcos med cert](#) (2026-03-24 08:17)

Vlogger Jack Argota on Tuesday personally filed his counter-affidavit with the Department of Justice (DOJ) over the complaint against him for allegedly spreading false medical information concerning President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

- [EXPLAINER: What is an effusive eruption?](#) (2026-03-24 08:15)

EXPLAINER: What is an effusive eruption?

- [VP Sara Duterte's attendance at impeachment still uncertain](#) (2026-03-24 05:24)

The House committee on justice said Tuesday that it has not received any feelers from the camp of Vice President Sara Duterte regarding her possible attendance in tomorrow's impeachment hearing.

- [Senators say Philippines already in crisis due to Middle East conflict](#) (2026-03-24 04:52)

Several senators on Tuesday expressed belief that the Philippines is already in a crisis as it continues to suffer from the effects of the heightened tensions in the Middle East.

- [RORO, airport terminal fees to be slashed in April --DOTr](#) (2026-03-24 04:41)

The Department of Transportation announced on Tuesday a reduction in transport fees for airports and roll-on/roll-off (RORO) ships in response to the ongoing oil crisis.

- [Supreme Court to hold summer sessions in Manila amid rising fuel prices](#) (2026-03-24 04:17)

The Supreme Court (SC) said Tuesday it would hold its summer sessions, including oral arguments, in Manila instead of Baguio City in April due to rising fuel prices amid tensions in the Middle East.

- [PH Navy: 49 Chinese vessels spotted in WPS last week](#) (2026-03-24 04:08)

A total of 49 Chinese vessels were monitored in some features of the West Philippine Sea (WPS) in the past week, the Philippine Navy said on Tuesday.

- [SC justice Maria Filomena Singh opens up about battle with cancer](#) (2026-03-24 03:52)

Supreme Court Associate Justice Maria Filomena Singh on Tuesday opened up about her battle with cancer, saying it was a reminder to treasure each day and to do what she can, while she can.

- [Sandiganbayan allows Alcantara's testimony in flood control malversation case](#) (2026-03-24 03:20)

The Sandiganbayan has allowed the testimony of state witness former Department of Public Works and Highways District Engineer Henry Alcantara in the government's malversation case vs. ex-Ako Bicol party-list Representative Zaldy Co and 15 others involving an alleged P289-million flood control project in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro.

- [Marcos: Bus operators get P10K fuel subsidy per bus unit](#) (2026-03-24 03:10)

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. on Tuesday announced that the government is providing bus operators P10,000 fuel subsidy per bus unit to help them cope with the rising cost of fuel due to the Middle East conflict.

- [DepEd stands by three-term school calendar amid criticism](#) (2026-03-24 01:51)

The Department of Education (DepEd) defended Tuesday its planned shift to a three-term school calendar starting School Year 2026-2027, noting that the reform aims to ensure more continuous learning and reduce classroom disruptions.

- [Cash aid payout for TNVS drivers starts in Metro Manila](#) (2026-03-24 00:28)

The distribution of cash assistance to transport network vehicle service drivers affected by the rising fuel prices began in Metro Manila on Tuesday, the Department of Social Welfare and Development said.

- [LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East \(March 24, 2026\)](#) (2026-03-23 23:41)

Here are the latest news and updates on the conflict in the Middle East and related developments.

- [DFA: MOU of PH, China Coast Guards don't tackle sensitive operations](#) (2026-03-23 21:59)

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on Monday said ongoing talks to amend a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the China Coast Guard (CCG) are limited in scope and do not involve “sensitive operational areas.”

- [PDEA gives P7.4M reward to 31 tipsters who helped anti-drug ops](#) (2026-03-23 17:44)

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) on Monday gave P7.46 million in rewards to 31 civilian informants who helped advance the government's anti-narcotics campaign.

- [Marcos vows to beef up infra after visit to Bicol mega cold storage](#) (2026-03-23 15:45)

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday inspected the Bicol Mega Cold Storage and Vegetable and Fruit Processing Facility in Pili, Camarines Sur and vowed to continue boosting the country's agricultural infrastructure.

- [Court denies Jack Lam's bid to dismiss P50M gift case, maintains HDO](#) (2026-03-23 15:40)

For lack of merit, the Sandiganbayan has denied the bid of businessman Jack Lam to dismiss the charge against him over his alleged P50 million gift to two high-ranking Immigration officials.

- [PCSO: No jackpot prize winners in March 23 major lotto draws](#) (2026-03-23 14:32)

No one won the jackpot prizes in the major lotto draws of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) on Monday, March 23.

- [DSWD to distribute cash aid to TNVS drivers on March 24](#) (2026-03-23 13:19)

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) will distribute financial assistance to Transport Network Vehicle Service (TNVS) drivers on Tuesday, March 24, amid rising fuel prices driven by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

- [Pinoy fishermen surrounded, shadowed by China Coast Guard in Bajo de Masinloc](#) (2026-03-23 13:18)

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) slammed the China Coast Guard (CCG)'s latest alleged harassment of Filipino fishermen at the Bajo de Masinloc on Sunday, March 22.

- [CWC: Adult men behind most pregnancies of adolescent girls](#) (2026-03-23 12:13)

The Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) on Monday warned that adult men are responsible for most of the pregnancies among adolescent girls.

- [Farmers file land-grabbing complaint vs. Harry Roque at NBI](#) (2026-03-23 12:08)

Farmers from Bataan on Monday filed a land-grabbing complaint against various individuals, including former presidential spokesperson Harry Roque, the NBI confirmed.

- [Senate leaders back call to study postponement of PH hosting of ASEAN Summit](#) (2026-03-23 11:20)

Senate leaders on Monday expressed support for the call to study the possible postponement of the Philippines' hosting of the 2026 ASEAN Summit and Related Summits to save over P17 billion amid the economic pressures resulting from the Middle East conflict.

- [Claire Castro seeks P500M in damages from Leviste](#) (2026-03-23 10:59)

Palace Press Officer Undersecretary Atty. Claire Castro on Monday confirmed she is seeking P500 million in damages from Batangas 1st District Rep. Leandro Leviste, accusing the lawmaker of damaging her integrity in connection with the libel case he filed against her.

- [Ex-cop gets jail time for failing to return service firearm](#) (2026-03-23 09:42)

The Sandiganbayan sentenced a former police officer in Bataan to two to seven years of imprisonment, among other penalties, for failing to return government-issued guns and bulletproof vests worth P260,000.

- [DENR warns vs. approaching, hunting Philippine deer](#) (2026-03-23 09:27)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Mimaropa warned the public against approaching the Philippine deer, which was recently sighted in Marinduque after it was believed to be locally extinct.

- [Lawyer appeals to DOJ to exclude Atong Ang from Manila case on missing sabungeros](#) (2026-03-23 09:19)

The camp of businessman Charlie “Atong” Ang appealed Monday to the Department of Justice (DOJ) to not include him as a respondent in an ongoing Manila court case on the missing sabungeros, his lawyer said.

- [Palace calls Imee's remarks on acting Cabinet appointments 'too harsh'](#) (2026-03-23 09:13)

Malacañang on Monday denounced the remarks made by Senator Imee Marcos regarding the practice of her brother, President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., of appointing Cabinet officials serving in a "prolonged acting capacity."

- [DA inspects suspected 'ghost' farm-to-market road project in Guinobatan, Albay](#) (2026-03-23 08:50)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) inspected a suspected “ghost” farm-to-market road (FMR) project in Barangay Lower Binogsacan in Guinobatan, Albay, on Monday.

- [DepEd rebuffs alleged foreign political influence in schools](#) (2026-03-23 08:17)

The Department of Education (DepEd) has rejected claims that Philippine public schools are being used as platforms for foreign political influence, following warnings from a maritime security expert about alleged Chinese efforts to shape public sentiment.

- [ICI turns over flood control documents to DOJ](#) (2026-03-23 06:29)

The Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI) on Monday turned over documents

related to its investigation of anomalous flood control projects to the Department of Justice (DOJ), Justice spokesperson Polo Martinez said.

- [Palace calls out Toby Tiangco: Don't make claims sans evidence](#) (2026-03-23 05:53)

Malacañang on Monday hit Navotas City Representative Toby Tiangco over his recent statement that Vice President Sara Duterte would hold the perpetrators of the flood control mess accountable if she is elected President in 2028.

- [Sandro Marcos wants new grads to get transcripts, diplomas for free](#) (2026-03-23 05:38)

A bill mandating state-run and private higher educational institutions to provide employment application documents for their respective graduates within 12 months of their graduation at no cost has been filed at the House of Representatives.

- [403 gas stations closed amid fuel price hikes -- PNP](#) (2026-03-23 05:26)

The number of gas stations who have closed amid rising fuel prices has increased to 403, the Philippine National Police (PNP) said Monday.

- [DepEd pushes for simple, low-cost end-of-year rites](#) (2026-03-23 05:16)

The Department of Education (DepEd) has instructed public schools nationwide to hold simple, low-cost graduation and moving-up ceremonies for School Year 2025-2026, citing the impact of rising fuel prices on Filipino families.

- [Palace defends Marcos' presence at cash aid event](#) (2026-03-23 04:55)

Malacañang on Monday defended President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.’s presence at a cash aid distribution in Manila City, despite the “Anti-Epal” policy set forth by the 2026 budget law.

- [PNP: Nearly 60K personnel to secure 2026 Holy Week, summer vacation](#) (2026-03-23 04:49)

The Philippine National Police (PNP) will deploy nearly 60,000 personnel including cops and force multipliers nationwide to ensure safety during the 2026 Holy Week and summer vacation.

- [Only regional champs advance to NSPC 2026 -- DepEd](#) (2026-03-23 04:16)

The Department of Education dashed the hopes of student journalists seeking wider participation in the annual National Schools Press Conference (NSPC), announcing that only

regional champions will advance to the national level.

- [Trillanes files cyberlibel complaint vs. 18 marines, others](#) (2026-03-23 04:09)

Former senator Antonio Trillanes IV on Monday filed a cyberlibel complaint against the 18 former marines and others for implicating him in an alleged scheme involving the International Criminal Court.

- [Marcos orders creation of crisis committee amid Middle East conflict](#) (2026-03-23 03:40)

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. has ordered for the creation of a crisis committee amid the rising fuel prices brought by the conflict in the Middle East.

- [DepEd backs shift to three-term school calendar starting SY 2026-2027](#) (2026-03-23 03:21)

The Department of Education has endorsed the implementation of a three-term school calendar beginning School Year 2026-2027, positioning the reform as a key step toward improving learning outcomes and addressing long-standing inefficiencies in the basic education system.

- [Transport groups set strike on March 26-27 amid rising fuel prices](#) (2026-03-23 01:57)

Several transport groups across different modes are set to stage on March 26 to 27 a simultaneous nationwide strike to protest rising fuel prices.

- [Palace denies downplaying impact of Middle East tensions on PH](#) (2026-03-23 01:46)

Malacañang on Monday denied that the government is downplaying the impact of the Middle East tensions on the Philippines, particularly the recent oil price shocks.

- [Longer queues observed as 50% discount on MRT-3, LRT-2 rides start](#) (2026-03-23 01:24)

A 50% discount is now effective on train rides at the Metro Rail Transit Line 3 (MRT-3) and Light Rail Transit Line 2 (LRT-2) to help ease the impact of rising fuel prices on the public.

- [ACTO observes 'transport holiday' amid rising fuel prices](#) (2026-03-23 00:43)

Thousands of public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers across the country staged a transport holiday on Monday, led by the Alliance of Concerned Transport Organizations (ACTO), in protest of rising fuel prices.

- [LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East \(March 23, 2026\)](#) (2026-03-22 23:28)

Here are the latest news and updates concerning the US-Israel war against Iran and related events.

- [Public warned vs scammers posing as DPWH execs](#) (2026-03-22 19:37)

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) on Sunday warned the public against scammers who message unsuspecting victims and claim to be DPWH officials.

- [LTO: Socmed posts on vehicle registration fee hikes are fake news](#) (2026-03-22 18:18)

The Land Transportation Office (LTO) has denied social media posts which claim that it imposed a 100% increase in vehicle registration fees without prior notice to the public.

- [Marcos orders accelerated completion of Marawi rehab, United Grand Central Station](#) (2026-03-22 16:17)

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the expedited implementation of the long-delayed rehabilitation of Marawi City and the United Grand Central Station (UGCS).

- [6/49 jackpot prize now at P131M, no winners for March 22 major draws](#) (2026-03-22 14:17)

No one won the jackpot prizes in the major lotto draws of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) on Sunday night, March 22.

- [House justice panel chair: No double standard in impeachment case vs. VP Sara](#) (2026-03-22 13:56)

"There is a very big disparity between the impeachment against the President and the Vice President. Yung kay Presidente, hindi mo makita ang personal participation," Rep. Luistro said.

- [DOE allows temporary use of Euro 2 petroleum products](#) (2026-03-22 10:09)

The Department of Energy (DOE) has issued a circular authorizing the temporary importation and use of Euro 2 petroleum products for select vehicle models as well as industrial applications to safeguard the country's fuel supply.

- [CHED clarifies accumulated notices of suspension, disallowance](#) (2026-03-22 09:52)

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) on Sunday clarified issues surrounding

accumulated notices of suspension (NS) and notices of disallowance (ND) over several years, following the circulation of an audit report online.

- [Marcos to Pinoys: Embrace 'bayanihan' amid rising oil prices](#) (2026-03-22 08:25)

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Sunday urged Filipinos to embrace “bayanihan” as the government provides measures to ease the burden of rising fuel prices amid the ongoing Middle East conflict.

- [Japan could consider Hormuz minesweeping if ceasefire reached, minister says](#) (2026-03-22 07:14)

Japan could consider deploying its military for minesweeping in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital artery for global oil supplies, if a ceasefire is reached in the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran, Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said on Sunday.

- [Close price monitoring needed for declaring national state of emergency --Sen. Gatchalian](#) (2026-03-22 06:26)

A thorough monitoring of commodity prices is needed before declaring a national state of emergency amid the climbing fuel prices, Senator Sherwin Gatchalian said Sunday.

- [DA to begin distributing P5K fuel subsidy to farmers](#) (2026-03-22 06:02)

The Department of Agriculture on Sunday said it is set to distribute P5,000 fuel subsidy to farmers to help them cope with the rising cost of fuel as a result of the conflict in the Middle East.

- [NFA to buy palay by end of March to avoid higher prices amid surging fuel costs](#) (2026-03-22 05:20)

The National Food Authority plans to buy palay (unhusked rice) by the end of March to replenish the national buffer stock, as doing so earlier may cause price increases among traders, NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said Sunday.

- [ACTO to hold transport holiday on Monday amid surging fuel prices](#) (2026-03-22 04:27)

The Alliance of Concerned Transport Organization (ACTO) on Sunday announced that it will conduct a transport holiday on Monday, March 23, as drivers and operators of public utility vehicles (PUVs) struggle to operate amid the rising prices of petroleum products.

- [Over 200K NCR drivers to get cash aid this week; payout outside NCR after Holy Week](#) (2026-03-22 04:13)

More than 200,000 public utility vehicle drivers in the National Capital Region are scheduled to receive their cash relief assistance from the government this week to help them cope with rising fuel prices, the Department of Social Welfare and Development said.

- [Comelec expenses for BARMM polls may increase by 25% due to surging oil prices](#) (2026-03-22 03:01)

The expenses of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) for the first regular elections in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) may increase by up to 25% due to rising fuel prices.

- [Transport groups defer Monday transport strike amid high fuel prices](#) (2026-03-22 01:25)

Some transport groups have postponed the supposed transport strike on Monday amid the surging prices of fuel products.

- [LIVE UPDATES: Conflict in the Middle East \(March 22, 2026\)](#) (2026-03-21 23:20)

Here are the latest news about the conflict in the Middle East and its effects.

- [Bettor in Cavite wins Lotto 6/42 jackpot worth P10M](#) (2026-03-21 15:38)

A Cavite bettor scored the P10-million Lotto 6/42 jackpot on Saturday.

- [China using schools, media to sway public sentiment -- maritime expert](#) (2026-03-21 14:50)

A maritime security expert warned that China is allegedly using media and educational institutions to influence public sentiment in the Philippines.

- [DA to continue fuel aid for fisherfolk, fast-track funding](#) (2026-03-21 13:16)

The Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) will continue providing fuel subsidies to fisherfolk nationwide to help cushion the impact of surging fuel prices, the agency said Saturday.

- [Impeachment counsel: VP Sara 'duty bound' to attend House hearings](#) (2026-03-21 09:15)

The lawyer in the withdrawn impeachment complaint against Vice President Sara Duterte

believes she will not attend the House hearings despite being "duty bound to answer the allegations."

- [LTO: Reports of vehicle registration fees going up by 100% not true](#) (2026-03-21 06:53)

The Land Transportation Office on Saturday said there is no truth to reports going around that vehicle registration fees have gone up by 100%.

- [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.

- [Antigrift 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.

## Source: PhilStar Global

- [Tagle to preside over Fulton Sheen beatification](#) (2026-03-26 16:00)

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, the Vatican's pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, will represent Pope Leo XIV and preside over the beatification mass for US Bishop Fulton Sheen in September.

- [No foul play in Pasig teen death](#) (2026-03-26 16:00)

The Pasig City police has ruled out foul play in the death of a 15-year-old Grade 9 student, whose body was found in a private compound after she went missing for nearly a week.

- [Missing Chinese national found dead](#) (2026-03-26 16:00)

A Chinese national earlier reported missing was found dead in Datu Piang, Maguindanao del Sur on Wednesday.

- [P6.6 million expired food items seized in Central Luzon](#) (2026-03-26 16:00)

Expired food products worth P6.6 million have been seized from a Chinese businessman and a barangay kagawad in separate police operations in Central Luzon.

- [Marcos inspects post-harvest facilities in Isabela](#) (2026-03-26 16:00)

President Marcos yesterday visited the province of Isabela to oversee ongoing efforts aimed at assisting farmers and enhancing access to health services.

- [Tagbilaran residents get free rides](#) (2026-03-26 16:00)

The city government of Tagbilaran in Bohol is offering free rides to cushion the impact of high fuel prices on the riding public.

- [‘Energy woes may affect BARMM poll preparations’](#) (2026-03-26 16:00)

The energy problem brought by the war in the Middle East may affect preparations for the conduct of the first parliamentary elections in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, according to the Commission on Elections.

- [40 degrees Celsius heat index seen in 4 areas](#) (2026-03-26 16:00)

Four areas in the country are expected to experience heat indices of 40 degrees Celsius and above, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

- [DOH: Hospitals ready for heat-related illnesses](#) (2026-03-26 16:00)

Hospitals are prepared to attend to patients suffering from heat-related illnesses, especially heat stroke, the Department of Health said yesterday.

- [UP Diliman chancellor gets another term](#) (2026-03-26 16:00)

University of the Philippines Diliman chancellor Carlo Vistan II will serve for three more years after the Board of Regents voted to continue his leadership.

- [Cops seize P6.8 million worth of shabu in Lanao operation](#) (2026-03-26 10:41)

Policemen seized P6.8 million worth of shabu from three dealers, one of them a woman, entrapped in Lumbatan town in Lanao del Sur on Tuesday afternoon, March 24.

- [Missing Chinese national found buried in Maguindanao](#) (2026-03-26 10:19)

Policemen and barangay officials exhumed on Wednesday, March 25, from a shallow grave in Barangay Masigay in Datu Piang, Maguindanao del Sur a male Chinese national who was reported missing two days before.

- [Free ride routes on March 26 amid transport strikes](#) (2026-03-26 02:59)

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) on Thursday deployed free rides amid nationwide transport strikes due to soaring fuel prices driven by the United States-Israel's war on Iran.

- [BARMM execs upbeat amid election reset law](#) (2026-03-26 01:00)

Key officials in the Bangsamoro region expressed support and optimism following the signing of Republic Act No. 12317 by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., which resets the historic parliamentary elections here to September 2026.

- [LGUs suspend local gatherings to conserve fuel, energy](#) (2026-03-25 16:00)

Several local government units have canceled activities lined up for the celebration of local festivals and milestones, in compliance with national energy conservation measures.

- [Palace deploys 290 'doctors to the barrios'](#) (2026-03-25 16:00)

To ensure accessible health care services for Filipinos, President Marcos has directed the Department of Health to send more physicians to remote areas.

- [493,000 families eyed as new 4Ps beneficiaries](#) (2026-03-25 16:00)

Up to 493,000 poor families may qualify as new beneficiaries of the government's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program or 4Ps following a validation and verification process this month, according to the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

- [PAGASA monitoring development of El Niño](#) (2026-03-25 16:00)

The country may experience El Niño beginning in the third quarter of the year, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

- [Marcos resets BARMM polls](#) (2026-03-25 16:00)

President Marcos has signed into law a measure rescheduling the first parliamentary election in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to the second Monday of September this year.

- [617 Pinoys repatriated from Middle East](#) (2026-03-25 16:00)

Around 617 Filipinos have been repatriated as the Middle East conflict continues, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

- [174 held in e-sabong raid in Tondo](#) (2026-03-25 16:00)

Up to 174 people were rounded up after police raided an illegal online cockfighting operation in Tondo, Manila on Tuesday night.

- [25,818 balikbayan boxes released](#) (2026-03-25 16:00)

Up to 25,818 balikbayan boxes abandoned by cargo handlers have been delivered to the families of overseas Filipino workers.

- [P44 billion for Metro Manila subway project OK' d](#) (2026-03-25 16:00)

About P44.17 billion has been released by the government to avoid project delays for the Metro Manila Subway Project phase 1 and North-South Commuter Railway (NSCR) System.

- [HPG chief quits amid sex raps](#) (2026-03-25 16:00)

Brig. Gen. Jessie Tamayao resigned yesterday as Highway Patrol Group (HPG) director post after a policewoman accused him of sexual harassment.

- [Security guard, brother hurt in South Cotabato ambush](#) (2026-03-25 10:49)

A security guard and his brother were seriously wounded in an ambush in a remote area of Polomolok town, South Cotabato, on Tuesday night, March 24.

- [BARMM officials want import of fuel from Brunei, Malaysia](#) (2026-03-25 09:45)

Bangsamoro regional officials are seeking Malacañang' s permission for their constituent traders to import petroleum products from Brunei and Malaysia, which are much cheaper than those purchased by big companies from the Middle East and sold across the country.

- [PAGASA raises El Niño Watch, sees possible onset by July](#) (2026-03-25 09:28)

El Niño Watch is raised, with forecasts pointing to a possible return of dry conditions by midyear.

- [Humid, hotter weather to prevail as dry season starts](#) (2026-03-24 16:00)

Humid weather is starting to be felt nationwide as the dry season begins, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration said yesterday.

- [Bicol workers to receive pay hike this year – DOLE](#) (2026-03-24 16:00)

Workers in the private sector in Bicol will receive this year an increase in their monthly pay, which will be given in two tranches, according to the Department of Labor and Employment.

- [Land grabbing complaint filed vs Harry Roque](#) (2026-03-24 16:00)

A group of farmers from Mariveles, Bataan filed a complaint of land grabbing against former presidential spokesman Harry Roque and several others in connection with the transfer of ownership of parcels of land covered by the agrarian reform law.

- [5 La Union LGUs provide fuel subsidy to farmers, fisherfolk](#) (2026-03-24 16:00)

The municipal governments of Balaoan, Bangar, Caba, Santol and Sudipen in this province have provided fuel subsidy to farmers, fisherfolk and tricycle drivers and operators to help them cope with the high cost of petroleum products.

- [Missing Grade 9 student found dead in Pasig](#) (2026-03-24 16:00)

A 15-year-old Grade 9 student who has been missing for nearly a week was found dead at a private compound in Barangay Santolan, Pasig on Monday.

- [EDSA rehab on track – DPWH](#) (2026-03-24 16:00)

The first phase of the EDSA rehabilitation is on track for completion by May, the Department of Public Works and Highways said yesterday.

- [Makati shifts to renewable energy](#) (2026-03-24 16:00)

Amid the global oil crisis, facilities of the Makati city government will operate using renewable energy sources.

- [P4.56 billion assorted illegal drugs torched in Cavite](#) (2026-03-24 16:00)

Assorted types of illegal drugs valued at more than P4.56 billion were destroyed in Trece Martires, Cavite yesterday morning.

- [BOC intercepts P1 billion illegal vapes in Navotas](#) (2026-03-24 16:00)

Illegal e-cigarettes and vape products valued at more than P1 billion have been confiscated in Navotas City.

- [Isko ex-aide's gunman nabbed](#) (2026-03-24 16:00)

Authorities arrested on Monday the gunman in the killing of retired police officer George Capistrano in Tondo, Manila.

- [P6.8 million worth of shabu seized in 2 Mindanao anti-narcotics stings](#) (2026-03-24 10:57)

Agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and policemen seized up to P6.8 million worth of shabu in separate operations in Maguindanao del Sur and Sulu provinces on Monday, March 23, laid with the help of Muslim clerics and local executives.

- [BARMM execs launch 2026-2028 governance framework](#) (2026-03-24 10:46)

Officials of the Bangsamoro autonomous regional government together launched on Monday, March 23, the “Mas Matatag na Bansamoro Agenda” as a framework for their 2026-2028 governance thrusts, parallel with the Mindanao peace process.

- [Coast Guard vessel BRP Cape Engaño catches fire in Palawan port](#) (2026-03-24 07:27)

The Philippine Coast Guard said that the BRP Cape Engaño (MRRV-4411) was hit by a fire early Monday morning while moored at the International Cruise Ship Port in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan.

- [Zambales residents back charter changes for Magsaysay-named university, reject renaming](#) (2026-03-24 01:25)

Following the withdrawal of a bill seeking to rename the President Ramon Magsaysay State University (PRMSU) and enact certain amendments to its charter, Zambales residents now said they favor charter revisions but without the proposed name change.

- [Bong Go visits, aids Davao fire victims](#) (2026-03-23 16:00)

Sen. Bong Go visited families displaced by fire in Barangay Kapitan Tomas Monteverde in, Davao City's Agdao District on Saturday.

- [Lipa bishop encourages simple living](#) (2026-03-23 16:00)

Lipa, Batangas Archbishop Gilbert Garcera yesterday urged parishioners to practice simple living and extend assistance to those most affected by the rising cost of fuel and other commodities.

- [Isabela declares state of calamity over prolonged dry spell](#) (2026-03-23 16:00)

The provincial government has placed Isabela under a state of calamity, amid a prolonged dry spell that has battered farm output and threatened livelihoods.

- [President Marcos inspects solar irrigation projects](#) (2026-03-23 16:00)

President Marcos yesterday inspected solar-powered irrigation projects (SPIPs) in Camarines Sur as the government steps up measures to mitigate the impact of rising fuel prices.

- [Trillanes files fresh raps vs 18 'bagmen'](#) (2026-03-23 16:00)

Former senator Antonio Trillanes IV yesterday filed cyberlibel complaints against 18 alleged bagmen and hosts of a television network.

- [Child labor cases drop 38.5 percent – DOLE](#) (2026-03-23 16:00)

Child labor cases decreased by 38.5 percent, from 828,000 in 2022 to 509,000 in 2024, according to data released yesterday by the Department of Labor and Employment.

- [PCSO begins 4-day workweek](#) (2026-03-23 16:00)

Heeding nationwide energy-saving efforts, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office has shifted to a four-day workweek.

- [Atong seeks exclusion from Manila sabungero case](#) (2026-03-23 16:00)

The camp of fugitive gaming tycoon Charlie Ang is seeking his exclusion from the case of missing cockfight enthusiasts filed before a Manila court.

- [31 PDEA informants get P7.4 million](#) (2026-03-23 16:00)

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency gave over P7.4 million in cash incentives to 31 civilian informants for their role in the war on drugs, PDEA officials said yesterday.

- [12,000 cops deployed in Metro Manila for Holy Week](#) (2026-03-23 16:00)

To ensure public safety amid increased travel and religious activities for the Holy Week, the National Capital Region Police Office has deployed 12,370 NCRPO personnel across Metro Manila.

- [2 NPA ‘revolutionary tax’ collectors killed in Surigao encounter](#) (2026-03-23 10:21)

Two New People’s Army guerrillas, part of a group allegedly collecting “revolutionary tax” from hapless villagers on a periodic basis, were killed in a brief encounter with soldiers in Barangay Nurcia in Lanuza, Surigao del Sur on Sunday, March 22.

- [BARMM police gun down 2 ‘hired killers’ in Maguindanao clash](#) (2026-03-23 10:13)

Policemen shot dead two individuals long wanted for murder and other crimes during an operation in Barangay Rebuken in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao del Norte before dawn on Monday, March 23, after an attempted peaceful arrest went awry.

- [Stranded sperm whale in Sultan Kudarat dies despite rescue bid](#) (2026-03-22 23:10)

Sperm whale found stranded in Sultan Kudarat dies hours after rescue attempt.

- [Sperm whale guided back to deeper waters in Sultan Kudarat](#) (2026-03-22 23:00)

Authorities rescued a disoriented sperm whale found near the shoreline in Kalamansig.

- [DPWH to review new NAIAX exit](#) (2026-03-22 16:00)

A committee will review San Miguel Corp. (SMC)’s opening of another NAIA Expressway exit ramp to Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, according to the Department of Public Works and Highways.

- [Quezon City expands milk donation network](#) (2026-03-22 16:00)

The Quezon City government has partnered with SM Cares in mobilizing more mothers to donate breastmilk for vulnerable infants in need.

- [LTO: No vehicle registration fee hike](#) (2026-03-22 16:00)

The Land Transportation Office (LTO) has belied online reports about a 100-percent increase in vehicle registration fees amid soaring fuel prices.

- [PNP eyes 20 percent female recruitment quota](#) (2026-03-22 16:00)

The Philippine National Police is open to increasing the recruitment quota for female PNP personnel to 20 percent, citing women’s growing role in leadership and law enforcement.

- [Chinese tycoon’s plea in P50 million bribe case junked](#) (2026-03-22 16:00)

Chinese gambling tycoon Jack Lam’s move to dismiss the charges filed against him for allegedly paying P50 million in bribes to immigration officials has been denied by the

Sandiganbayan.

- [Roblox, other games under police watch](#) (2026-03-22 16:00)

Online games, including Roblox, are being monitored by the Philippine National Police (PNP) amid child exploitation concerns.

- [School principal nabbed in Surigao drug sting](#) (2026-03-22 16:00)

A public school principal was arrested in a drug sting in Surigao del Sur, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency reported yesterday.

- [Phivolcs logs 9 ash emissions at Kanlaon Volcano](#) (2026-03-22 16:00)

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology recorded nine ash emissions at Kanlaon Volcano, with one lasting over three hours over the weekend, Phivolcs reported yesterday.

- [Philippine deer re-emerges in Marinduque](#) (2026-03-22 16:00)

The Philippine deer has been spotted in several towns in Marinduque after years of being presumed locally extinct, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Mimaropa reported.

- [Foreign scientists study San Pablo lakes](#) (2026-03-22 16:00)

Thirty-nine scientists from Chile, El Salvador, France, Indonesia, Italy and the United States conducted a study of Lakes Pandin and Mojicap here to guide government and environment groups in their preservation.

- [BARMM cops seize P68.3-M worth shabu in 10 days](#) (2026-03-22 09:14)

Police seize P68.3 million worth of shabu in 10-day operations in Bangsamoro.

- [Jeepney group to halt operations over fuel prices](#) (2026-03-22 08:32)

Transport group to hold nationwide holiday as fuel prices are set to rise again.

- [Easterlies to bring rain in Metro Manila, rest of country](#) (2026-03-22 01:55)

Expect scattered rains today.

- [3 nabbed for carrying gun](#) (2026-03-21 16:00)

Three men were arrested for allegedly carrying a shotgun in Angat, Bulacan on Friday.

- [P20 million smuggled cigarettes seized in Maguindanao](#) (2026-03-21 16:00)

Smuggled cigarettes valued at P20 million were seized in Parang, Maguindanao del Norte on Friday.

- [Radio blocktimer shot dead](#) (2026-03-21 16:00)

A community radio blocktimer was shot dead by a lone assailant in La Castellana, Negros Occidental on Friday.

- [Rescued softshell turtle released in Apayao river](#) (2026-03-21 16:00)

A critically endangered giant softshell turtle earlier found in a river in Pudtol, Apayao was released back to its habitat on Thursday.

- [32 rescued as boat sinks off Batangas](#) (2026-03-21 16:00)

Thirty-two people including minors were rescued after their motorized boat capsized in the waters off Calatagan, Batangas on Thursday.

- [SC asked: Declare BARMM budget unconstitutional](#) (2026-03-21 16:00)

A petition seeking to declare the 2026 budget of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao unconstitutional has been filed before the Supreme Court.

- [3 slain in Negros encounter](#) (2026-03-21 16:00)

Three suspected remnants of dismantled factions of the New People's Army were killed in an encounter in Kabankalan, Negros Occidental yesterday.

- [101,807 TB cases logged in NCR](#) (2026-03-21 16:00)

The Department of Health has recorded 101,807 tuberculosis or TB cases in the National Capital Region, a data from the DOH Epidemiology Bureau-Integrated Tuberculosis Information System showed.

- [P40 million monthly subsidy needed for LRT-2 discounts](#) (2026-03-21 16:00)

The Light Rail Transit Authority has asked the government for additional funding, ahead of the LRTA implementation of a 50-percent discount on Monday.

- [P102 million shabu seized at NAIA](#) (2026-03-21 16:00)

A Malaysian was arrested at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport on Friday after security officers found P102 million worth of shabu in the foreigner's luggage, the Philippine National Police said.

- [Philippine Army's 10th Infantry Division receives two streamer awards](#) (2026-03-21 10:05)

Local executives in southern regions supporting the activities of the 10th Infantry Division were elated with its having received citation streamers for good performance during the commemoration on Thursday, March 19, of the 129th anniversary of the Philippine Army in Fort Andres Bonifacio in Taguig City.

- [Appeals for community interfaith solidarity cap off Eid'l Fitr in BARMM](#) (2026-03-21 09:39)

Local executives in the Bangsamoro region took turns reassuring commitments to the Mindanao peace process after participating in congregational outdoor Eid' I Fitr prayers in different areas on Saturday morning, March 21.

- [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 policies 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.

## Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer

- [PNP seeks tighter coordination with fuel stations over ‘gas-and-run’ cases](#) (2026-03-27 13:32)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) will intensify its coordination with fuel stations after some reports of motorists filling up and driving off to evade payment. READ: Driver flees after getting full tank of gas worth P5,000 in Quezon City In a press briefing in Camp Crame on Friday, PNP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Randulf

- [Chua: Impeachment not far from crisis as wars caused by unfit leaders](#) (2026-03-27 13:23)

MANILA, Philippines — The impeachment proceedings against Vice President Sara Duterte should not be treated as an issue far from the oil crisis because the wars that triggered it are caused by leaders whose fitness to serve is being questioned, Manila Rep. Joel Chua said. Chua, in an online interview on Friday, said it is

- [P12.9M marijuana, P1.3M illegal logs seized in Cagayan Valley](#) (2026-03-27 13:23)

TUGUEGARAO CITY — Authorities seized at least P12.9 million worth of marijuana and P1.3 million in illegal logs, while arresting 169 individuals during the Simultaneous Anti-Criminality Law Enforcement Operations (SACLEO) conducted across Cagayan Valley from March 19 to 25, police said Friday. Police Brig. Gen. Antonio Marallag Jr., Cagayan Valley regional police director, said authorities

- [Gov’ t agencies to formalize carpooling guidelines amid fuel price surge](#) (2026-03-27 13:22)

MANILA, Philippines — Government transport agencies are set to craft formal guidelines for carpooling and company shuttle services as rising fuel prices continue to strain commuters in Metro Manila. Aside from the government’ s free rides, recommending alternative modes of transport such as biking, and the implementation of the work-from-home scheme, one of the most common

- [Driver flees after getting full tank of gas worth P5,000 in Quezon City](#) (2026-03-27 12:43)

MANILA, Philippines — The driver of a Toyota Innova got a full tank of fuel worth around P5,000 at a gas station in Quezon City but drove off to evade payment, the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) said on Friday. The incident took place at a gas station along Epifanio delos Santos Avenue (Edsa)

- [INQToday: Marcos: PH has enough crude oil supply until June 30](#) (2026-03-27 12:41)

Marcos: PH has enough crude oil supply until June 30 President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Friday said the country has sufficient crude oil supply until June 30, 2026. “We already have a supply of crude oil, a sufficient supply of crude oil until June 30. But we are still looking for supply, we are still

- [Firms facing fuel hoarding, profiteering cases now at 5, says PNP](#) (2026-03-27 12:29)

MANILA, Philippines — The number of fuel hoarding and profiteering cases is now at five as of Friday morning, March 27, according to the Philippine National Police's (PNP) monitoring. Data shared by the PNP in a press briefing in Camp Crame showed the following cases were recorded in these areas: Hoarding Profiteering READ: PNP warns

- [Marcos: Repeal of oil deregulation law not off table](#) (2026-03-27 12:11)

CAVITE, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Friday said “nothing is being discounted” in relation to proposals to repeal the oil deregulation law and remove value-added tax on fuel imports, but the government's focus right now is immediate solutions on the impacts of rising fuel prices caused by Middle East conflict. These remarks came

- [Fuel shortage forces 425 gas stations to close temporarily – PNP](#) (2026-03-27 12:03)

MANILA, Philippines — Four hundred and twenty-five of the country's 14,485 gas stations have temporarily closed due to supply constraints as of Friday morning, March 27, according to the Philippine National Police's (PNP) monitoring. Data shared by the PNP in a press briefing in Camp Crame showed the gas station closures in the following regions:

- [‘Everything’s unconstitutional’: Chua says Duterte team ‘hallucinating’](#) (2026-03-27 12:00)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte's legal team appears to be “hallucinating” when they presented their issues with the impeachment proceedings as the House of Representatives' committee on justice is following every rule stated, Manila Rep. Joel Chua said on Friday. Chua in a statement said that Duterte camp's claims of the impeachment proceedings being

- [BOC luxury car auction fails as no bidders register](#) (2026-03-27 11:19)

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Customs' (BOC) public auction of 11 seized luxury cars set on Friday did not push through as there were no interested bidders who registered for the event. This was announced by the BOC-Port of Manila on Friday as it scheduled the public auction through sealed bidding on the same

- [15,000 lanterns to light Pampanga lake in Guinness bid](#) (2026-03-27 11:14)

MEXICO, Pampanga — Pampanga, through Central Country Estate Inc. (CCEI) here, will vie for the Guinness World Record (GWR) for the “largest display of water lanterns” in the world during the Lumina Water Lantern and Music Festival on May 10, organizers announced on Thursday. “It's a modern tribute to tradition,” said Maricar Pangilinan, CCEI communications

- [Green groups cite Canada trash fiasco in opposing Cuna's DENR appointment](#) (2026-03-27 11:04)

MANILA, Philippines — Environmental groups are questioning the appointment of Juan Miguel Cuna as acting secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), citing his past involvement in the Canada trash shipment fiasco and urging greater accountability as he takes the agency's top post. In a joint statement, five environmental and public interest

- [PNP: No untoward incident during March 26 transport strike](#) (2026-03-27 11:02)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) reported no untoward incidents during the first day of the transport strike on Thursday, March 26. In a statement on Friday, as the strike entered its second day, PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said of the protest action, “There were some minor disruptions, but this

- [OIL PRICE WATCH as of March 27, 2026](#) (2026-03-27 09:43)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. may decide by April 12 or 13 whether to suspend or reduce the excise tax on petroleum products, a move aimed at easing the impact of rising oil prices driven by the Middle East crisis, the Department of Finance (DOF) said Thursday. Business groups have welcomed the new

- [Marcos: PH has enough crude oil supply until June 30](#) (2026-03-27 09:07)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Friday said the country has sufficient crude oil supply until June 30, 2026. “We already have a supply of crude oil, a sufficient supply of crude oil until June 30. But we are still looking for supply, we are still supporting our commuters,” Marcos said in a

- [DSWD to release P240-M fuel subsidy for 48,000 Negros tricycle drivers](#) (2026-03-27 08:48)

BACOLOD CITY — The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) will begin distributing P240 million in fuel subsidies to around 48,000 tricycle drivers across 22 local government units on Negros Island starting April 8. Under the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) program, each qualified driver will receive P5,000 to help ease the

- [Earth Hour turns 20, pushing action beyond the switch](#) (2026-03-27 08:38)

MANILA, Philippines — Every year, millions of people around the world pause for 60 minutes of collective action for the planet through World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)'s Earth Hour. More than a symbolic “lights off” campaign, Earth Hour has evolved into what organizers describe as a “moment of unity,” bringing people together to confront

- [Gov't adds more routes for free rides on Day 2 of transport strike](#) (2026-03-27 08:14)

MANILA, Philippines — The government has added more routes for its free ride initiative across key areas in Metro Manila on Friday for the second day of a nationwide transport strike of several transport groups. READ: TNVS sector makes rare participation in transport strike In an advisory, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) said that commuters

- [Pagasa: Hot, humid Friday with isolated rains likely](#) (2026-03-27 07:34)

MANILA, Philippines — Warm and humid conditions will continue across the country over the next several days due to the prevailing easterlies, the state weather bureau said Friday. According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), the easterlies will continue to affect the country in the next five days. The easterlies, or

- [Price council pushes P50 per kilo cap on imported rice](#) (2026-03-27 05:52)

MANILA, Philippines — The National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) has adopted the Department of Agriculture's (DA) proposal to impose a price ceiling of P50 per kilogram on imported rice, endorsing the measure to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. for approval. In a statement on Thursday, the NPCC said the proposed cap will cover imported rice with

- [PhilHealth launches online records check for members](#) (2026-03-27 05:50)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) launched on Thursday the PhilHealth Check Utility (PCU), an online tool that members can use to verify their records and eliminate false claims. The PCU was launched with the support of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), which, according to PhilHealth President and CEO Edwin Mercado, “reflects

- [BJMP buys P46-M fresh food for inmates](#) (2026-03-27 05:48)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) reported on Thursday that the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) has procured P46.1 million worth of fresh, locally grown produce directly from farmers to provide healthier meals for prisoners nationwide. The initiative is part of the Enhanced Partnership Against Hunger and

- [TNVS sector makes rare participation in transport strike](#) (2026-03-27 05:42)

MANILA, Philippines — The transport strike triggered by rising oil prices and growing discontent over the government's response saw the rare participation of a relatively young sector: TNVS or transport network vehicle service drivers. Around 150 TNVS vehicles formed a convoy and made their presence felt by honking their horns in solidarity with their counterparts in

- [Fare hike suspension, fuel subsidies lauded](#) (2026-03-27 05:38)

MANILA, Philippines — A group promoting the interest of commuters welcomed the suspension of the planned fare increase for jeepneys, buses, airport taxis and ride-booking services, as well as the release of fuel subsidies for drivers, saying both measures had helped ease the burden on the riding public. The Coalition of Filipino Commuters (CFC-PasaHero) said

- [PNP: No foul play in teen's death](#) (2026-03-27 05:31)

MANILA, Philippines — The police have ruled out foul play in the death of 15-year-old Isabelle Sophia Tablate, a Grade 9 student whose body was found on a lot in Pasig City, days after her

father reported her missing. “There was no sign that she was killed or subjected to any form of violence,” Capt.

- [DOF: Price cuts due to fuel tax law felt by mid-April](#) (2026-03-27 05:30)

MANILA, Philippines — The administration could suspend or reduce the excise on fuel as early as April 12, with the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) set to make this recommendation to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. next week, a Department of Finance (DOF) official said. Finance Undersecretary Karlo Fermin Adriano on Thursday told a newly formed

- [Locals take lead in saving turtles in Zambales](#) (2026-03-27 05:04)

SAN ANTONIO, ZAMBALES—Along the shores of Masinloc-Oyon Bay, a protected landscape and seascape, hope persists for one of the ocean’s most vulnerable creatures—the “pawikan” or marine turtles. A 7,000-hectare sanctuary of sandy beaches, mangroves and coastal waters, the bay is the first and only marine protected area in Central Luzon established under Republic Act No.

- [Ex-communist rebels top amnesty seekers](#) (2026-03-27 05:02)

KORONADAL CITY—Former communist rebels turned in the largest number of applications for amnesty, official records show. At the close of filing on March 13, the National Amnesty Commission (NAC) counted a total of 13,633 applicants who used to belong to the ranks of the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front-New People’s Army

- [2 suspects in ‘illegal investment scheme’ arrested in Laoag](#) (2026-03-27 00:01)

MANILA, Philippines — Two suspects allegedly involved in an “illegal investment scheme” were arrested in an entrapment operation in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) reported Thursday. According to the NBI, its Laoag District Office, in coordination with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Laoag Extension Office, conducted the operation in

- [March 26: No jackpot winners in SuperLotto, Lotto 6/42](#) (2026-03-26 22:03)

MANILA, Philippines — No bettor won the jackpots for SuperLotto 6/49 and Lotto 6/42 in Thursday’s draw, according to the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. March 26, 2026, fell on a Thursday, when those two major games are scheduled for draws. PCSO said the winning combination for SuperLotto 6/49 was 46-04-19-25-33-02, but no ticket matched all

- [Jeepney driver thankful as passenger pays P200, takes no change](#) (2026-03-26 21:50)

MANILA, Philippines — A jeepney driver was touched when a passenger paid a P200 fare and walked away without taking the change. Caught on CCTV inside the jeepney, a masked passenger, who appears to be male, was seen alighting the vehicle at Commonwealth Ave. corner Pearl Drive in Fairview, Quezon City, after paying his fare.

- [Community pantries return for PUV drivers amid oil crisis](#) (2026-03-26 21:43)

MANILA, Philippines — As the nationwide transport strike paralyzed key routes on Thursday, March 26, public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers continue to bear the brunt of rising fuel prices. With an approved fare hike still stuck in the pipeline, drivers are bearing the brunt of a global oil crisis—one that has found a local answer

- [Clark Water marks World Water Day by empowering next generation](#) (2026-03-26 21:27)

MANILA, Philippines — Clark Water, a Non-East Zone operating unit of Manila Water Company, celebrated World Water Day this year through the Katubig Youth Caravan. The annual two-day flagship youth engagement program highlights the importance of water sustainability while empowering young leaders to become responsible stewards of this vital resource. Now on its second year,

- [Ombudsman Remulla cites ‘problem’ with AMLC amid flood mess probe](#) (2026-03-26 21:00)

MANILA, Philippines — Ombudsman Jesus Crispin Remulla on Thursday said his agency is having a “problem” with the Anti Money Laundering Council (AMLC) related to their investigation into the multibillion flood control corruption scandal. Remulla made this remark a day after AMLC Executive Director Matthew David announced his resignation. David, who requested a transfer to

- [Taguig police seize drugs, firearm, grenade; 4 in custody](#) (2026-03-26 20:46)

MANILA, Philippines — Taguig City police arrested a suspected robbery group member and three others during an early morning anti-criminality operation in Barangay Pembo on Tuesday, seizing illegal drugs, a firearm, and a grenade. The operation took place around 3 a.m. Tuesday along Tanaquin Street in Barangay Pembo, involving a coordinated effort by local police

- [Angara pushes stronger farm-to-school links during Batangas school visit](#) (2026-03-26 20:38)

LIPA CITY, Batangas — Education Secretary Sonny Angara on Thursday underscored the role of agriculture in improving student nutrition and strengthening local communities as he met with farmer cooperatives during a visit in Batangas. Angara joined farmers, school officials, and education stakeholders in a dialogue aimed at strengthening the connection between schools and local agriculture

- [Castro defends Garin: She works so hard, now looks sleepless](#) (2026-03-26 20:35)

MANILA, Philippines — It is wrong to judge and label the Department of Energy (DOE) as slackers just because they do not report to office regularly, as the agency has been in the thick of finding solutions to the high price of fuel, Palace press officer and Undersecretary Claire Castro said on Thursday. During the Malacañang

- [31 arrested in ‘anti-drug crackdown’ in Laguna](#) (2026-03-26 20:32)

MANILA, Philippines — Thirty-one individuals were arrested in San Pedro, Laguna, following the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI)’ s anti-drug crackdown operation on Wednesday. According to the NBI, 28 of those apprehended tested positive for illegal drug use. READ: NBI confiscates P23M worth of narcotics in Davao City During the enforcement of the warrants in Barangays

- [Security guard nabbed for illegal gun discharge in front of Cubao mall](#) (2026-03-26 20:23)

MANILA, Philippines — A security guard, 28, was arrested for allegedly illegally firing his gun in his front of a mall in Cubao, Quezon City, the Philippine National Police (PNP) said on Thursday. “At around 5:45 a.m. [on March 24], a gunshot rang out at the mall entrance, causing alarm among civilians present in the

- [National 911 center logs over 3,300 VAWC calls from Jan. to Feb.](#) (2026-03-26 20:17)

[Trigger warning: Mentions of domestic violence] MANILA, Philippines — The Emergency 911 National Office recorded a total of 3,392 calls related to violence against women and their children (VAWC) from January 2025 to February 2026. In a statement on Thursday, the Emergency 911 National Office said 2,533 of the calls logged during the said period

- [Marcos, Dy push farm productivity with new Isabela agri projects](#) (2026-03-26 20:17)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. and Speaker Faustino “Bojie” Dy III on Thursday led the inspection and inauguration of key agricultural facilities here, marking a P168.3-million investment aimed at boosting farm productivity, cutting post-harvest losses, and raising farmers’ incomes. Joining them were Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and Isabela Governor Rodolfo

- [Albee Benitez to push for automated national policy for crises](#) (2026-03-26 20:11)

MANILA, Philippines — The huge fuel price increases due to the Middle East conflict has exposed the country’ s need for an automated policy during crises, so that national and local government units would no longer scramble for solutions, House of Representatives Deputy Speaker Albee Benitez said. Benitez, in an interview on the sidelines of the

- [Man with explicit photos of classmates nabbed, 3 rescued by local gov’ t](#) (2026-03-26 19:59)

MANILA, Philippines — A man was arrested for allegedly possessing materials showing him engaging in sexual activities with some classmates when they were still minors, the Philippine National Police Women and Children Protection Center (PNP WCPC) said on Thursday. An undercover agent discovered the explicit materials on the suspect’ s phone, leading to his arrest in

- [Man caught trying to sexually exploit 3 victims online for pay](#) (2026-03-26 19:35)

MANILA, Philippines — A 36-year-old man was arrested in Davao City for allegedly offering to sexually exploit three male individuals online, according to the Philippine National Police Women and Children Protection Center (PNP WCPC) on Thursday. The suspect was caught on March 19, after being tracked down by operatives online, WCPC Chief Brig. Gen. Maria

- [Dy says admin' s post-harvest facility helps food security push](#) (2026-03-26 19:30)

MANILA, Philippines — The current administration' s several post-harvest facilities — including those inaugurated in Isabela province — will be a great help in pushing for food security, House of Representatives Speaker Faustino “Bojie” Dy III said on Thursday. Dy in a statement said that the government' s push for agricultural productivity is evident in the projects, as

- [Woman nabbed for selling 8-year-old boy' s explicit photos to foreigner](#) (2026-03-26 19:17)

MANILA, Philippines — A 31-year-old woman was arrested for allegedly selling explicit photos of her partner' s eight-year-old boy to an Australian man, the Philippine National Police Women and Children Protection Center (PNP WCPC) said on Thursday. Operatives had tracked her down through her conversations with the foreigner on the latter' s phone and she was entrapped

- [Gov' t urged to classify internet as '5th utility' as costs decline](#) (2026-03-26 19:16)

MANILA, Philippines — Advocacy group CitizenWatch Philippines has reiterated its call for the government to classify internet access as the country' s “fifth” utility, alongside electricity, water, gas, and transportation, as its costs continue to decline. The group' s co-convenor, Atty. Kit Belmonte noted that internet access should be included in the top list of essential utilities

- [Rising fuel costs hit infra, but rail projects on track — contractors](#) (2026-03-26 18:51)

MANILA, Philippines — Rising fuel prices driven by the conflict in the Middle East are affecting construction costs for Philippine infrastructure projects, but contractors say progress on major railway projects remains largely on schedule. Ricky Salenga, construction manager for tunneling works at Sumitomo Mitsui Construction, which handles Contract Package 103 covering the Anonas and Camp

- [TNVS drivers join transport strike, say income reduced by as high as 70%](#) (2026-03-26 18:46)

MANILA, Philippines — Around 150 transport network vehicle service (TNVS) drivers passed through Aurora boulevard on Thursday afternoon while sounding their horns and revving their engines in protest of the rising fuel prices, which have reduced their income by as much as 70 percent. The parade was part of a two-day nationwide transport strike organized

- [Gatchalian sees unscrupulous oil traders raking in windfall profits](#) (2026-03-26 18:17)

MANILA, Philippines – Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian sees unscrupulous traders reaping windfall profits from skyrocketing oil prices in the country driven by the crisis in the Middle East. READ:

PNP files profiteering, hoarding charges vs gas station, driver At Thursday’ s hearing of the Senate Proactive Response and Oversight for Timely and Effective Crisis Strategy (Protect)committee,

- [Jeepney driver faints while lining up for cash aid; in stable condition](#) (2026-03-26 18:11)

MANILA, Philippines — A jeepney driver fainted during the rollout of the government’ s cash financial assistance for public utility vehicle drivers but is now in stable condition, the Quezon City Government said on Thursday. The driver was taken by the city disaster risk reduction and management office to the Quezon City General Hospital for assessment

- [Marcos announces Camago-3 gas drilling, testing operations](#) (2026-03-26 18:04)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday announced the drilling and testing operations at Camago-3, capable of producing up to 60 million standard cubic feet of gas per day. In a video statement, Marcos said Camago-3 is the second major milestone under the USD893-million Malampaya Phase 4 campaign. READ: Marcos signs law granting him

- [Gatchalian tells DOE to power up, ‘don’ t sleep’ as energy crisis looms](#) (2026-03-26 17:52)

MANILA, Philippines — Department of Energy (DOE) officials should take energy drinks and refrain from sleeping as they try to find alternative suppliers of oil and ultimately avoid an energy crisis for the country, Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian said on Thursday. During the Senate’ s ad hoc committee hearing on addressing the effects of the Middle East tensions,

- [Man nabbed for alleged illegal sale of fuel in Masbate](#) (2026-03-26 17:51)

MANILA, Philippines — A man was arrested for allegedly illegally selling fuel in Masbate, the Philippine National Police (PNP) said on Thursday. The suspect was entrapped in an operation in Barangay Tan-awan, Placer on Tuesday, according to the PNP in a statement. “Confiscated from the suspect were five liters of gasoline used in the buy-bust;

- [Sara Duterte, lawyers ‘not consistent’ with their positions – law expert](#) (2026-03-26 17:47)

MANILA, Philippines – Vice President Sara Duterte and her legal camp appeared to be “not consistent” with their positions on the House justice committee giving them the opportunity to be heard in the impeachment proceedings and refusing to attend for being a “mini trial,” a constitutional law expert said on Thursday. Paolo Tamase, associate dean

- [CDO transport workers stay on sidelines amid nationwide strike](#) (2026-03-26 17:39)

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY — Transport workers here chose not to participate in a nationwide strike demanding urgent actions on issues tied to the Middle East crisis that continue to squeeze them with reduced daily incomes. Officials said this could have been due to the paltry turnout during Monday’ s citywide strike called by a federation

- [Marcos inspects Isabela palay warehouse, onion cold storage facility](#) (2026-03-26 17:14)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday inspected Ambatali Warehouse with multi-purpose drying pavement and the Ramon Onion Cold Storage Facility in the Municipality of Ramon, Isabela. The project was expected to strengthen the agricultural sector and provide a more efficient post-harvest system, the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) said in a press release.

- [Speaker Dy welcomes BARMM poll reset, backs stronger regional transition](#) (2026-03-26 17:13)

MANILA, Philippines – Speaker Faustino “Bojie” G. Dy III on Wednesday welcomed the signing into law by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. of the measure resetting the first regular elections in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), calling it a crucial step toward a more stable and credible democratic transition in the region.

- [SC upholds ex-Agusan del Norte mayor’ s malversation conviction](#) (2026-03-26 17:11)

MANILA, Philippines — The Supreme Court has affirmed the malversation conviction of former mayor Teresita Soliva of the municipality of Remedios T. Romualdez, Agusan del Norte for failing to liquidate cash advances for confidential funds and other expenses amounting to more than half a million pesos. In a 26-page decision in August last year but

- [Calapan clergy renew vows after Vatican raises vicariate to diocese](#) (2026-03-26 17:10)
- [Ortega: House productive even with impeachment duty](#) (2026-03-26 17:02)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives is expected to top its performance in the 19th Congress regarding productivity even as it is duty-bound to tackle the impeachment complaints, Deputy Speaker Paolo Ortega V said on Thursday. Ortega, in a statement, said that having the House committee on justice tackle the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara

- [PH always sincere in its dealings, Malacañang says](#) (2026-03-26 16:26)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines has always been sincere in its dealings and negotiations with the international community, Palace press officer and Undersecretary Claire Castro said on Thursday. Castro said this in a press briefing, after being asked to react to the Chinese embassy’ s recent statements on the possible resumption of oil exploration talks between Manila

- [Transport strike in Bacolod lasts only a few hours](#) (2026-03-26 16:21)

BACOLOD CITY—A transportation strike that failed to cripple public transportation here ended before noon on Thursday. There were about 500 drivers and operators who gathered at five rally centers to demand government action against rising fuel prices brought on by unrest in the Middle East, said Eric Bendoy, secretary-general of the United Negros Drivers and

- [Transport strikes, protests to continue until demands met – Piston](#) (2026-03-26 16:18)

MANILA, Philippines — Drivers and operators of public utility vehicles will not stop holding transport strikes and protests until the government heeds their calls amid the rising cost of fuel products, transport group Piston president Mody Floranda said on Thursday. Floranda reiterated this statement as the No to Oil Price Hike Coalition, which comprises drivers

- [Marcos inspects agri, health projects in Isabela](#) (2026-03-26 16:01)

RAMON, Isabela—President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday pledged to put up more livelihood projects as he inspected various farm facilities and a new road in far-flung Ambatali village here and in Santiago City and Cabatuan town in Isabela province. Marcos said the projects would improve food supply and increase farmers’ earnings. Worth P168.3 million, the

- [Senators peel off the issue of conflicting data on onion production](#) (2026-03-26 15:26)

MANILA, Philippines — Senators during an agriculture panel hearing on Thursday questioned the government’ s conflicting data on national onion production. This comes as the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported a production surplus, while the Department of Agriculture (DA) reported a deficit. During the hearing, the PSA said the Philippines produced 308,661 metric tons (mt) in

- [Balisacan appears lukewarm over proposed tax on super rich](#) (2026-03-26 15:18)

MANILA, Philippines — Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan appears to be lukewarm over proposals to tax the rich, as a measure to curb the possible losses generated by the country due to the possible tax suspension, as it may create more harm than good. During a Malacañang press briefing on Thursday, Palace press officer and Undersecretary Claire

- [Transport group seeks P10,000 monthly aid for PUV drivers](#) (2026-03-26 15:11)

MANILA, Philippines — Transport group Manibela on Thursday called on the government to provide P10,000 in monthly cash assistance, instead of the one-time payout of P5,000, for public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers. According to Manibela chairperson Mar Valbuena, the P5,000 cash assistance is not enough for the drivers, noting the rising cost of fuel. “It’ s only

- [Marcos may order fuel excise tax cut, suspension by April 12 or 13](#) (2026-03-26 14:30)

MANILA, Philippines— President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. may order the suspension or reduction of excise taxes on petroleum products by April 12 or 13, an official of the Department of Finance (DOF) told senators on Thursday. DOF is part of the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) tasked to make recommendations to the president to either suspend

- [Agencies should hasten response to oil crisis – Bam Aquino](#) (2026-03-26 14:21)

MANILA, Philippines — Cabinet members should respond to the ongoing oil crisis immediately with the national state of energy emergency declared, Sen. Bam Aquino said on Thursday.

“Please move as fast as the price of diesel and gasoline and gasoline is going up. Move as fastas that. If the price of diesel and gasoline

- [Marcos’ Partido Federal gains strength in House – South Cotabato gov](#) (2026-03-26 14:16)

KORONADAL CITY, South Cotabato – The Partido Federal ng Pilipinas (PFP) has been gaining strength in the House of Representatives, trailing behind the dominant Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD), its president, South Cotabato Gov. Reynaldo Tamayo Jr., said.

“Actually, the number is increasing regularly. We are the super majority in the local government, with the governors

- [PNP to bolster community ties to address rising cases of suicide](#) (2026-03-26 14:03)

[Warning: Mention of suicide] MANILA, Philippines — Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. on Thursday said the agency will be strengthening its relationships with communities in a bid to address the rising cases of suicide. “As law enforcers, the PNP also wants the public to feel that they can rely on

- [House gives free rides for those commuting from SJDM, Welcome Rotonda](#) (2026-03-26 13:45)

MANILA, Philippines — Commuters moving from the City of San Jose del Monte in Bulacan to Welcome Rotonda in Quezon City can enjoy free rides after the House of Representatives launched trips as part of their transport relief initiative amid rising fuel costs. In a statement on Thursday, the House said that it launched a

- [Rice trader gives free gas to over 300 South Cotabato trike drivers](#) (2026-03-26 13:41)

KORONADAL CITY, South Cotabato – May you live long and your tribe increase. A young businesswoman received such wishes for her kindness after she gave out free gasoline for hundreds of tricycle and habal-habal drivers in the towns of Surallah and T’boli amid the skyrocketing fuel prices due to the Middle East war. READ: Marcos OKs

- [Calapan City heat index hits 41°C; ‘extreme caution’ advised](#) (2026-03-26 13:19)

CALAPAN CITY, Oriental Mindoro — Residents of this city are warned of mounting health risks as the heat index soared to a sweltering 41 degrees Celsius on Thursday morning, prompting local disaster officials to raise an “extreme caution” advisory. Data from the Calapan City Public Market monitoring station recorded the peak value at 11 a.m,

- [Coding without limits: IT grad thrives despite disability](#) (2026-03-26 13:17)

MANILA, Philippines — In the fast-paced world of front-end development, skill is often measured by how quickly one can type, fix errors, or run clean code. For Ayevin Hao, a 27-year-old BS Information Technology graduate of the University of the East (UE), that work happens differently. Every line of code, every command, is done with

- [55 green sea turtle hatchlings released in Catanduanes](#) (2026-03-26 13:07)

LEGAZPI CITY, Albay— Fifty-five green sea turtle hatchlings were released into the sea on March 20 at Taelan Cove in Talisoy village, Virac town, in the island province of Catanduanes. The activity was led by the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) in Catanduanes, headed by officer-in-charge Lawyer Vivian D. Escoto, in coordination with

- [Police rule out foul play in death of missing Pasig teen](#) (2026-03-26 12:58)

MANILA, Philippines — Police have ruled out foul play in the death of 15-year-old Grade 9 student Isabelle Sophia Tablate, whose body was found in vacant a lot in Pasig City after she had been missing for five days. “There was no sign that she was killed or subjected to violence,” Capt. Rodolfo Rabago, team

- [Leviste to Marcos: Cut Asean budget, funnel savings to fuel price relief](#) (2026-03-26 12:48)

MANILA, Philippines — Batangas Rep. Leandro Legarda Leviste has urged the Office of the President (OP) to review and eventually trim its P22.9 billion budget for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit this year. Leviste is asking President Marcos to allocate the savings that will result in the budget decrease to measures that will

- [BARMM grants P7,500 fuel subsidy to transport sector](#) (2026-03-26 12:34)

COTABATO CITY — The Ministry of Transportation and Communication in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (MOTC-BARMM) has rolled out fuel subsidies for the transport sector as the petition for a provisional fare increase for public transport vehicles in the region remains up in the air. Through the MOTC-BARMM Pantawid Pasada Program (PPP), each franchise

- [When mangrove planting goes wrong](#) (2026-03-26 12:13)

MANILA, Philippines — Along a stretch of coastline, volunteers waded into shallow water, pressing mangrove seedlings into the mud — one by one, row after row. It is a familiar scene across the Philippines, often repeated after storms, during company-led drives, and in community activities promoted as climate action. The intention is clear: to protect

- [Oil traders quiet on May supply – local oil firms](#) (2026-03-26 11:56)

MANILA, Philippines — Fuel companies on Thursday admitted that no oil traders have committed to supplying stocks for May. The Philippine Institute of Petroleum (PIP) and the Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association (IPPCA) made the revelation during the Senate Proactive Response and Oversight for Timely and Effective Crisis Strategy (Protect) committee hearing. “So many of

- [Lawyer of 18 ‘ex-Marines’ back at NBI over De Lima, Villanueva cases](#) (2026-03-26 11:48)

MANILA, Philippines — Atty. Levito Baligod, counsel for the 18 alleged former Marines, returned to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) on Thursday to comply with the subpoena issued to him. This time, the subpoena was in connection with the cyber complaints recently filed by Mamamayang Liberal Rep. Leila de Lima and 2025 Ramon Magsaysay

- [Man arrested for siphoning diesel from truck in Tacloban](#) (2026-03-26 11:44)

TACLOBAN CITY — Police have arrested a man who allegedly siphoned diesel from the parked truck of a business establishment here. The theft was reported at a business along Rizal Avenue in Barangay 37, where around 70 liters of diesel fuel valued at P8,050 were siphoned from a company vehicle owned by Lucky Hardware and

- [Manibela leader seeks commuters' understanding over calls for fare hike](#) (2026-03-26 11:40)

MANILA, Philippines — Transport group Manibela chairperson Mar Valbuena on Thursday appealed for commuters' understanding and sympathy as they call for a fare increase in view of the rising cost of fuel due to the conflict in the Middle East. Valbuena criticized the suspension of the fare hike on several public utility vehicles, such as

- [Cebu prov' l govt cuts terminal fees for PUVs](#) (2026-03-26 11:13)

CEBU CITY — The Cebu provincial government has ordered a temporary reduction in terminal fees for public utility vehicles (PUVs) using Capitol-operated bus terminals, aiming to cushion the impact of rising fuel prices on transport operators and commuters. The three-month measure, which took effect on March 25 and will run until June 24 this year,

- [Residents brave long queue for cheap rice in Kidapawan City](#) (2026-03-26 11:02)

KIDAPAWAN CITY, Cotabato- Hundreds of residents here braved a long queue on Thursday to avail of the government's cheap rice. The people trooped to the National Food Authority (NFA) warehouse to get priority numbers starting at 4 a.m. But within an hour, the line of would-be beneficiaries had grown to about half a kilometer. Those

- [NCRPO deploys over 8,900 cops, 190 vehicles for transport strike](#) (2026-03-26 10:54)

MANILA, Philippines — Over 8,900 police officers and 190 police vehicles have been deployed in Metro Manila for security during the two-day transport strike launched on Thursday, March 26, according to the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO). A breakdown of the agency's deployment as of 10 a.m. showed they had sent out the following

- [Transport groups: Scrap, not just suspend, fuel taxes amid price hikes](#) (2026-03-26 10:54)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. should have abolished the excise tax and value added tax (VAT) on fuel products, instead of suspending or reducing their taxes, amid the rising cost of fuel caused by tension in the Middle East, transport group Piston said on Thursday. Piston president Mody Floranda said this as the

- [DA plans 5 mega hatcheries to boost aquaculture, ease pressure on seas](#) (2026-03-26 10:49)

GUINOBATAN, Albay — Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the government will strengthen aquaculture and build five mega hatcheries in the country to help achieve food security and allow overfished seas to recover. Laurel said the planned hatcheries will be established in the provinces of Camarines Sur, Sorsogon, Quezon, Zamboanga Sibugay, and Pangasinan. “The

- [Ombudsman to comply with House order for Sara Duterte SALN](#) (2026-03-26 10:42)

MANILA, Philippines — The Office of the Ombudsman on Thursday said they will comply with the order of a House panel to release the certified true copy of Vice President Sara Duterte’s Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALN). Assistant Ombudsman Mico Clavano noted that SALNs of certain public officials are public documents that

- [Superkit series tees off May 16 in Clark](#) (2026-03-26 10:42)

MANILA, Philippines — The Superkit Series will tee off on May 16 to 17 at the Mimosa Golf and Country Club in Clark, Pampanga, marking a three-month nationwide tour organized by the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines. The opening leg will be played across Mimosa’s Mountain and Acacia courses, setting the stage for a

- [Bacolod jeepney drivers, operators join nat’ l transport protest](#) (2026-03-26 10:36)

BACOLOD CITY- Drivers and operators of traditional jeepneys and other transport groups have stopped plying their routes here on Thursday as part of a nationwide protest to demand government action over rising fuel prices brought on by the Middle East unrest. Leading the strike in Bacolod are the United Negros Drivers and Operators Center-Pagkakaisa ng

- [Campaign launched for toxics-free, zero-waste hospitals](#) (2026-03-26 10:21)

TACLOBAN CITY — The Eastern Visayas Medical Center (EVMC), based here, launched on Wednesday a campaign for toxics-free and zero-waste hospitals aimed at reducing plastic use and improving healthcare waste management. The campaign was highlighted by the rollout of the “Nurse Susie” roadshow at the medical center’s Outpatient Department. The initiative forms part of the

- [Senate ad hoc panel holds consultation on impact of Middle East war](#) (2026-03-26 10:07)

MANILA, Philippines — The Senate ad hoc committee resumed its hearing on Thursday to hear inputs on the socioeconomic effects of the Middle East war on Filipinos. The Proactive Response and Oversight for Timely and Effective Crisis Strategy (Protect) committee, created under Senate Resolution No. 45, aims to formulate a national comprehensive contingency framework. This

- [LOOK: Mall hours adjusted for Holy Week observance](#) (2026-03-26 09:55)

MANILA, Philippines — Major mall operators have announced adjusted operating schedules ahead of the observance of Holy Week, with closures set for Maundy Thursday on April 2 and Good Friday on April 3. Open on Maundy Thursday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.: Open on Good Friday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.: Closed

- [Bicol's damaged Maharlika Highway section now open for Holy Week rush](#) (2026-03-26 09:54)

LEGAZPI CITY, Albay — Motorists traveling from Metro Manila and bound for Bicol, Visayas, and Mindanao (and vice versa) for the Holy Week observance can now use previously damaged portions of the Maharlika Highway. This is after the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) completed emergency repairs ahead of the peak travel period. READ:

- [LIBRENG SAKAY rolled out in Metro Manila as transport strikes continue](#) (2026-03-26 09:45)

MANILA, Philippines – The government has rolled out “libreng sakay” (free rides) across key routes in Metro Manila as a nationwide transport strike disrupts public commuting on March 26 and 27. In an advisory, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) said the “libreng sakay” program will run from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Thursday and

- [DepEd to Western Visayas schools: No fees for end-of-school-year rites](#) (2026-03-26 09:29)

ILOILO CITY — The Department of Education (DepEd) in Western Visayas has reiterated that no fees should be collected from students, parents, or teachers for end-of-school-year (EOSY) activities, including graduation and moving-up ceremonies. The directive was contained in Regional Memorandum No. 274, series of 2026, signed by Cristito A. Eco, regional director of the Department

- [Taal Volcano logs slight rise in sulfur emissions; seismic activity low](#) (2026-03-26 09:14)

LUCENA CITY, Quezon — Taal Volcano recorded a slight increase in sulfur dioxide emissions, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) reported on Thursday. In its morning bulletin, Phivolcs said the volcano emitted 1,625 metric tons of sulfur dioxide from its main crater over the past 24 hours, a level still classified as “weak.”

- [Nartatez vows crackdown on e-sabong after Manila coliseum bust](#) (2026-03-26 09:11)

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. intends to crack down on online cockfighting after police shut down an alleged e-sabong operation at a coliseum in Manila yesterday. The raid in Vitas Coliseum in Tondo resulted in the arrest of 136 bettors and 28 operators. “Illegal e-sabong is a

- [On-site classes in Albay suspended due to transport strike](#) (2026-03-26 09:10)

LEGAZPI CITY, Albay—In-person classes in Albay province were suspended on Thursday and Friday in anticipation of the nationwide transport strike. In an advisory, Acting Governor Farida Co said the public and private schools will implement alternative learning modality at all levels.

She also advised the local government units to provide free rides for stranded commuters

- [Central Luzon deputy police chief named new head of Highway Patrol Group](#) (2026-03-26 09:07)

MANILA, Philippines — Police Regional Office Central Luzon (PRO 3) Deputy Director for Administration Brig. Gen. Rommel Batangan has been designated the new acting director of the Philippine National Police Highway Patrol Group (PNP HPG). This came through the order of PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. dated March 25 and issued by the

- [CHR hails PH removal from UN list of grave rights violations](#) (2026-03-26 08:46)

MANILA, Philippines — The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) welcomed the Philippines' removal from the United Nations (UN) list of grave child rights violations related to armed conflict, calling it a milestone in efforts to protect children in areas affected by fighting. The CHR said the delisting highlights “sustained national efforts to strengthen the implementation

- [Pagasa warns of soaring heat index across PH on March 26 \(Thursday\)](#) (2026-03-26 08:14)

MANILA, Philippines — Scorching heat is expected across the country, with the heat index reaching up to 41°C, while Metro Manila may experience 37°C to 38°C on Thursday, the state weather bureau warned. Heat index is how hot it actually feels to the human body when relative humidity is combined with the air temperature. Temperatures

- [OIL PRICE WATCH as of Thursday, March 26, 2026](#) (2026-03-26 08:10)

The Department of Energy describes the global oil market this week as “calm” compared to last week. Despite this pronouncement, local fuel prices are still going up, it’s just that the numbers are about half of the increases experienced by motorists last week. Here are the prevailing oil prices in Metro Manila and other parts

- [Mt. Province cancels Lang-ay Festival due to nat’ l energy emergency](#) (2026-03-26 07:27)

BAGUIO CITY — The provincial government of Mountain Province on Wednesday announced the cancellation of all activities for the annual Lang-ay Festival in support of the national energy emergency, officials said. In a social media post, the local government announced the cancellation “in compliance with Executive Order 17-2026,” adding that the move supports the National Energy

- [Corruption issues hound Marcos, Duterte in Pulse Asia poll](#) (2026-03-26 05:52)

Corruption remained the primary factor influencing the public’s trust or distrust of President Marcos while Vice President Sara Duterte enjoyed the trust of most survey respondents because of her supposed ability to govern despite her alleged involvement in corrupt activities, according to the latest survey by Pulse Asia. The First Quarter 2026 Ulat ng Bayan

- [Police official accused of harassment quits post](#) (2026-03-26 05:50)

The acting Highway Patrol Group (HPG) chief of the Philippine National Police has voluntarily resigned from his post after a subordinate accused him of sexual harassment. Brig. Gen. Jessie Tamayao, however, denied the allegation in a statement on Wednesday, calling it part of a personal vendetta against him. “I have always conducted myself with the

- [SC: DSWD certificate needed in adoption of ‘surrendered’ kids](#) (2026-03-26 05:48)

Abandoned children who are surrendered to a person with whom they have no existing ties cannot be legally adopted without a certification from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). This was the recent ruling of the Supreme Court’s Third Division when it junked a petition for certiorari in connection with an adoption case

- [AMLC seeks forfeiture of assets tied to flood control scam](#) (2026-03-26 05:44)

The Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) has filed three petitions for civil forfeiture against assets allegedly linked to the flood control corruption scandal, following six months of investigations and freeze orders. In a statement, the council said the petitions cover assets of individuals and entities earlier placed under freeze orders issued by the Court of Appeals.

- [Cops bust ‘e-sabong’ in Manila; 174 arrested](#) (2026-03-26 05:42)

The police have busted a group behind an electronic cockfighting ( “e-sabong” ) operation conducting around 500 cockfights daily in a Manila coliseum, resulting in the arrest of 174 people, mostly bettors. Col. John Guiagui, the head of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in the National Capital Region (CIDG – NCR), told reporters that they raided

- [Police note mounting suicides in PH capital](#) (2026-03-26 05:38)

Suicide cases in Metro Manila have more than tripled in the first quarter, a situation that should make families more aware of the factors that drive youths to self-harm, including the negative effects of online gaming, the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) said on Wednesday. The cases surged to 111 between January and March

- [House panel asks for Sara’ s SALNs, files on her threat to kill Marcos](#) (2026-03-26 05:36)

The House committee on justice opened a new stage on Wednesday in the impeachment proceedings against Vice President Sara Duterte by asking two agencies—the Office of the Ombudsman and the National Bureau of Investigation—to produce documents pertaining to her declared wealth and the death threat she issued in 2024 against President Marcos, first lady Liza

- [P20 billion emergency fund set to secure fuel supply](#) (2026-03-26 05:32)

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has directed the release of billions in additional funds in response to the deepening global oil crisis caused by the Middle East conflict, a day after he signed an executive order declaring a national energy emergency. The P20-billion emergency fund, sourced from the Malampaya Gas Fund under the Special Account

- [Marcos gets special power to cut or suspend fuel tax](#) (2026-03-26 05:30)

President Marcos on Wednesday signed Republic Act No. 12316, a law authorizing him to suspend or reduce excise on petroleum products, as the country continued to reel from oil price spikes caused by the Middle East conflict. The measure was certified as urgent by the President on March 12, as an oil crisis loomed following

- [LGUs roll out fuel subsidy in provinces](#) (2026-03-26 05:06)

The streets of Kidapawan City in Cotabato province were almost emptied of passenger tricycles on Wednesday morning after their usual rounds of ferrying private and government workers to their respective offices. There was no transport strike. But many of them gathered at the city gymnasium and queued to beat the deadline to submit filled-out forms

- [Pangasinan, Ecija farmers face dearth of onion buyers](#) (2026-03-26 05:04)

CALASIAO, PANGASINAN—It is a bumper harvest season for onion farmers in Pangasinan and Nueva Ecija provinces. With the help of concerned agencies, growers were able to control armyworms, locally known as “harabas,” which are moth larvae that feed on onion leaves at night and cause severe production losses. As a result, this year’s harvest is

- [Mountain Province tourism bracing for impact of rising fuel prices](#) (2026-03-26 05:02)

BAGUIO CITY—Tourism in Mountain Province is taking a hit from the fuel shocks due to the conflict in the Middle East, which entered its 25th day on Wednesday. Gov. Bonifacio Lacwasan on Wednesday canceled the province’s annual Lang-ay Festival scheduled on April 6 to comply with President Marcos’ declaration of a state of national energy

- [LGUs, national government commit to diversity, inclusion](#) (2026-03-26 04:30)

As the global workforce continues to evolve, existing cultural factors and government policies demonstrate the growing role of businesses in fostering environments where employees feel seen, valued, and treated fairly. But beyond fairness, inclusive work environments empower individuals to fully realize and maximize their talents and capabilities. Companies that embed diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

- [Mangyans show promise of solar-powered future in Mindoro](#) (2026-03-26 04:25)

CITY OF CALAPAN—In remote communities across Mindoro, Indigenous Mangyan families are already experiencing what a renewable energy future could look like—powered by small, decentralized solar systems that bring light to homes and electricity to community facilities long beyond the reach of the grid. Their experience is now at the heart of a broader conversation, as

- [LIST: LGUs, schools shifting to online classes on March 26](#) (2026-03-26 00:14)

MANILA, Philippines — Several local government units (LGUs) and educational institutions have switched to online classes on Thursday, March 26 due to a nationwide transport strike. The

following LGUs have announced adopting the measure: Calabarzon Laguna – all levels, public and private; modular or online learning on March 26 Bicol Region Albay READ: Groups back 2-day

- [PNP to public: Observe water activity safety guidelines](#) (2026-03-26 00:13)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Wednesday enjoined the public to take extra precautions when swimming or holding activities in pools and bodies of water.

“Swim only in designated areas, check for lifeguards, wear life vests when needed, and avoid risky behavior such as diving in shallow water or swimming alone,” PNP

- [Mountain Province calls off Lang-ay festival amid energy emergency](#) (2026-03-25 23:07)

BAGUIO CITY — Citing the need to conserve energy amid a national energy emergency, Mountain Province has called off major activities for this year’s Lang-ay Festival. Governor Bonifacio C. Lacwasan Jr., through Executive Order No. 17, directed all provincial offices and local government units to suspend festival events and adopt strict energy-saving measures. The move

- [Guiuan, E. Samar converts evacuation facility into drug rehab center](#) (2026-03-25 22:48)

TACLOBAN CITY — The municipality of Guiuan in Eastern Samar has opened its own community-based drug rehabilitation center, after converting a former evacuation facility. Located in Barangay Cogon, the facility can accommodate up to 350 individuals and is expected to serve as a key intervention center for drug surrenderers in the town, Mayor Annaliza Gonzales-Kwan

- [2 drugs suspects fall in Rizal; shabu, gun seized](#) (2026-03-25 22:41)

LUCENA CITY, Quezon – Anti-illegal drug operatives arrested two suspects and seized around P510,000 worth of shabu and an unlicensed firearm in a buy-bust operation in Cainta, Rizal, on Tuesday. The Police Region 4A police in a report on Wednesday said the operatives collared the suspected pushers identified only by their aliases as “Marco” and

- [Protest greets Davao Light takeover of Nordeco assets in Tagum City](#) (2026-03-25 22:25)

SAN FRANCISCO, Agusan del Sur– Hundreds of members of the National Confederation of Electric Cooperatives’ Member-Consumer-Owners staged a prayer rally in Tagum City on Wednesday to show support for the Northern Davao Electric Cooperative (Nordeco) even as the Davao Light and Power Co. (DLPC) took control of its key assets. The march comes on the

- [2 Cavite drug suspects busted, P3.4M shabu seized](#) (2026-03-25 22:17)

LUCENA CITY, Quezon – Authorities seized an estimated P3.4 million worth of shabu (crystal meth) and arrested two alleged big-time illegal drugs traffickers in a buy-bust operation Wednesday afternoon in Imus City, Cavite. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) -vRegion 4A said in a spot report that their agents and Cavite Maritime Police operatives

- [Lone player bags MegaLotto 6/45 jackpot in March 25 draw](#) (2026-03-25 22:10)

MANILA, Philippines – A lone player bettor won the MegaLotto 6/45 jackpot in Wednesday's draw, while no one won the top prize in the Grand Lotto 6/55 draw, according to the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. The winning MegaLotto 6/45 combination with a jackpot prize of P15 million is 17-24-15-29-10-05. The Grand Lotto 6/55 combination was

- [DepEd Iloilo: New academic calendar favorable to teachers](#) (2026-03-25 21:53)

ILOILO CITY — The Department of Education (DepEd) Schools Division of Iloilo has welcomed the adoption of a new academic calendar, saying it is favorable to teachers. Leonil Salvilla, DepEd Iloilo spokesperson, said the updated calendar benefit teachers as shorter grading cycles and built-in breaks may help reduce workload and allow time for rest. President

- [Iloilo orders stricter energy, fuel-saving measures amid rising costs](#) (2026-03-25 21:49)

ILOILO CITY – The Iloilo provincial government has rolled out enhanced energy and fuel conservation measures across multiple sectors following continued increases in fuel prices and global energy uncertainties. Gov. Arthur Defensor Jr. signed Executive Order No. 34-A, series of 2026 on March 25, directing households, businesses, industries, and transport groups to adopt stricter energy-saving

- [Cops arrest 3, seize P6.8M in meth in Lanao del Sur](#) (2026-03-25 21:45)

COTABATO CITY – Three suspected peddlers of illegal drugs were arrested on Wednesday and a kilo of suspected meth recovered from them in a buy-bust operation in Lumbatan town, Lanao del Sur. Col. Caesar Cabuhat, Lanao del Sur police director, said the operation was carried out after undercover agents confirmed the drug trade taking place

- [Sugar board exec urges hike in farmers' trucking allowance amid crisis](#) (2026-03-25 21:23)

BACOLOD CITY — Sugar Regulatory Board Member David Andrew Sanson on Wednesday, March 25, said he is appealing to all sugar mills nationwide to increase the allowance they give sugar farmers for delivering cane to the milling plants, in light of the rising fuel costs. Sanson, planters representative on the Sugar Board, in his letter

- [Manila Water Wawa–Calawis supply system bolsters East Zone, Rizal](#) (2026-03-25 21:14)

MANILA, Philippines — Manila Water continues to expand its supply network in the East Zone, pushing service into upland and hard-to-reach communities in Metro Manila and Rizal Province as part of its long-term water security program. A key component of this effort is the Wawa–Calawis Water Supply System, which is designed to diversify sources and

- [Pope appoints Fr. Saco as 8th bishop of Tagbilaran — CBCP](#) (2026-03-25 20:09)

TAGBILARAN CITY, Bohol — Pope Leo XIV has appointed Rev. Fr. Gerardo Fortich Saco Jr. as the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Tagbilaran, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) announced. CBCP said the Vatican made the announcement Wednesday at noon in Rome (7 p.m. in the Philippines), naming Saco—who has served as

- [Vatican elevates Calapan to diocese; Cuevas named first bishop](#) (2026-03-25 19:53)

CITY OF CALAPAN, Oriental Mindoro – The Vatican has elevated the Apostolic Vicariate of Calapan into a full-fledged diocese, appointing Moises Cuevas as its first bishop, according to the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) News. The announcement was made Wednesday at noon local time in Rome (7 p.m. in the Philippines), following approval

- [PNP ramps up road safety measures ahead of Holy Week travel surge](#) (2026-03-25 19:49)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) will be intensifying its deployment for road safety measures in anticipation of an influx of travelers for the 2026 observance of Holy Week and the vacation season. In a statement on Wednesday, the PNP said its Highway Patrol Group (HPG) will be deploying 714 personnel and 92

- [Madriaga seeks protection, fearing Teves wants him dead — Diokno](#) (2026-03-25 19:29)

MANILA, Philippines — The request for protective custody for Ramil Madriaga, former aide to Vice President Sara Duterte, arises from his fear that former Negros Oriental Rep. Arnolfo Teves Jr. may want him dead, Akbayan Rep. Chel Diokno said Wednesday. Speaking at the House Committee on Justice hearing on Duterte's impeachment complaints, Diokno reiterated his motion

- [DSWD issues warning vs text scams posing as cash aid rollout](#) (2026-03-25 19:20)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) issued a warning to the public to take caution against text scams posing as the agency delivering the P5,000 cash aid for public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers. “Because of the continuous payout of cash relief assistance by the DSWD, scammers are everywhere again,” the

- [Vistan retains UP Diliman chancellor post](#) (2026-03-25 19:19)

MANILA, Philippines — Edgardo Carlo Vistan II has been reappointed as chancellor of the University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman, receiving a fresh three-year term. The state university announced Wednesday that Vistan will continue as chancellor of its Diliman campus following the 1407th meeting of the UP Board of Regents. Vistan competed against geology professor

- [Manila Cathedral installs image of Our Lady of Guadalupe](#) (2026-03-25 19:10)

MANILA, Philippines—The pilgrim image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, considered as one of the most influential Marian apparitions, is set to be permanently installed at the Manila Cathedral, with its expected arrival from Mexico scheduled on June 13. In a briefing on Wednesday, Kidapawan Bishop Jose Colin Bagaforo, who serves as spiritual director of the

- [Over 22,900 TNVS drivers get P5,000 cash aid — DSWD](#) (2026-03-25 19:03)

MANILA, Philippines — Over 22,900 transport network vehicle service (TNVS) drivers so far have received the P5,000 cash financial assistance from the government, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said on Wednesday. In a social media post, the DSWD gave the following breakdown of TNVS drivers who received the aid in Metro Manila

- [Marcos signs law granting him powers to suspend fuel excise tax](#) (2026-03-25 18:56)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday signed into law a bill authorizing him to suspend or reduce excise taxes on petroleum products, as the country continues to feel the impact of rising oil prices caused by the conflict in the Middle East. Republic Act No. 12316 states that the sitting president, upon the

- [Luistro stands by ‘mini trial’ term for Sara Duterte impeach hearings](#) (2026-03-25 18:41)

MANILA, Philippines — “No regrets.” This was the response of Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro when pressed if she regretted using the term “mini trial” to refer to the “hearing proper” of impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte. Duterte’s camp zeroed in on her “mini trial” remarks as a reason not to attend the proceedings,

- [INQToday: Duterte impeachment: House panel subpoenas threat probe record, SALNs](#) (2026-03-25 18:19)

Here’s a quick roundup of today’s top stories: House panel subpoenas VP Sara SALNs, threat probe record The House of Representatives’ committee on justice has issued a subpoena for records of the investigation into Vice President Sara Duterte’s threats against ranking officials and her Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALN) from 2007. At

- [House panel asks PSA to verify OVP, DepEd secret fund beneficiaries](#) (2026-03-25 18:08)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) has been asked to verify its reports on the lack of records for some individuals who allegedly received confidential funds (CF) from the Office of the Vice President (OVP) and the Department of Education. During Wednesday’s House Committee on Justice hearing, Mamamayang Liberal party-list Rep. Leila de Lima

- [Senate panel: Cost-cutting measures can save gov’t at least P160B](#) (2026-03-25 18:03)

MANILA, Philippines — The government could save at least P160 billion from this year’s budget if it implements cost-cutting measures in the face of rising prices of fuel and basic commodities caused by tensions in the Middle East. These potential savings were identified by the Senate Proactive Response and Oversight for Timely and Effective Crisis Strategy (Protect) committee during its hearing on Tuesday, according to

- [Gatchalian urges gov’t-to-gov’t approach in securing oil supply](#) (2026-03-25 18:03)

MANILA, Philippines – Senator Sherwin Gatchalian on Wednesday urged the Department of Energy (DOE) to pursue government-to-government deals to secure a sufficient oil supply after it reported that the country has less than two months of fuel stocks. The DOE said the Philippines has only 53 days of gasoline supply remaining and 46 days of

- [CICC: Telcos agree to block Roblox if mum on risks in 15 days](#) (2026-03-25 17:47)

MANILA, Philippines — The Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center (CICC) on Wednesday said local telecommunication companies have agreed to block the game Roblox if its owners fail to address the risks it poses to children. The CICC secured the telcos’ commitment after meeting with them and the National Telecommunications Commission in Quezon City last Tuesday,

- [Counsel: Sara Duterte ready to answer impeachment raps in ‘proper forum’](#) (2026-03-25 17:44)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte is ready to answer the impeachment complaints against her in a “proper forum,” according to her legal team. This follows Duterte’ s absence from the House Committee on Justice’ s impeachment hearing on Wednesday, March 25. “The Vice President is ready to respond, and the defense team is ready to

- [Laguna gov suspends face-to-face classes due to transport strike](#) (2026-03-25 17:44)

LUCENA CITY, Quezon — Laguna Gov. Sol Aragon has suspended in-person classes in all public and private schools across the province on Thursday, March 26, due to a nationwide transport strike. “Modular or online learning will be implemented in the meantime due to the nationwide transport strike,” Aragon said in a Facebook post Wednesday afternoon.

- [Marcos to DOE: Secure more fuel sources while PH has 45-day supply](#) (2026-03-25 17:36)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said on Wednesday that he has ordered the Department of Energy (DOE) to secure additional fuel sources, even though the country currently has up to 45 days’ worth of supply. In an address in Malacañang Palace, Marcos backed Energy Secretary Sharon Garin’ s earlier assurance that the Philippines’ fuel supply

- [MMDA to roll out free ride single dispatch system during strike](#) (2026-03-25 16:51)

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) on Wednesday said it will implement a “single dispatch system” for its vehicles deployed for free rides and rescue to avoid competition with other public utility vehicles, as transport groups will stage transport strikes on March 26-27. The MMDA said that it coordinated with local government

- [Iloilo transport groups to join nationwide strike on Thursday](#) (2026-03-25 16:50)

ILOILO CITY— Public transport drivers and operators in Iloilo City are set to take part in a nationwide transport strike on Thursday, joining calls against rising fuel costs and

transport-related policies. Elmer Foro, lead convenor of the No to Public Utility Vehicle (PUV)Phaseout Coalition–Panay, told local media that passenger jeepneys in the city will suspend

- [De Lima bars Marcoleta from ‘resurrecting’ settled impeachment matters](#) (2026-03-25 16:46)

MANILA, Philippines — Mamamayang Liberal party-list Rep. Leila De Lima on Wednesday barred Sagip Rep. Paolo Marcoleta from raising “settled” matters during Vice President Sara Duterte’s impeachment hearing. House Committee on Justice Chairperson Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro approved De Lima’s motion to prevent Marcoleta from revisiting “double standard” accusations, which De Lima said had

- [DBM: Marcos orders release of over P60B for infrastructure projects](#) (2026-03-25 16:36)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the release of over P60 billion for the payment of completed and ongoing infrastructure projects and timely implementation of the Metro Manila Subway Project (MMSP) Phase I and the North-South Commuter Railway (NSCR) System, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said. In separate press releases on

- [Labor leader slams Marcos order: UPLIFT is just facelift for gov’t](#) (2026-03-25 16:17)

MANILA, Philippines — Labor leader Luke Espiritu criticized the UPLIFT (Unified Package for Livelihoods, Industry, Food, and Transport) framework and committee addressing the Middle East conflict, calling it a mere “facelift” that fails to tackle the real problems of Filipinos. Espiritu made the remark a day after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed Executive Order (EO)

- [DepEd, DOLE expand Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair nationwide](#) (2026-03-25 16:16)

QUEZON CITY — The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) are expanding the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair (BPSF) to at least two schools in every region nationwide to help senior high school and Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates transition more easily from school to work. The initiative is part

- [Marcos: No reason to panic after national energy emergency declaration](#) (2026-03-25 16:14)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday said that the declaration of a state of national energy emergency is not meant to cause public panic over the effects of the Middle East crisis but rather serves as a “precautionary tool” for whatever may come next. He made the announcement through Executive Order No. 110,

- [PNP on alert for protests marking Duterte’s 81st birthday on March 28](#) (2026-03-25 15:58)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) is on alert for possible protest actions marking the upcoming 81st birthday of former President Rodrigo Duterte on Saturday,

March 28. “I have directed our chiefs of police to assess and prepare the deployment of police officers in key areas where rallies could take place. I also tasked

- [Jeepney drivers stage transport strike in Iligan City](#) (2026-03-25 15:31)

ILIGAN CITY – More than 600 jeepney drivers began a three-day transport strike here on Wednesday to demand a P5 fare adjustment due to the skyrocketing fuel costs. The drivers belong to the transport group Boses at Samahan ng mga Jeepney Drivers and Operators Association (Busina). Jessie Sumaylo, Busina president, told the Inquirer that jeepney

- [Marcos receives, set to sign final fuel excise tax suspension bill](#) (2026-03-25 15:20)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday said he had already received the final version of a bill seeking to suspend the collection of excise taxes on fuel products. He will sign it into law “by end of day,” he said in his address at Malacañang. The final version of a bill was transmitted back to

- [PNP logs 415 gas station closures amid oil supply crisis](#) (2026-03-25 15:14)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) recorded 415 gas station closures nationwide as of Wednesday morning, March 25, amid the oil supply crisis caused by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. In a statement, the PNP said the highest number of closures were in the Cordillera Administrative Region (78 stations), followed by

- [3 dead in puffer fish poisoning in Masbate](#) (2026-03-25 15:12)

LEGAZPI CITY — Three people died on Saturday after eating puffer fish, locally known as “butete,” in Cawayan town in Masbate province. The fatalities were identified as Benito A. Jumao-as, Rosebell P. Jumao-as, and Joanna Tapar, all residents of Purok 3, Maihao village. Wheng Bricia-Briones, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Bicol information officer, said

- [Lawyers press SC to act on petition vs Naia fee hikes](#) (2026-03-25 15:02)

MANILA, Philippines — Petitioners and groups representing consumers and commuters have urged the Supreme Court to act on the temporary restraining order (TRO) they sought nearly a year ago against a concession deal that triggered the “unconstitutional” increase of terminal fees and other charges at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia). Petitioners Rico Domingo, former Philippine

- [Bicol police seize P4.08-million illegal drugs, arrest suspect](#) (2026-03-25 14:52)

LEGAZPI CITY – Authorities seized suspected shabu with an estimated street value of P4.08 million and arrested a drug suspect during a buy-bust operation in Daet, Camarines Sur, on Tuesday, an official said. In a report on Wednesday, Brig. Gen. Erosito Miranda, director of the Police Regional Office (PRO) 5 (Bicol), identified the suspect as “Roland,”

- [Suicide cases in NCR more than double in first 3 months of 2026 — NCRPO](#) (2026-03-25 14:50)

MANILA, Philippines — Suicide cases in Metro Manila more than doubled in the first three months of 2026, the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) said. In a statement on Wednesday, the NCRPO said it recorded 111 cases from January 1 to March 23, 2026, compared to the 33 cases recorded during the same period

- [Sara Duterte impeachment: House issues subpoena vs Michael Poa](#) (2026-03-25 14:38)

MANILA, Philippines — The House Committee on Justice has issued a subpoena for lawyer Michael Poa, as lawmakers believe he is key to determining how confidential funds (CF) under Vice President Sara Duterte’s office were spent. At the start of Wednesday’s hearing, ACT Teachers party-list Rep. Antonio Tinio moved to issue a subpoena ad testificandum

- [Groups back 2-day transport strike: This is everyone’s fight](#) (2026-03-25 14:26)

MANILA, Philippines — Sectoral groups will join transport groups in a nationwide transport strike set on March 26 to 27 amid the oil price hike, emphasizing that it is not just the fight of the transport sector but of everyone. Labor, vendors, women, and environment advocates made this statement on Wednesday as transport groups composed

- [Senators hit gov’t slow action, late admission of crisis](#) (2026-03-25 13:54)

[Updated March 25, 2026, 3:50 p.m.] MANILA, Philippines—While they welcomed the declaration of a state of national energy emergency, two senators lamented this long “overdue” admission of the government that there is a crisis as well as its “extremely” slow actions to address the effects of the Middle East conflict. “I welcome the President’s declaration of a state of

- [Legarda backs energy emergency declaration, urges urgent gov’t action](#) (2026-03-25 13:50)

MANILA, Philippines — Sen. Loren Legarda on Wednesday welcomed President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s declaration of a state of national energy emergency, calling it a long-overdue acknowledgment of the country’s worsening energy situation. In a statement dated March 25, 2026, Legarda said the President’s move reflects what the public has been experiencing in recent weeks, describing

- [Sara Duterte impeachment: House subpoenas Ramil Madriaga, his affidavit](#) (2026-03-25 13:47)

MANILA, Philippines — The House Committee on Justice has issued a subpoena for Ramil Madriaga and his sworn affidavit against Vice President Sara Duterte, deeming them vital to the impeachment proceedings. At Wednesday’s hearing, Mamamayang Liberal Party-list Rep. Leila de Lima moved to issue a subpoena duces tecum for Madriaga’s affidavit, in which he asked the

- [Sara Duterte camp skips House hearing over Luistro’ s ‘mini trial’ remark](#) (2026-03-25 13:43)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte’ s camp on Wednesday said they snubbed the House Committee on Justice hearing over its chairman’ s use of the term “mini trial.” In a letter to Committee Chairperson and Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro, Duterte’ s counsel said the panel was overstepping constitutional boundaries by calling a “mini-trial” a procedure meant

- [2 nabbed for alleged sale of ‘stolen’ racing pigeons worth P2.15M](#) (2026-03-25 13:36)

MANILA, Philippines — Two men were arrested for allegedly selling stolen racing pigeons worth P2.15 million in Batangas, the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group National Capital Region (CIDG NCR) said on Wednesday. The suspects were tracked down by operatives in Taal town last Thursday afternoon, CIDG NCR Chief Col. John Guiagui told reporters at Camp

- [Fuel hikes hit Zambales fishers in West Philippine Sea](#) (2026-03-25 13:25)

MANILA, Philippines — A fresh spike in fuel prices is forcing small-scale fishers in Zambales to stretch their time at sea, even as risks mount in the contested waters of the West Philippine Sea (WPS). In a statement on March 25, the fisherfolk group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) said rising fuel

- [Dy backs Marcos, vows swift House action on energy emergency](#) (2026-03-25 13:20)

MANILA, Philippines — Speaker Faustino “Bojie” Dy III said on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, the House of Representatives is prepared to move with urgency to deliver concrete relief measures following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’ s declaration of a state of national energy emergency. “The House will move with the same urgency, through targeted interventions, close oversight,

- [HPG acting director accused of sexual abuse resigns, denies charges](#) (2026-03-25 13:17)

[Trigger warning: Mentions of sexual abuse] MANILA, Philippines — Acting Philippine National Police Highway Patrol Group (PNP HPG) Director Brig. Gen. Jessie Tamayao has resigned from his post after a subordinate filed an administrative case against him for allegedly sexually harassing her. “I have always conducted myself with the utmost professionalism and respect for my

- [Duterte impeachment: House panel subpoenas threat probe record, SALNs](#) (2026-03-25 12:55)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives’ committee on justice has issued a subpoena for records of the investigation into Vice President Sara Duterte’ s threats against ranking officials and her Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALN) from 2007. At the start of the committee’ s formal hearing on the impeachment complaints against Duterte,

Manila Rep.

- [Alleged 24-hour e-sabong op busted Tondo coliseum; over 170 nabbed](#) (2026-03-25 12:43)

MANILA, Philippines — An alleged online cockfighting (e-sabong) operation was busted by the police at a coliseum in Manila, the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group National Capital Region (CIDG NCR) said on Wednesday. In an interview in Camp Crame, CIDG NCR Chief Col. John Guiagui told reporters that they had received information about the alleged

- [Marcos OKs P20-B emergency fund to secure fuel amid global oil crisis](#) (2026-03-25 12:43)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has directed the release of a P20 billion emergency fund to secure the country’s fuel supply amid the global oil crisis, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said on Wednesday. The funds will be released through a Special Allotment Release Order and a Notice of Cash Allocation to

- [INQToday: Sara Duterte absent as House panel starts formal impeach hearings](#) (2026-03-25 12:30)

Here’s a quick roundup of today’s top stories: House panel starts formal impeach hearings; Sara Duterte absent The hearing of the House committee on justice started its formal impeachment hearing even without the presence of Vice President Sara Duterte, who skipped the proceeding. During the hearing on Wednesday, the committee allocated a seat for the

- [Group calls for tougher action vs illegal gambling in Pangasinan](#) (2026-03-25 12:15)

MANILA, Philippines — Advocates in Pangasinan are calling for a “determined and consistent campaign” backed by local government units (LGUs) to curb illegal gambling in the province. The Fight Against Illegal and Rigged Games said current police efforts, including a series of arrests, are insufficient without stronger government support, warning that illegal gambling continues to

- [Luistro to critics: House tackling crises even amid impeachment](#) (2026-03-25 11:45)

MANILA, Philippines — Despite being tasked to hear the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte, the House of Representatives is doing its job to address pressing issues like the oil crisis brought by the Middle East conflict, Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro said. Luistro, chairperson of the House committee on justice, said in her opening speech

- [Sara Duterte on formal impeachment hearing: Another ‘fishing expedition’](#) (2026-03-25 11:25)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte on Wednesday tagged as yet another “fishing expedition” the House of Representatives’ hearing on the impeachment complaints against her. In a statement, she also said that the invitation for her to attend the House Committee on Justice hearing was allegedly framed to create a media narrative that there will

- [PNP touts internal cleansing, recruitment reforms vs ‘ninja cops’](#) (2026-03-25 11:25)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Wednesday touted its internal cleansing and recruitment reforms against “ninja cops,” or police officers who take a portion of illegal drugs seized in operations to resell them. “The Philippine National Police reaffirms its commitment that ninja cops have no place in our organization,” PNP chief Gen.

- [Kanlaon logs 16 ash emission events in 2 days](#) (2026-03-25 11:23)

BACOLOD CITY – Kanlaon Volcano on Monday and Tuesday continued to spew ash, but it is not an indication that its alert level will be raised, a Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) official said. Twelve ash emissions were recorded on Monday and four on Tuesday. The volcano remains at alert level 2. READ:

- [BOC: Over 15,000 abandoned balikbayan boxes set to be delivered](#) (2026-03-25 11:00)

MANILA, Philippines — There are over 15,000 remaining abandoned balikbayan boxes that are set to be delivered to their rightful owners as the Bureau of Customs (BOC) finished the shipment for all boxes from the Ports of Manila and Davao. The BOC made this statement as the agency and the Department of Finance (DOF) led

- [House panel starts formal impeach hearings; Sara Duterte absent](#) (2026-03-25 10:32)

MANILA, Philippines — The hearing of the House committee on justice started its formal impeachment hearing even without the presence of Vice President Sara Duterte, who skipped the proceeding. During the hearing on Wednesday, the committee allocated a seat for the vice president, beside Mamamayang Liberal party-list Rep. Leila de Lima. However, it was left vacant

- [Corruption is top issue in gauging Marcos, Duterte’ s records – survey](#) (2026-03-25 10:18)

MANILA, Philippines — Corruption is the common reason why Filipinos either trust or doubt President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Vice President Sara Duterte. This information came out in survey of Pulse Asia Research in the first quarter of 2026. According to the agency’ s Ulat ng Bayan released on Wednesday, 28.6 percent of respondents cited Marcos’ efforts

- [WATCH: House justice panel starts formal hearings on VP Sara Duterte impeachment complaints](#) (2026-03-25 10:13)

The House committee on justice starts hearing on impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte. READ: LIVE UPDATES: Sara Duterte impeachment hearing | March 25, 2026 READ: What to expect: VP Sara Duterte’ s impeachment proceedings

- [Filipino scientists map genome to save endangered Visayan spotted deer](#) (2026-03-25 10:12)

MANILA, Philippines — Scientists from the University of the Philippines and Silliman University have assembled a draft genome for the endemic Visayan spotted deer, a milestone they said could strengthen efforts to protect the endangered species. The Visayan spotted deer, or Rusa

alfredi, is one of three endemic species in the genus *Rusa*, native to

- [PNP tightens security at energy facilities after emergency order](#) (2026-03-25 10:03)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) will tighten security at energy facilities following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s declaration of a national energy emergency triggered by escalating tensions in the Middle East. “We in the Philippine National Police will focus on securing critical energy facilities and maintaining peace and order,” PNP chief Jose Melencio

- [Highway Patrol Group official faces termination for alleged sexual abuse](#) (2026-03-25 09:01)

[Trigger warning: Mentions of sexual abuse] MANILA, Philippines — A Philippine National Police Highway Patrol Group (PNP HPG) official is facing dismissal for allegedly sexually abusing one of his personnel, the National Police Commission (Napolcom) said on Wednesday. The victim lodged an administrative case against the HPG official before Napolcom’s Inspection, Monitoring and Investigation Service

- [OIL PRICE WATCH as of March 25, 2026](#) (2026-03-25 08:11)

Fuel prices continue to soar this week amid the war in the Middle East. The expected price increase on Tuesday was an additional P6.47 for gasoline, and P11.88 for diesel— mild when compared to the massive price surge in the week of March 17 to 23, wherein an additional P16.60 was added to every liter

- [Samar Provincial Hospital opens free dialysis center](#) (2026-03-25 07:18)

TACLOBAN CITY — The Samar Provincial Hospital in Catbalogan City inaugurated a new dialysis center on Monday, offering a full range of free, hospital-based services for patients with kidney disease, officials announced. The facility provides comprehensive dialysis care, including hemodialysis sessions, physician consultations, laboratory testing and essential medications such as erythropoietin injections, iron sucrose administration, intravenous

- [Pagasa warns of hot weather on March 25, Wednesday](#) (2026-03-25 07:10)

MANILA, Philippines — The state weather bureau on Wednesday warned of increasing heat index levels, urging the public to take precautions against prolonged exposure to extreme heat. This comes two days after the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) announced the start of the dry season as the northeast monsoon ended. Heat index,

- [Marcos declares national energy emergency](#) (2026-03-25 05:55)

President Marcos has declared a state of national energy emergency to address issues caused by the conflict in the Middle East. This was announced through Executive Order No. 110 sent to reporters on Tuesday evening. “A state of national energy emergency is hereby declared in

light of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and

- [President oversees rollout of fuel subsidies](#) (2026-03-25 05:50)

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. vowed to streamline the distribution of fuel subsidies for drivers and operators, as he oversaw the rollout of a P10,000 fuel subsidy at the Parañaque Integrated Terminal Exchange (PITX) on Tuesday. A total of 27 bus operators from the terminal received fuel assistance, which will benefit 1,096 bus units. “I” m

- [Gov’ t allots P20B to buy 2 million barrels of diesel](#) (2026-03-25 05:45)

The Philippine government is allotting P20 billion to purchase up to 2 million barrels of diesel meant to bolster the local stockpile as the Middle East war continues to disrupt global trade flows. In a briefing on Tuesday, Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said the Philippine National Oil Co. (PNOC) will focus on the acquisition, with

- [Gov’ t slashes airport, Ro-ro terminal fees effective April](#) (2026-03-25 05:35)

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) announced on Tuesday that some airport fees, particularly the Passenger Service Charge (PSC) and takeoff and landing fees, would be discounted beginning on April 1 as part of government efforts to ease the burden on passengers and the aviation industry because of the spiraling prices of oil products. The discount

- [COA clears UP-PGH nurse of financial liability in 2021 fire](#) (2026-03-25 05:30)

The Commission on Audit (COA) has cleared the head nurse of the University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital (UP-PGH) of financial liability over the loss of P60.2 million worth of hospital equipment and medical instruments in a fire in 2021, saying there was no negligence on her part. In a decision dated April 29, 2025,

- [Lustro: No-show in impeach hearings risks VP’ s defense](#) (2026-03-25 05:10)

The chair of the House justice committee on Tuesday cautioned Vice President Sara Duterte against skipping the hearings on the two impeachment complaints filed against her, saying this will hurt her defense of the case. The committee opens its hearing proper on Wednesday to evaluate evidence in the two complaints, after these had been deemed

- [DENR warns of ‘water bankruptcy,’ to tap filtration, desalination](#) (2026-03-25 05:00)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) plans to deploy filtration and desalination systems across several “water-stressed” provinces as it warned the country faces “water bankruptcy.” The agency’ s Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) said it will soon activate high-performance filtration and desalination systems in 59 barangays in Masbate, Cebu, Bohol, Palawan and other areas

- [DENR to install filtration, desalination in areas with no clean water](#) (2026-03-25 05:00)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) plans to deploy filtration and desalination systems across several “water-stressed” provinces. The agency’s Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) said it will soon activate high-performance filtration and desalination systems in 59 barangays in Masbate, Cebu, Bohol, Palawan and other areas where access to clean water has become critical.

- [Makati earns ERC recognition as first LGU to champion renewable energy](#) (2026-03-25 04:50)

Makati City Mayor Nancy Binay proudly announced that the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) has recognized Makati as the first local government unit (LGU) in the Philippines to champion 100-percent renewable energy utilization under the Retail Competition and Open Access and the Retail Aggregation Program. ERC Chair and CEO Francis Saturnino Juan presented the certificate of

- [Baguio hotels told to upgrade, build own wastewater plants](#) (2026-03-25 04:45)

BAGUIO CITY—Days before the Holy Week break, hotels and other accommodation facilities in the summer capital have been directed to construct or upgrade their own wastewater treatment systems following a national regulator’s order to disconnect them from Baguio’s aging sewage treatment plant (STP). Because the 2016 Baguio Environment Code classifies the STP as a domestic

- [In Cagayan de Oro, local fares synced with pump prices](#) (2026-03-25 04:40)

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY— Seeking to provide relief to the local public transport sector battered by soaring fuel costs, this city has rolled out an updated, tiered fare matrix for “motorela” (motorcycle-driven passenger cabs) that dynamically adjusts based on prevailing pump prices. Endorsed by City Mayor Rolando Uy, the city council approved the amendment to

- [Iloilo City starts fuel subsidy rollout for tricycle drivers](#) (2026-03-25 04:35)

ILOILO CITY—The city government is distributing fuel subsidy coupons to tricycle drivers on March 25 and March 26 as part of efforts to cushion the impact of rising petroleum prices driven by tensions in the Middle East. In an advisory released Tuesday, Mayor Raisa Treñas said the rollout will be conducted in batches, with assigned

- [Fuel tax, BARMM poll reset bills sent to Palace](#) (2026-03-25 04:30)

The bills seeking to suspend or reduce excise on fuel and to reset the parliamentary elections in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) were transmitted to the Office of the President on Tuesday. In a message to reporters, Senate President Vicente “Tito” Sotto III confirmed the transmittal. Senate Bill No. 1982 and House

- [Impeachment hearing to go on with or without Sara Duterte, says solon](#) (2026-03-24 23:43)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives’ committee on justice will conduct its hearing on the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte whether or not she shows up, Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro said late Tuesday night. In a statement, Luistro, the committee chairperson, said they received information that Duterte will not show up to the

- [VP Sara Duterte skipping first impeachment hearing](#) (2026-03-24 23:02)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte will not attend the first hearing on the impeachment complaints against her before the House of Representatives scheduled on March 25, Wednesday, her camp announced on Tuesday. Her legal team’s spokesperson, Atty. Michael Poa confirmed this to the INQUIRER in a Viber message—just a day before the scheduled

- [Drug suspect busted in Lucena City; P459,000 shabu seized](#) (2026-03-24 22:47)

LUCENA CITY, Quezon – Police seized more than P459,000 worth of shabu (crystal meth) from an alleged drug pusher in a buy-bust operation in this capital city on Monday, March 23. Lt. Colonel Ryan Hernandez, Lucena City police chief, reported on Tuesday that anti-illegal drugs operatives arrested a drug suspect identified only as “Reynante,” 40,

- [2 drugs suspects busted, P3.4 M shabu seized in Maguindanao del Sur](#) (2026-03-24 22:41)

COTABATO CITY – The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) on Tuesday said its agents, backed by the police and military arrested on Monday two drug suspects and seized and estimated P3.4 million worth of shabu in Maguindanao del Sur. The joint anti-illegal drug operation was conducted Monday afternoon in Barangay Kauran, Ampatuan, Maguindanao del Sur.

- [Olongapo City adopts 4-day workweek, Fridays set as work-from-home](#) (2026-03-24 22:33)

SAN ANTONIO, Zambales – Olongapo City announced on Tuesday that it adopted a four-day workweek and other conservation measures amid increasing cost of fuel. In an executive order, Mayor Rolen Paulino Jr. said that all city government workers shall report onsite to their respective offices from Monday to Thursday from 8 a.m to 5 p.m

- [Marcos cites futility of spending all foreign reserves to defend peso](#) (2026-03-24 22:04)

MANILA, Philippines — The government will not use all its foreign reserves to defend the Philippine peso, which recently dipped to P60 per US dollar, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said on Tuesday. In an exclusive interview with Bloomberg News, Marcos said: “I think it would be even futile to try to spend all our

- [March 24 lotto results: No jackpot winners in 3 games](#) (2026-03-24 21:58)

MANILA, Philippines — No jackpot winners were recorded in the major Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) lotto draws on Tuesday, March 24, 2026. PCSO said the Ultra Lotto 6/58 draw produced the combination 16-20-12-18-48-50 for a jackpot of P75 million, with no

winner. READ: [Two new millionaires emerge from PCSO lotto draw In the SuperLotto](#)

- [LTFRB warns vs overcharging, stressing no fare hike imposed yet](#) (2026-03-24 21:53)

TACLOBAN CITY — The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) in Eastern Visayas has reiterated that no fare increase has been authorized in the region despite the recent spike in fuel prices, warning drivers and operators against overcharging passengers. Veronica Reposar, LTFRB regional information officer, said their office has not approved any fare hike

- [Family says Surigao del Sur gov stable after accident](#) (2026-03-24 21:36)

SAN FRANCISCO, Agusan del Sur – Governor Johnny T. Pimentel of Surigao del Sur is in stable condition after being involved in a vehicular accident on Friday, March 20. The incident occurred in the afternoon, raising concerns about his well-being, though no specific details regarding his injuries have been disclosed. A press statement from the

- [Northern Samar solon seeks relief vs high power costs in off-grid areas](#) (2026-03-24 21:01)

TACLOBAN CITY — Northern Samar Rep. Edwin Ongchuan filed a House resolution that seeks a review of existing power pricing mechanisms in off-grid communities, noting how consumers in remote areas are suffering from high electricity rates. Under House Resolution No.883, Ongchuan and party-list Rep. Eulogio Rodriguez are urging concerned government agencies to explore options to ease

- [Kanlaon Volcano emits ash anew](#) (2026-03-24 20:47)

MANILA, Philippines – Kanlaon Volcano in Negros Island emitted ash once again on Tuesday, the Philippine Institute of Seismology and Volcanology (Phivolcs) said. According to Phivolcs in an advisory, the ash emission event occurred at two separate times the same day, specifically at 12: 33 p.m. and 5:59 p.m. EMBED: “These events generated grayish plumes

- [Women’ s health and wellness center launched at Rizal Medical Center](#) (2026-03-24 20:32)

MANILA, Philippines — Rizal Medical Center in Pasig City has launched a wellness center offering free advanced medical services for Filipino women, ranging from diagnostics to maternal and reproductive care. As the country celebrates Women’ s Month this March, the ISHA Women’ s Health and Wellness Center was launched Tuesday at Rizal Medical Center, led by Health

- [Farmers group tells Palace: Include us in crisis committee](#) (2026-03-24 20:13)

LUCENA CITY, Quezon — A farmers’ group on Tuesday urged Malacañang to include peasants and fisherfolk in the proposed “crisis committee” being formed to address possible food and fuel shortages amid the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. “With the government moving to create a crisis committee to secure food and fuel supply amid global

- [PITX: Bus shortage possible during Holy Week rush amid fuel price hike](#) (2026-03-24 20:03)

MANILA, Philippines — The Parañaque Integrated Terminal Exchange (PITX) said Tuesday that a bus shortage is possible during the Holy Week travel rush, as some operators have already begun to reduce trips amid fuel price hikes caused by ongoing tensions in the Middle East. PITX spokesperson Jason Salvador said in an ambush interview that currently,

- [Manila Water, DepEd Antipolo, Rizal formalize partnership](#) (2026-03-24 19:40)

MANILA, Philippines — Manila Water Company formalized its partnership with the Department of Education Division of Antipolo City and the Department of Education Division of Rizal through the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement to expand the Salin – Lakbayan Para sa mga Guro Program. The ceremony, held in observance of World Water Day, was

- [Shorter mall hours seen to save energy amid Middle East crisis](#) (2026-03-24 19:35)

MANILA, Philippines — Shortening the operating hours of malls and other commercial establishments by two to three hours may be necessary to save energy as supply remains uncertain due to the Middle East conflict, Davao Oriental Rep. Cheeno Almario said. Almario said Tuesday that he filed House Resolution (HR) No. 893, urging the Department of Trade

- [Marcos declares state of national energy emergency](#) (2026-03-24 19:25)

[Updated March 24, 2026, 7:48 p.m.] MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has declared a state of national energy emergency to address issues caused by the conflict in the Middle East. This was declared through Executive Order 110 sent to reporters on Tuesday evening. “A state of national energy emergency is hereby declared in light

- [Solon calls for better walkways, bike lanes amid fuel price hikes](#) (2026-03-24 19:18)

MANILA, Philippines — The government has to provide a safe way for commuters to do “active transport” — a better network of walkways and bike lanes for pedestrian and bikers — as this will be key amid the oil crisis over the Middle East, Parañaque Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan said on Tuesday. Yamsuan in a statement

- [AboitizPower allocates P37.4M for environmental projects in Bataan towns](#) (2026-03-24 19:11)

ORANI, Bataan — Power giant AboitizPower is investing P37.4 million for environmental projects in the towns of Orani and Morong in this province. The initiatives include the adoption of 12 additional hectares under the Orani Mangrove Experimental Forest, on top of the 20 hectares previously adopted by the company. During the signing of a memorandum

- [Zamora: NCR mayors asked to submit unfinished projects list to DPWH](#) (2026-03-24 19:07)

MANILA, Philippines — Metro Manila mayors have been tasked to submit to the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) a list of unfinished projects in their cities to be prioritized for completion, San Juan City Mayor Francis Zamora said Tuesday. Zamora said DPWH Secretary

Vince Dizon issued the directive during the Metro Manila Council

- [PH now experiencing socio-economic crisis, says NSC](#) (2026-03-24 19:04)

MANILA, Philippines — The National Security Council (NSC) on Tuesday declared that the country is now facing a socio-economic crisis due to the effects of the escalating military conflict in West Asia, commonly known as the Middle East. READ: Amid Middle East war, senators tell cabinet members: We are ‘in crisis’ NSC deputy director Nestor

- [Gatchalian projects P406B support fund in worst-case Middle East crisis](#) (2026-03-24 18:53)

MANILA, Philippines – Should the Middle East crisis reach a worst-case scenario, Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian said the Philippines may need P406 billion in intervention funds to support vulnerable sectors. His office ran simulations of scenarios on the potential effects of escalating tensions in the Middle East on the country. “Worst-case scenario… there will be a

- [‘Live with purpose’ : Women justices share wisdom on life outside courts](#) (2026-03-24 18:53)

MANILA, Philippines — Four “Ladies of Justice” gathered in the Supreme Court (SC)’ s session hall in Manila on Tuesday, March 24, to speak before their fellow women in celebration of Women’ s Month. They talked not only about what they experienced and upheld in the High Court — laws, the Constitution, evidence, and the like. Instead,

- [Isabela PUV operators, drivers decry lack of aid, delayed fuel subsidies](#) (2026-03-24 18:32)

CAUAYAN CITY, Isabela — The third wave of fuel price increases has forced public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers and operators to either cut trips or temporarily stop operations, transport groups in Isabela said. Jaime Labiano Jr., president of the Ilagan-Cauayan Camp-Pi Operators and Drivers Association, said the situation has left many operators with no choice

- [Bataan tricycle drivers seek 50% fare hike amid rising fuel costs](#) (2026-03-24 18:28)

ORANI, Bataan — More than 2,000 tricycle drivers in Orani and nearby towns have asked the Sangguniang Bayan (municipal council) to approve a 50 percent increase in regular fares amid rising fuel prices. Marvin Dela Cruz, chair of the municipal council committee on transportation, said during a public hearing Monday (March 23) that presidents of

- [INQToday: Senate sends bills on excise tax suspension to Palace](#) (2026-03-24 18:00)

Here’ s a quick roundup of today’ s top stories: Senate sends bills on excise tax suspension to Palace The bills suspending or reducing excise tax on fuel and resetting the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) elections were transmitted to the Office of the President on Tuesday. In a message to reporters, Senate President Vicente

- [Murder raps filed vs 3 suspects in neighborhood brawl in Iloilo City](#) (2026-03-24 17:58)

ILOILO CITY — The Iloilo City Police Office (ICPO) formally filed multiple murder charges on Tuesday afternoon (March 24) against three suspects involved in a bloody neighborhood brawl that claimed the lives of four individuals in La Paz district last week. Through the Iloilo City Police Station 2 (ICPS2), three counts of murder were filed

- [Acidre: Docs dispel Tiangco claim of ICI seeking cases vs Romualdez](#) (2026-03-24 17:54)

MANILA, Philippines — Tingog party-list Rep. Jude Acidre has again accused Navotas Rep. Toby Tiangco of misleading the public when he claimed that charges were recommended against former Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, noting that documents say otherwise. In a statement on Tuesday, Acidre said that the documents handed over by the Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI) to

- [MMDA exempts trucks carrying fuel, essential goods from coding, ban](#) (2026-03-24 17:43)

MANILA, Philippines — Trucks and other vehicles transporting fuel and essential goods will be exempted from the truck ban and number coding scheme amid the ongoing tension in the Middle East, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said on Tuesday. According to the MMDA, the resolution for this policy was approved by the agency and

- [Marcos: Plane groundings ‘distinct possibility’ due to jet fuel shortage](#) (2026-03-24 17:36)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said on Tuesday that grounding planes is a “distinct possibility” due to a jet fuel shortage triggered by the war in the Middle East.

“Several countries have already told our airlines they cannot fuel their aircraft, so they have to carry fuel there and back,” he said in an

- [LTO warns public against colorum vehicles ahead of Holy Week](#) (2026-03-24 17:33)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Office (LTO) is intensifying operations against unregistered or “colorum” vehicles ahead of the Holy Week travel surge, warning commuters against riding them due to safety risks. Jerome Rodriguez of the Traffic and Safety Management Department of LTO said pre-Holy Week terminal inspections and random roadside checks are being conducted

- [Napocor: Power outages in Quezon town not due to fuel shortage](#) (2026-03-24 17:04)

LUCENA CITY — The National Power Corporation (Napocor) clarified on Tuesday that the reported power interruptions in the island town of Jomalig in Quezon province were not caused by a fuel shortage. READ: Another Quezon town cuts power use due to limited fuel supply “For the record, the situation referenced in the article does not

- [Ombudsman conducts physical inventory of pending cases](#) (2026-03-24 16:59)

MANILA, Philippines — The Office of the Ombudsman is currently conducting a physical inventory of all pending cases filed in this government body. This was announced in a public

advisory signed by Ombudsman Jesus Crispin Remulla, released on Tuesday. “The Office of the Ombudsman is currently conducting a comprehensive physical inventory of all pending cases across

- [DepEd invests record P25.6B to feed 4.6M learners](#) (2026-03-24 16:59)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Education is preparing to implement its largest School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP) to date, backed by a PhP25.6 billion allocation for School Year 2026–2027. The expansion signals a shift from short-term intervention to sustained support. From 120 feeding days last year, the program will now cover 200 days, reaching an

- [Alleged gunman in killing of ex-cop in Manila arrested](#) (2026-03-24 16:57)

MANILA, Philippines — The alleged gunman in the killing of retired police officer George Capistrano was arrested early Tuesday morning, Manila Mayor Francisco “Isko” Moreno Domagoso said. In his “Talk to the People” livestream on Tuesday afternoon, Domagoso identified the gunman as Albert Magdaraog and noted that police operatives had tracked him down to a

- [COA clears PGH head nurse over P60M equipment loss in 2021 fire](#) (2026-03-24 16:55)

MANILA, Philippines — The Commission on Audit (COA) found no fault with the head nurse at the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) regarding the loss of hospital equipment and medical instruments worth P60 million in a 2021 fire. In a seven-page decision dated April 29, 2025, but released to the public only this week, the COA

- [A working mom’s reminder: You need not be a perfect parent, just be a happy one](#) (2026-03-24 16:34)

Amid busy schedules and the constant pressure to do everything right, one working mother from Baras, Rizal, offers a simple, powerful reminder to fellow moms: children don’t need perfect parents; they need happy ones. In a now-viral TikTok video, Christine Fullante Parocha shared a heartwarming glimpse of her life, showing her dancing with her two

- [Pangasinan town bans community gatherings to conserve energy](#) (2026-03-24 16:25)

MALASIQUI, Pangasinan – Community gatherings are suspended in Lingayen as one of the efforts to conserve energy. READ: DILG advises LGUs to cut energy use by 10 to 20% In a memorandum issued on Tuesday, Lingayen Mayor Josefina Castañeda said gatherings include founding anniversaries, patronal fiestas, basketball tournaments, and similar events. “This directive aims to ensure

- [Senate sends bills on excise tax suspension, BARMM polls reset to Palace](#) (2026-03-24 16:22)

MANILA, Philippines – The bills suspending or reducing excise tax on fuel and resetting the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) elections were transmitted to

the Office of the President on Tuesday. In a message to reporters, Senate President Vicente “Tito” Sotto III confirmed the transmission. [READ: Dy signs final bill suspending fuel excise](#)

- [DOE: Month and a half left to seek supply before PH ‘runs dry’ of fuel](#) (2026-03-24 16:01)

MANILA, Philippines — The country may run out of fuel supply after two months if oil companies and the government fail to secure backup suppliers in the next month and a half, the Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Sharon Garin said on Tuesday. Garin made the revelation when asked by the Senate Proactive Response and

- [Number coding scheme suspended on April 1-3 — MMDA](#) (2026-03-24 16:00)

MANILA, Philippines — The number coding scheme will be suspended from April 1 to 3, 2026, in observance of Holy Week, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said Thursday. MMDA General Manager Nicolas Torre announced this during a press conference following the Metro Manila Council meeting. [READ: MMDA gives personnel 30-minute breaks to prevent heat](#)

- [JV Ejercito pushes for an inter-agency task force amid Middle East war](#) (2026-03-24 15:53)

MANILA, Philippines — Deputy Majority Floor Leader Sen. JV Ejercito urged the government to create an inter-agency task force to prepare for the potential economic and energy impact of the escalating conflict in the Middle East. “Let’s not wait for the crisis to worsen; we should already be preparing. We should be proactive and prepare

- [Murder suspect, cohort die in shootout with cops in Maguindanao](#) (2026-03-24 15:47)

MANILA, Philippines — A murder suspect and his cohort were killed in a shootout with police officers in Maguindanao del Norte, the Philippine National Police (PNP) said on Tuesday. In a statement, the PNP said the incident happened when policemen were serving an arrest warrant against the suspect, whom it did not name but only

- [Jack Argota files counter-affidavit at DOJ over cyber libel](#) (2026-03-24 15:27)

MANILA, Philippines — Vlogger Jack Argota on Tuesday appeared before the Department of Justice (DOJ) to submit his response to cyber libel and unlawful publication complaints filed by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) against him. The complaints stem from Argota’s alleged dissemination of fake medical records of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. [READ: NBI sues](#)

- [Dy signs final bill suspending fuel excise tax, sends it back to Senate](#) (2026-03-24 15:21)

MANILA, Philippines — The final version of a bill seeking to suspend the collection of excise taxes on fuel products was transmitted back to the Senate after it was signed by House of Representatives Speaker Faustino “Bojie” Dy III, his office said Tuesday. In a statement, the Office of the Speaker confirmed that Dy instructed the chamber

- [PNP chief orders measures to protect cops from heat during summer season](#) (2026-03-24 15:19)

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. ordered the agency's units to implement measures to protect personnel from intense heat amid the 2026 hot and dry season. READ: Warmer days ahead as dry season begins, 'amihan' ends – Pagasa “Officers on duty should be protected from health problems common

- [QCPD warns public: Secure your belongings on Holy Week, summer vacation](#) (2026-03-24 15:02)

MANILA, Philippines — With the Holy Week and summer vacations nearing, the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) warned of a possible rise in crimes such as theft and snatching during the summer holiday season. Police Col. Julius Sagandoy, chief district directorial staff of QCPD, in a forum in Quezon City, announced Tuesday that police presence

- [DBM: P230-billion funds available to address effects of ongoing crisis](#) (2026-03-24 14:56)

MANILA, Philippines — The government has identified a total of P230 billion in appropriations, including P20 billion from the Malampaya fund, to respond to the impact of the ongoing crisis in the Middle East. According to Acting Budget Secretary Rolando Toledo, the executive has initially consolidated a total of P210 billion—continuing appropriations of about P10 billion

- [Motor taxi driver stabbed dead in Taguig; PNP wants stronger TNVS ties](#) (2026-03-24 14:49)

MANILA, Philippines — A motorcycle taxi driver was stabbed to death in Taguig City, according to the Philippine National Police (PNP), prompting the law enforcement agency's chief to consider stronger partnerships with transport network vehicle services (TNVS) for security. In a statement on Tuesday, the PNP said the victim was seen on security footage calling

- [QCPD to deploy up to 2,000 cops for Holy Week](#) (2026-03-24 14:49)

MANILA, Philippines – The Quezon City Police District (QCPD) will deploy up to 2,000 personnel ahead of Holy Week, from March 29 to April 5, to secure major transport hubs and ensure commuter safety. PCOL Julius Sagandoy, chief of the QCPD's district directorial staff, announced Tuesday that 1,700 to 2,000 personnel will be deployed, supported

- [Luistro: No pressure from House leaders, Duterte camp on impeach hearing](#) (2026-03-24 14:47)

MANILA, Philippines — Neither the House of Representatives leadership nor Vice President Sara Duterte's side has exerted pressure on the committee on justice regarding how the impeachment proceedings should move forward, Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro said on Tuesday. Luistro was asked in an online interview whether there were external pressures to steer the committee towards a particular

- [DDB chief bats for stronger support for drug users: Anger not a solution](#) (2026-03-24 14:27)

TRECE MARTIRES CITY, Cavite — Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) Chairperson Oscar Valenzuela on Tuesday said the government must provide stronger support mechanisms for people who use drugs. In a press briefing ahead of a ceremony in this city to burn P4.56-billion worth of confiscated illegal drugs, Valenzuela said authorities' efforts to reduce the supply of

- [Iloilo City rolls out fuel subsidy for tricycle drivers](#) (2026-03-24 14:06)

ILOILO CITY — The city government has started distributing fuel subsidy coupons to tricycle drivers and operators to help cushion the impact of rising petroleum prices driven by tensions in the Middle East. Mayor Raisa Treñas said the Fuel Subsidy Coupon (FSC) program will initially cover members of various Tricycle Operators and Drivers Associations (TODA)

- [Zambales earns multiple nominations in regional tourism awards](#) (2026-03-24 13:36)

SAN ANTONIO, Zambales — The province of Zambales and several of its municipalities have been named finalists in multiple categories of the Tourism Recognition for Enterprises and Stakeholders (TRES) Awards of the Department of Tourism – Region III, according to the regional tourism office. The province secured nominations in key destination categories, with Zambales shortlisted

- [DOTr begins rollout of fuel subsidies for PUV drivers, operators](#) (2026-03-24 13:32)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Transportation (DOTr) on Tuesday, March 24, began distributing fuel subsidies to public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers and operators amid rising fuel costs fueled by tensions in the Middle East. Transport Secretary Giovanni Lopez said the subsidy will complement cash assistance from the Department of Social Welfare and Development under

- [Sara Duterte impeachment: No delays, no steps skipped — Luistro](#) (2026-03-24 12:57)

MANILA, Philippines — While agreeing that proceedings on Vice President Sara Duterte's impeachment must not be delayed, Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro maintained that no steps can be skipped, as this would violate due process provisions. In an online interview on Tuesday, Luistro was asked about Navotas Rep. Toby Tiango's recent statements on his House Resolution No.

- [Defense waives cross-exam of Alcantara in Co malversation case](#) (2026-03-24 12:49)

MANILA, Philippines — Defense lawyers declined to question a former district engineer of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) who was presented as a witness in the malversation case of former Ako Bicol Party-list Rep. Zaldy Co before the Sandiganbayan on Tuesday. Henry Alcantara, former district engineer of the DPWH First District Engineering

- [Luistro: Skipping hearing hurts Sara Duterte's bid to junk impeach raps](#) (2026-03-24 12:20)

MANILA, Philippines — Should Vice President Sara Duterte skip the impeachment hearings at the House of Representatives, she runs the risk of losing her chance to convince lawmakers that the complaints against her have no probable cause, according to Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro. Luistro, chairperson of the House committee on justice, said in an online interview

- [Missing teen girl found dead in Pasig City](#) (2026-03-24 12:09)

MANILA, Philippines — A teenage girl who had been missing for five days was found dead “hanging from a tree” in a private compound in Pasig City, the local police said on Tuesday. Authorities found the body in Barangay Santolan on Monday afternoon. “Initial investigation at the scene found a decomposing female body, fitting the

- [INQToday: Diesel prices seen hitting P130-P140/liter](#) (2026-03-24 12:00)

Here’s a quick roundup of today’s top stories: Diesel prices seen hitting P130-P140/liter The Philippines was hit by yet another “significant jump” in fuel prices this week, with diesel prices soaring to nearly P150 a liter, Energy chief Sharon Garin said Tuesday. Garin said, however, that the increases were not as sharp as in the

- [Airport fee discounts to start April 1 – DOTr](#) (2026-03-24 11:51)

MANILA, Philippines — Airport fees, such as the terminal and navigation charges, will be discounted starting April 1, 2026, in view of the series of oil price hikes, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) announced on Tuesday. According to Transport Secretary Giovanni Lopez, the discounts will be applied to airports operated by the Civil Aviation Authority

- [PNP offers aid to Marcos crisis panel amid Middle East tension](#) (2026-03-24 11:50)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) said it is ready to provide services to the crisis committee formed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to prepare for possible fuel and food shortages driven by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. “The serious challenge we are facing as a result of the Middle East

- [Marcos anti-drug ‘campaign’ more effective than Duterte’s, says Remulla](#) (2026-03-24 11:48)

TRECE MARTIRES CITY, Cavite — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s anti-drug “campaign” is more effective than the drug war waged by President Rodrigo Duterte, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jonvic Remulla maintained on Tuesday. “It is a campaign against illegal drugs. The president’s directive is that. We should follow the law. We should not game the

- [Dagupan heat index hits 40°C as dry season begins](#) (2026-03-24 11:47)

DAGUPAN CITY — This city is beginning to swelter as the dry season sets in, with the heat index expected to reach 40 degrees Celsius again on Tuesday. This marks the second consecutive day that the heat index has reached a high level, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa). The

- [Legarda fumes over ‘busy’ Garin’ s absence in Senate crisis hearing](#) (2026-03-24 11:45)

MANILA, Philippines — Sen. Loren Legarda fumed over Energy Secretary Sharon Garin’ s absence in the Senate ad hoc committee’ s first hearing on how the government would respond to the impact of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Her absence in the hearing of the ad hoc committee called Proactive Response and Oversight for Timely and Effective

- [Fisherman missing off Zambales; search underway](#) (2026-03-24 11:31)

SAN ANTONIO, Zambales – A 35-year-old fisherman went missing while fishing about 12 nautical miles (22 kilometers) off the capital town of Iba, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) Zambales confirmed on Tuesday. Based on reports, the fisherman, identified as Benigno Asis from the town of Palauig, left on Sunday, March 22, aboard the motor banca

- [Amid Middle East war, senators tell cabinet members: We are ‘in crisis’](#) (2026-03-24 11:21)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines is “in crisis” due to the impact of the escalating conflict in the Middle East, senators told cabinet secretaries on Tuesday. Sens. Bam Aquino, JV Ejercito, Kiko Pangilinan and Loren Legarda gave this description in relation to the impact of the Middle East war on the country. The senators gave their

- [Another Quezon town cuts power use due to limited fuel supply](#) (2026-03-24 11:20)

LUCENA CITY — Another island town in Quezon province has been forced to reduce electricity use due to a limited fuel supply amid the continuing oil crisis linked to tensions in the Middle East. On Monday, the local government of Jomalig announced a temporary power interruption schedule from March 24 to 29. READ: LGUs told:

- [PDEA destroys P4.56B worth of illegal drugs in Cavite](#) (2026-03-24 11:20)

TRECE MARTIRES CITY, Cavite — The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) on Tuesday destroyed P4.563 billion worth of confiscated illegal drugs through incineration at a waste management plant here. The drugs were burned to mitigate the risk of them being recycled, and after the resolution of the cases in which they were used as evidence,

- [BOC intercepts P1B worth of illegal vape products in Navotas City](#) (2026-03-24 10:57)

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Customs (BOC) has seized what it described as one of the largest hauls of illegal vape products this year, valued at P1 billion, in Navotas City, reaffirming its commitment to curb the entry of unregistered products that may pose health risks. According to the BOC, authorities

- [PPA pushes P1 RoRo terminal fee for Class 3, 4 vehicles — DOTr](#) (2026-03-24 10:56)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) has recommended a P1 roll-on/roll-off (RoRo) terminal fee for Class 3 and 4 vehicles transporting agricultural products

amid the rising cost of fuel, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) said on Tuesday. According to Transport Secretary Giovanni Lopez, the maritime sector and PPA-operated ports agreed to provide discounts

- [Ad hoc Senate panel grills Cabinet execs on Middle East crisis impact](#) (2026-03-24 10:36)

MANILA, Philippines — Several Cabinet officials on Tuesday faced the first Senate ad hoc committee hearing to address the impact of the Middle East crisis to the country. The Senate Proactive Response and Oversight for Timely and Effective Crisis Strategy (Protect) committee was established to both mitigate the effects of the tensions in the said

- [DepEd defends shift to 3-term school calendar but teachers have doubts](#) (2026-03-24 10:18)

MANILA, Philippines — Amid concerns over the implementation of a three-year school calendar, the Department of Education (DepEd) maintained that this shift is a “strategic move to improve the use of instructional time and address recurring classroom disruptions.” DepEd clarified on Tuesday that the planned transition, set to begin in School Year 2026-2027, aims to

- [Why purple cloth covers crosses, church images on Passiontide](#) (2026-03-24 09:59)

MANILA, Philippines — If you entered a church for Mass on Sunday, March 22, you may have noticed the cross and other sacred images already veiled or covered in purple cloth. The tradition, which started in the ninth century, marks the beginning of Passiontide, or the last two weeks of the season of Lent. As

- [Marcos: Let’s simplify fuel subsidies rollout, consider ‘digital payment’](#) (2026-03-24 09:17)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. wants to streamline the distribution of fuel subsidies for drivers and operators. He expressed his view as he oversaw the rollout of P10,000 fuel cash aid to each driver and operator at the Parañaque Integrated Terminal Exchange (PITX) on Tuesday. A total of 27 bus operators, who operate 1,096

- [Fair weather forecast on Tuesday as dry season begins](#) (2026-03-24 07:27)

MANILA, Philippines — Generally fair weather will prevail over most parts of the country on Tuesday, as the northeast monsoon or amihan ends and the warm and dry season begins, the state weather bureau said. Despite this transition, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said that some areas in Northern Luzon may

- [OIL PRICE WATCH as of March 24, 2026](#) (2026-03-24 07:01)

MANILA, Philippines — “Calm” returned to the global oil market despite the continuing Middle East crisis, Energy Secretary Sharon Garin announced yesterday. The expected price hike starting today would be an additional P6.47 for gasoline, and P11.88 for diesel—mild when compared to the massive price surge in the week of March 17 to 23, wherein

- [Crisis body formed to act on fuel, food shortages](#) (2026-03-24 05:55)

MANILA, Philippines — Malacañang is finalizing the formation of a “crisis committee” to ensure the country’s supply of food and petroleum products, amid the Iran war, which broke out on Feb. 28 and is now past its third week. Meanwhile, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. continues to await the enrolled bill authorizing him to cut or

- [Manhunt on for killers of Negros broadcaster](#) (2026-03-24 05:50)

MANILA, Philippines — Following the fatal shooting of radio announcer Julito “Jaz” Calo, the Philippine National Police on Monday pledged a thorough investigation of the crime, and stronger protection for media workers. Calo, the 49-year-old host of the local radio program “Waswasanay sa Quinto Distrito” on 88.3 DNN News FM, was standing outside his house

- [Latest fuel price hikes seen easing](#) (2026-03-24 05:45)

MANILA, Philippines — Another round of fuel price hikes is expected on Tuesday, but these are only about half the increases a week earlier, according to the Department of Energy (DOE), which cited a relative calm in the global oil market. Also on Monday, Malacañang announced a new round of cash aid for public utility

- [Palace: Presence of 2 mayors at aid distribution justified](#) (2026-03-24 05:42)

MANILA, Philippines — Palace press officer Claire Castro on Monday justified the presence of two Metro Manila mayors during a recent cash distribution event for public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers despite the government’s anti- “epal” policy. On March 17, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. presided over the rollout of the government’s cash assistance program for PUV drivers

- [Trillanes sues anew 18 ‘ex-Marines’ for cyberlibel](#) (2026-03-24 05:40)

MANILA, Philippines — Former Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV on Monday filed cyberlibel complaints at the Department of Justice (DOJ) against the 18 alleged former Marines who had accused him of receiving \$2 million from former Ako Bicol Rep. Elizaldy Co, supposedly to facilitate the entry into the country of International Criminal Court (ICC) investigators and

- [DepEd: Tri-sem to help students learn better](#) (2026-03-24 05:30)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Education (DepEd) on Monday said the adoption of a trimestral school calendar would help address the long-standing inefficiencies affecting the country’s education system. The shift from four grading periods to a three-term academic calendar for public schools, it stressed in a statement, would help students learn better “by redesigning

- [Dropping out, burnout among PH working students’ top concerns](#) (2026-03-24 05:00)

MANILA, Philippines — Nearly half of working students in the Philippines have seriously considered quitting school because of work or personal pressures, according to a new survey by Mapua Malayan Digital College (MMDC). In the first edition of its State of the Working Student report, the MMDC found that 45.2 percent of respondents had considered

- [Pagasa announces start of ‘warm and dry season’](#) (2026-03-24 04:55)

MANILA, Philippines — The public should expect temperatures to rise in the coming days with the northeast monsoon or “amihan” officially over, according to the state weather bureau.

“The northeast monsoon has officially ended, marking the transition to the warm and dry season,” the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said in a

- [ICI turns over to DOJ documents, records on probe](#) (2026-03-24 04:50)

MANILA, Philippines — The Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI) on Monday turned over to the Department of Justice (DOJ) the documents and records related to its investigation of anomalous government infrastructure projects after its earlier announcement that it would cease operations on March 31. ICI members, led by their chair, Andres Reyes Jr., went to

- [Transport strikes disrupt travel in regions amid protests](#) (2026-03-24 04:45)

DAGUPAN CITY, PANGASINAN, Philippines — Transport protests opposing rising fuel prices and calling for government aid and fare adjustments disrupted operations in parts of Luzon and the Visayas on Monday, while some areas reported normal transport activity. In Pangasinan, some drivers joined the strike despite no official transport holiday declaration from Auto Pro Pangasinan. At

- [Gov’t, MILF urged to renew peace pact commitment](#) (2026-03-24 04:40)

GENERAL SANTOS CITY, Philippines — The independent Third Party Monitoring Team (TPMT) on Monday urged the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to recommit to the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), as the “overall Bangsamoro peace process is at a very sensitive juncture as a result of continuing delays and obstacles.” The

- [Marcos OKs release of P145B for Mindanao highway project](#) (2026-03-24 04:35)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has directed the release of P145.56 billion for the Central Mindanao High Standard Highway Construction Project, aimed at cutting travel time nearly in half and boosting economic growth across the region, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said. The highway will improve connectivity between Cagayan de Oro

- [DA probes ‘ghost’ farm-to-market roads in Albay, Camarines Sur](#) (2026-03-24 04:30)

MANILA, Philippines — Two suspected “ghost” farm-to-market road (FMR) projects in Albay and Camarines Sur provinces, prompted the Department of Agriculture (DA) to launch a

nationwide investigation after identifying irregularities in recent infrastructure initiatives.

“The department is now conducting a deeper investigation, including a review of project documents, funding releases and coordination with concerned agencies,

- [BIR hits 100.43% of January–February 2026 goal](#) (2026-03-24 00:28)

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) reported a strong start to 2026 based on its preliminary collection performance, with net collections of P530.055 billion from January 1 to February 28, 2026. This not only surpassed the Bureau’s internal collection goal of P527.775 billion by P2.280 billion, or 0.43 percent, net of tax

- [ICI denies ruling on Romualdez’s guilt in flood control scandal](#) (2026-03-23 23:13)

MANILA, Philippines — The Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI) on Monday denied that it had cleared House Speaker Martin Romualdez of any liability in the anomalous flood control projects scandal. The ICI made the pronouncement in response to Rep. Jude Acidre who accused the commission of supposedly declaring that Romualdez was not accountable for the

- [Farmers file complaint vs Roque over alleged land-grabbing scheme – NBI](#) (2026-03-23 22:42)

MANILA, Philippines — The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) on Monday said over 15 farmers filed a complaint against former presidential spokesperson Harry Roque and others over an alleged land-grabbing scheme. According to the NBI, the 15 to 20 farmers formally executed their sworn statements before the NBI-National Capital Region office, as well as provided

- [March 23: No jackpot winners in Grand, Mega Lotto draws](#) (2026-03-23 21:51)

MANILA, Philippines—No jackpot winner was recorded in Monday’s Grand Lotto 6/55 and MegaLotto 6/45 draws, according to the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. March 23, 2026, falls on a Monday. In the Grand Lotto 6/55 draw, the winning combination was 43-33-10-26-42-14 for a jackpot prize of ₱45 million. PCSO said no bettor won the top prize.

- [DA probes ‘ghost’ farm-to-market road project in Albay](#) (2026-03-23 21:00)

MANILA, Philippines — A farm-to-market road (FMR) project in Guinobatan, Albay is being investigated for supposedly being a “ghost project,” the Department of Agriculture (DA) said Monday. According to the DA, Agriculture Sec. Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. personally led the inspection of the FMR project in Barangay Lower Binogsacan in Guinobatan after initial validation by

- [Counsel asks DOJ to exclude Atong Ang in Manila ‘sabungeros’ case](#) (2026-03-23 20:17)

[Updated March 23, 2026, 9:42 p.m.] MANILA, Philippines — The lawyer of gambling tycoon Atong Ang appeared before the Department of Justice (DOJ) on Monday to appeal that his client be excluded in the ongoing case in Manila involving the cockfighting aficionados

( “sabungeros” ). In a chance interview after his appearance at the DOJ, Atty. Gabriel

- [DepEd mandates simple graduation rites amid rising fuel costs](#) (2026-03-23 19:49)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Education (DepEd) has directed all public schools nationwide to keep end-of-school-year ceremonies modest and economical in response to the recent surge in fuel prices. Under Memorandum No. 015 series of 2026, DepEd emphasized that graduation and moving-up rites must be conducted without excessive spending or extravagant attire. Education Secretary

- [Sotto signs bill suspending fuel excise tax](#) (2026-03-23 19:45)

MANILA, Philippines – Senate President Vicente “Tito” Sotto III on Monday signed the bill seeking to suspend the fuel excise tax. In a message to reporters, Sotto said he had received the two enrolled copies of Senate Bill No. 1982, which amends the National Internal Revenue Code to allow sitting presidents to reduce or suspend

- [PCSO brings to Batanes ultra-portable AI X-ray technology tested by Nasa](#) (2026-03-23 19:36)

MANILA, Philippines — In support of the healthcare agenda of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., residents of Batanes are set to receive world-class medical screening as a high-performance, portable AI X-ray system — previously chosen for evaluation in National Aeronautics and Space Administration’ s space-ready imaging tests — is deployed to the province. The REMEX KA6 recently

- [Mega Prime Foods partners with Thailand’ s largest conglomerate](#) (2026-03-23 19:16)

ZAMBOANGA CITY, Philippines — A major investment in Mindanao is set to transform how eggs are produced in the country. Mega Prime Foods Inc. (MPFI), makers of the Philippines’ number one sardines brand, partners with Thailand’ s largest agribusiness conglomerate, Charoen Pokphand Foods (CPF), to break ground on what is poised to be the first facility

- [PNP steps up road safety measures ahead of dry season travel surge](#) (2026-03-23 18:43)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Monday said it is ramping up operations to reduce vehicular accidents this year, particularly during the peak travel season in the country’ s dry months. PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said police units have already been ordered to work closely with bus operators and management

- [Leviste offers to cover Castro’ s hospital bills if she seeks treatment](#) (2026-03-23 18:28)

MANILA, Philippines — Batangas Rep. Leandro Leviste has assured Palace Press Officer Claire Castro that he is willing to shoulder her hospital bills if she seeks treatment for “sleepless nights and anxiety.” In a Facebook post, Leviste said that while he has no obligation to pay Castro, he will support her should she decide to seek

- [INQToday: Milder oil price hikes set on March 24](#) (2026-03-23 18:12)

Here's a quick roundup of today's top stories: Peso sinks deeper into 60-level, sets new record low The Philippine peso slid further past the 60-per-dollar threshold to a fresh record low, as the greenback extended its advance amid rising geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. The local currency closed at 60.3, down 20 centavos from

- [Palace slammed for 'downplaying' crisis, worker 'exclusion' in committee](#) (2026-03-23 18:09)

MANILA, Philippines — Lawmakers representing the labor sector slammed on Monday the remarks of Malacañang's remarks amid the oil price spike amid the Middle East conflict. Palace press officer Claire Castro echoed President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.'s remarks that there is no oil "crisis" yet, but just a "price disruption." "Gov't should be in crisis mode'

- [Marcos says no offense meant to CA over acting secretaries — Palace](#) (2026-03-23 18:08)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. "means no offense" to the Commission on Appointments (CA) with his decision to designate acting secretaries as heads of several executive departments instead of appointing permanent ones, Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said Monday. These remarks came after Sen. Imee Marcos alleged that there appears to be an "emerging

- [LTFRB releases list of qualified NCR TNVS drivers for cash aid](#) (2026-03-23 17:55)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) on Monday released the list of Transport Network Vehicle Service (TNVS) drivers scheduled to receive cash assistance on Tuesday, March 24. According to the LTFRB, the list is based on data provided by the following Transport Network Company providers: The list of drivers can

- [Marcos backs proposed P50/kilo price cap on imported rice](#) (2026-03-23 17:35)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. supports the proposed P50 per kilo price cap on imported rice, according to Palace press officer Undersecretary Claire Castro. She said the Department of Agriculture has already submitted its recommendation to the National Price Coordinating Council for deliberation. READ: Palace: PH facing 'price disruption,' not yet an oil

- [Tiangco clarifies: View on VP Sara, lawmaker accountability is my own](#) (2026-03-23 17:21)

MANILA, Philippines — Navotas Rep. Toby Tiangco has maintained that his view that Vice President Sara Duterte will surely hold individuals involved in the flood control mess accountable is merely his own opinion, questioning why some have labeled it as "fake news." In an online interview on Monday, Tiangco was asked about Palace press officer and Undersecretary

- [Hontiveros seeks Senate probe into Roblox, other online games](#) (2026-03-23 17:17)

MANILA, Philippines — Sen. Risa Hontiveros has called on the Senate to probe Roblox and other online video game platforms. Senate Resolution No. 357, filed by Hontiveros, directs the Senate Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations, and Gender Equality to investigate online games to establish protections for children in virtual spaces. Through the probe, the

- [PNP arrests Chinese national wanted for alleged carnapping in Parañaque](#) (2026-03-23 16:32)

MANILA, Philippines — A Chinese national wanted for alleged carnapping was arrested in Parañaque City, the Philippine National Police (PNP) said Monday. The PNP identified the suspect by his aliases “Jason Lee” and “MWP.” He was apprehended in accordance with a warrant issued by a Parañaque court for a 2025 carnapping case, with bail set

- [31 drug informants receive P7.4 M reward from PDEA](#) (2026-03-23 16:25)

MANILA, Philippines—Thirty-one civilian informants were awarded a total of ₱7.4 million in cash incentives by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) for providing information that led to a series of anti – illegal drugs operations nationwide. The tips were submitted through Operation: Private Eye (OPE), an intelligence-driven program that empowers ordinary citizens to act as

- [Palace slams Tiangco over ‘baseless’ claim of vote-buying to impeach VP](#) (2026-03-23 16:21)

MANILA, Philippines — Malacañang on Monday slammed Navotas Lone District Rep. Toby Tiangco for his “baseless statements” after he claimed there is vote-buying in the House of Representatives (HoR) to impeach Vice President Sara Duterte. At a briefing, Palace Press Officer Claire Castro was asked to comment on Tiangco’ s claim, as lawmakers worry that Duterte might

- [Gatchalian eyes panel to have crisis plan in 2 weeks amid global tension](#) (2026-03-23 15:19)

MANILA, Philippines – The Senate’ s ad hoc committee is looking to create a contingency plan to deal with the effects of the Middle East crisis in two weeks, according to its chairman, Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian. Gatchalian, who heads the Senate Proactive Response and Oversight for Timely and Effective Crisis Strategy (Protect) Committee, made the remark

- [Palace: PH facing ‘price disruption,’ not yet an oil crisis](#) (2026-03-23 14:58)

MANILA, Philippines — Palace Press Officer Claire Castro on Monday supported Energy Secretary Sharon Garin’ s statement that the country is not yet experiencing an oil crisis but is instead facing a “price disruption” caused by the conflict in the Middle East. At a briefing, Castro said there is still a sufficient supply of fuel products

- [ICI turns over docs, records to DOJ as its work ends March 31](#) (2026-03-23 14:48)

MANILA, Philippines — The Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI), tasked to investigate flood control anomalies, turned over documents and records to the Department of Justice (DOJ) on Monday, following its recent announcement that its work would end on March 31. ICI members, led by Chair Andres Reyes Jr., arrived at the DOJ headquarters in Manila

- [Marinduque gov urges wearing of Moryon costumes during Holy Week](#) (2026-03-23 14:47)

LUCENA CITY — Government and private sector workers, teachers, students, and business establishments in the island province of Marinduque are being encouraged to wear Lenten costumes as part of the province’s traditional Holy Week observance. “In observance of the Lenten season, all provincial, municipal, and barangay officials, national government officials and employees, government-owned and controlled

- [PNP vows probe, stronger protection for journalists after Calo killing](#) (2026-03-23 14:44)

MANILA, Philippines — Following the fatal shooting of radio announcer Julito “Jaz” Calo, the Philippine National Police (PNP) on Monday pledged a thorough investigation and stronger protection for media workers. On March 20 in Negros Occidental, Calo, the 49-year-old radio host of 88.3 DNN News FM, was killed. Calo, who also served as a job-order

- [Castro demands P500M in damages from Leviste for ‘ruining’ her integrity](#) (2026-03-23 14:27)

MANILA, Philippines — Palace press officer Claire Castro on Monday demanded P500 million in damages from Batangas 1st District Rep. Leandro Leviste for allegedly “ruining” her integrity. The demand came in response to Leviste’s social media post on Sunday, where he said he does not have an obligation to compensate Castro for the “sleepless nights and

- [‘No indication yet if Sara Duterte would attend impeachment hearing’](#) (2026-03-23 14:25)

MANILA, Philippines — There is still no word from Vice President Sara Duterte’s camp if she will attend the impeachment hearings of the House of Representatives’ committee on justice set on March 25, Bicol Saro party-list Rep. Terry Ridon said. Ridon, a member of the committee, said in a statement on Monday that Duterte’s camp has

- [House Makabayan bloc wants special session to address oil crisis](#) (2026-03-23 14:19)

MANILA, Philippines — Lawmakers from the House of Representatives’ Makabayan bloc believe Congress must hold a special session to craft legislation that would address the rising fuel prices brought by the Middle East conflict. In a joint statement on Monday, ACT Teachers party-list Rep. Antonio Tinio, Gabriela party-list Rep. Sarah Elago, and Kabataan party-list Rep. Renee

- [Iloilo City eyes expanded assistance for transport sector](#) (2026-03-23 14:15)

ILOILO CITY — As fuel prices continue to climb amid global oil supply uncertainties, the Iloilo City government is exploring additional interventions to cushion the growing burden on public utility drivers whose earnings are being eroded by rising operating costs. READ: Gov' t urged to expand cash, fuel subsidy programs amid oil price spikes Mayor Raisa

- [More commuters seen amid fuel price hike — DOTr-SAICT](#) (2026-03-23 14:04)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Transportation–Special Action and Intelligence Committee for Transportation (DOTr-SAICT) has observed an increase in the number of commuters amid fuel price hikes due to ongoing tensions in the Middle East. In a Viber message to the INQUIRER on Monday, DOTr-SAICT Commander and Philippine Coast Guard Rear Admiral Oliver Sy Tanseco

- [Valencia City public transport moves normally amid nationwide strike](#) (2026-03-23 13:53)

VALENCIA CITY, Bukidnon — Business continued as usual in this city on Monday amid a transport strike in Metro Manila, Cagayan de Oro City, and other parts of the country, calling for fuel subsidies and fare adjustments amid rising fuel prices. READ: Commuters told: Brace for nationwide ‘transport holiday’ on March 23 Early in the

- [Marcos OKs release of P145.56 billion for Mindanao Highway project](#) (2026-03-23 13:44)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has directed the release of P145.56 billion for the Central Mindanao High Standard Highway Construction Project, aimed at cutting travel time nearly in half and boosting economic growth across the region, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said. The highway will improve connectivity between Cagayan de Oro and

- [Warmer days ahead as dry season begins, ‘amihan’ ends – Pagasa](#) (2026-03-23 13:42)

MANILA, Philippines — The country has entered the hot, dry season following the end of the northeast monsoon or “amihan” period after more than four months, the state weather bureau said on Monday. “The northeast monsoon has officially ended, marking the transition to the warm and dry season,” the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services

- [Marcos eyes stronger food security in CamSur agri project inspection](#) (2026-03-23 13:21)

LEGAZPI CITY — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday inspected a P500-million cold storage facility and solar-powered irrigation projects in Camarines Sur, highlighting government efforts to boost farm productivity and food security. Marcos first visited solar-powered irrigation systems in the towns of Minalabac and Bula, where he met with farmers and said the projects aim

- [Aquino backs emergency declaration to ease fuel crisis](#) (2026-03-23 13:12)

MANILA, Philippines – Declaring a state of national emergency would help Filipinos cope with the impact of rising oil prices, Sen. Paolo Benigno “Bam” Aquino IV said on Monday. Aquino made the statement in a video message days after Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. may declare a state of emergency

- [Transport strike felt in Pangasinan as some drivers stay off roads](#) (2026-03-23 13:06)

DAGUPAN CITY—Some drivers joined the nationwide transport strike on Monday despite no official declaration of a transport holiday by the Auto Pro Pangasinan, an association of public transportation operators and drivers. Auto Pro president Bernard Tuliao said at least 50 percent of public utility vehicles did not ply their routes during the day. READ: Commuters

- [Marcos wants immediate enforcement of fuel excise tax cuts](#) (2026-03-23 12:57)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. wants the immediate enforcement of a bill slashing excise taxes on fuel products, Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said on Monday. However, Marcos has not yet signed the bill, as he has not yet received its enrolled copy. READ: Palace: ‘Crisis committee’ being finalized to address food, fuel supplies

- [Cotabato City drivers, operators join nationwide transport holiday](#) (2026-03-23 12:52)

COTABATO CITY— Public transport here was paralyzed after all public utility vehicles ceased operations, as drivers and operators joined the nationwide transport holiday on Monday. READ: Commuters told: Brace for nationwide ‘transport holiday’ on March 23 To cushion the impact of the transport strike, the Cotabato City Police Office used its mobility assets to transport

- [Nationwide transport strike set March 26-27 over rising oil prices](#) (2026-03-23 12:39)

MANILA, Philippines — Several transport groups composed of jeepney, bus and transport network vehicle service (TNVS) drivers will stage a two-day nationwide strike from March 26 to 27 to demand government action on rising fuel prices linked to tensions in the Middle East. In a press conference on Monday, Mody Floranda, president of Pagkakaisa ng

- [Village councilor slain, wife survives ambush in Northern Samar](#) (2026-03-23 12:38)

TACLOBAN CITY—A 51-year-old barangay kagawad (village councilor) was shot dead while his common-law wife survived after they were ambushed by armed suspects in Barangay Osmeña, Lope de Vega, on Sunday morning. Police later arrested two suspects, including a fellow barangay kagawad from the same locality. The Northern Samar Police Provincial Office (NSPPO) strongly condemned the

- [Palace defends presence of 2 mayors in cash aid distribution](#) (2026-03-23 12:33)

MANILA, Philippines — Palace press officer Undersecretary Claire Castro on Monday justified the presence of two city mayors during a recent cash aid distribution event for public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers, amid the government’s implementation of an anti-epal policy to prevent

political patronage. On March 17, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. presided over the distribution of P5,000

- [BARMM energy office assures public of ample fuel supplies](#) (2026-03-23 12:12)

COTABATO CITY — The Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources, and Energy (MENRE) in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) has assured the public of a steady supply of petroleum products. MENRE issued the assurance on Monday, March 23, as incorrect information has been circulating on social media that the region's inventory of petroleum

- [INQToday: 'Crisis committee' being finalized to address food, fuel supplies – Palace](#) (2026-03-23 12:05)

Here's a quick roundup of today's top stories: Palace: 'Crisis committee' being finalized to address food, fuel supplies Palace Press Officer Claire Castro on Monday said that the formation of a "crisis committee" is being finalized to ensure the country's continuous supply of food and petroleum products amid the Middle East war. "Even before someone suggests

- [Transport strike disrupts commuting in Iloilo City](#) (2026-03-23 12:03)

ILOILO CITY —A transport strike opposing rising fuel prices disrupted commuting in Iloilo City on Monday, with a large number of drivers expected to join the protest, officials said. READ: Commuters told: Brace for nationwide 'transport holiday' on March 23 Despite the protest, some transport groups continued to operate, with passengers seen boarding public utility

- [Bohol strikes 2 golds in CVIRAA 2026 in Naga City, Cebu](#) (2026-03-23 11:44)

TAGBILARAN CITY—Bohol captured two gold medals in athletics at the Central Visayas Regional Athletic Association (CVIRAA) meet held in Naga City, Cebu, marking a strong start to its campaign in the regional competition. READ: CVIRAA meet: Naga City to play host amid budget, venue limits Leading the charge was Nila Acampado of St. John the

- [Gov't to release additional cash aid for PUV drivers –Palace](#) (2026-03-23 11:31)

MANILA, Philippines — There will be another tranche of cash assistance for public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers to further help them cope with the impact of rising fuel costs caused by the conflict in the Middle East, Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said on Monday. The announcement came after some PUV drivers raised concerns that the initial

- [Pampanga transport groups halt traffic, seek fuel aid](#) (2026-03-23 11:29)

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO —Transport federations in Pampanga aligned with the United Transport 86% Consolidated Entities Nationwide halted traffic along major roads and highways starting at 6 a.m. on Monday as part of a transport protest, officials said. Danilo Yumul, chair of the Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operators sa Pilipinas and the Confederation of

- [Trillanes files new raps vs ‘18 ex-Marines,’ others at DOJ](#) (2026-03-23 11:28)

MANILA, Philippines — Former Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV on Monday filed another cyberlibel complaint at the Department of Justice (DOJ) against the 18 alleged former Marines for accusing him of receiving \$2 million from former Ako Bicol Partylist Rep. Elizaldy Co to bribe International Criminal Court (ICC) investigators. In an ambush interview upon his arrival

- [Bill seeking free school transcript docs for fresh grads filed at House](#) (2026-03-23 11:04)

MANILA, Philippines — A bill that seeks to assist fresh graduates applying for jobs by mandating the free provision of scholastic records required by employers has been filed before the House of Representatives. In a statement on Monday, House Majority Leader Ferdinand Alexander Marcos said he filed House Bill (HB) No. 8701 or the proposed Academic

- [Bacolod transport groups stage strike over unfair aid distribution](#) (2026-03-23 10:47)

BACOLOD CITY —Transport groups staged a strike on Monday in this city to demand the fair and immediate release of government aid to all drivers and measures to reduce fuel prices. READ: Gov’ t urged to expand cash, fuel subsidy programs amid oil price spikes The Police Regional Office Negros Island Region (PRO NIR), through the

- [PCG rescues fisherman from sinking boat off Quezon](#) (2026-03-23 10:24)

LUCENA CITY — A fisherman was rescued after his boat sank in waters off Mauban, Quezon, on Saturday, March 21, authorities said. In a belated report on Monday, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)-Mauban station said the fisherman, whose name was withheld, was returning from a fishing trip near Cagbalete Island in Lamon Bay when his

- [Cops hunt gunman in killing of Negros Occidental radio block-timer](#) (2026-03-23 10:12)

BACOLOD CITY —The Police Regional Office Negros Island Region (PRO NIR) has activated a Special Investigation Task Group (SITG) to lead a region-wide manhunt for the killer of Himamaylan City job order worker and community radio block-timer Julito “Jaz” Diamante Calo. The 49-year-old Calo, host of Waswasanay sa Quinto Distrito on 88.3 DNN News FM,

- [2 suspected NPA rebels killed, 2 soldiers hurt in Surigao del Sur clash](#) (2026-03-23 09:49)

TANDAG CITY, Surigao del Sur—Troops from the Philippine Army’ s 36th Infantry Battalion engaged in a firefight with suspected New People’ s Army (NPA) members on Sunday in Barangay Nurcia, Lanuza town, Surigao del Sur, leaving two suspected rebels dead. Initial reports said two alleged NPA members were killed in the encounter, while two government troops sustained

- [Palace: ‘Crisis committee’ being finalized to address food, fuel supplies](#) (2026-03-23 09:41)

MANILA, Philippines — Palace Press Officer Claire Castro on Monday said that the formation of a “crisis committee” is being finalized to ensure the country’ s continuous supply of food

and petroleum products amid the Middle East war. “Even before someone suggests forming a crisis committee, the President has already officially ordered the creation of one. So

- [Marcos to open P500-million cold storage facility in CamSur](#) (2026-03-23 09:39)

LEGAZPI CITY — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. will lead the inauguration on Monday of a P500-million mega cold storage facility in San Jose village, Pili town, Camarines Sur. Governor Luis Raymund “Lray” Villafuerte Jr. told the Inquirer in a phone interview that the 7.5-hectare agri-industrial hub, described as the centerpiece of the CamSur Food Complex,

- [Corruption issues may be driving rise in support for anti-dynasty law – data scientist](#) (2026-03-23 09:04)

MANILA, Philippines — Support for an anti-dynasty law rose to 64% from 54% last year, which a data scientist said may have been driven by corruption issues that surfaced over the past year. Alicor Panao, an Inquirer data scientist and associate professor at the University of the Philippines, made the observation as Pulse Asia released

- [OIL PRICE WATCH as of March 23, 2026](#) (2026-03-23 08:14)

Diesel is becoming more expensive than gasoline these days. This observation is different from what has been experienced by motorists for the longest time in the past when diesel was always cheaper than gasoline. Since war in the Middle East broke out on Feb. 28, diesel prices have risen by as much as P49 per

- [Generally fair weather expected to prevail in PH on Monday \(March 23\)](#) (2026-03-23 07:32)

MANILA, Philippines — Generally fair weather is expected to prevail throughout the country on Monday, March 23, due to easterlies, the state weather bureau reported. According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), the easterlies refer to the warm winds coming from the Pacific Ocean. “Given our weather conditions, we expect good

- [Palace vows justice in broadcaster’s slay](#) (2026-03-23 05:55)

MANILA, Philippines — The Presidential Task Force on Media Security (PTFoMS) on Sunday condemned the killing of Negros Occidental radio broadcaster Julito “Jaz” Diamante Calo and vowed to ensure “justice is served.” Calling the murder a “significant threat to press freedom,” the interagency task force under the Office of the President said it is coordinating

- [INQUIRER.net is most visited PH news site in Jan., Feb. 2026 – Similarweb](#) (2026-03-23 05:50)

MANILA, Philippines — INQUIRER.net retained its position as the country’s most visited online news site in January and February 2026, according to web analytics firm Similarweb. In 2025, INQUIRER.net topped the list of the country’s most visited local news websites. Beyond the increase in total visits, Inquirer.net also maintained its standing across global, country and

- [Gov't expands cash assistance to PUV drivers outside NCR](#) (2026-03-23 05:50)

MANILA, Philippines — The government is expanding its subsidy assistance to include public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers operating outside the National Capital Region (NCR) who are reeling from runaway fuel prices caused by the Middle East conflict, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. announced on his latest vlog on Sunday. The one-time payouts composed of P5,000 in

- [League of Municipalities seeks bigger national tax share for LGUs](#) (2026-03-23 05:45)

MANILA, Philippines — The League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) is calling for an increase in the share of local government units (LGUs) from the national tax revenues, saying they need it for better delivery of services previously assigned to national agencies but now devolved to cities and towns. This was one of the

- [Energy bills among 18 measures passed by House](#) (2026-03-23 05:10)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives has approved 18 priority measures, including those seeking to lower pump prices and convert residential waste into energy, a week before adjourning for the Holy Week. Of those passed on third and final reading, House Bill (HB) No. 8469 or the proposed Oil Price Stabilization Act and House

- [Don't count on VP response to impeachment complaints – lawyer](#) (2026-03-23 05:05)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte “will never respond” to the impeachment complaints filed against her at the House of Representatives, according to one of the complainants. Lawyer Dino de Leon, who filed the second of four earlier impeachment complaints against Duterte, believes she “will use other diversions” rather than “respond to the allegations

- [Marcos approves trimestral calendar for public schools](#) (2026-03-23 05:00)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has approved the adoption of a three-term school calendar for public education institutions beginning Academic Year 2026–2027. Malacañang said the directive was issued upon the recommendation of the Economic and Development Council during a meeting on March 19. The shift from four grading periods, or quarters, to a

- [PNP: We're pro-women but gender rule stays](#) (2026-03-23 04:55)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police said on Sunday it may increase its recruitment quota for women from 10 percent to 20 percent, citing the competence and dedication that women have shown in maintaining peace and order. “In the PNP, gender is not the basis of competence. It is service and dedication that matters,”

- [ERC sees power rate increase in April](#) (2026-03-23 04:50)

MANILA, Philippines — Electricity rates are expected to rise in April due to the ongoing Middle East conflict and the peso's decline against the dollar, according to Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) Chair Francis Saturnino Juan. In an interview over Super Radyo dzBB of GMA News, Juan assured consumers that electricity supply is stable. “For now,

- [Coco levy case dismissal sparks outcry from farmers](#) (2026-03-23 04:45)

LUCENA CITY, QUEZON, Philippines — A farmers' group criticized the Sandiganbayan for dismissing the 1987 coconut levy civil case against the late former President Ferdinand Marcos Sr., former first lady Imelda Marcos, the late Juan Ponce Enrile and others, citing “inordinate delay.” “This ruling is a painful reminder that in the Philippines, cases are rarely

- [Culinary creativity blooms in Alaminos City](#) (2026-03-23 04:40)

ALAMINOS CITY, PANGASINAN, Philippines — Tourists cruising through the emerald waters and scattered islets of Hundred Islands National Park here may discover that beyond its famed seascape lies another attraction—local food prepared from farm produce. Known as the home of the country's first national park, this city remains deeply rooted in agriculture, with nearly half

- [Over 15,000 at risk as Bulusan Volcano placed under alert level 1](#) (2026-03-23 04:35)

LEGAZPI CITY, ALBAY, Philippines — The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) on Sunday raised alert level 1 over Bulusan Volcano in Sorsogon, following weeks of increased seismic activity. Alert level 1 indicates low-level unrest, with possible phreatic or steam-driven eruptions. Phivolcs said it recorded 475 volcanic earthquakes since March 15, while degassing from

- [Transport ‘holiday’ set in Cagayan de Oro](#) (2026-03-23 04:30)

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, Philippines — A group of transport cooperative owners is set to stage a transport strike, or “holiday,” today to press the government for fuel subsidies and fare increases amid rising fuel costs. Luzviminda Escobidal, president of the Northern Mindanao Federation of Transport Service Cooperatives, said operators are losing as much as

- [Commuters told: Brace for nationwide ‘transport holiday’ on March 23](#) (2026-03-22 22:18)

MANILA, Philippines — After a two-day transport strike, transport groups are mounting a bigger nationwide one-day “transport holiday” on Monday, March 23, as they called on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to offer concrete solutions and not just empty assurances to address the soaring fuel prices. Leading the transport holiday were the Alliance of Concerned Transport

- [No jackpot winners in Ultra Lotto, Super Lotto draws on March 22](#) (2026-03-22 21:58)

MANILA, Philippines – No bettor won the jackpot in Sunday's Ultra Lotto 6/58 and SuperLotto 6/49 draws, according to the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. PCSO said the Ultra Lotto

6/58 draw yielded the combination 14-08-22-50-58-19 with a jackpot prize of ₱75 million. The SuperLotto 6/49 draw had the combination 31-16-45-10-47-32 and a ₱131.2 million jackpot

- [Election lawyer questions Comelec’ s decision on Marcoleta case](#) (2026-03-22 21:46)

MANILA, Philippines — Election lawyer Romulo Macalintal criticized on Sunday the Commission on Elections’ (Comelec) decision to clear Senator Rodante Marcoleta regarding his controversial Statement of Contributions and Expenditure (SOCE) but not his donors. In its resolution, the Comelec cleared Marcoleta after the commission’ s Political Finance and Affairs Department found that while the senator did

- [Soil art showcases Bukidnon heritage](#) (2026-03-22 21:24)

MALAYBALAY CITY, Bukidnon — Bukidnon’ s rich cultural identity took center stage during the Kaamulan Festival 2026 as artists gathered for the first-ever “Hulagway sa Yuta: Soil Painting Competition” held at the Bukidnon Center for Culture and the Arts inside the Bukidnon Sports and Cultural Complex in Barangay Laguitas here. The competition, which featured both professional

- [LTO summons 3 drivers, vehicle owners over reckless driving](#) (2026-03-22 19:18)

MANILA, Philippines — The Land Transportation Office (LTO) on Sunday said it summoned the drivers and registered owners of three vehicles for reckless driving. According to the LTO in a statement, a show cause order was issued against the three vehicles’ drivers and owners after initial investigation showed them repeatedly switching lanes through traffic. READ:

- [Delivery riders’ group seeks DSWD clarification on aid distribution](#) (2026-03-22 19:04)

MANILA, Philippines – A group of food delivery riders asked the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to clarify how it will distribute its cash assistance, saying that many delivery riders may not receive the benefit because of their informal working arrangements. In a statement on Friday, Riders-Sentro said it welcomes the announcement that

- [Kababaihan partylist brings free medical services to CIW, Pasig on Women’ s Month](#) (2026-03-22 18:41)

MANILA, Philippines – More than 430 women and community members received free healthcare services through two medical missions organized by Kababaihan Partylist as part of its Women’ s Month initiatives to expand access to basic health services. The first mission was held on March 13, 2026 at the Correctional Institution for Women (CIW) in Mandaluyong City,

- [Gov’ t urged to expand cash, fuel subsidy programs amid oil price spikes](#) (2026-03-22 18:27)

MANILA, Philippines — Cavite 1st District Rep. Jolo Revilla on Sunday called on the national government to expand its fuel subsidy and financial assistance programs to other key sectors apart from public utility vehicles (PUV) drivers. According to Revilla, the government should

adopt a more comprehensive approach by also supporting truckers, inter-island cargooperators, farmers,

- [Villar pushes bill creating Philippine National Public Parks System](#) (2026-03-22 18:00)

MANILA, Philippines — Senator Mark A. Villar has filed Senate Bill No. 1796, a measure seeking to establish a Philippine National Public Parks System aimed at protecting natural resources, preserving cultural and historical sites, and expanding public access to green and recreational spaces across the country. Villar described the proposal as a landmark initiative that

- [Villar pushes stronger anti-rabies policies on Rabies Awareness Month](#) (2026-03-22 17:52)

MANILA — Senator Mark A. Villar renewed calls for stronger rabies prevention measures and long-term animal welfare policies during a privilege speech on the Senate floor as the country observes Rabies Awareness Month this March. In his speech, Villar stressed that rabies remains a serious public health threat in the Philippines despite being preventable. He

- [Marcos orders expedited Marawi City rehabilitation projects](#) (2026-03-22 17:28)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. told concerned agencies to expedite the long-delayed rehabilitation of Marawi City, following updates presented during the eighth Economy and Development (ED) Council Meeting. In a news release on Sunday, the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) said Marcos ordered an assessment of the feasibility of completing the Reconstruction and Development

- [Baguio transpo groups, traders seek reforms, relief from oil price hike](#) (2026-03-22 16:24)

BAGUIO CITY — Transport groups, commuters, vendors, and local officials here are calling for policy reforms, including the removal of fuel taxes and the repeal of the oil deregulation law, as rising oil prices continue to strain livelihoods and basic services. The calls were raised during a multisectoral forum organized on Saturday (March 21) by

- [Barangay captain slain in Zamboanga del Sur](#) (2026-03-22 16:15)

PAGADIAN CITY, Zamboanga del Sur — A 36-year-old barangay chairwoman was shot dead in Barangay Licuroan, Midsalip, Zamboanga del Sur early Sunday morning, according to the police. The victim, Jodeliza Mansip, was traveling on a motorcycle with a 20-year-old male companion from Barangay Poblacion toward Barangay Licuroan when she decided to continue on foot due

- [School principal linked to illegal drugs busted in Surigao – PDEA](#) (2026-03-22 16:11)

MANILA, Philippines — A public school principal was arrested in Surigao del Sur over his alleged involvement in illegal drugs, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) said Sunday. According to PDEA, the suspect—whom they only identified as an individual currently serving as a District 1 School Supervisor (Principal III)—was arrested during a joint anti-drug operation

- [Cagayan de Oro transpo group sets strike on Monday as fuel prices soar](#) (2026-03-22 16:04)

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY— The Northern Mindanao Federation of Transport Service Cooperatives on Sunday announced that it will stage a transport strike on Monday to press the government for fuel subsidies and fare hikes amid rising fuel costs. Luzviminda Escobidal, president of the Northern Mindanao Federation of Transport Service Cooperatives, said operators are losing as

- [PUV drivers outside NCR to receive cash, fuel subsidy starting April 6](#) (2026-03-22 15:34)

MANILA, Philippines — Public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers outside Metro Manila will receive their P5,000 cash aid and up to P10,000 fuel subsidy from the government starting on April 6. President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. made the announcement on his latest vlog released on Sunday. The assistance package covers a one-time P5,000 cash relief assistance from

- [House passes 18 of 52 Ledac priority measures before Holy Week](#) (2026-03-22 14:57)

MANILA, Philippines — Eighteen of the 52 Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (Ledac) priority measures were passed by the House of Representatives ahead of the observance of Holy Week. READ: House on track for approval of Ledac priority measures According to House Majority Leader and Ilocos Norte Rep. Sandro Marcos in a statement, the following priority

- [Romualdez receives warm welcome in return to Leyte](#) (2026-03-22 14:51)

TACLOBAN CITY— Former House Speaker Martin Romualdez made his first public appearance in Leyte’ s 1st congressional district since the flood control projects controversy surfaced and received a warm welcome from local officials and residents on Saturday. The visit comes amid national attention on flood control controversy where Romualdez’ name was dragged. He has since denied

- [P5,000 aid for other Metro Manila PUV drivers coming this week – DSWD](#) (2026-03-22 14:46)

MANILA, Philippines — After tricycle drivers, other transport workers in Metro Manila will receive their P5,000 cash relief assistance starting on Tuesday as fuel prices continue to soar. In an advisory, the Department of Social Welfare and Development – National Capital Region (DSWD-NCR) said drivers of transport network vehicle services (TNVS), jeepneys, delivery riders and motorcycle

- [Surigao del Sur governor injured in motorcycle crash](#) (2026-03-22 14:42)

TANDAG CITY, Surigao del Sur — Governor Johnny T. Pimentel sustained injuries after figuring in a road accident while on his motorcycle on Friday in Cagwait, Surigao del Sur. According to the Surigao del Sur Police Provincial Office (SDSPPO), the incident occurred at 12:20 p.m. in Sitio Puting Buhangin, Barangay Bitaugan East, Cagwait. Initial investigation

- [PTFoMS condemns killing of Negros Occidental broadcaster](#) (2026-03-22 14:38)

MANILA, Philippines – The killing of Negros Occidental radio broadcaster Julito “Jaz” Diamante Calo is a “significant threat” to press freedom, the Presidential Task Force on Media Security (PTFoMS) said on Sunday. Calo, a broadcaster for 88.3 DNN News FM in Himamaylan City, was shot dead near his house the other day. “The Presidential Task

- [DPWH: Beware of individuals impersonating Dizon, other execs online](#) (2026-03-22 14:20)

MANILA, Philippines – The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) on Sunday warned against individuals impersonating its officials, including Secretary Vince Dizon. This came after social media users were reportedly posing as a DPWH official while soliciting money and favors. “Nagbabala ang Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) sa publiko laban sa mga

- [PNP tightens watch on Roblox, other platforms to curb child exploitation](#) (2026-03-22 13:47)

MANILA, Philippines—The Philippine National Police (PNP) is stepping up its monitoring of online gaming platforms, including Roblox, to detect potential criminal activity and prevent online child exploitation. The move follows reports that predators have allegedly used Roblox’ s interactive features to target minors. READ: Roblox ban: big government or responsible parenting? In a statement on Sunday,

- [Chinese softshell turtle caught in Apayao](#) (2026-03-22 13:04)

TUGUEGARAO CITY — A baby Chinese softshell turtle (*Pelodiscus sinensis*) was reportedly caught Saturday evening, March 21, in Barangay Imelda, Sta. Marcela, Apayao, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources–Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (DENR-CENRO) in Calanasan said Sunday. The turtle was turned over by Christian Maruquin of Barangay Tamalunog, Flora, Apayao in what

- [‘No double standards in treatment of Sara Duterte, Marcos impeach raps’](#) (2026-03-22 13:01)

MANILA, Philippines – There are no double standards in the treatment of the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte and President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., House committee on justice chairperson Rep. Gerville Luistro said on Sunday. Luistro made the remark during a radio program where she explained that the panel’ s decisions to dismiss or continue

- [Bulusan Volcano in Sorsogon under Alert Level 1](#) (2026-03-22 12:47)

MANILA, Philippines – Bulusan Volcano in Sorsogon was placed under Alert Level 1 after weeks of increased seismic activity, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs). The Phivolcs advisory issued on Sunday said that Alert Level 1 means that the volcano is now “in a state of low-level unrest with increased chances

- [P1 million worth of illegal lumber seized in 2 Nueva Vizcaya checkpoints](#) (2026-03-22 12:39)

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya — Two trucks carrying alleged illegally transported and undocumented lumber worth more than P1 million were intercepted in separate police checkpoints in Diadi and Aritao towns on Saturday, March 21, police said. Police flagged down a truck in Calitlitan, Aritao where they discovered 1,907 board feet of narra and other hardwood flitches

- [PNP asks schools’ help in lessening youth crimes](#) (2026-03-22 12:33)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) seeks to curb youth crimes. PNP chief General Jose Melencio Nartatez wants to do this by asking schools to be proactive at the frontlines in values formation, safety awareness and crime prevention. “We in the PNP believe that peace and order is not an exclusive job for

- [Angeles City firm seeks to save spring water via watershed reforestation](#) (2026-03-22 12:30)

ANGELES CITY — While surface water remains the ideal source for supply systems, groundwater continues to be the primary source for many water utilities across Central Luzon and other parts of the country. However, as underground aquifers risk depletion, their rehabilitate have become increasingly urgent to ensure a steady supply of water for drinking, cooking

- [4 dead, 2 injured in bloody ‘duel’ between two families in Iloilo City](#) (2026-03-22 11:43)

ILOILO CITY — Four men were killed and two others were critically injured after a heated dispute between two families escalated into a bloody duel using bladed weapons in Barangay San Isidro, La Paz late on Saturday evening, March 21. The Iloilo City Police Office (ICPO) reported that the violent confrontation broke out at 9:40

- [PNP eyes raising women recruitment quota from 10% to 20%](#) (2026-03-22 10:09)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) is considering raising its recruitment quota for women from 10 percent to 20 percent, citing the growing leadership of female officers and their role in maintaining peace and order. The PNP on Sunday noted the growing representation of women in leadership roles, highlighting their influence in guiding

- [Power rates in Oriental Mindoro drop by 3% despite Middle East war](#) (2026-03-22 10:04)

CALAPAN CITY, Oriental Mindoro — Despite rising global petroleum prices driven by war in the Middle East, electricity rates in the province have continued to decline for the third consecutive month this year. In a radio interview on Saturday (March 21), Oriental Mindoro Electric Cooperative (ORMECO) General Manager Engr. Humphrey Dolor said March billing will

- [Fuel shortage cuts hours of electricity in Quezon island town](#) (2026-03-22 09:51)

LUCENA CITY — The island town of Patnanungan in Quezon province will experience reduced power hours due to limited fuel supply amid the continuing oil crisis linked to tensions in the Middle East. Mayor Claire Larita-Natividad announced on Saturday, March 21, that the

operating hours of the local power plant will be temporarily reduced, citing

- [Fair weather prevails in most of PH on Sunday – Pagasa](#) (2026-03-22 07:33)

MANILA, Philippines — Generally fair weather is anticipated throughout the country with a chance of localized thunderstorms on Sunday, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) reported. “Based on our satellite image, there are almost no dense clouds here in our landmass, so expect fair weather conditions to continue throughout the day. But

- [Parents urged to be role models on healthy eating](#) (2026-03-22 07:30)

BAGUIO CITY — A healthy food practitioner in Baguio who is also an advocate of the “slow food” system said parents are responsible for their children’s food choices, urging them to lead by example in maintaining a healthy diet. “Let us go back to the basic education and give emphasis on the importance of nutrition or

- [Agri chief sees ‘slight’ food price hike due to transport cost](#) (2026-03-22 05:37)

MANILA, Philippines — Despite sufficient supply, retail food prices may slightly rise as the escalating conflict in the Middle East drives up freight and transport costs, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said. In a statement on Saturday, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. noted heightened concerns over costs due to rising oil prices linked to

- [How diesel overtook gasoline in prices](#) (2026-03-22 05:35)

MANILA, Philippines — For jeepney and delivery truck drivers, trips to fuel stations have been jarring nowadays as diesel—which for the longest time had been cheaper than gasoline in the Philippines—is already becoming the costlier fuel between the two. Since the war in the Middle East broke out on Feb. 28 when the United States

- [SC: AI must only help, ‘not replace,’ human judgment](#) (2026-03-22 05:33)

MANILA, Philippines — The Supreme Court has crafted a framework that will guide courts in the use of artificial intelligence (AI)—or what it chooses to refer to as “augmented intelligence” —to ensure that judges, lawyers and employees and their cognitive abilities are only aided and not replaced by technology. The high tribunal en banc on Feb.

- [MAUREEN AVA MATA: ‘3-legged’ advocate for walkable cities](#) (2026-03-22 05:31)

MANILA, Philippines — Maureen Ava Mata lost her left leg to bone cancer when she was 18. The amputation forced her to learn how to walk again, this time on “three” feet—her right leg plus two crutches. This introduced her to many challenges, and it amplified the problems she saw in the country’s public transportation

- [The little known debut in Malacañang](#) (2026-03-22 05:29)

MANILA, Philippines — It was the first debut—and apparently the only one so far—held in Malacañang. But despite being held in the country’s seat of power, there was little pomp and pageantry, glitz and glitter. It was not even mentioned in available records, including biographies of the debutante’s father, Ramon Magsaysay, the seventh president of

- [Airport police arrest Malaysian over 15-kilo ‘shabu’](#) (2026-03-22 05:27)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police arrested on Friday a Malaysian woman at Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) who was found in possession of 15 kilograms of suspected “shabu,” (crystal meth) with an estimated street value of more than P102 million. The PNP said on Saturday that the seizure occurred around 12:47 a.m. on

- [Transport group cries ‘harassment’ amid strike](#) (2026-03-22 05:25)

MANILA, Philippines — A labor rights group on Friday alleged police harassment and surveillance during the first day of a transport strike staged by jeepney drivers and their supporters across Metro Manila. The Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) said police officers in civilian clothes were deployed in several protest sites on Thursday,

- [Fuel hikes hit hard, but Iloilo riders keep rolling](#) (2026-03-22 05:17)

ILOILO CITY, Philippines — Before the sun rises, 29-year-old Ayban is already preparing his motorcycle, checking his fuel, and scanning his phone for bookings. By mid-morning, he is on the road—ferrying passengers, picking up parcels, or running errands—doing whatever it takes to provide for his family of four. “I will take anything as long as

- [This week’s milestones: March 22 to March 28](#) (2026-03-22 05:15)

March 24, 2001 Ligao in Albay was converted into a component city through a plebiscite held ratifying Republic Act No. 9008 that was signed on February 21, 2001 by then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. The most widely accepted origin of the name “Ligao” was “licau” , meaning to take a longer route or to deviate from the

- [Iloilo City halts face-to-face classes on March 23 amid transport strike](#) (2026-03-21 23:22)

ILOILO CITY, Philippines — Face-to-face classes at all levels in Iloilo City will be suspended on Monday, March 23, following a transport holiday that is expected to significantly disrupt public transportation, according to an executive order issued by Mayor Raisa S. Treñas. Executive Order No. 034, signed on March 21, directs all schools within the

- [Bukidnon hosts NMRAA 2026 for first time](#) (2026-03-21 23:17)

MALAYBALAY CITY, BUKIDNON, Philippines — For the first time, Bukidnon province is able to host the Northern Mindanao Regional Athletic Association (NMRAA) meet that kicked off here on March 19. The sporting event gathered around 10,000 delegates from 14 schools divisions across Northern Mindanao competing in events patterned after the Palarong Pambansa. Competitions are centered

- [Solon denies allegations of bribe for VP Sara Duterte impeachment](#) (2026-03-21 22:46)

TACLOBAN CITY, LEYTE, Philippines — Tingog party-list Rep. Jude Acidre firmly denied allegations that members of the House of Representatives were being bribed to support the impeachment complaint against Vice President Sara Duterte. In a statement, Acidre called such claims “categorically false” and demanded evidence from those making the accusations. The Tingog lawmaker was responding

- [March 21: Lotto 6/42 ticket wins P10 million jackpot](#) (2026-03-21 22:39)

MANILA, Philippines — A single ticket holder won the Lotto 6/42 jackpot on Saturday, March 21, while no one claimed the Grand Lotto 6/55 top prize, according to the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. March 21, 2026, falls on a Saturday. PCSO said the winning combination for Lotto 6/42 was 18-12-37-02-30-24, good for a P10 million

- [SBMA, BJMP ink pact on mangrove area development](#) (2026-03-21 21:57)

OLONGAPO CITY – The development and maintenance of about 400 square meters of mangrove area is set to be undertaken in the Subic Bay Freeport under the Adopt-A-Mangrove Program, the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) said. Under the program, SBMA will assign a portion of its mangrove forest for adoption by Bureau of Jail Management

- [Agusan del Sur college granted university status](#) (2026-03-21 21:45)

SAN FRANCISCO, Agusan del Sur — The Agusan del Sur State College of Agriculture and Technology (ASSCAT) has officially been granted university status by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), paving the way for its conversion into the Agusan del Sur State University (ADSSU). The recognition was approved through CHED Commission En Banc Resolution No.

- [Calls for BARMM unity ring as Muslims mark Eid al-Fitr](#) (2026-03-21 21:33)

COTABATO CITY – Political and religious leaders in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) echoed calls for greater unity among the region’s people as Muslims throughout the world celebrated Eid al-Fitr that marked the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. BARMM interim Chief Minister Abdulraof Macacua joined thousands of Muslims at the

- [Palawan electric coop assures no rate hike even as fuel prices rise](#) (2026-03-21 20:51)

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY, Palawan— The Palawan Electric Cooperative (Paleco) assured customers that there will be no power rate increase and that the delivery of services will remain uninterrupted despite rising fuel costs. Paleco General Manager Rez Contrivida said that the oil crisis will hardly affect their operation, emphasizing that electricity rates will not be affected

- [Pampanga launches floating clinic in Sasmuan](#) (2026-03-21 20:40)

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga – Pampanga Gov. Lilia Pineda on Thursday launched a floating clinic, said to be the first in the country, to the coastal village of Malusac in Sasmuan town where it extended medical services and assistance to more than 200 people including a woman who gave birth. The Kalingang Kapampangan Floating

- [Soldiers recover guns, ammunition abandoned by suspected terrorists](#) (2026-03-21 20:26)

COTABATO CITY – Soldiers recovered five high-powered firearms believed to be from gunmen connected with terrorist group Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) on Friday in Talitay, Maguindanao del Norte. Lt. Col. William Sabado, commander of the Army's 1st Mechanized Infantry Battalion, said soldiers rushed to Barangay Gadungan in Talitay at 2 p.m. in response

- [Stranded whale dies off Sultan Kudarat coast](#) (2026-03-21 20:03)

COTABATO CITY – A stranded whale off the coast of Barangay Poral in Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat eventually died on Saturday, according to local authorities. Curious villagers who first spotted the marine mammal approached the creature to have photo opportunities, with several others even hopping on its back. Netizen Hazi Masukat posted on his Facebook page

- [Duterte impeachment rap counsel warns of possible diversionary tactics](#) (2026-03-21 19:27)

MANILA, Philippines – The public should watch out for possible “diversionary tactics” during the impeachment proceedings against Vice President Sara Duterte, one of the counsels for the second impeachment complaint warned on Saturday. Dino de Leon, one of the lawyers for the complainants of the second complaint against the Vice President, said the “tactics” may

- [Drug suspect with guns busted in Quezon](#) (2026-03-21 19:16)

LUCENA CITY, Quezon – Police arrested a drug suspect who also yielded two illegal firearms on Saturday in Tagkawayan, Quezon. The Quezon police reported that Anti-illegal drugs operatives, with a search warrant, swooped down at 5:30 a.m. on the house of alias “Jeff,” 38, in Barangay Sta. Cecilia. The authorities seized from the suspect a

- [Iloilo City: Free rides on March 23 to offset transpo strike](#) (2026-03-21 18:47)

ILOILO CITY — The Iloilo City government will roll out free transportation services on Monday, March 23, in response to a planned transport holiday, aiming to ease the burden on commuters across the city. Mayor Raisa S. Treñas said the move comes after a transport alliance announced a one-day strike, prompting the local government to

- [Kanlaon Volcano logs five ash emission events; Alert level 2 stays](#) (2026-03-21 18:02)

BACOLOD CITY – Kanlaon Volcano emitted ash five times from Friday night to Saturday that lasted more than 10 hours, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said. The ash emissions on Friday occurred at 9 p.m. and lasted for 98 minutes, and then at 11:23 p.m. for 109 minutes. The ash emissions on

- [Fire hits Iloilo City residential area](#) (2026-03-21 17:46)

ILOILO CITY — Fire broke out in Barangay Gustilo, La Paz on Thursday and damaged 18 houses damaged according to the Iloilo City Emergency Operations Center. The fire started at around 2:11 p.m. and quickly spread across a cluster of homes, initially affecting 17 residential structures. The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) raised the alarm

- [BOC sets re-auction of 11 seized luxury vehicles on March 27](#) (2026-03-21 17:22)

Photo from BOC / Facebook MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Customs (BOC) will hold a re-auction of 11 seized luxury vehicles, through public sealed bidding on March 27. Among those to be auctioned are a Mercedes-Benz G650 V12 Biturbo and a Ferrari SF90 Stradale (Mansory). Following are vehicles up for reauction and their corresponding

- [Comelec resumes voter registration in Antipolo City from March 23-May 18](#) (2026-03-21 16:24)

MANILA, Philippines — The Commission on Elections (Comelec) announced on Saturday the resumption of voter registration in Antipolo City from March 23 to May 18, 2026, as part of preparations for the upcoming barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections. The registration, accordong to the Comelec, will be from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Saturday,

- [Cops intercept P20 M smuggled cigarettes in Maguindanao del Norte](#) (2026-03-21 15:49)

COTABATO CITY – Police officers manning a checkpoint in Parang, Maguindanao del Norte confiscated over P20 million worth of smuggled cigarettes on Friday. Brig. Gen. Jaysen de Guzman, regional director of Police Regional Office-Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (PRO-BARMM), said the operation in Barangay Pinantao also led to the arrest of a 42-year-old man

- [Northern Samar adopts ‘anticipatory measures’ vs Middle East crisis](#) (2026-03-21 14:52)

TACLOBAN CITY- As tensions in the Middle East push oil prices higher, Northern Samar is moving to protect its communities from a possible fuel and economic crisis. On March 18, the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC), led by Governor Harris Ongchuan, held a high-level meeting with local leaders and partners. During the

- [Zamboanga del Sur eyes fuel subsidy for delivery riders](#) (2026-03-21 14:41)

PAGADIAN CITY, Zamboanga del Sur- The provincial government of Zamboanga del Sur is pushing to expand the national government’ s fuel subsidy program to include delivery riders, citing their vital role in local transport services. Governor Divina Grace Yu said the province has been assisting in the validation of tricycle drivers to fast-track the release of

- [Marcos calls for compassion, unity as Eid’ I Fitr marks end of Ramadan](#) (2026-03-21 14:17)

MANILA, Philippines – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. extended his greetings to Filipino Muslims on Saturday, the celebration of Eid’ l Fitr, urging the nation to carry forward the virtues learned during Ramadan beyond personal observance and into everyday life. Marcos said Eid’ l Fitr is a reminder of the deeper values that strengthen both families and

- [LOOK: Muslims mark Eid al-Fitr in Iloilo City](#) (2026-03-21 14:12)

ILOILO CITY – Hundreds of Muslims gathered at La Paz Plaza here on Saturday morning, March 21, to offer prayers for Eid al-Fitr, the “Festival of Breaking the Fast” that marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Ramadan is the ninth and holiest month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide as

- [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 Muñoz, 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 of Filipinos 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 capacity and improving access to life-saving treatment. Distributed under PCSO’s Medical Equipment Donation 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 it 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 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 (Pamalalakaya) 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

## Source: The Manila Times

- [Court resets hearing vs starlet, vlogger to April over 'adult' content access to children](#) (2026-03-27 04:51)

MANILA, Philippines — The battle over explicit online content that could reach children continued Friday as sexy star Salome Salvi appeared at the Makati City Prosecutor’s Office while vlogger Brian Babilonia skipped his second consecutive hearing, prompting the preliminary investigation to be reset to April 16. Salvi personally attended the second preliminary investigation hearing for alleged violations of Article 201 of the Revised Penal Code in relation to the Anti-Cybercrime Act. Babilonia, who also goes by the name Tio Bri, was absent for the second consecutive hearing, according to the Kapisanan ng Social Media Broadcasters ng Pilipinas Inc. (KSMBPI). The complaints stemmed from content posted on public social media platforms that the group said were “easily accessible to children.” KSMBPI said it had issued cease-and-desist notices through its legal counsel, Mark Tolentino, in November 2025, but these were allegedly ignored, prompting the filing of cases earlier this month. KSMBPI Chairman Michael Raymond Aragon said the camp of Salvi had sought a dialogue prior to the filing of charges. However, both sides ultimately agreed to let the legal process proceed. He added that the organization was preparing to file additional complaints against other entities it accused of posting similar adult content online. “We are set to file similar cases against Cinepop and T-Bone corporations once our evidence and witnesses are complete,” Aragon said, reiterating the group’s call for stricter compliance to prevent minors from accessing explicit materials online.

- [Marcos open to repealing oil deregulation law](#) (2026-03-27 04:28)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is not discounting the proposal to repeal the Oil Deregulation Law to allow the government to regulate oil prices and intervene in securing oil supply. However, Marcos said the government was focused on delivering "immediate" solutions to the energy problems at the moment. "Nothing is being discounted, meaning everything that can be done so that we can do something to help mitigate the impact of the war in the Middle East is being discussed," Marcos said during a media interview in Silang, Cavite. "But what we are focus now is immediate, you know we will have to ammend the oil deregulation, that's a long discussion. I don' t know when will it come out," he added.

- [Villar Group malls adjust operating hours starting March 30](#) (2026-03-27 04:25)

MANILA, Philippines — Shopping malls under the Villar Group will adjust its operating hours starting March 30, 2026, following the government' s declaration of a national energy emergency. In separate advisories, Vista Land & Lifescapes Inc. said that operating hours for its Vista Malls would be modified, with all branches set to operate from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. from Monday to Friday and 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The same adjusted schedule will likewise be implemented across its Starmalls network. Both operators advised mallgoers to check the official social media pages of their preferred branches for any branch-specific updates or changes. The adjustment comes as businesses respond to measures aimed at managing electricity consumption amid tightening power supply conditions. Mall operators, among the country' s largest energy users, are expected to recalibrate operating hours to help ease demand on the grid. Further details on how long the adjusted schedules will remain in place have yet to be disclosed.

- [Marcos: Asean meet to push through in May](#) (2026-03-27 04:09)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Friday said the Philippines' hosting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Leaders' Summit in May would push through despite the ongoing war in the Middle East. In a media interview in Silang, Cavite, Marcos said that Southeast Asian leaders would focus discussions on oil supply, food security, and the welfare of migrants workers. "We have consulted with our counterparts in the 10 other member states. The question that I asked them is very simple, because of the war in the Middle East, would you like to postpone the Asean Summit? The consensus that we came to is that it is precisely now that we must coordinate our efforts," Marcos said. The President described the summit as "bare-bones," focusing only on urgent and essential issues. "What we really need at this time is for us, leaders to talk to know what do we do in the future, what do we do for the rest of the year, what do we do, how can we help each other, and what is the Asean position regarding all of these shocks that are coming our way," he added.

- [DSWD eyes second round of financial aid for public transport drivers](#) (2026-03-27 03:57)

MANILA, Philippines—The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) on Friday said it was considering another round of financial aid if fuel price increases continue.. In a press

conference in Manila, DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian said the P5,000 in cash assistance currently being distributed to different transport groups under its Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) program was only the first phase of the government's initiative to ease the burden of rising fuel costs on Filipino drivers. "This is not going to be limited to one round, it's going to be multiple rounds. In fact, that's why I'm circling around to see the issues on the ground, because right after Holy Week, there will be a special payout schedule for those who were not included in the first round, so that they can also be given, and then we'll immediately move on to the second round already," he said.

- [Fuel price increase eases further next week amid US-Iran talks on de-escalating war in Middle East](#) (2026-03-27 03:55)

MANILA, Philippines — Diesel and gasoline prices will increase again next week although at a slower pace as discussions between the US and Iran are ongoing to de-escalate the war in the Middle East, a local industry source said on Friday. The source said that diesel prices were expected to go up by around P11.00 to P12.00 per liter while gasoline will either have no adjustments or increase by around P3 per liter. These estimates are based on the 4-day trading of Mean of Platts, Singapore, the pricing basis of refined goods in Southeast Asia. This will also be the 11th straight week that diesel and gasoline prices have increased. "For this week, the relatively lower increase on diesel and slight easing of the increase of gasoline prices, are driven by de-escalation signals in the Middle East conflict, resulting to a drop in crude oil price benchmarks," the source said. "Gasoline prices, which closely track crude and regional supply risks, softened as fears of prolonged supply outages are somewhat reduced. Diesel however, often moves differently and more sharply due to distillate supply tightness," the source added. Local oil companies raised gasoline and diesel prices last week by around P8-P12 per liter and around P15-18 per liter respectively.

- [Duterte, Teves counsels dismiss alleged threat of bagman](#) (2026-03-27 03:35)

MANILA, Philippines — The counsels for both Vice President Sara Duterte and former representative Arnolfo Teves dismissed the claim of alleged bagman Ramil Madriaga that Teves wanted him dead inside prison, calling it "comical" and a "poppycock." During the impeachment hearing at the House of Representatives on Wednesday, Akbayan Partylist Rep. Jose Manuel Diokno raised a motion to put Madriaga under protective custody of the House as he was "being dragged to a cell that was built by Teves." In a statement, Salvador Paolo Panelo Jr., the counsel of Duterte to the perjury case she filed against Madriaga, said that his counsel, Raymund Palad, previously claimed that Madriaga was visited by the Vice President to persuade him not to testify. "That story was quickly debunked by [Interior] Secretary Jonvic Remulla, who confirmed that VP Sara visited Teves, not Madriaga. Since his lie was exposed, Madriaga has conveniently shifted his narrative to insinuate that VP Sara, through Teves, is behind the alleged threat to his life," Panelo said. He stressed that this falsehood was entirely "on brand" for someone who has lied through his teeth about his supposed association with the vice president and his own background. "The House Justice Committee's blind acceptance of this ridiculous and

unsubstantiated narrative from a “polluted source” only confirms the Committee’s willingness to entertain fabrications in pursuit of a politically motivated agenda,” Panelo added. In a separate statement, Teves's counsel, Ferdinand Topacio, said that it was already expected coming from Diokno. "I suggest he stick to what he does best: represent non-clients in non-cases using non sequitur. Because all he spews out is nonsense," Topacio added.

- [Marcos opens new NAIAX expressway to ease traffic](#) (2026-03-27 03:27)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Friday opened the new NAIA Expressway (NAIAX) westbound off-ramp, a 320-meter road designed to improve access to Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 3 and ease congestion along Andrews Avenue in Pasay City. The President said the new exit was expected to reduce travel time for motorists by as much as 30 minutes. "It is short but will have a big impact because this is where traffic builds up. This will help avoid traffic," Marcos said after the opening of the new NAIAX exit ramp. Marcos was joined during the inspection by San Miguel Corp. President and Chief Executive Officer Ramon Ang and Public Works Secretary Vince Dizon. NAIAX is operated and maintained by Skyway Operations and Maintenance Corp. under SMC Infrastructure, a subsidiary of San Miguel Corp., which holds the 25-year concession to operate the expressway.

- [Philippines, France sign visiting forces agreement to boost military cooperation](#) (2026-03-27 03:17)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines and France signed a Status of Visiting Forces Agreement (SOVFA) on Friday, expanding defense ties and allowing easier deployment of troops between the two countries. Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. and French Minister for the Armed Forces Catherine Vautrin formalized the agreement following a bilateral meeting in Paris, where Teodoro is attending a series of engagements, including the Paris Defense and Strategy Forum. The SOVFA sets the legal framework for the presence of visiting forces, facilitating joint exercises, training, and other military cooperation activities. “We were able to reach this stage in record time because of the fact that our two countries have had years of trust and confidence in working and dealing with one another,” Teodoro said in a speech during the signing, a recording of which was provided to media in Manila by the Department of National Defense. France becomes the latest country to enter into a visiting forces arrangement with the Philippines, as Manila expands its network of defense partnerships under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.. The Philippines maintains a long-standing Visiting Forces Agreement with the United States and signed a similar pact with Australia in 2012. More recently, Manila concluded a Reciprocal Access Agreement with Japan, whose troops are set to participate in the upcoming Balikatan exercises alongside Filipino and American forces—marking the first deployment of Japanese combat personnel to the Philippines since World War II. Teodoro has also overseen visiting forces agreements with Canada and New Zealand, while negotiations for a similar pact with the United Kingdom are expected to begin soon. In his remarks, Teodoro said the agreement with France reflected a shared commitment to strengthening defense capabilities and upholding international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of

the Sea. Even before the deal was finalized, France had joined the Philippine Navy in joint drills in the West Philippine Sea. French naval vessels are also expected to participate in Balikatan 2026, the Philippines' largest annual military exercise with the United States. France has been among the countries supporting the Philippines amid tensions with China in the South China Sea, where Manila asserts its maritime entitlements. In a keynote speech in Paris, Teodoro emphasized the need for deeper cross-regional cooperation in security and defense, citing growing challenges that require coordinated responses among like-minded nations.

- [Marcos: PH has enough crude oil until June 2026](#) (2026-03-27 02:58)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Friday announced that the country has sufficient crude oil supply to last until June 30, 2026. At the sidelines of the opening of the NAIA Expressway Phase II, Marcos said he and San Miguel Corp. Chairman Ramon Ang have discussed the importation of fuel to support domestic supply. "In terms of crude oil supply, because they are importing crude oil to be refined here in the Philippines, the price is different... It is more expensive when you import refined oil, which is diesel. And he (Ang) said, we already have a supply of crude oil, sufficient supply to last until June 30," he said.

- [PH Navy vessel avoids collision with Chinese warship in WPS](#) (2026-03-27 02:50)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Navy ship BRP Benguet (LS-507) avoided a potential collision after a dangerous maneuver by a Chinese missile frigate while it was conducting a routine operation near Pag-asa Island in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) on March 25, according to the Armed Forces of the Philippines in a statement late Thursday. The AFP Western Command (Wescom) said the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) missile frigate has the bow/pennant number 532. "While conducting lawful operations, BRP Benguet encountered the PLAN vessel, which executed an unsafe and unprofessional maneuver by closing in and passing at a dangerously close distance," it said. Wescom said such dangerous maneuvers are provocative and constitute a clear violation of the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea. "Despite this, the measured and decisive actions of LS-507 effectively prevented escalation while ensuring the safety of all personnel on board," it added. Likewise, Wescom called on the PLAN to adhere to established international rules and norms to prevent incidents at sea. It also added that it will continue to perform its lawful maritime operations with professionalism and resolve in exercising the country's sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction in the WPS.

- [SSS assures OFWs in Middle East of uninterrupted digital access](#) (2026-03-27 00:53)

MANILA, Philippines — The Social Security System (SSS) has assured its members in the Middle East that they can continue to access benefits and services through its digital platforms despite the escalating regional conflicts. In a statement on Thursday, SSS President Robert Joseph de Claro highlighted the reliability of the My.SSS Portal, which allows overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to file benefit claims and loan applications without interruption, provided they meet qualifying conditions. Among the available services is the unemployment benefit for OFWs who

have been involuntarily separated from their jobs, subject to certification by the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW). "Even in these challenging times, our digital infrastructure ensures seamless service delivery," De Claro said. "Members in the Middle East need not worry; they can manage their accounts safely from anywhere with internet access." The state pension fund chief also noted that pensioners residing in the region can now comply with the Annual Confirmation of Pensioners (ACOP) using the recently launched facial authentication feature on the SSS website ([www.sss.gov.ph](http://www.sss.gov.ph)). "A standout innovation is the ACOP Facial Authentication with Liveness Check, enabling secure identity verification from smartphones anywhere," De Claro explained. He added that the tool was designed to reduce fraud risks and eliminate the need for travel amid the current security situation in the Middle East. "These tools were purpose-built to empower OFWs, allowing transactions 'whenever, wherever' even in crisis zones," he said. Data from the SSS showed that as of December 2025, there are 1,476,645 covered OFWs, with 540,018 listed as active paying members. "We remain committed to supporting our OFWs through innovation and resilience, no matter the circumstances," De Claro added.

- [Trump says Iran allowed passage of 10 oil tankers as a 'present'](#) (2026-03-26 19:48)

WASHINGTON — Iran allowed 10 oil tankers to pass through the strategic Strait of Hormuz as a "present" to show it was serious about negotiations to end the war, US President Donald Trump said Thursday. Trump was referring to cryptic comments he made two days earlier about a "gift" from Tehran that involved the flow of oil and gas through the waterway, a key chokepoint for the global energy trade. Iranian forces have effectively slowed shipping through the strait to a trickle during the Middle East war, which began nearly four weeks ago. "They said 'to show you the fact that we're real and solid and we're there, we're going to let you have eight boats of oil,'" Trump told reporters in his first cabinet meeting since the conflict started. The tankers were believed to be Pakistani-flagged, Trump said, adding that he had seen news reports that they had passed the strait. "And, I said, 'well, I guess we're dealing with the right people'. And actually, they then apologized for something they said, and they said, 'We're going to send two more boats.'" Before giving his account to reporters, Trump first checked with his Middle East negotiator Steve Witkoff at the cabinet table, saying: "Steve, can I reveal the present?" The US president did not provide any further details. Data from marine intelligence firm Kpler shows that six laden oil tankers and five loaded gas carriers have transited the Gulf since Monday, but there was no independent confirmation these were the ones cited by Trump. Of these vessels, three oil tankers and two gas carriers are currently subject to US sanctions related to Iran. Based on tracking signals, two of the six oil tankers appear to be heading toward China, while one is bound for Thailand. Among the gas carriers, one is en route to Singapore, and another has already arrived in India. For the remaining six vessels, their destinations cannot be determined from the available data.

- [No winner in Super lotto 6/49, Lotto 6/42 draws for March 26](#) (2026-03-26 16:26)

MANILA, Philippines — There were no winners in the Super lotto 6/49 and Lotto 6/42 draws on Thursday night, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) said. The winning combination

for Super lotto 6/49 was 46-04-19-25-33-02 which had a jackpot prize of P144,085,930.99. There was also no winner for the Lotto 6/42 draw, which drew a winning combination of 29-15-03-18-23-30 for a jackpot prize of P10,000,000.00.

- [Diversification, grid upgrade key to solving energy crisis](#) (2026-03-26 16:17)

AGAINST the backdrop of a newly declared national energy emergency, The Manila Times Energy Forum 2026 convened on Thursday, bringing together representatives from the Department of Energy (DOE), the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) and Meralco PowerGen Corp. (MGen) for the morning session. Representatives from the National Power Corp. (Napocor), National Transmission Corp. and Aboitiz Power joined the afternoon session. With the theme “Addressing current energy challenges, building a secure and sustainable energy future,” the forum evolved into a “war room” of ideas as the country grappled with the escalating fallout from the Middle East conflict. Moderated by TMT columnist Ben Kritz, the panel reached a sobering consensus: the Philippines’ “umbilical cord” to Middle East energy supplies is no longer a manageable risk but a national security vulnerability. Participants emphasized that long-term resilience lies in developing indigenous energy sources and strengthening the grid infrastructure. They also underscored the need to move beyond temporary fuel subsidies toward localized energy solutions as well as environmental protection protocols. Napocor Chief Executive Officer Jericho Jonas Nograles warned local government units that he has the cooperation of the military to protect critical watersheds and that one of Napocor’s goals it for barangay to be able to “sustain themselves via solar and wind,” effectively insulating them from tremors in the global market. With diesel prices breaching the P100-per-liter mark and the peso weakening past 60 against the United States dollar, discussions shifted from long-term planning to immediate resilience. The focus expanded from fossil fuels to renewable energy and low-emission alternatives such as liquefied natural gas (LNG). The timing of the forum was critical. Just 48 hours earlier, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed Executive Order (EO) 110, placing the country under a state of national energy emergency for one year. MGen President and Chief Executive Officer Emmanuel Rubio, and Aboitiz Renewables President and Chief Executive Officer David Mikel Aboitiz outlined how the private sector is accelerating off-grid power solutions, including large-scale solar farms. The original roster of speakers, which included DOE Undersecretary Felix William Fuentesbella and ERC Chairman Francis Saturnino Juan, was changed at the last minute after they were called to attend a Senate hearing on EO 110. They were replaced by DOE Director Michael Sinocruz and ERC Executive Director Nancy Aurora Fajardo. Sinocruz discussed the administration’s push toward renewable energy while maintaining output from diesel and coal-fired power plants to stabilize prices, as global LNG and oil shipments face disruptions at the Strait of Hormuz. He also spoke of a diversified sourcing of energy which includes the potential adoption of small modular reactors. During the morning fireside chat, Kritz raised the issue of balancing solar energy generation and distribution. Rubio said MGen’s Battery Energy Storage Systems help address the “duck curve” by storing excess solar power and releasing it when demand rises. Meanwhile, National Transmission Corp. President Fortunato Leynes emphasized that

“there is no transition without transmission,” stressing the need to accelerate grid expansion and improve infrastructure to support renewable energy integration. Aboitiz also pointed out that grid constraints, permitting delays and land acquisition issues rather than design, funding or construction, remain the primary bottlenecks in scaling up renewable energy projects. Transforming challenges

In her opening remarks, The Manila Times CEO Anna Marie Ang-Thompson said that the news organization documents developments in the energy sector in real time. “We see the volatility of power costs, the strain on our aging grids and the rising public demand for sustainability. We are here today to do more than just report on these realities. We are here because we recognize that, as leaders, we hold the collective power to transform these challenges into a definitive turning point for our country,” she said. Times President and COO Blanca Mercado cited EO 110, signed on Tuesday, that authorizes the unified package for livelihoods, industries, food and transportation — with Malacañang declaring that energy security is a national priority.

- [Ombudsman to turn over VP Sara's SALN](#) (2026-03-26 16:16)

THE Office of the Ombudsman on Thursday said it will comply with the subpoena issued by the House Committee on Justice for statements of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALNs) of Vice President Sara Duterte. The committee is conducting hearings to determine whether there is probable cause to impeach her, after it found two impeachment complaints sufficient in form and substance. “Here in the Office of the Ombudsman, any person can request, the public, the general public can request for a copy of SALNs that are with the Ombudsman: the president’s, the vice president’s, those of the heads constitutional commissions and local government unit officials,” Assistant Ombudsman Mico Clavano said. “So, even a simple request would do... And so much more if it is a subpoena. We will comply,” Clavano said. The committee voted on Wednesday to issue a subpoena to the Office of the Ombudsman for Duterte’s SALNs from 2022 to 2025, 2007 to 2013 and 2016 to 2022. The Ombudsman, which is the repository for the SALNs of certain officials including the vice president’s, could provide the SALNs from when she was Davao City mayor and vice mayor. Clavano said they would endorse the subpoena to the Ombudsman’s Mindanao office. Under Republic Act 6713, or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees, public officials and employees have the duty to “submit declarations under oath of... their assets, liabilities, net worth, and financial and business interests including those of their spouses and of unmarried children under” the age of 18 who live in their households. The law requires the documents to be filed within 30 days after assuming office; on or before every April 30 after that; and within 30 days after separating from the service. Meanwhile, the political party of the vice president’s father, former president Rodrigo Duterte, said they are “alarmed and bothered” by what they described as the “weaponization” of the impeachment process by the House panel. The statement from the Partido Demokratiko Pilipino comes after the defense team of the vice president said on Wednesday that they are questioning the proceedings of the committee, saying that only the Senate has the “sole power” to try impeachment cases.

- [Beijing says it's open to oil exploration talks](#) (2026-03-26 16:15)

THE Chinese Embassy in Manila said Beijing remains open for oil and gas exploration talks with Manila as long as the Philippines shows its sincerity for such discussions. The embassy was asked to comment on the remarks of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., in a Bloomberg interview, that he is open to resuming discussions with China on a joint oil and gas project in a disputed area of the South China Sea. It noted that China and the Philippines in the past “have conducted in-depth discussions on joint oil and gas development in disputed waters in the South China Sea and have made positive progress.” Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. during the latter’s state visit to Beijing on Jan. 5, 2023, issued a joint statement on the agreement “to resume discussions on oil and gas development at an early date.” “As long as the Philippine side demonstrates sincerity, China’s door to dialogue and cooperation will remain open,” the embassy said in a statement on Thursday. “Setting aside differences and pursuing joint development is the right path to uphold peace and stability in the South China Sea and deliver benefits to countries in the region and their peoples,” it added. The Palace on Thursday said the Philippines is not ruling out the possibility of engaging in a joint exploration with China to develop oil and gas resources in the West Philippine Sea (WPS). Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro issued the statement in reaction to Beijing’s pronouncement that it is willing to strike a deal with Manila if it would show “sincerity.” The Philippines and China have been long embroiled in a territorial dispute over the WPS. “The Philippines has never been insincere. In all occasions, the Philippines has always been sincere in talking, in negotiating, especially under the leadership of President Marcos. He doesn’t have a secret deal. If the negotiation can lead to anything that will be good for the Philippines, the president will not object to that,” Castro said in Filipino. “Right now, there is no joint exploration with China, but that doesn’t mean there won’t be [any in the future]. So, the Philippines is also open to that,” she added. The United States and Israeli war against Iran, which triggered oil prices to skyrocket in the international market, could provide an impetus for the Philippines and China to finally reach a deal. “That’s something we are exploring. Everything that might be of help we are certainly pursuing,” Marcos said. But the Philippines claims exclusive rights over the natural maritime resources in the contested waterway which China refuses to recognize. Given the current geopolitical situation, Marcos raised the possibility of a “reset” in the two countries’ strained relations. “There’s going to be a very, very serious restructuring,” he said. Constitutional challenge Joint exploration faces constitutional challenges, however. In 2023, then-senator Francis Tolentino urged the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to carefully study the government’s plan to have another round of gas exploration talks with China. Tolentino said the DFA should take into consideration what the Constitution provides when it comes to the Philippines’ rights in its exclusive economic zone. He said the DFA should consider the 2016 Hague arbitral ruling and the recent Supreme Court decision which invalidated the 2005 Tripartite Agreement for Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking (JMSU) before entering into another partnership with China. Voting 12-2-1, the Supreme Court on Jan. 10, 2023, invalidated the tripartite agreement between China National Offshore Oil Corp., Vietnam Oil and Gas Corp., and Philippine National Oil Co. involving an area in the South China Sea covering 142,886 square kilometers. The court ruled that the JMSU is unconstitutional for allowing wholly owned foreign corporations to participate in the

exploration of the country's natural resources without observing the safeguards provided in Section 2, Article 12 of the 1987 Constitution. In 2023, then-Senate minority leader Aquilino Pimentel III also raised the need for transparency from both Philippine and Chinese governments if the proposed negotiations for joint oil and gas explorations in WPS pushed through. Pimentel, in a statement, said the purpose of transparency "is for us to know if the agreement is compliant with our Constitution." Transparency "is crucial for these talks to prosper, most especially when it involves our rights over some parts" of WPS, he added. Tolentino also said that since the matter involves foreign policy and national security, it is only proper that the Senate must be involved in any future exploratory talks with China. He noted that the 2016 Arbitral Ruling invalidated China's "nine-dash line" claim, the basis of Beijing's expansion in the South China Sea and the WPS.

- [Camago-3 well successfully drilled, tested – Marcos](#) (2026-03-26 16:14)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday announced that the Camago-3 well has been successfully drilled and tested, producing up to 60 million standard cubic feet of gas per day. "Today, I am proud to announce another step forward in our mission to secure affordable, reliable energy for every Filipino," Marcos said in a video message. "It is the second major milestone under our \$893-million Malampaya Phase 4 campaign, and it is significantly larger than our first," he added. The president said Camago-3 holds an estimated 2.5 times more recoverable gas than the Malampaya East-1 discovery. "Together, these two wells are projected to extend the life of the Malampaya gas field by an estimated six years," Marcos said. "We are targeting first gas delivery by the fourth quarter of 2026," he added. "This is energy we control. Energy that shields the Filipino people from rising fuel costs beyond our shores," the president said. Prime Energy, operator of Service Contract 38 (SC 38), on Thursday said that it is on track to deliver first gas from the Malampaya Phase 4 (MP4) development by the fourth quarter of 2026. The Camago-3 well flowed at rates of up to 60 million standard cubic feet of gas per day, confirming a substantial addition to Malampaya's remaining gas resources and reinforcing the role of indigenous natural gas in supporting the Philippines' long-term energy security. "The successful completion of Camago-3 demonstrates the strength of the Filipino workforce and the close collaboration between government and industry," Prime Energy said. The Malampaya consortium, led by Prime Energy in collaboration with joint venture partners UC38 LLC, Prime Oil & Gas Inc. and PNOG Exploration Corp., continues to advance activities under MP4 on schedule. For the first time since 2000, new subsea pipelines are being installed to tie additional resources into the Malampaya platform, restoring large-scale offshore construction capability and reinforcing the Philippines' long-term energy resilience. "Delivering results of this scale in less than three years since the renewal of SC 38 is an amazing achievement and reflects what 'Top Quartile' performance looks like in the international Oil and Gas industry. This progress keeps us firmly on track to deliver first MP4 gas in the fourth quarter of 2026 and opens new opportunities to expand the country's domestic gas resources," the company said. Prime Energy, a wholly owned subsidiary of Prime Infra, thanked the president and the Department of Energy for supporting new investments to

sustain the country's indigenous natural gas supply. Utilizing indigenous gas provides a vital shield against price volatility driven by global events. Malampaya's fuel cost equivalent is approximately P4.80 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), compared with roughly P10.30/kWh for imported liquefied natural gas. "The results at Camago-3 further strengthen our confidence in Malampaya's remaining resource potential," Prime Energy said. "Together with the Malampaya East-1 gas discovery, this will deliver continued value of indigenous natural gas in ensuring a stable and reliable power supply for Filipino consumers."

- [Labor group seeks P5,000 wage subsidy](#) (2026-03-26 16:13)

ORGANIZED labor called on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to include the over 5 million minimum wage earners in the government's cash-support program to ease the impact of the rising costs fueled by the Middle East conflict. The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) on Thursday pressed the government to roll out a P5,000 subsidy for private sector employees, who it said are also suffering from rising fuel costs. It said that with Congress still failing to pass the long-delayed P200 legislated wage hike, urgent relief should be provided to minimum wage earners, similar to what the government is providing to the transportation sector. "It cannot be that everything is increasing — except for wages. If there's a fuel subsidy, there should be a wage subsidy. We cannot abandon five million workers," TUCP said. It said that for more than three decades, minimum wage earners have been left behind by the regional wage-setting system established in 1989. It criticized the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) for failing to hold consultations with labor groups and raised concern over the formation of the Palace's Uplift (Urban Program for Livelihood Finance and Training) Committee without adequate worker representation. "For over thirty years, fair wages have not been given to the workers. Now, in the midst of a crisis, they are being neglected again. Not once were we consulted by DOLE, and the Uplift Committee was formed without a genuine voice from the ranks of the workers," TUCP said. It made the call during the Senate Protect (Proactive Response and Oversight for Timely and Effective Crisis Strategy) Committee hearing, as the Department of Budget and Management confirmed P230 billion in available crisis funds. "The P5,000 subsidy costs just P25 billion — loose change compared to the P230 billion [for other sectors]. It can be done if there's a political will," TUCP said. It called on Malacañang to certify the P200 legislated wage hike as urgent to fast-track its passage. TUCP also called on the government to remove the excise taxes on petroleum products, implement price control on basis commodities, including diesel and gasoline, impose a moratorium on loan payments and lower interest from SSS, GSIS and Pag-IBIG.

- [Manibela urges govt to scrap fuel taxes](#) (2026-03-26 16:12)

TRANSPORT group Manibela on Thursday called on the government to remove the excise tax and value-added tax on fuel, a day after a driver died during a payout in Quezon City. Manibela Chairman Mar Valbuena said drivers were being squeezed by rising oil prices and delayed relief, prompting the group to press for the immediate removal of fuel taxes on the first day of the nationwide transport strike. Valbuena said the government should not wait any longer to lift the

excise tax on fuel and the VAT, which further increased the burden on drivers. He said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. should prioritize the suspension of the excise tax, the removal of VAT on fuel and oversight of oil prices so oil companies would not take advantage of the increase in petroleum prices. He said drivers were left with grievances over the fuel aid distribution and the suspension of the fare increase. Valbuena said drivers were asked to submit multiple documents before the payout, including copies of their OR/CR (Official Receipt and Certificate of Registration), franchise papers and other requirements, but many still did not receive assistance. He said some lists were also misplaced, claiming that names submitted in Pasig City ended up in Caloocan City, while drivers along their Nagtahan route did not receive any fuel subsidy. Valbuena said transport groups submitted lists four times, but none of their members on that route received aid. “The giving of aid should be orderly, now that someone has died. Some felt dizzy, some were not given anything. What we received was not aid, but only inconvenience — we lined up the whole day, did not drive, and in the end there was nothing to receive,” he said. A Manibela member also appealed to the government to act on the drivers’ concerns after the driver died during Wednesday’s payout in Quezon City. “Please think carefully about how you will solve our situation, because every member of Manibela is already suffering. We do not want what happened yesterday to happen again. Someone already died, but still got nothing,” the member said. Valbuena said the group’s protest was also driven by the continued increase in fuel prices, which he said had entered its fourth week. He said the transport sector was being affected by the continued rise in diesel prices and by what he described as the government’s lack of control over pump prices. Valbuena also said the problem was not the war in the Middle East itself, but businessmen who, he claimed, were taking advantage of the situation by raising petroleum prices. He said removing fuel taxes would help drivers and other sectors directly affected by rising oil prices, including farmers, fishers and workers. Valbuena questioned the allocation of government funds, saying only P2.5 billion of the P21-billion subsidy package would go to drivers and others directly hit by the oil price increase. He said some groups of 60 to 100 drivers had only four, five or eight members who were able to receive aid. Valbuena said around 80 percent joined the strike, particularly in Metro Manila and nearby provinces. He said at least 30,000 jeepneys in Metro Manila joined the strike and that the figure in the National Capital Region could reach at least 100,000 if transportation network vehicle services, motorcycle taxis and UV Express units were included. Valbuena said the government was not prepared for the strike despite earlier statements from the group that the protest would begin on Wednesday and last for three days.

- [NPCC backs P50/kg price cap for imported rice](#) (2026-03-26 16:11)

THE National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) has endorsed to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. the proposal of the Department of Agriculture (DA) for a P50-per-kilogram (kg) price ceiling on imported rice for 30 days. In a statement on Thursday, the NPCC said it has adopted the DA’s proposal for the imposition of a price cap on 5 percent broken rice. The council said the measure seeks to curb unreasonable price increases and prevent market abuse. The price cap is anchored on Republic Act 7581, or the Price Act, which protects consumers by stabilizing the

prices of basic necessities and prime commodities. It said the proposal is consistent with efforts in response to the president's declaration of a State of National Energy Emergency. Earlier this month, there were reports of imported rice being sold for as high as P60/kg in some parts in the country. Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has said the increase was partly due to the war in the Middle East, which has pushed up fuel prices and freight charges. Tiu Laurel said a P60/kg price on imported rice was not reasonable, noting that 5 percent broken imported rice should only retail within a P48 to P50/kg range. The DA continues to expand its P20/kg rice program. It is also selling rice at P45/kg and P48/kg through Food Terminal Inc. and Planters Products Inc. This initiative has started in Metro Manila and will soon be implemented in major cities nationwide.

- [Go to DBM: Use idle funds for key youth programs](#) (2026-03-26 16:10)

SEN. Bong Go urged the National Youth Commission (NYC), and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to utilize funds already allocated by Congress, warning against leaving budgets idle while critical youth programs remain unimplemented. Go, who chairs the Senate Committee on Youth, raised the issue during the Senate hearing on March 17, citing delays in the rollout of initiatives, particularly those addressing mental health and bullying among the youth. He noted that some programs have been pending for years despite the availability of funding. In response, NYC Chairman Jeff Ortega said limitations during budget deliberations affected the use of additional allocations. Ortega explained that guidance from their agency head restricted spending beyond the commission's regular budget. He said certain requested funds were earmarked for specific purposes that have yet to be implemented. "We only asked for the budget that was given to us for the NYC Extension Office that we are still not using," he said. Ortega said he was open to redirecting funds toward more urgent programs, subject to coordination with the Senate and DBM. Go said funds approved by Congress must be put to use, especially when intended for youth development programs. He raised concerns that unutilized funds could be diverted elsewhere without clear public benefit. The DBM acknowledged the concern and said upcoming budget preparations could help support such initiatives.

- [Southeast Asia revisits nuclear power plans for AI data centers](#) (2026-03-26 16:09)

BANGKOK, Thailand — Nuclear power is getting a second look in Southeast Asia as countries prepare to meet surging energy demand as they vie for artificial intelligence-focused data centers. Several Southeast Asian nations are reviving mothballed nuclear plans and setting ambitious targets and nearly half of the region could, if they pursue those goals, have nuclear energy in the 2030s. Even countries without current plans have signaled their interest. Southeast Asia has never produced a single watt of nuclear energy, despite long-held atomic ambitions. But that may soon change as pressure mounts to reduce emissions that contribute to climate change, while meeting growing power needs. The Iran war is underscoring the vulnerability of Asia's energy supplies, raising the sense of urgency about finding alternatives to oil and gas in Southeast Asia, analysts say. The surge in crude oil prices caused by the escalating conflict has raised the motivation for countries to speed up their nuclear efforts, said Alvie

Asuncion-Astronomo of the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute. Vietnam and Russia advanced a nuclear power deal this week as the region's energy security concerns worsened. In South Asia, Bangladesh is racing to power up its new nuclear power plant, also backed by Russia, to address the country's energy shortfalls. Southeast Asia will account for a quarter of growth in global energy demand by 2035, according to the International Energy Agency, or IEA. That partly is because of the more than 2,000 data centers in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines, according to the think tank Ember. Many more data centers are in the pipeline. That's most obvious in Malaysia, which aspires to be Southeast Asia's AI computing hub and has drawn investments and interest from tech giants like Microsoft, Google and Nvidia. The revival of Southeast Asia's nuclear interest mirrors a global trend. Nearly 40 nations — including the United States, Japan, South Korea and China — have joined a global push to triple installed nuclear energy capacity by 2050. Southeast Asia will account for nearly a fourth of the 157 gigawatts expected from “newcomer nuclear nations” by mid-century, according to the industry-backed World Nuclear Association. “There is a more serious, new and growing momentum for the development of nuclear energy in Southeast Asia,” said King Lee, with the association. Southeast Asia revisits nuclear power. Five of the 11 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations — Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines — are chasing nuclear. Vietnam is building two nuclear plants, backed by the Russian state corporation Rosatom. These are “nationally significant, strategic projects,” according to Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh. Vietnam's revised atomic energy law took effect in January. Indonesia added nuclear to its new energy plan last year, aiming to build two small modular reactors by 2034. Officials there say Canada and Russia have issued formal cooperation proposals and others will soon follow. Thailand set a target last year of adding 600 megawatts of nuclear generating capacity by 2037. Nuclear is a “promising solution” to supplying enough affordable, clean electricity to meet rising demand, officials with Thailand's Electricity Generating Authority told a conference in Bangkok. No Southeast Asian nation has engaged with atomic energy more than the Philippines, which built a nuclear power plant in the 1970s that it never turned on. A new atomic energy regulatory authority launched last year will “usher in the integration of nuclear power,” according to Philippine officials. The country set a 2032 target and approved a roadmap for potential investors in February. “We are not anticipating that nuclear electricity will be cheap at the onset,” said Asuncion-Astronomo. But in the long term, she said it will improve the Philippines' energy reliability, security, independence and eventually costs. “The ongoing conflict in the Middle East definitely demonstrates how volatile fossil fuel costs are and the instability of the supply,” she said. “Nuclear is an alternative solution that can give us more self-reliance in terms of energy.” Southeast Asian nations without firm plans are also showing interest. Cambodia's latest national strategy signaled an openness to nuclear and Singapore outlined plans last year to study its own atomic potential. Even the tiny oil and gas sultanate of Brunei told the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, that it is “carefully exploring nuclear energy.” Data centers revive Malaysia's nuclear plans. The AI-focused data centers contributing to Southeast Asia's growing energy demand are large windowless buildings filled with rows of computers. A standard AI data center consumes as much electricity as 100,000 households, the

IEA says. Malaysia has more than 500 operational data centers. Another 300 or so are under construction and around 1,140 are planned, according to Ember. Malaysia revived its nuclear program last year and set a 2031 target for bringing atomic energy online. Nuclear power risks remain. Global nuclear capacity will more than triple — to about 1,446 gigawatts — by 2050 if existing reactors continue operations and governments meet their stated targets, according to the World Nuclear Association. More than 400 nuclear reactors, in about 30 countries, generate around 380 gigawatts of energy, according to the IAEA's Power Reactor Information System. This makes up between 4.5 to 10 percent of the world's energy, the IEA and nuclear association estimate. Concerns over nuclear safety, waste and supply remain. Public resistance flared after the cataclysmic 1986 Chernobyl and 2011 Fukushima nuclear meltdowns. But even Japan, which idled all its plants after that disaster, is restarting its nuclear plants. Bridget Woodman, with the research group Zero Carbon Analytics, said that as the world strays farther off track from its climate goals, nuclear can look deceptively more enticing than other less risky alternatives, like renewable energy. Southeast Asian countries “considering starting a nuclear industry from scratch” need to consider “the possibility of accidents,” she said.

- [Comelec adopts austerity measures amid national energy emergency](#) (2026-03-26 16:07)

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) has implemented austerity measures relative to the president's declaration of a state of national energy emergency to ease the impact of the war in the Middle East. The Commission en banc on Thursday adopted the recommendation of Chairman George Erwin Garcia to postpone or cancel non-essential travel and activities that entail significant budgetary expenditures. “This measure demonstrates sensitivity to the economic hardship and fuel price volatility currently affecting the Filipino people,” Garcia said in a memorandum. However, the en banc exempted from its directive activities related to the preparations for the Bangsamoro parliamentary election, the 2026 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections, and the 2028 national and local elections, the resolution of electoral controversies and other core functions and activities in compliance with rules and regulations. The recommendations adopted by the Commission en banc include, among others, the postponement of the Election Expo Convention and Conference, including the Asian Electoral Stakeholders Forum VII and the Philippine Election Expo scheduled on April 21-23, 2026. The commission postponed the National Goodwill Games scheduled for May 8-10, 2026 and the team building activities of all departments and offices. The Comelec will also adopt a work-from-home arrangement for main and field offices every Monday beginning April 6, 2026. Meanwhile, Malacañang on Thursday assured the public that essential government services would not be affected by the government's energy conservation measures. Executive Secretary Ralph Recto said agencies delivering frontline services were not covered by the four-day onsite work being implemented to conserve energy. “The language of the president's order is clear: Agencies that provide frontline services shall keep their services running at all times,” Recto said in a statement. He said that the “overriding rule” was that “essential, basic and vital services” must not be disrupted. These include agencies involved in the “direct delivery of health, public safety, and emergency response services.” “We do not

cut ambulance service in the name of fuel economy. We do not restrict police response to crime in order to save on gas. Services like these are not subject to cost-cutting,” he added. “If fuel prices rise, we will put government vehicles on a gas diet so ambulances, fire trucks, and police patrol cars can continue operating,” he said. Under Memorandum Circular 114 issued by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on March 6, support and auxiliary offices, even in frontline agencies, are required to reduce their energy consumption by at least 20 percent. Recto said the conservation measures covered regional and administrative offices. “If you are a regional office of the Bureau of Fire Protection, you are covered by energy conservation protocols, but the fuel supply of fire trucks is exempt,” he said.

- [Senators sound alarm on possible onion price collapse](#) (2026-03-26 16:05)

SEN. Joseph Victor Ejercito on Thursday warned that rising production costs and declining farm-gate prices may push farmers into losses and put the country’s food security at serious risk. “We cannot neglect our farmers,” Ejercito said. 989789,989793,989791,989782,989784,989779,989792,989785,989772,989775,989776,989783,989781,989777,989778,989794,989796,989773,989780,989786,989774,989787,989790,989771,989795 He cited the sharp drop in farm-gate prices of onions in Nueva Ecija and other producing provinces, even as production costs continue to rise. The Senate deputy majority leader raised this matter during a public hearing of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform held in Nueva Ecija. Sen. Francis Pangilinan, the panel chairman, said the inquiry looked into the “systemic collapse” of onion farmgate prices in Occidental Mindoro and Nueva Ecija. Ejercito said that the situation is no longer a simple issue of supply and demand. “This is no longer just a matter of price fluctuations. This is a failure of the system. This is [government] negligence.” Sen. Panfilo Lacson also questioned the country’s onion importation policy, saying that continued importation during local harvest could harm farmers. The Senate president pro tempore cited data suggesting that the Philippines may already be beyond onion self-sufficiency. He presented the Philippine Onion Industry Road Map 2021-2025. “The Philippines reportedly needs to increase onion production from 229,539 metric tons to 279,270 metric tons in order to achieve self-sufficiency by 2025,” said Lacson in Filipino. He said data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed that the national onion harvest in 2024 had reached 264,000. “So, the question is, how much was harvested in 2025?” he asked. Lacson learned a harvest of 279,000 metric tons of onion is self-sufficient. “And we’ve even exceeded that. So why did we import so much — 94,000 metric tons in total in 2025? Our shortfall wasn’t even close to 94,000 metric tons,” he said. “Why are we importing? It’s to kill our farmers, there’s no other reason,” Lacson said. Ejercito also raised concern over the continued influx of imported onions, even during peak harvest season, which he said undermines local producers. He questioned the government’s importation strategy, warning that poorly timed imports worsen the situation. Ejercito said the issue “goes beyond market fluctuations and points to structural problems that must be immediately addressed.” Lacson said that local farmers are being harmed by importers who deliberately time shipments to coincide with the local harvest, undercutting the prices of homegrown

onions. Pangilinan, panel chairman, raised concerns over the continued importation of onion during the local harvest season. He noted that farmers are already struggling with rising fuel and logistics costs resulting from the Middle East war. He said onion import clearances remained valid during the local harvest period despite policies intended to prevent overlap with domestic production. “It is questionable, especially since the policy is very clear that imports should not overlap with the harvest season of our local farmers,” Pangilinan said in Filipino. He noted that imported onions occupying cold storage facilities leave little room for local harvests, forcing farmers to sell their products at a lower cost. “When this happens, you cannot help but wonder whether our farmers are being deliberately denied access to cold storage while imported onions continue to enter the market and farmgate prices keep falling,” Pangilinan said.

- [Tulfo welcomes dismissal of eligibility case](#) (2026-03-26 16:05)

THE Senate Electoral Tribunal has dismissed a quo warranto petition seeking the ouster of Sen. Erwin Tulfo, who called the dismissal a reaffirmation of earlier decisions clearing his eligibility. In a statement issued on Thursday, Tulfo expressed relief over the tribunal’s March 25 decision. “I thank God that this case that was repeatedly thrown at me has been dismissed,” he said. The tribunal, chaired by Justice Marvic Leonen, junked the petition on the grounds of “insufficiency in form” and failure to meet basic procedural requirements. Tulfo thanked the tribunal members for “for carefully reviewing and finally dismissing this case based on the pieces of evidence my lawyer submitted.” The petition, filed by Berteni Cataluña Causing, questioned Tulfo’s eligibility to hold public office, citing allegations that held United States citizenship and served in the US Army, a prior libel conviction allegedly involving moral turpitude, and purported violations related to political dynasties and academic qualifications. The ruling effectively ends the latest legal challenge against Tulfo, following earlier dismissals of similar cases by the Commission on Elections. He described the decision as a “direct and clear affirmation” of the previous rulings. The tribunal, which serves as the sole judge of electoral contests involving members of the Senate, has yet to release a full copy of its decision.

- [Kids, elderly more susceptible to heat stroke – DOH](#) (2026-03-26 16:04)

THE Department of Health (DOH) urged the public to take precautions against heat-related illnesses, particularly heat stroke, which poses a significant threat to children and the elderly. In a television interview on Thursday, Health Secretary Ted Herbosa said it is important to stay hydrated and avoid prolonged exposure to the sun, as the heat intensifies. Herbosa said the bodies of children and the elderly are less efficient at regulating temperature, making them more susceptible to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. While most heat-related illnesses, such as heat fatigue, can be managed with rest, hydration, and cooling techniques, severe cases of heat stroke require immediate medical attention. “The treatment of most heat-related illnesses does not require hospitalization. However, heat stroke, which can be fatal, needs to be treated urgently in hospitals,” he said. Herbosa assured the public that public hospitals and emergency departments are equipped and ready to manage an increase in heat-related illnesses.

- [PNP aims to close more e-sabong hubs](#) (2026-03-26 16:04)

THE Philippine National Police (PNP) said Thursday that it intends to close more “e-sabong” hubs across the country following a major operation against illegal cockfighting in Tondo, Manila. PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. called for an intensified crackdown against illegal online cockfighting, noting the operation in a coliseum in Tondo was part of a sustained nationwide campaign targeting organized illegal gambling networks. “We are intensifying intelligence-driven operations nationwide. This crackdown will continue until these illegal gambling hubs are completely dismantled,” Nartatez said in a statement. Authorities on Tuesday night raided an alleged 24-hour e-sabong operation at Vista Coliseum in Tondo, resulting in the arrest of more than 170 individuals. Nartatez said the operation exposed how illegal betting activities continue to operate behind closed doors despite a nationwide ban. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. issued Executive Order 9 in December 2022, reaffirming the nationwide suspension of e-sabong operations and ordering stricter enforcement against illegal activities. “Illegal e-sabong is a breeding ground for crime. It leads to financial ruin for families and fuels petty crimes. This destroys the moral fiber of our community,” Nartatez said. “Apart from gambling, these hubs often involve unregulated crowds and tax evasion. It creates an environment where lawlessness thrives, affecting even those who are not playing,” he added. The PNP is currently conducting nationwide intelligence mapping to locate e-sabong networks attempting to hide behind physical coliseums or digital screens. Nartatez lauded the CIDG-National Capital Region and the Manila Police District for the successful operation and warned operators of illegal e-sabong operations to stop their activities.

- [CAAP unveils eco-friendly facility](#) (2026-03-26 16:04)

THE Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) broke ground on a P382.96 million, six-story executive building on Monday. Located within the CAAP Central Office complex on Old MIA Road in Pasay City, the modern facility was designed to serve as the agency’s executive hub and meet the rising demands of the aviation sector. The building will expand office capacity and improve inter-office coordination, fostering a more efficient and productive working environment for employees. “These initiatives reflect one clear direction: a CAAP that is safer, greener, and truly future-ready,” said CAAP Director General Raul del Rosario. The regulator also inaugurated a sewage treatment plant (STP) within the same compound. The facility utilizes integrated fixed-film activated sludge (IFAS) technology — the first of its kind in a Philippine government aviation facility — and is capable of treating up to 260 cubic meters of wastewater daily. The CAAP added that eight newly acquired Oshkosh aircraft rescue and firefighting units have been deployed to domestic airports under its jurisdiction. The units were distributed to airports in Laoag, Puerto Princesa, Butuan, Siargao, Busuanga, Bicol, General Santos and Tacloban.

- [Marcos urged to call special session after Holy Week](#) (2026-03-26 16:03)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. must call a special session of Congress after Holy Week to address the worsening impact of the Middle East war on Filipinos, two lawmakers from

northern Metro Manila said on Thursday. Interviewed separately via Viber, Caloocan City 2nd District Rep. Edgar Erice and Navotas City Rep. Toby Tiangco highlighted the need for Congress to remain in session and “act decisively given the current situation.” “Especially now that the chief executive has declared a state of energy emergency,” they pointed out. Erice and Tiangco said they already filed measures to mitigate the impact of the crisis, including fuel subsidies for affected sectors, government austerity measures and suspension of the value-added tax (VAT) on petroleum products to ease the burden on consumers. “It would be unfair that Congress is on break while the Filipino people are suffering. This is not the time for recess — this is the time for action,” said Erice, a member of the House opposition. They noted that the crisis has gone beyond energy concerns and now affects inflation, transportation costs, food security, government revenues, and the safety of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). “In the long run, the families of OFWs in the country would be directly affected and that would be alarming,” Tiangco said. They called on the House to exercise its oversight powers over rising oil prices, citing alarming data. “It was indeed infuriating to find out that at the height of the crisis, there are opportunists and greedy people who take advantage for their own interests,” Erice said. He noted that based on the Asian diesel price tracker, the Philippines has already recorded a 97-percent surge in the prices of diesel, compared with other neighboring countries which only had a 30 percent to 40 percent rise. To ensure continuity of legislative work while conserving resources, Erice proposed a modified schedule like holding only two sessions weekly from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in order to save on electricity. Tiangco suggested austerity measures like doing away with food catering, especially during committee hearings. “Let’s try bringing our own food — coffee and bread is good enough. What’s important, our work must continue amid this crisis. Let us show good example to our fellowmen,” the former long-time Navotas mayor said.

- [‘DBP willing to waive penalties on loans’](#) (2026-03-26 16:02)

THE Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) announced Thursday that the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) is willing to temporarily waive or suspend penalties on overdue loans of transport service entities that acquired modern jeepneys under the government’s modernization program. LTFRB Chairman Vigor Mendoza II said the loans were obtained by transport cooperatives and small companies to finance the purchase of modern jeepneys under the Public Transport Modernization Program. Mendoza said many of these units are financed through DBP’s Program Assistance to Support Alternative Driving Approaches. He said the LTFRB wrote to DBP President and CEO Michael de Jesus requesting a temporary waiver or suspension of penalties on delayed payments, citing the financial strain caused by surging fuel prices. “The significant increase in petroleum costs has placed additional pressure on transport operators, affecting their ability to meet loan obligations,” Mendoza said. In its reply, DBP acknowledged that the Middle East situation has driven up global oil prices and weakened the peso, resulting in higher operating expenses for the transport sector. “DBP may consider granting a temporary suspension or waiver of penalties on a case-to-case basis, subject to approval of the appropriate authorities,” the bank said in its

response. Mendoza welcomed the bank's response, saying the measure would help operators stabilize their finances and sustain public transport services. "This will be a big help to operators struggling with rising operational costs," he said, adding that the move reflects coordination among government agencies to support the transport sector.

- [PNP HPG names acting director](#) (2026-03-26 16:01)

POLICE Regional Office Central Luzon Deputy Director for Administration BGen. Rommel Batangan has been designated acting director of the Philippine National Police Highway Patrol Group (PNP-HPG). On Wednesday, PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. released the order issued by the PNP Directorate for Personnel and Records Management. The appointment follows the resignation of BGen. Jessie Tamayao, who stepped down Wednesday amid a subordinate's sexual harassment accusation. The victim filed an administrative complaint against Tamayao before the National Police Commission on Tuesday. Tamayao denied the accusations in a statement and clarified that his resignation was not an admission of guilt but a gesture of respect for due process.

- [Russian oil arrives, boosts buffer stock](#) (2026-03-26 16:00)

A SHIP carrying more than 700,000 barrels of Russian crude oil has arrived in the Philippines, a source with knowledge of the matter told Agence France-Presse (AFP) on Thursday, days after the country declared a national energy emergency over the Middle East war. The Sierra Leone-flagged Sara Sky, bearing high-quality crude from Russia's ESPO pipeline arrived on Monday, with documents showing the consignee as Petron Corp., operator of the Philippines' sole oil refinery, said the source, who asked to remain anonymous as they were not authorized to speak to press. Based on recent data from the Department of Energy and international energy monitoring agencies, the Philippines consumes about 450,000 to 487,000 barrels of oil per day. At this rate, the Russian delivery this week would add less than two days to the country's fuel inventory. The Philippines is heavily dependent on imported fuel, the cost of which has hit historic highs since the US-Israeli war with Iran forced the partial closure of the Strait of Hormuz. An AFP journalist on Thursday saw the Sara Sky at anchor in Limay port just outside Manila, where the Petron refinery is located. It is believed to be the first shipment of Russian oil to the Philippines in five years. Last week, Ramon Ang, CEO of Petron, told AFP the company was "in talks" to potentially purchase Russian oil. On Thursday, he declined to confirm the arrival of the shipment. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said Wednesday that the Philippines was casting a wide net in its search for fuel, with the country's dwindling stocks expected to last only another 45 days. "We have not only gone to our... traditional oil suppliers, we have tried to explore other sources that are not affected by the war that is ongoing in the Middle East," he said in a press briefing addressing the state of emergency. "Nothing is off the table. We are looking at everything, everything that we can do." The United States this month eased some restrictions on sales of Russian crude, allowing countries to purchase oil that was already at sea until April 11. Kpler analyst Muyu Xu told AFP around 120 million barrels of Russian oil may have been at sea at the time, adding much of it may have already been preordered by Chinese or

Indian clients. On Thursday, the Philippines' Department of Energy activated a P20-billion emergency fund that Energy Secretary Sharon Garin called a "proactive step" to securing fuel supplies. Garin said earlier this week that the Philippines also planned to boost the output of its coal-fired power plants to keep electricity costs down as the war wreaks havoc with gas shipments. With the cost of LNG (liquefied natural gas) soaring, Garin said the country would "temporarily" be forced to lean even more heavily on the fossil fuel, the main contributor of climate-warming carbon dioxide emissions from human sources. She added that top coal supplier Indonesia had placed no restriction on the amount the Philippines could buy if it needs to increase imports.

- [JV Ejercito: Onion price collapse threatens farmers, food security](#) (2026-03-26 13:46)

MANILA, Philippines -- Sen. Joseph Victor Ejercito on Thursday warned that rising production costs and declining farm-gate prices may push farmers into losses and put the country's food security at serious risk. The senator said that while the country is in the midst of state of national energy emergency, the problems hounding the agricultural sector remain. Ejercito reiterated that farmers remain the backbone of the nation and must not be neglected. "We cannot neglect our farmers." He cited the sharp drop in farm-gate prices of onions in Nueva Ecija and other producing provinces, even as production costs continue to rise. The Senate deputy majority leader raised this matter during a public hearing of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform held in Nueva Ecija. He said that the situation is no longer a simple issue of supply and demand. "This is no longer just a matter of price fluctuations. This is a failure of the system. This is [government] negligence." Ejercito also raised concern over the continued influx of imported onions, even during peak harvest season, which he said undermines local producers. He questioned the government's importation strategy, warning that poorly timed imports worsen the situation. Ejercito said the issue "goes beyond market fluctuations and points to structural problems that must be immediately addressed."

- [DSWD, DOTR to have special payout of fuel subsidies for PUV drivers not on master list](#) (2026-03-26 13:31)

MANILA, Philippines – The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Department of Transportation (DOTr) would set a day for the special payout of fuel subsidies for transport workers who were excluded from the master list of beneficiaries, Malacañang announced on Thursday. Presidential Communications Office (PCO) Undersecretary Claire Castro said this is to ensure compliance with the directive of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to not leave anyone behind in the government's efforts to cushion the impact of the high prices of petroleum products particularly those from the transport sector. Castro noted that DOTr Secretary Giovanni Lopez and DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian have agreed to have a special payout for the P5,000 financial assistance which will come from the Cash Relief Assistance Program under the DSWD's Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS). "There may have been a double entry or lack of details in their names or they may not have been registered with the LTRFB (Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board). But by the order of the

president, no one will be left behind,” the official said in Filipino in a Palace briefing. Reports earlier surfaced that there were jeepney drivers in some areas around the country whose names were not on the list slated to receive the cash aid. Castro gave reassurance that this is now being remedied. “It’s likely that there was a double listing. Let’s say they were listed as a tricycle driver but they are also driving a motor taxi. So, all we really need is review the list of valid beneficiaries,” she said. Overall, the government’s cash aid targets 245,066 driver-beneficiaries and operators of 1,180,783 PUV units nationwide.

- [Lazaro urges countries to uphold international law](#) (2026-03-26 13:10)

MANILA, Philippines -- Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro called on all countries to uphold international law, particularly the respect for sovereignty amid the war in the Middle East. Lazaro underscored the need for the "peaceful resolution of disputes, refraining from the threat or use of force, and cooperation within an established and robust multilateral system." The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said she renewed the Philippines’ call for all parties to the ongoing conflict to "de-escalate and resolve their differences through diplomacy and dialogue." Lazaro said the Philippines is committed to enhancing its relations with Muslim partners in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. She made the assurance on Thursday when she hosted a lunch reception for Muslim heads of diplomatic missions in the Philippines to celebrate Eid’ I Fitr, which marked the end of the holy month of Ramadan. The DFA said Lazaro emphasized the "universal values of compassion, empathy, and unity that are shared by other faiths and cultures in the world." She said that Eid’ I Fitr is a national holiday in the Philippines to give importance to the Muslim population, mostly in Mindanao and in the Bangsamoro region. "The DFA said it "traditionally hosts the Eid’ I Fitr reception to keep with its tradition of expressing solidarity and brotherhood with the Muslim members of the diplomatic corps and the larger Muslim community."

- [Lacson: Smuggling, unchecked importation, sloppy govt response 'killing' onion farmers](#) (2026-03-26 13:04)

MANILA, Philippines -- Sen. Panfilo Lacson said aside smuggling and unchecked onion imports, disjointed government data and sloppy government response further push farmers to the brink. The senator called out the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) for the apparent discrepancies in their data on onion production and consumption. This issue hinders the government from making the needed decisions to help onion farmers, said Lacson during a public hearing of the Senate committees on agriculture and local government on the systemic collapse of onion farm-gate prices. "How can we arrive at effective decisions if your data is disjointed?" Lacson asked the representatives of the DA and PSA. The PSA said the Philippines produced 308,660 metric tons (MTs) in 2025. Lacson said this could mean a "surplus" of about 13,000 MTs of onion. Lacson noted that the Philippines imported 94,000 MTs in 2025. He said that the volume of onion imports that year could even be bigger -- potentially up to 150,000 MTs if smuggling and leakage are factored in. On the other

hand, Lacson said DA's figures showed that onion production in 2025 amounted to 245,988 MTs from Regions 1 (Ilocos Region), 2 (Cagayan Valley), 3 (Central Luzon). Onion production in Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan) in 2025 showed a deficit of 22,035 MTs. "It seems the communication gap between the DA and stakeholders is very wide. Are stakeholders being consulted by the DA? How often? Or if they are consulted, are the stakeholders being heard?" Lacson asked.

- [President announces successful drill, test of second Malampaya well](#) (2026-03-26 11:21)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday announced that the Camago-3 well has been successfully drilled and tested, producing up to 60 million standard cubic feet of gas per day. "Today, I am proud to announce another step forward in our mission to secure affordable, reliable energy for every Filipino," Marcos said in a video message. "It is the second major milestone under our \$893-million Malampaya Phase 4 campaign and it is significantly larger than our first," he added. The President said Camago-3 holds an estimated 2.5 times more recoverable gas than the Malampaya East-1 discovery. "Together, these two wells are projected to extend the life of the Malampaya gas field by an estimated six years," Marcos said. "We are targeting first gas delivery by the fourth quarter of 2026," he added.

- [Marcos mulls wealth tax as revenue measure for govt](#) (2026-03-26 10:19)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. would study the possibility of implementing a wealth tax as part of possible revenue measures of the government, Malacañang said Thursday. Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said the president was considering various policy options after economist Winnie Monsod criticized the administration's suspension of excise taxes on fuel, saying it benefits wealthier Filipinos more than the poor. "Just like what the President said, nothing is off the table so all suggestions are being considered," Castro said during a press conference. However, Castro cited the statement of Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DepDev) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan on the matter, saying that "imposing a wealth tax on the super wealthy is an economist's dream because wealth tends to compound." "A wealth tax slows wealth concentration over generations. Such concentration translates into political and economic power leading to market failures, slowing economic growth and further weakening inclusivity. Implementing or administering a wealth tax is never easy," Balisacan said, as relayed by Castro. "Most countries that have tried it such as Germany, France, and Sweden abandoned it because of its administrative complexity and the low revenue it generated. Moreover, a wealth tax may encourage capital flight especially when imposed during an economic crisis," he added.

- [Police Highway Patrol Group names Central Luzon deputy chief acting director](#) (2026-03-26 09:37)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine National Police (PNP) named an acting director for its Highway Patrol Group to replace his predecessor who resigned over allegations of sexual harassment. Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr., PNP chief, released the order issued by the PNP's

Directorate for Personnel and Records Management on Wednesday for Brig. Gen. Rommel Batangan, Police Regional Office Central Luzon (PRO 3) deputy director for Administration, to succeed Brig. Gen. Jessie Tamayao who stepped down after a subordinate filed an administrative complaint before the National Police Commission (Napolcom) against him. Tamayao denied the accusations in a statement and clarified that his resignation was not an admission of guilt but a respect for due process.

- [Labor demands ₱5,000 monthly wage subsidy for 5M workers as prices soar](#) (2026-03-26 08:18)

MANILA, Philippines — Organized labor called on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to include the over five million minimum wage earners in the government's cash-support program to ease the impact of the rising costs fueled by the ongoing Middle East conflict. The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) on Thursday pressed the government to immediately roll out a ₱5,000 subsidy for private sector employees, saying that they are also suffering from the effects of rising fuel costs. It pointed out that with Congress still failing to act on the long-delayed ₱200 legislated wage hike, urgent relief should also be provided to minimum wage earners, similar to what the government is providing to the transportation sector. “Hindi puwedeng lahat tumataas—maliban sa sahod. Kung may fuel subsidy, dapat may wage subsidy. Hindi puwedeng pabayaang ang limang milyong manggagawa” (It cannot be that everything is increasing—except for wages. If there's a fuel subsidy, there should be a wage subsidy. We cannot abandon five million workers),” TUCP stressed. The labor group lamented that for more than three decades, minimum wage earners have been left behind by the regional wage-setting system established in 1989. It also criticized the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) for failing to convene meaningful consultations with labor groups, and raised concern over the formation of the Palace's UPLIFT Committee without adequate worker representation.

- [PDP slams House "weaponization" of Impeach Probe](#) (2026-03-26 08:05)

MANILA, Philippines — The Partido Demokratiko Pilipino (PDP) said it was "alarmed" over the "weaponization" of the impeachment process by the House of Representatives Justice Committee against Vice President Sara Duterte. Duterte is the daughter of PDP's chairman-emeritus, former president Rodrigo Duterte, who is currently jailed at International Criminal Court at The Hague where he may stand trial for alleged crimes against humanity for his war against illegal drugs. In a press briefing in Quezon City on Thursday, PDP Deputy Spokesman Ferdinand Topacio said that the committee, led by Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro, was converting the summary proceedings into a "trial" for the Vice President. "Both Houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives, cannot formulate its rules that violate the constitution, particularly the due process clause, the right against self incrimination, and the right to remain silent," Topacio, a lawyer, said. Topacio even described the proceedings as a 'kangaroo court' and a "star chamber", meaning a court with no due process. Former PDP senatorial candidate Jimmy Bondoc agreed with Topacio, saying that the jurisdiction of the House committee to conduct a mini trial is "fatally flawed" and "defective," citing the concept of "

in dubio pro reo" or "always rule for the accused""Because it's in favor of the accused, always in favor of Sara who is now an accused, who is in jeopardy and we know they will file cases," Bondoc, a lawyer, said. On Wednesday, the defense team of Duterte said that it was questioning the proceedings of the committee, saying that the Senate has the "sole power" to try impeachment cases.

- [China seeks sincerity from PH in resuming oil exploration talks](#) (2026-03-26 07:24)

MANILA, Philippines — The Chinese Embassy in Manila said Beijing remained open for oil and gas exploration talks with Manila as long as the Philippines showed its sincerity for such discussion. The embassy was asked to comment on the remarks of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., in a Bloomberg interview, that he was open to resuming discussions with China on a joint oil and gas project in a disputed area of the South China Sea. It noted that China and the Philippines in the past "have conducted in-depth discussions on joint oil and gas development in disputed waters in the South China Sea and have made positive progress." Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. during the Philippine leader's state visit to Beijing on Jan. 5, 2023, issued a joint statement on the agreement "to resume discussions on oil and gas development at an early date." "As long as the Philippine side demonstrates sincerity, China's door to dialogue and cooperation will remain open," the embassy said in a statement on Thursday. "Setting aside differences and pursuing joint development is the right path to uphold peace and stability in the South China Sea and deliver benefits to countries in the region and their peoples," it added. In 2023, then senator Francis Tolentino urged the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to carefully study the government's plan to have another round of gas exploration talks with China. Tolentino said the DFA should take into consideration what the Constitution provides when it comes to the Philippines' rights in its exclusive economic zone. He said the DFA should consider the 2016 Hague Arbitral ruling and the recent Supreme Court decision which invalidated the 2005 Tripartite Agreement for Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking (JMSU) before entering into another partnership with China. But voting 12-2-1, the Supreme Court on Jan. 10, 2023 invalidated the tripartite agreement between China National Offshore Oil Corp., Vietnam Oil and Gas Corp., and Philippine National Oil Co. involving an area in the South China Sea covering 142,886 square kilometers. The court ruled that the JSMU was unconstitutional for allowing wholly-owned foreign corporations to participate in the exploration of the country's natural resources without observing the safeguards provided in Section 2, Article 12 of the 1987 Constitution.

- [DOH warns heat stroke more prevalent in kids and elderly](#) (2026-03-26 07:12)

MANILA, Philippines—The Department of Health (DOH) urged the public to take precautions against heat-related illnesses, particularly heat stroke, which poses a significant threat to vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly. In an interview with state-run media PTV on Thursday, Health Secretary Ted Herbosa said it was important to stay hydrated and avoid prolonged exposure to the sun, as the summer heat intensifies. "To our countrymen, especially the elders and children, they are the most at risk for heat-related illnesses. Drink plenty of

water, avoid staying in hot places for too long, and if you feel unwell, seek medical attention immediately," he said in Filipino.

- [Ombudsman to comply with House panel subpoena order for Sara SALNs](#) (2026-03-26 06:20)

MANILA, Philippines — The Office of the Ombudsman will comply with a subpoena order issued by the House of Representatives on the Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN) of Vice President Sara Duterte. In a press conference on Thursday, Assistant Ombudsman Mico Clavano said that "even a simple request would do [...]. So much more if it is a subpoena. We will comply." The House justice committee, which is hearing Duterte's impeachment case to determine whether there is probable cause, decided on Wednesday to issue a subpoena to the Ombudsman for the vice president's SALNs from 2022 to 2025, 2007 to 2013, 2016 to 2022. The office, which is the repository for the SALNs of some officials, including the vice president's, could provide the documents from when she was Davao City mayor and vice mayor. Clavano said that "we would have to direct or endorse the request or subpoena to the proper office that was the repository of those SALNs which is 'yung sa Mindanao office ho natin (our Mindanao office)."

- [Russian oil arrives as PH battles 'energy emergency'](#) (2026-03-26 05:09)

MANILA, Philippines — A ship carrying more than 700,000 barrels of Russian crude oil has arrived in the Philippines, a source with knowledge of the matter told AFP Thursday, days after the country declared a national energy emergency over the Middle East war. The Sierra Leone-flagged Sara Sky, bearing high-quality crude from Russia's ESPO pipeline arrived on Monday, with documents showing the consignee as Petron Corp, operator of the Philippines' sole oil refinery, said the source, who asked to remain anonymous as they were not authorized to speak to press. The Philippines is heavily dependent on imported fuel, the cost of which has hit historic highs since the US-Israeli war with Iran forced the partial closure of the Strait of Hormuz. An AFP journalist on Thursday saw the Sara Sky at anchor in Limay port just outside Manila, where the Petron refinery is located. It is believed to be the first shipment of Russian oil to the Philippines in five years. Last week, Ramon Ang, CEO of Petron, told AFP the company was "in talks" to potentially purchase Russian oil. On Thursday, he declined to confirm the arrival of the shipment. President Ferdinand Marcos said Wednesday that the Philippines was casting a wide net in its search for fuel, with the country's dwindling stocks expected to last only another 45 days. "We have not only gone to our...traditional oil suppliers, we have tried to explore other sources that are not affected by the war that is ongoing in the Middle East," he said in a press briefing addressing the state of emergency. "Nothing is off the table. We are looking at everything, everything that we can do." The United States this month eased some restrictions on sales of Russian crude, allowing countries to purchase oil that was already at sea until April 11. Kpler analyst Muyu Xu told AFP around 120 million barrels of Russian oil may have been at sea at the time, adding much of it may have already been pre-ordered by Chinese or Indian clients. On Thursday, the Philippines' Department of Energy activated a 20 billion-peso (\$332

million) emergency fund that energy secretary Sharon Garin called a "proactive step" to securing fuel supplies. Garin said earlier this week that the archipelago nation also planned to boost the output of its coal-fired power plants to keep electricity costs down as the war wreaks havoc with gas shipments. With the cost of LNG (liquefied natural gas) soaring, Garin said the country would "temporarily" be forced to lean even more heavily on the fossil fuel, the main contributor of climate-warming carbon dioxide emissions from human sources. She added that top coal supplier Indonesia had placed "no restriction" on the amount the Philippines could buy if it needs to increase imports.

- [Comelec adopts austerity measures; cancels non-essential travel](#) (2026-03-26 03:54)

MANILA, Philippines — The Commission on Elections (Comelec) has implemented austerity measures in connection with the President's declaration of a state of national energy emergency to ease the impact of the war in the Middle East. The Commission en banc on Thursday adopted the recommendation of Chairman George Erwin Garcia to postpone or cancel non-essential travel and activities that entail significant budgetary expenditures. "This measure demonstrates sensitivity to the economic hardship and fuel price volatility currently affecting the Filipino people," Garcia said in a memorandum. However, the En Banc exempted from its directive activities related to the preparations for the Bangsamoro parliamentary election, the 2026 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections, and the 2028 national and local elections, the resolution of electoral controversies and other core functions and activities in compliance with rules and regulations. The recommendations adopted by the Commission en banc include, among others, the postponement of the Election Expo Convention and Conference, including the Asian Electoral Stakeholders Forum VII and the Philippine Election Expo scheduled on April 21-23, 2026. The commission postponed the National Goodwill Games scheduled for May 8-10, 2026 and the teambuilding activities of all departments and offices. The Comelec will also adopt a work-from-home arrangement for main and field offices every Monday beginning April 6, 2026.

- [30K delivery, motorcycle taxi riders queue for P5K fuel subsidy](#) (2026-03-26 03:47)

MANILA, Philippines—Thousands of motorcycle taxi and delivery riders on Thursday packed the Quezon Memorial Circle (QMC) in Quezon City where the city is handing out P5,000 in relief assistance amid rising fuel costs. Mayor Joy Belmonte told The Manila Times that she directed Elmo San Diego, the city's Department of Public Order and Safety chief; and QMC management to ensure the safety of the riders and orderliness during the event. The local government said the distribution will be made in alphabetical order. The riders should bring the original and a photocopy of their professional driver's license with three signatures. "On behalf of the city government, I am gratified by the quick response of the national government led by the Department of Social Welfare and Development and Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board for extending the much-needed assistance to these essential sectors," Belmonte said. The city government has also set up similar payouts for TNVS (transport network vehicle service) riders as well as jeepney and tricycle drivers.

- [Drivers are losing P1,500 a day, group says as transport strike starts](#) (2026-03-26 03:09)

MANILA, Philippines — Transport group Manibela on Thursday pushed back against complaints over its proposed fare increase, saying drivers are losing big because of soaring fuel prices. On the first day of the nationwide transport strike on Thursday, March 26, Manibela Chairman Mar Valbuena said each driver is losing about P1,500 in daily income. “You are affected only once or twice, but for us, each driver loses P1,500 in income every day,” Valbuena said. He said that even if commuters take four rides a day, the added cost from the proposed increase would amount to about P10 to P12. “If you compare that with the P1, P2, or P3 fare increase that we are asking for, and let us say you ride four times a day, that is only P12, only P10, while for us we lose thousands,” he said. Valbuena said commuters should also share the burden being carried by drivers as fuel prices continue to eat into their earnings. “I hope we share the responsibility. If you are saying this reduces your income, it affects us even more,” he said. He also took a swipe at the government’s free ride trucks, saying some passengers were no longer able to get to work. “There are no more passengers, they were no longer able to get to work. Will that (truck) fight a war? What do you think of the people? Trash?” he said in Filipino.

- [Barmm officials welcome Marcos' signing of law resetting election](#) (2026-03-26 03:02)

MANILA, Philippines—Key officials in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Barmm) on Thursday expressed optimism following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s signing of a law rescheduling the region’s first parliamentary elections to September 2026. Republic Act (RA) 12317, signed by the President on Wednesday, amends the Bangsamoro Organic Law, moving the historic vote from its original 2025 schedule to the second Monday of September this year. Maguindanao Rep. Esmel “Toto” Mangudadatu called the postponement a “blessing” that provides essential breathing room for the democratic process. “There is still time for candidates to prepare and for people, especially the youth who have just become eligible, to register before the September deadline,” Mangudadatu said. “We hope the elections will be peaceful and that all elected officials will remain committed to serving the people,” he added. Acting Senior Minister Abdullah Cusain assured the public that preparations were underway to ensure credible and orderly election. “The Office of the Chief Minister will ensure that the process will be credible, peaceful, transparent, and with integrity,” Cusain said. “Our preparations have been continuous. Even when the election was rescheduled, we maintained coordination with the Commission on Elections, especially at the regional level,” he added. The move also drew support from the United Bangsamoro Justice Party (UBJP), the political arm of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. UBJP spokesman Mohajirin Ali said the new date provided “renewed momentum” for a transition they have advocated for since last year. “This is something we have been pushing for since last year. We were ready when elections were initially set, even when they were moved to October,” Ali said. Barmm officials are hopeful that the rescheduled election will pave the way for stronger governance, inclusive leadership and lasting peace.

- [Govt urged to scrap fuel taxes as transport strike gets underway](#) (2026-03-26 02:55)

MANILA, Philippines — Transport group Manibela on Thursday called on the government to remove the excise tax and value-added tax on fuel, a day after a driver died during a payout in Quezon City. Manibela Chairman Mar Valbuena said drivers were being squeezed by rising oil prices and delayed relief, prompting the group to press for the immediate removal of fuel taxes on the first day of the nationwide transport strike. During the protest, Valbuena said the government should not wait any longer to lift the excise tax on fuel and should also remove the VAT, which further increased the burden on drivers. “We are appealing to the government to remove the excise taxes, although it has already been signed, but when will that become effective? Because what we know is that it will still take several weeks before it is removed, and the Value Added Tax, where the base is even bigger, should also be removed,” Valbuena said in Filipino. He said the problem was aggravated by what he described as a disorderly aid distribution process, after a driver died during Wednesday’s payout in Quezon City. “The giving of aid should be orderly, not that someone has died. Some felt dizzy, some were not given anything. What we received was not aid, but only inconvenience — we lined up the whole day, did not drive, and in the end there was nothing to receive,” he said. A Manibela member also urged the government to find a solution quickly. “Please think carefully about how you will solve our situation, because every member of Manibela is already suffering. We do not want what happened yesterday to happen again. Someone already died, but still got nothing,” the member said. Valbuena said the transport strike has gone beyond the issue of unpaid aid and reflected wider frustration over the continued rise in fuel prices and the losses drivers absorb each day.

- [172 nabbed in Tondo online sabong bust - CIDG](#) (2026-03-25 18:23)

MANILA, Philippines - At least 172 individuals were arrested when elements of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit (CIDG) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) raided an illegal online cockfighting (e-sabong) operation in Vitas Coliseum in Tondo Manila on Tuesday (March 24) night. During the operation, bettors, management personnel, gaffers and bet takers were apprehended along with several pieces of evidence including 45 sets of computers, three tripod cameras, and cockfighting hens all strongly suggesting the existence of the illegal e-sabong operations. Of the 172, 132 were released to their families awaiting word from the CIDG’s legal department if they would also be included in the charges. Remaining suspects are currently detained and undergoing inquest proceedings at the Manila Police District. The suspects are set to face charges for violation of PD 1602 (Illegal Gambling) in relation to RA 10175 (Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012). E-sabong is prohibited in the Philippines primarily due to severe social ills such as rising gambling addiction, mounting debt, and unsolved criminal cases such as the controversial disappearance of cockfight enthusiasts linking fugitive gaming tycoon Charlie “Atong” Ang as the mastermind. The ban, initially ordered by former President Rodrigo Duterte in May 2022 and continued under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

- [Philippines says Strait of Hormuz must be reopened 'immediately'](#) (2026-03-25 17:32)

PARIS — National Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, whose country the Philippines has declared an energy emergency as a result of the Middle East war, said on Wednesday that the Strait of Hormuz must be reopened "immediately". Iran has virtually closed the vital strait since the US-Israeli strikes that started the war on February 28, causing global oil and gas prices to soar. On Tuesday, President Ferdinand Marcos declared a state of "national energy emergency," citing risks to the domestic fuel supply and energy stability created by the war in the Middle East. "It is of vital importance to us that the Strait of Hormuz be opened immediately and kept safe," Teodoro told AFP in an interview in Paris. "Not only for the seafarers, but also for Philippine consumers. The poor Filipinos who need to pay astronomical prices for electricity, fuel, and power. I think the effects are worldwide." French President Emmanuel Macron said last week that France could help escort vessels in the strategic waterway, but ruled out doing so "in the current context". Teodoro said the conditions for reopening the Strait of Hormuz must be determined based on the expectations of economic stakeholders, particularly insurers. "What will the insurers require as a minimum to insure the vessels? And we proceed from that. Because without adequate vessel insurance, maritime insurance, nothing will move," he said. "So let's see their comfort zone. Let's see the comfort zone of the ship owners. And we work from there," he said, speaking on the sidelines of a security and defence forum in Paris. Around 30 countries, including France, Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Japan, have said they are ready "to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz". This week, Britain and France will chair military talks involving those nations to form a coalition to reopen the strait, a UK defence official told AFP on Wednesday.

- [Lone bettor wins P15M in Mega lotto 6/45 draw for March 25](#) (2026-03-25 16:24)

MANILA, Philippines — A lone bettor won the ₱15,000,000.00 jackpot prize in the Mega lotto 6/45 draw on Wednesday, March 25, 2026, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office announced. The winning combination was 17-24-15-29-10-05. According to PCSO, the winning ticket was purchased at a lotto outlet in Capiz. Meanwhile, no bettor won the Grand lotto 6/55 jackpot worth ₱45,000,000.00. The winning combination for the 6/55 draw was 29-25-44-39-13-05.

- [House panel seeks Sara' s SALNs, tax returns](#) (2026-03-25 16:15)

THE House Committee on Justice on Wednesday voted to subpoena the statements of assets, liabilities, and net worth (SALNs) of Vice President Sara Duterte and other documents as it began hearings to determine whether there is probable cause to impeach her. The committee said it would subpoena the Office of the Ombudsman for Duterte's SALNs from 2022-2025, 2007-2013, and 2016-2022. The committee also decided to issue a subpoena for records of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) investigation on her threat against President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Also on Wednesday, the committee, voting 29-1, ruled to issue a subpoena to Ramil Madriaga, Duterte's alleged bagman, to testify and to produce his affidavit dated Nov. 29, 2025, and any other evidence in his possession. The committee, voting 35-1, granted the motion of Akbayan Rep. Chel Diokno for Madriaga's protection. Diokno said his motion was for the

committee to "make sure that there is additional security provided to Madriaga in his present place of detention." "Second, that both in the transport when he is required to come here to testify and while he is testifying [...] that adequate security be provided to him", Diokno said. Madriaga is detained over a kidnapping case. Bicol Saro Rep. Terry Ridon, a member of the committee, said in a press conference that they would have to coordinate with the court and with the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology because these have jurisdiction over Madriaga. In a press conference, panel chairman and Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro said they have directed the House Office of the Sergeant-at-Arms and its security office to coordinate with the BJMP to make sure that all measures in line with his protective custody will be observed when he attends the hearing. Also on Wednesday, the committee, voting 34-2, decided to issue a subpoena for the income tax returns (ITRs) of Duterte and her spouse from 2007-2025. Ridon made the motion for a representative of the Bureau of Internal Revenue to bring the original or certified true copies of the yearly ITRs. The committee granted Ridon's motion to issue a subpoena to a representative from the Securities and Exchange Commission and for certified true copies of the general information sheet and audited financial statements of entities he enumerated. The committee also ordered the issuance of a subpoena to lawyer Michael Poa, a former undersecretary of the Department of Education (DepEd). The committee proceeded with the hearing even as it received information that Duterte would not join the proceedings. Luistro said at the start of the hearing that "regardless of the participation of the vice president and even in her absence, this committee will proceed." "We will do our duty with resolve, without hesitation, and without delay," she added. Luistro said the committee is committed to a fair and constitutional conduct of the proceedings. "Let us be reminded that this hearing... is intended for the determination of probable cause, not for the purpose of determining the guilt or innocence of the respondent," she said. "I reiterate that what is happening before the Justice committee is not a trial," she said. Luistro said the panel would welcome the vice president and her counsel at any stage of the proceedings. 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 one was filed by priests and others who alleged, among others, that Duterte committed culpable violation of the Constitution and betrayed the public trust in connection with confidential funds allocated to the Office of the Vice President (OVP) for 2022 and 2023 and confidential funds allocated for 2023 to the DepEd which Duterte led as secretary before she resigned in 2024 from that post. This complaint also alleged that Duterte committed culpable violation of the Constitution, betrayed the public trust and committed high crimes "in contracting to murder or assassinate" President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., first lady Liza Araneta Marcos, and former speaker Martin Romualdez. The complaint cited a Nov. 23, 2024 briefing with the media in which she said, "[...] may kinausap na ako na tao. Sinabi ko sa kanya kapag pinatay ako, patayin mo si BBM, si Liza Araneta, at si Martin Romualdez (I have spoken to someone and told him if I am killed, kill Marcos, Liza Araneta and Martin Romualdez)." The fourth impeachment complaint was filed on Feb. 18, 2026 by lawyer Nathaniel Cabrera and alleged that Duterte "committed acts that constitute culpable violation of the Constitution,

betrayal of public trust, and other high crimes, by publicly admitting the contracting of an assassin.” On Wednesday, Duterte said she chose not to attend the first impeachment hearing to devote her time to serving Filipinos through providing assistance "to ease the financial burden of the families most in need." She also called on the committee to junk the impeachment complaints against her for "lack of evidence."In a statement, Duterte said that the invitation to attend the hearing was used to construct a media narrative of a "mini trial" based on her alleged refusal to answer and her failure to attend the hearing."In this manner, the hearings are being used by the House of Representatives to conduct yet another third fishing expedition against me," Duterte said.Meanwhile, Duterte's lawyers said she is always ready to answer the allegations raised against her, provided it is in the proper forum — the Senate Impeachment Court — noting that they are only questioning the jurisdiction of the House Justice Committee in holding what it described as a "mini-trial." In a press briefing on Wednesday, Shiela Sison of Fortun Narvasa and Salazar law office said that under the Constitution, only the Senate has the power to conduct the impeachment trial."The same does not give the committee any power or jurisdiction to conduct any form of trial, whether a mini or full-blown one, much less try and receive evidence," Sison said. REINA TOLENTINO, RED MENDOZA

- [Marcos gets power to suspend fuel tax, but no immediate relief announced](#) (2026-03-25 16:15)

(UPDATE) PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday signed into law a bill granting him the power to suspend or reduce excise tax on fuel products.The president signed Republic Act (RA) 12316 as part of the government’ s efforts to cushion the impact of rising oil prices triggered by the war in the Middle East.Marcos, however, said he was still determining the right time to use the new authority “because there are conditions within the law that have to be satisfied.” “What’ s difficult here is the constant changes in the prices of oil,” Marcos said. “So, it’ s hard to plan. That’ s why we have been trying to find the optimum levels in terms of support, the suspension of some of the charges that the government exacts, especially from food products,” he added.The measure authorizes the president to temporarily suspend fuel excise tax to help cushion the impact of global oil price hikes due to the war in the Middle East.On March 3, Marcos bared plans to ask for a special power to reduce excise tax on petroleum products should prices exceed \$80 per barrel. The price of Brent Crude was at \$98 a barrel, down from a high of \$119 since the US and Israel attacked Iran.The president signed on Tuesday an executive order declaring a state of national energy emergency as a response to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East that could affect the availability and stability of the country’ s energy supply.In the same briefing on Wednesday, Marcos said the declaration would “provide government with more options should the need arise.” “Nothing is off the table. We are looking at everything, everything that we can do. And so whatever suggestion that has been brought to us, whatever idea that has, that we have come up with,” the president said. “We are examining it very, very closely in great detail to see if it is going to be advantageous to our people,” he added.

- [City, town governments to give out free rice](#) (2026-03-25 16:14)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday announced that local government units (LGUs) will provide free rice to their constituents through the Local Government Support Fund (LGSF) by April, as part of the government's efforts to help Filipinos cushion the impact of rising oil prices. In a press conference in Malacañang, Marcos said the LGUs would roll out the rice program under the expanded LGSF "within the next week or two." He said the funds would be released to local governments so they can provide assistance faster. Under the program, the president said that each LGU would provide at least 50 percent of the LGSF funds for the purchase and distribution of rice to their constituents. "They can use 100 percent of the fund for the rice distribution but it is up to them. However, it is necessary that at least 50 percent of the funds they receive must be used to purchase and distribute rice," he added. Under the expanded LGSF, the president earlier said that more than five million Filipino families will receive 60 kilos of rice annually or 10 kilos of rice for six months every year. Marcos said the LGSF would also fund health facility upgrades, disaster preparedness initiatives, and critical infrastructure projects, including farm-to-market roads, electrification, and water supply systems. "This will help lower the prices of goods and increase farmers' incomes," he said, adding that the rice aid would reduce household expenses while supporting local agriculture. The 2026 General Appropriations Act allocated the largest LGSF in the country's history at P57.872 billion, an increase of P34.87 billion. It includes the Financial Assistance to LGUs amounting to P37.492 billion, the Growth Equity Fund totaling P11.3 billion, the Support to the Barangay Development Program amounting to P8.09 billion, and the Support and Assistance Fund to Participatory Budgeting totaling P1 billion.

- [P20B allotted to emergency fund to secure fuel supply](#) (2026-03-25 16:13)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the release an emergency fund of P20 billion to the Department of Energy (DOE) to secure the country's fuel supply and shield Filipinos from the impact of the global oil crisis, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said Wednesday. In a statement, the DBM said the funding, sourced from the Malampaya Gas Fund under the Special Account in the General Fund, was released through a Special Allotment Release Order and Notice of Cash Allocation to support the government's Emergency Energy Security Program. The P20-billion intervention will fund the strategic procurement of fuel products — including diesel, gasoline, and liquefied petroleum gas — to boost the national fuel inventory, stabilize pump prices, and ensure uninterrupted operations across transport, logistics, agriculture, emergency response, and other critical sectors, the DBM said. The program will be implemented by the Philippine National Oil Company-Exploration Corp., which has already initiated procurement activities to immediately augment domestic supply. Acting Budget Secretary Rolando Toledo said the swift approval reflected the president's clear directive to ensure that "no Filipino is left vulnerable to fuel disruptions." "This is about protecting the daily life of every Filipino — from the jeepney driver and delivery rider, to our farmers, frontliners, and ordinary families. When there is a fuel problem, the entire economy is affected. We can't wait," Toledo said. "Under the president's directive, we are moving with urgency

to ensure that fuel remains available, prices are moderated, and essential services continue uninterrupted. This is government acting ahead of the crisis — not reacting after the damage is done,” he added. “This is not just funds. This is security — security in travel, in employment, and in the daily lives of Filipinos,” Toledo said. “Every peso we release here is meant to keep the economy moving, keep goods flowing, and keep services running. This is what fiscal discipline looks like — using public funds where they matter most, at the time they are needed most,” he added. As global uncertainties continue to affect energy markets, the Marcos administration is taking a firm and proactive stance — ensuring that the Philippines remains resilient, prepared, and protected, Toledo said. Enough for 45 days In an address Wednesday, the president said the country has a sufficient supply of oil and petroleum products for at least 45 days, and that it would procure an additional 1 million barrels to add to its stockpile. “We have no problem with the oil supply,” he said in Filipino. “We can be sure that at least for 45 days we will be all right. I think that we can be fairly confident — we can be confident that after the 45 days, additional deliveries would have already arrived here in the Philippines. We will have already a flow of oil, not just one delivery, not just two deliveries but a flow of petroleum and petroleum-related products. Right now, because of the situation, we are asking for everything. We are asking for crude oil, also gasoline, diesel — diesel is of course the most important here in the Philippines. There’s also kerosene and then jet fuel to keep the planes flying,” he added. He added that 23 power projects will also come online in 60 days. Marcos said that while the government has no control over the price of oil in the international market, it will continue to provide assistance to citizens and affected sectors. This includes free rides, train discounts, reduction in terminal and aeronautical fees, cash assistance for drivers, and toll discounts. The chief executive also urged the public not to panic despite his earlier issuance of Executive Order 110 declaring a state of national energy emergency. The declaration, he reiterated, was merely to give the government “more options” to mitigate the effects of the soaring price of oil and petroleum products triggered by the war in the Middle East. Meanwhile, the country is also in talks with Washington to secure waivers and exemptions that will allow it to obtain oil from US-sanctioned countries, Ambassador Jose Manuel Romualdez said Wednesday. Asked if imports of oil from Venezuela and Iran were part of the discussions, Romualdez said “all options are being considered.” Asked what has been the response from the State Department, the ambassador said: “Work in progress.” Temporary measures The country has temporarily increased coal-fired generation due to energy supply pressures and allowed the temporary and limited use of cheaper but dirtier Euro II fuel to ensure supply. At least two Russian ESPO crude cargoes are heading to the Philippines this month, while a cargo of Abu Dhabi Murban crude is expected to arrive at its Bataan terminal on April 8, according to Kpler, a private data, analytics, and technology firm specializing in providing real-time, actionable intelligence on commodity and shipping markets. The shipment would be the country’s first imports of Russian crude oil in five years, following a 30-day waiver issued by the United States. Washington on Friday also issued a 30-day sanctions waiver for the purchase of Iranian oil already at sea. The waiver applies to oil loaded on any vessel on or before March 20 and discharged by April 19, including tankers under sanctions. Sen. Imee Marcos said the Philippines should secure oil importation from fellow members in the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (Asean) to lessen the impact of the oil crisis. She urged the government to engage more with regional and global partners following Malacanang's declaration of a state of national energy emergency. "Who are we even talking to? Have we reached out to Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, as well as China and India?" the senator, a critic of her brother's administration, asked.

- [DPWH expedites road maintenance](#) (2026-03-25 16:12)

THE Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said it has ramped up road maintenance works in preparation for the anticipated influx of travelers during Holy Week. Following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive to prioritize road safety and commuter convenience, Public Works Secretary Vince Dizon on Wednesday said all DPWH regional and district engineering offices were ordered to ensure that all major thoroughfares are well-maintained and free from obstructions. Ongoing maintenance activities, Dizon said, include the repair of potholes and cracks, repainting of faded road markings, clearing of overgrown vegetation, and restoration of damaged or missing road signs. "Our teams are working round-the-clock shifts to ensure major thoroughfares are well-maintained and free from obstruction and potholes," Dizon said, adding that the DPWH would also provide emergency assistance to commuters before and after the observance of Holy Week. Dizon said one of the DPWH's priority projects was the road repairs on the Andaya Highway in Sipocot, Camarines Sur, which is one of the main arteries of the Maharlika Highway. "Remember, it's not only people from Bicol who pass through here — everyone does, including those going to Visayas and Mindanao. At least with our Holy Week timeline, we can provide this to our fellow citizens," he said. Dizon said that travel will now be continuous as the one-way system will no longer be implemented in preparation for the Holy Week rush. "We need to ensure that before Holy Week, the Maharlika Highway is fully passable — from Quezon, Bicol, Samar to Leyte. We make sure that our (DPWH) regional director will deliver and that all our ongoing projects will be completed quickly so that before Holy Week all these one-way sections will already be open," he added. The DPWH also opened the northbound lane of the Tuganay Bridge, a key infrastructure link between Carmen and Panabo City, serving as a primary artery for travelers from Davao City to Tagum and the northern regions. "This will be a great relief for the more than 30,000 motorists and commuters who pass through it every day, especially with Holy Week approaching," Dizon added. The P516 million bridge project, including the pedestrian structures and final island finishing, is expected to be completed by the end of May 2026, in line with the president's directive to accelerate completion of unfinished infrastructure projects nationwide and as part of the ongoing initiatives in the region to improve traffic flow and support local development. Dizon said the DPWH is working on the completion of a critical diversion road leading to Bauan Port in Batangas and speeding up the resolution of the right-of-way issue so that work can proceed on the stalled Casile-Tagaytay Bypass Road. "Our priority at the DPWH right now is bypass roads. We really want to finish these bypasses so we can decongest cities. Plus, you can create a lot of economic activity along the route, just like here in Cabuyao. This is a big deal — opening this will be a huge benefit," Dizon said following

an inspection of the Casile-Tagaytay Road. He said the diversion road to the Port of Bauan will benefit the local economy in San Roque, Bauan, as it will improve transportation and shorten travel time in the area. “The economic benefit of this road is very significant, and it will even go beyond Bauan. Right now, all the trucks coming from the ports in Batangas that are heading to Bauan pass through the town center and the main road. So the people there will experience less traffic, and their daily lives will become easier once all these trucks pass through this route instead,” Dizon said.

- [Lopez backs expansion of free rides program](#) (2026-03-25 16:11)

TRANSPORTATION Secretary Giovanni Lopez called on lawmakers to expand the government’s Service Contracting Program (SCP) or Libreng Sakay (free rides) to widen its reach and cushion the impact of rising fuel prices on commuters and the transport sector. Lopez said allowing local government units (LGUs) to implement their own versions of the program would enable more public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers, operators and passengers to benefit from government support. “If we have Service Contracting or Libreng Sakay, we can mitigate the situation because we are addressing commuters while also sustaining the supply of transport by compensating operators and drivers,” Lopez said. He added that empowering LGUs to roll out localized service contracting programs would complement national government efforts. “If we can empower them, they can implement their own Libreng Sakay,” he said. Apart from the SCP, Lopez said the Department of Transportation (DOTr) is implementing other measures to ease the burden of high fuel costs. These include the Fuel Subsidy Program for PUV drivers and operators, as well as fare discounts in major rail lines. The DOTr has maintained a 50 percent fare discount for passengers of MRT-3 and LRT-2, while toll discounts are being extended to Class 1, 2, and 3 PUVs. Lopez also said the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines has reduced passenger service charges and navigation fees in airports it operates, benefiting both airlines and travelers. Meanwhile, the Philippine Ports Authority is implementing a “Piso Fees” scheme, lowering roll-on/roll-off terminal fees from P258 and P516 to P1 for Class 3 and 4 vehicles transporting agricultural goods. The transport chief said these measures are intended to provide immediate relief to both commuters and transport operators as fuel prices remain volatile.

- [It’s go time: Historic Moon mission set for lift-off](#) (2026-03-25 16:10)

WASHINGTON, United States — More than half a century after the groundbreaking Apollo program’s last crewed flight to the Moon, three men and one woman are preparing for a lunar journey set to turn a new page in American space exploration. The long-delayed NASA mission dubbed Artemis II is slated to lift off from Florida and venture to Earth’s natural satellite as early as April 1. They won’t land but are instead on a mission to fly by, much as Apollo 8 did in 1968. Americans Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch — along with Canadian Jeremy Hansen — will carry out the approximately 10-day trip. The odyssey will mark a series of firsts: the first time a woman, a person of color, and a non-American will venture on a Moon mission. It’s also the inaugural crewed flight of NASA’s new lunar rocket, dubbed SLS. The

mammoth orange-and-white rocket is designed to allow the United States to repeatedly return to the Moon in years to come, with the goal of establishing a permanent base that will offer a stepping stone for further exploration. "We're going back to the Moon because it's the next step in our journey to Mars," said Wiseman, the Artemis II commander, on a NASA podcast. Space Race 2.0? The Artemis program — named in honor of Apollo's goddess twin — aims to test technologies needed to one day send humans to Mars, a far more distant journey. That ambition presents an immense challenge — which is compounded by pressure to achieve it before China does. China is currently aiming to land humans on the Moon by 2030. Beijing is also targeting the lunar South Pole, not least for its rich natural resource potential. The competition recalls the 1960s-era Space Race between the US and the Soviet Union — but Harvard professor Matthew Hersch said that rivalry was "unique" and "will not be repeated anytime soon." He told AFP the Chinese are "not really competing with anyone but themselves." Washington's lunar program investment is significantly lower now than during the Cold War era — but the technology has changed dramatically. "The computer technology that supports the Artemis 2 crew would be almost unimaginable to the Apollo 8 crew, which went to the Moon in a spacecraft with the electronics of a modern high-end toaster oven," Hersch said. And yet the Artemis 2 mission will not be without risks, even by NASA's own admission. The crew will board a spacecraft that has never once carried humans or traveled to the Moon, which is more than 384,000 kilometers (238,855 miles) from Earth — or roughly 1,000 times further away than the International Space Station. "We don't accept anything less than perfect, otherwise we're accepting greater risk," NASA's former chief astronaut Peggy Whitson told AFP. "That is an important process that everyone has to embrace in order for us to be really successful, because we have to live with that knowledge, because of our space flight history, that when accidents happen, people will die," she said. Minimizing risks and preventing disaster will involve the crew performing a series of checks and maneuvers while still in Earth's vicinity. If all goes well, they'll set forth for the Moon. Ambitious timeline The crew's objective will be to verify that both the rocket and the spacecraft are in working order, in the hopes of paving the way for a return and Moon landing in 2028 — the final year of President Donald Trump's term. That deadline has raised eyebrows among experts, in part because Washington is relying on the private sector's technological headway. The astronauts will require a second vehicle to descend to the moon's surface, a lunar lander that remains under development by rival space companies owned by billionaires Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos. The Artemis program has also been plagued by delays and massive cost overruns. Still, NASA hopes that Artemis 2 can succeed in recreating the rare moment of unity and hope that Apollo 8, when a crew flew by the Moon on Christmas Eve 1968, allowed for. In the shadow of a tumultuous year, approximately 1 billion people worldwide tuned in to their flickering television sets to follow the monumental journey of Frank Borman, Jim Lovell and Bill Anders. The astronauts — who immortalized the famous "Earthrise" photograph taken from lunar orbit — were credited with having "saved 1968." Nearly 60 years later, the country is once again mired in deep division and uncertainty, and the crew of Artemis 2 will soon have their chance to inspire.

- [PAL says it has stable jet fuel supply](#) (2026-03-25 16:09)

FLAG carrier Philippine Airlines (PAL) said Wednesday it has sufficient jet fuel supply to ensure uninterrupted domestic and international operations in the coming months. The announcement follows President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s warning that jet fuel shortage may ground planes. "The airline recognizes that global supply conditions remain dynamic. As part of prudent planning, PAL continues to work closely with fuel suppliers, industry partners, and government stakeholders to ensure stable and efficient operations over the longer term," PAL said in a statement. While PAL acknowledged that fuel prices have more than doubled, it is working with government and industry partners to maintain stable and efficient operations amid dynamic global supply conditions. Meanwhile, Gokongwei-led Cebu Pacific (CEB) said it has secured fuel supply through the end of April and is already working on supply for May and beyond. "Things are working well for us at a time that we're very financially strong, coming from 2025, which was a record year," CEB said in a statement. CEB said 73 percent of its network is domestic, and 72 percent of its jet fleet consists of Airbus NEOs, which are new-generation, fuel-efficient.

- [Rise of self-harm cases alarming – DOH](#) (2026-03-25 16:08)

THE Department of Health (DOH) on Wednesday expressed alarm over the rise of self-harm cases in the Philippines. The statement comes after the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) reported 111 self-harm incidents from Jan. 1 to March 23, compared to 33 in the same period last year — a 236 percent increase. The NCRPO further noted that the majority of the incidents stemmed from emotional distress, relationship issues, personal loss and financial pressure. DOH spokesman Albert Domingo told The Manila Times that the National Center for Mental Health's (NCMH) crisis hotline is ready to serve Filipinos in need of immediate mental health consultation. "The DOH is concerned with the rise in cases of self-harm recorded by the PNP-NCRPO. We hope to remind our kababayan that we have a 24/7 NCMH Crisis Hotline ready to help with emotional distress and other urgent mental health conditions: 1553 or 1800-1888-1553; 09190571553 and 09178998727," Domingo said. The DOH reminded the public that they are not alone, saying, "We can walk this journey together." The NCRPO said it is intensifying efforts to improve early detection and response by deploying police units in coordination with village leaders and schools. "NCRPO is strengthening real-time and community-based interventions under the Enhanced Managing Police Operations framework," it said. ALLEN LIMOS

- [Senator backs lawmakers' pay cut to fund cash aid](#) (2026-03-25 16:07)

VOLUNTARY pay cuts among government officials may help augment funding for fuel subsidies and cash assistance amid the oil crisis, a senator said Wednesday. Sen. Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito said proposals to trim salaries and allowances could support aid for vulnerable sectors while setting an example in government austerity. "That's a noble offer; if salaries and allowances are trimmed, it would be a big help... salaries could even be donated to vulnerable sectors," Ejercito said during the Kapihan sa Senado forum. He said such measures could be done voluntarily, particularly if the Senate leadership adopts austerity steps. "It can be voluntary... but if leadership leads... allowances can be slashed... it would be significant since

government should set the example,” he added. Earlier, Tingog Party-list Rep. Jude Acidre expressed support for the proposal, noting that lawmakers have previously reduced compensation during crises. “I don't think that's going to be a problem, during crises... we do reduce our compensation,” Acidre said in a television interview. He said the move could help fund fuel subsidies and cash aid as tensions in the Middle East continue to drive oil price pressures.

- [CHR cites gains in child rights protection](#) (2026-03-25 16:06)

THE Commission on Human Rights (CHR) hailed the Philippines' removal from a United Nations list of grave child rights violations, calling the development a milestone in the protection of children's rights. CHR Chairman Richard Palpal-latoc said the country's removal in late 2025 from the UN's list of situations with grave child rights violations related to armed conflict — after 22 years — was the result of sustained national efforts to strengthen the implementation of the Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act, or Republic Act (RA) 11188. He said this was detailed in the commission's 2025 Annual Report on Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (CSAC), which cited key institutional mechanisms established by the government and civil society to safeguard children. Central to these efforts, according to the CHR chief, is the interagency committee on CSAC, which coordinates implementation among agencies under RA 11188. The CHR cited the Armed Forces of the Philippines for ensuring that children encountered in operations are treated as victims and rights-holders. “Meanwhile, the Department of Social Welfare and Development leads the care, custody, and referral of children, recognizing them as survivors in need of protection and rehabilitation, while the Department of Education has also issued guidelines promoting schools as ‘zones of peace’ and discouraging their use for military purposes,” Palpal-latoc said. He said civil society organizations have also supported these efforts. These include the International Committee of the Red Cross, Plan International and Sulong Peace through programs on psychosocial support, education assistance and child protection advocacy, he added. The Philippines has likewise continued to comply with international standards, the commission said, noting its participation in the UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting on grave child rights violations. Despite the positive development, the CHR said protection gaps remain. Resource and operational constraints, limited access to specialized psychosocial and mental health services, and gaps in reintegration programs continue to affect protection outcomes, the CHR said. “Upholding children's rights is a shared responsibility among government, civil society and communities to ensure that every child can grow in a society where their dignity and well-being are promoted and protected,” Palpal-latoc said.

- [PNP-HPG chief resigns, denies sex raps](#) (2026-03-25 16:05)

A TOP official of the Philippine National Police Highway Patrol Group (PNP-HPG) stepped down from his post on Wednesday over sexual harassment allegations filed before the National Police Commission (Napolcom). “To ensure a completely impartial, fair and transparent investigation, I have decided to voluntarily step down from my position as Acting Director of the PNP Highway

Patrol Group, effective immediately,” Director BGen. Jessie Tamayao said in a statement, adding that he wants to state, in the clearest and most categorical terms, that he is innocent of these charges. “I firmly deny the allegations. I can only deduce this is a personal vendetta of which I am not aware. However, I recognize the gravity of such a complaint and the importance of maintaining the public’s trust in our office,” he added. Tamayao clarified that his decision to resign was not an admission of guilt but a demonstration of his commitment to due process and the reputation of the Philippine National Police. “In my 30 years of service, I have never been involved in, nor subjected to, any such allegation or complaint. I have risen through the ranks through my own diligence, hard work and integrity. By stepping down, I aim to remove any perception of influence or conflict of interest while the proper authorities perform their duties,” he stressed. “I fully welcome a thorough investigation, and I am prepared to cooperate with the investigating body to clear my name. I am confident that the truth will prevail through the proper legal and administrative channels,” he added. In a statement, Napolcom did not detail the victim’s rank but said Tamayao was named in a five-page sworn statement submitted to the Napolcom Inspection, Monitoring and Investigation Service (IMIS) on Tuesday by a female HPG personnel. The female personnel is seeking Tamayao’s dismissal for alleged violations of Republic Act 7877 (Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995) and Republic Act 10173 (Data Privacy Act of 2012). The complainant said Tamayao allegedly invited her to engage in sexual activity while also reportedly touching her buttocks. She further claimed that the official’s statements and actions included intimidation and threats, such as reassignment to Mindanao if she refused his advances. The complainant also alleged that the official accessed her cellphone without consent, read her personal messages, and took photos of images and conversations from her gallery, Messenger, and Viber accounts. He allegedly threatened to use these against her if she reported the incident to former HPG director BGen. Hansel Marantan.

- [Catholics urged to pray for Middle East peace](#) (2026-03-25 16:05)

THE Catholic Church on Wednesday called on the Filipino faithful to pray for peace in the Middle East as the conflict continues. “Let’s pray for the end of the war in Iran. Let’s pray for peace,” said Bishop Jose Colin Bagaforo, president of Caritas Philippines, during a press conference in Manila. Besides praying for an end to the war, Bagaforo also urged Filipinos to be “mindful of our countrymen abroad” who are directly affected by the hostilities. In response to the imminent danger to the country’s energy supply caused by ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday signed Executive Order 110, declaring a state of national energy emergency. Asked for comment on the government’s declaration of an energy crisis, Bagaforo said it is high time the administration recognized the need to declare the crisis. “It’s the call of the time to prevent the ‘uncontrolled increase in prices.’ I think the government has that responsibility of regulating many of the things, most especially those that concern the economic life of Filipinos,” he said. “Let’s help one another so that the executive order on the national emergency crisis can be fulfilled and bring good to all,” Bagaforo said.

- [National energy emergency gets backing](#) (2026-03-25 16:05)

SEN. Erwin Tulfo on Wednesday expressed support for President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s declaration of a national energy emergency amid tension in the Middle East. "I'm fully behind this decision, as it gives the president the flexibility to act swiftly to support the people during this crisis," Tulfo said. As the chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Tulfo emphasized that empowering the executive branch will speed up decision-making and ensure timely delivery of essential services, especially during emergencies where delays could worsen conditions for affected communities. He said the declaration of a national energy emergency is a temporary measure designed to stabilize the energy sector. In line with this, he has also shown support for proposals to suspend fuel excise taxes if global crude oil prices reach alarming levels, aiming to cushion the financial impact on consumers. Tulfo also called for an urgent recovery plan to assist overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) affected by the conflict in the Middle East. He urged the Department of Migrant Workers and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration to extend support not just to Filipinos in conflict zones, but also to those whose deployment has been put on hold. "Many of these Filipinos hail from the provinces. They have already invested money into processing their requirements in search of decent opportunities in the Middle East," he said. To bridge this gap, Tulfo proposed utilizing the P2 billion *Agarang Kalinga at Saklolo para sa mga OFWs na Nangangailangan* Fund to deliver immediate financial and psychological support. Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian also supported the declaration of a national energy emergency, describing the move as necessary to mitigate the impact of the war in the Middle East. Gatchalian said the measure would enable the government to implement extraordinary interventions to cushion households and businesses from potential increases in fuel and electricity prices, amid volatility in global energy markets driven by geopolitical instability. "The president's declaration of a state of national energy emergency is a necessary step that enables the government to take extraordinary measures to cushion the impact of the Middle East war on Filipino households and the broader economy," he said in a statement. The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Wednesday said it supported the government in addressing the energy challenge and vowed to ensure the orderly implementation of regulations to maintain peace and security. "Police forces nationwide are on heightened readiness to secure key installations, critical infrastructure, and communities. The PNP will monitor and address any activities that may disrupt public order, assuring the public of its full capability to protect every Filipino," PNP chief Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said in a statement.

- [Pagasa starts El Niño watch](#) (2026-03-25 16:04)

THE Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) began its El Niño watch on Wednesday, seeing a strong probability that the weather phenomenon could occur between July and August this year. Nathaniel Servando, Pagasa chief, said that with the termination of the La Niña event on March 9, ENSO-neutral conditions prevail and will most likely last until June or July 2026. El Niño is a warm phase of ENSO characterized by warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures in the Central and Eastern Equatorial Pacific. Thelma Cinco, Pagasa's Weather Services head, said during a press briefing at the agency's central office in Quezon City that the El Niño Watch was issued based on its ENSO

Alert and Warning System, which indicated the phenomenon's development with a probability of 55 percent or more within the next six months. "El Niño increases the likelihood of below-normal rainfall, which could bring negative impacts such as dry spells and droughts in some areas of the country," Cinco said. Above-normal rainfall conditions, however, can also be experienced during the southwest monsoon, particularly over the western part of the archipelago, she pointed out.

- [Ex-NYC chief wants SK turned into environmental corps](#) (2026-03-25 16:03)

FORMER National Youth Commission (NYC) chairman Cesar Chavez has suggested a "sweeping institutional reform" that seeks the transformation of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) into a nationwide Youth Environmental Corps (YEC). In a statement on Tuesday, Chavez said that the YEC is an alternative to calls to abolish the youth council, saying that "ecological security is the highest form of security." He suggested that converting the SK into this body would "shift youth governance toward protecting the very foundation of national survival." Chavez, who served as Youth Sector Representative during the 9th Congress from 1992 to 1995, first proposed this idea in 1994, through House Bill 12763. While serving as chairman of the NYC, he initiated the issuance of Executive Order 52 in 1998, which mandated environmental committees in all SK councils and allocated 10 percent of SK funds for environmental programs. Chavez said the YEC would operate under eight pillars, namely, protecting youth participation in governance, preparing young Filipinos for the green and blue economy, and strengthening community climate resilience through initiatives such as mangrove restoration, urban greening, and disaster preparedness. He also said the transformation to the environmental body "would also bridge education and action, promote health and active lifestyles, and support sustainable local economies while building a pipeline of future leaders in sustainability." "By redirecting youth governance toward environmental action, the Philippines can preserve youth participation in governance while generating long-term benefits for the economy, sustainable development, and peace and security of the nation," Chavez said. "For this reason, it should be transformed into a Youth Environmental Corps, redirecting its mandate toward concrete, measurable actions that secure the Philippines' long-term survival and sustainability for future generations," he added. Under Chavez's proposal, it would redirect the P23.1 billion budget for SK toward environmental programs that included community gardens, recycling systems, tree nurseries, disaster preparedness, and climate resilience projects. This proposal came as Interior Secretary Jonvic Remulla raised the possibility of abolishing the SK, because of low attendance rates among its officials, with participation dropping from around 60 percent in the first year to as low as 30 percent in subsequent years. Chavez said that most of the youth council's activities are "often short-term or event-based, such as sports leagues, beauty pageants or celebrations, with limited long-term developmental impact." He clarified that the reform keeps the SK, but "repurposes" the structure and funds while approving accountability. "Transforming SK into YEC operationalizes that idea by turning young people into active defenders of ecological security, not just future leaders but present-day guardians of the environment," Chavez said. "By clearly defining the

Youth Environmental Corps' mandate around environmental programs, communities, barangay, local governments, and oversight bodies such as the Commission on Audit will have clear expectations of its functions — thereby improving transparency, monitoring, and overall accountability,” the former youth commission chief added.

- [Muntinlupa mayor urges calm over emergency](#) (2026-03-25 16:02)

MUNTINLUPA Mayor Ruffy Biazon on Wednesday urged the public to stay calm amid the declaration of a state of national energy emergency under Executive Order 110 signed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., saying the measure was a preparatory step and not a sign that the country was already in crisis. In a statement issued on March 25, Biazon said the order was issued in response to tensions in the Middle East that could affect global oil supply and drive up fuel prices. Biazon said the order directs various government agencies to work together to ensure the continued supply of fuel and essential goods, assist sectors that may be hit, such as transport and agriculture, and enforce energy-saving measures. He said the declaration means systems are already in place before a more serious situation befalls the county. James Daniel Danio The mayor also urged the public to use fuel and energy carefully and to conserve where possible. Biazon said the order also calls for measures to save energy. For this, the Muntinlupa City government said it conducted benchmarking with the Quezon City government to study the implementation of its E-Bus Program and its practices in modern public transportation. The city government said the discussions covered Quezon City's sustainable mobility initiatives, including the use of environmentally friendly vehicles and systems to improve vehicular traffic flow. It said the benchmarking activity seeks to adapt best practices that could help deliver more orderly, efficient and modern transportation services for Muntinlupeños.

- [172 suspects nabbed in online sabong bust – CIDG](#) (2026-03-25 16:02)

THE Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit (CIDG) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) arrested 172 people in a raid on an illegal operation of online cockfighting (e-sabong) at Vitas Coliseum in Tondo, Manila, on Tuesday, March 24. During the raid, authorities apprehended bettors, management personnel, gaffers and bet takers. They seized several pieces of evidence, including 45 sets of computers and three tripod cameras. Of the 172 suspects, 132 were released to their families, who were at the CIDG's legal department. The remaining suspects were being held for inquest proceedings at the Manila Police District. Detained suspects face charges for violation of PD 1602 (Illegal Gambling) in relation to RA 10175 (Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012). In the Philippines, e-sabong is prohibited, primarily due to severe social ills arising from gambling addiction, including indebtedness and criminality, such as the controversial disappearance of cockfight enthusiasts linking fugitive gaming tycoon Charlie "Atong" Ang as the mastermind. The ban, initially ordered by former president Rodrigo Duterte in May 2022, continued under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s administration. Col. John Guiagui, regional director of CIDG National Capital Region, said the online sabong operates non-stop, with each fight lasting two to three minutes. In contrast, an in-person or traditional cockfight lasts at least 30 minutes. “The online sabong operations last 24 hours a day, even without

bettors physically present,” Guiagui told reporters. Bettors place their bets through an online link called “Sabong VIP,” ranging from P100 to P1,000. Despite overwhelming evidence, management denied their operations. However, CIDG operatives showed videos as proof. Each cockfight yields at least P300,000 in bets. “The very nature of the cockfight is already questionable. That’s why we arrested the management staff because they may know about this,” Guiagui said.

- [More drivers to receive cash aid](#) (2026-03-25 16:02)

THE Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said it has provided P5,000 in cash relief to 22,937 transport network vehicle service (TNVS) drivers to mitigate the effect of rising fuel prices. The number represents 84.39 percent of the total TNVS beneficiaries identified by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB). The assistance is part of the government’s efforts to cushion the impact of increasing petroleum prices on the transport sector. The DSWD said it will conduct a special payout for public utility vehicle drivers who were not included in the original list of beneficiaries. Assistant Secretary Irene Dumlao urged excluded drivers to coordinate with authorities to be included in the next payout. “We understand that some drivers were not included in the list, so we are asking them to submit their names and a copy of their valid driver’s license to their transport regulatory units so these can be forwarded to the LTFRB,” Dumlao said. She said the directive is in line with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s instruction to extend assistance to all drivers affected by rising fuel prices. “This is the directive of the president that all our drivers who are facing various challenges due to the continued increase in fuel prices must be assisted,” Dumlao said. The DSWD also said it is coordinating with local government units and LTFRB regional offices to prepare for the rollout of regional payouts after Holy Week. Meanwhile, the agency is set to meet with transport network companies, including Grab Philippines, to explore ways to include more drivers, particularly those not reflected in the initial beneficiary list.

- [Bam Aquino seeks 'broader' state of national emergency](#) (2026-03-25 15:45)

MANILA, Philippines -- Sen. Bam Aquino on Wednesday sought a "broader" state of national emergency, and not just a state of national energy emergency to control the prices of goods amid the oil crisis brought by the Middle East war. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday declared a state of national energy emergency through Executive Order 110. The senator said that a state of national emergency would give the government "more teeth in controlling prices and addressing the crisis," rather than relying on the state of national energy emergency. Aside from the issue of price control, Aquino said it was also unclear under EO 110 if local government units can utilize their quick response fund to extend assistance to their constituents. Sen. Loren Legarda said the President's declaration of a state of national energy emergency was an "overdue recognition" that the country is already in a crisis. "By itself, a declaration of a state of national energy emergency will not protect Filipino families from rising fuel prices, higher food costs, heavier transport expenses, and the mounting burdens on our farmers and fisherfolk," Legarda said. "But with such recognition, our actions can finally

proceed in their proper light," the senator said in a statement on Wednesday. Whether it involves the issue on oil supply or prices, the current economic situation directly affects the people -- which "cannot be addressed by business-as-usual approach" of the government, she added. "This declaration will only have real meaning if it becomes the basis for swift, coordinated, and compassionate action that delivers immediate relief to Filipino families and guides the nation through this crisis with clarity, resolve, and purpose," Legarda said. Aquino said he would seek clarification on the matter during the resumption of the Proactive Response and Oversight for Timely and Effective Crisis Strategy Committee hearing on Thursday to determine whether the provision is included in the EO 110. Meanwhile, Aquino said the government should utilize its more than P200 billion in available funds to provide targeted aid to affected sectors and industries. Among these sectors are transport workers, micro, small, and medium enterprises, farmers, fisherfolk, teachers, and healthcare workers, among others. He also stressed the importance of protecting the country's public markets, hospitals, and schools, saying they are vital to Filipino families from the worst effects of the crisis.

- [Imee Marcos: PH should import oil from fellow Asean members](#) (2026-03-25 15:42)

MANILA, Philippines -- Sen. Imee Marcos said the Philippines should secure oil importation from fellow members in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to lessen the impact of the oil crisis in the country arising from the Middle East war. The senator on Wednesday proposed that the Philippines negotiate with Asean neighbors such as Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam, and Thailand to supply the country's petroleum needs. Marcos said Myanmar has implemented fuel rationing, an odd-even scheme for private vehicles, and expanded work-from-home programs in both the public and private sectors. The senator said that Vietnam has reinstated its oil price stabilization fund during the crisis. Marcos also called on the administration to disclose the country's actual fuel supply situation amid the Palace's declaration of a state of national energy emergency. She warned that the country may be leaning too heavily on short-term relief instead of pursuing a clear energy strategy. "Can someone give us the real score on the country's energy supply? Have importers, refinery owners, and LPG suppliers been consulted. How much supply of the critical oil products is really left?" she asked. "Please, please stop trumpeting delusions of six percent growth when the ordinary Filipino can barely survive this energy shock," Marcos said in a statement.

- [Marcos urges public not to panic despite national energy emergency declaration](#) (2026-03-25 15:39)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday urged the public not to panic despite his earlier issuance of Executive Order No. 110, which declares a state of national energy emergency. He reiterated that the declaration is meant to give the government "more options" to mitigate the effects of soaring oil and petroleum prices triggered by the war in the Middle East. "The state of national energy emergency is not meant to cause panic among the public, but to give the government more options to address the crisis caused by tensions in the Middle East, should the need arise," he said in Filipino during a press conference in

Malacañang. “This does not mean that we should panic. We are doing everything we can to assess and alleviate the situation. This is a precautionary tool so we will be ready for what’s next,” he added. EO No. 110 establishes the Unified Package for Livelihoods, Industry, Food, and Transport (UPLIFT), a coordinated whole-of-government response framework. It includes energy supply management measures to be implemented by the Department of Energy (DOE) and its attached agencies, as well as complementary measures to support consumers and affected sectors to be carried out by other concerned agencies. The President also warned against those who may attempt to take advantage of the situation, saying the government would strictly enforce laws against hoarding, price gouging, and profiteering involving petroleum products and other commodities.

- [VP Lawyers question House proceedings, insists Sara ready to answer in Senate trial](#) (2026-03-25 14:40)

MANILA. Philippines - Counsels for Vice President Sara Duterte stressed that she is ready to answer the allegations against her, provided these are addressed in the proper forum—the Senate impeachment court—while maintaining that they are questioning the proceedings before the House Committee on Justice. The statements from lawyers Shiela Sison and Michael Wesley Poa came after the panel, led by Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro, issued several subpoenas for documents related to the impeachment complaints. In a press briefing on Wednesday, Sison said that under the Constitution, only the Senate has the authority to conduct an impeachment trial. “The Constitution does not grant the committee any power or jurisdiction to conduct any form of trial, whether a mini or full-blown one, much less to try a case and receive evidence,” Sison said. She added that while they do not intend to disrespect the committee, the panel has no authority to examine or cross-examine witnesses or to compel their appearance through subpoenas. This comes despite Luistro’s assertion that the hearings resemble a “preliminary investigation” in the criminal justice system. Meanwhile, Poa said he is “ready” to appear before the panel after receiving a subpoena. “I have no intention to evade. I don’t see any point in not appearing,” Poa said.

- [Pasay fire reaches second alarm](#) (2026-03-25 13:36)

MANILA, Philippines — A fire broke out along David Street in Village 23, F.B. Harrison, Pasay City, reaching the second alarm as of 4:23 p.m. on Wednesday, March 25. Firefighters were still battling the blaze as of posting, while authorities have yet to determine its cause. The Bureau of Fire Protection–National Capital Region (BFP-NCR) in Pasay urged the public to avoid the area and follow official advisories for their safety. The BFP also reminded residents to observe fire safety measures, including avoiding illegal electrical connections, not overloading outlets or extension cords, unplugging appliances when not in use, and regularly checking wiring and electrical equipment.

- [Luistro says House doesn't forget other responsibilities amid hearing on Duterte impeach complaints](#) (2026-03-25 13:18)

MANILA, Philippines - The House of Representatives “does not forget its other responsibilities” even as it proceeds with the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte. On Wednesday, the House Committee on Justice began hearings on the two impeachment complaints it had earlier deemed sufficient in form, substance, and grounds. The panel is conducting the proceedings to determine whether there is probable cause to impeach Duterte. “Even as we undertake this solemn constitutional duty, the House of Representatives does not forget its other responsibilities,” said Batangas 2nd District Rep. Gerville Luistro, the committee chairperson, at the start of the hearing. She added that “we do not lose sight of the hardships faced by the powerless.” Luistro also cited the House’ s passage of a bill authorizing President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to suspend or reduce fuel excise taxes. “We also continue to work on measures that address inflation, food security, and social services,” she said.

- [Marcos on govt taking over oil industry: 'We don't want to get into that discussion'](#) (2026-03-25 13:08)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday said he does not want to discuss the possibility of a government takeover of the oil industry to control the soaring prices of fuel. “We don't want to get into that discussion,” Marcos told reporters, when asked whether the government plans to take over the oil industry following the declaration of state of national energy emergency. Trade Union Congress of the Philippines Rep. and House Deputy Speaker Raymond Democrito Mendoza earlier urged Marcos to consider declaring a state of national emergency to allow temporary government takeover of oil companies’ operations. Mendoza cited that under Section 14(e) of Republic Act 8479, the Department of Energy may temporarily take over or direct the operations of entities in the oil industry during emergencies.

- [Marcos enacts law resetting the first BARMM elections](#) (2026-03-25 12:23)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday signed into law a measure resetting the first parliamentary elections of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Republic Act (RA) 121317 moves the region’ s first regular election from March to the second Monday of September 2026, the fourth time the polls were reset. It also amends Section 13, Article XVI of Republic Act 11054, or the “Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.” “For the purpose of synchronizing the BARMM Parliamentary Elections with the national and local elections, the regular elections for the Bangsamoro Government shall be held on the second Monday of May 2031 and every three years thereafter,” part of RA 121317 read. “The Commission on Elections shall promulgate rules and regulations for the conduct of the elections, enforce, and administer them this Organic Law,” it added. The new law authorizes the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) to continue as the interim government of the BARMM while still in transition period “unless such interim members are replaced by the president or their tenure is shortened by their election to a different office.” The interim members of the BTA shall serve until their successors shall have been elected and qualified in an automated election. RA 121317 likewise mandates the use of the automated election system used in the May 12, 2025 national and local

polls. This includes all machines, devices, equipment, and supplies used, as well as the service providers involved in their operation and maintenance. Marcos regarded the BARMM elections as crucial to the government's push to achieve lasting peace and development in the southern part of the country. "If that election fails, that will be a big failure in the peace process, that's why the BARMM elections need to be successful," he said.

- [MMDA gears up for two-day transport strike](#) (2026-03-25 11:45)

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) activated its Emergency Operations Center and pre-positioned rescue and free ride vehicles for the transport strike set on Thursday and Friday. Transport group MANIBELA on Wednesday also released the areas where they would hold their strikes for March 26. In a Viber message, the MMDA said the Emergency Operations Center had been activated at its Communications and Command Center as part of its preparations for the strike. The agency said rescue vehicles and "libreng sakay" (free ride) units were pre-positioned in coordination with Metro Manila local government units for commuters who may be affected. It added that a single dispatch system would be implemented so government vehicles would not compete with drivers who continue to operate and were not joining the strike. Under the setup, the MMDA said once an LGU has dispatched rescue or free ride vehicles to an area, the agency will no longer send another unit there. MANIBELA Chairman Mar Valbuena said he would be at Philcoa by 6 a.m. Valbuena said the strikes would be centered at: \* Philcoa\* Shell Gulod, Novaliches\* Monumento\* Puregold J.R. Gatchalian, Parañaque\* Starmall Alabang\* Nagtahan\* Shell Zapote, Las Piñas\* Pasig public market\* Marcos Highway, Sta. Lucia, Marikina\* Pedro Gil-Agoncillo\* Malaya-Tanay\* Balibago Highway, Sta. Rosa\* Olivarez Highway, Central Mall\* Tunasan Highway, RMT\* Iligan City Plaza, Lanao del Norte\* Bacolod Public Plaza\* Tacloban City\* Ormoc City\* Tagbak, Ungka Terminal, Christ the King, UP Flyover, and Iloilo City Provincial Capitol\* Dasmariñas, Cavite area. He added that the whole of Laguna would join the protest, although the list of strike centers has yet to be finalized. The two-day transport strike was announced by PISTON and MANIBELA, with PISTON saying the protest would draw participation from jeepney and bus operators, UV Express, TNVS drivers, motorcycle taxis and other transport sectors.

- [Fare hike suspension, fuel subsidies ease burden, says commuter group](#) (2026-03-25 11:29)

MANILA, Philippines — The Coalition of Filipino Commuters (CFC-PasaHero) on Wednesday said that recent measures of the government "eased" the burden of the riding public, amid continued rising fuel prices. In a statement, PasaHero said the suspension of the planned fare hike on public utility vehicles (PUVs) provided relief to commuters and stopped additional strain on daily expenses in transportation. "By suspending the initially announced fare hike, the government helped address one of the most immediate concerns of commuters—rising fares amid already increasing living costs," CFC-PasaHero lead convenor Ira Panganiban said in a statement. He pointed out that commuters usually felt the effects of the oil price hikes first, since the fare adjustments on PUVs affect their daily expenses.

- [Marcos signs law allowing him to suspend, reduce excise tax](#) (2026-03-25 11:17)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday signed into law a bill granting him the power to suspend or reduce excise tax on fuel products. The President signed Republic Act (RA) 12316 as part of the government's efforts to cushion the impact of the oil price surge triggered by the war in the Middle East.

- [Fire breaks out in Pasay area, reaches second alarm](#) (2026-03-25 09:40)

MANILA, Philippines — Fire broke out in Pasay City, reaching second alarm, on Wednesday. Firefighters were still battling the blaze along David Street in Village 23, F.B. Harrison of posting time, as authorities determine its cause. The Bureau of Fire Protection National Capital Region urged the public to avoid the area and follow safety advisories. The BFP warned against illegal power connections, overloading outlets or extension cords, leaving appliances plugged in when not in use, and failing to regularly check wiring and electrical equipment.

- [Marcos: LGUs to roll out free rice program by April](#) (2026-03-25 09:34)

MANILA, Philippines- President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday announced that local government units (LGUs) would provide free rice to their constituents through the Local Government Support Fund (LGSF) by April, as part of the government's efforts to help Filipinos cushion the impact of rising oil prices. In a press conference in Malacañang, Marcos said the LGUs would roll out the rice program under the expanded LGSF "within the next week or two." "So we used the LGSF, the Local Government Support Fund and it will be directly released to our local governments so that they themselves can provide assistance faster," Marcos said. Under the program, the President said that each LGU would provide at least 50 percent of the LGSF funds for the purchase and distribution of rice to their constituents. "They can use 100 percent of the fund for the rice distribution but it is up to them. But it is necessary that at least 50 percent of the funds they receive must be used to purchase and distribute rice," he added.

- [House panel seeks Duterte SALNs, NBI records on 'threat' vs Marcos](#) (2026-03-25 07:09)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives' Committee on Justice on Wednesday ruled to subpoena documents from the Office of the Ombudsman and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in relation to its hearing on the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte. The committee will ask the Ombudsman for Duterte's Statements of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALNs) from 2022 to 2025, 2007 to 2013, 2016 to 2022. The committee also decided to issue a subpoena duces tecum on the documents of the NBI's investigation on the alleged assassination "threat" by Duterte against President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. The committee is conducting the hearing to determine whether there is probable cause to impeach Duterte. This comes after it found two complaints sufficient in: form, substance, and grounds. Duterte is charged with alleged culpable violation of the Constitution and betrayal of public trust for her alleged misuse of intelligence funds of the Office of the Vice President and the Department of Education. She has denied the accusations.

- [Marcos to sign bill suspending fuel excise tax](#) (2026-03-25 07:03)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday said he would sign into law a bill granting him the power to suspend or reduce excise tax on fuel products within the day. Speaking to reporters in Malacañang, Marcos said he was still determining the right time to use the power. "By the end of the day I will be signing that law already," Marcos said during a press conference.

- [Marcos: No fare hikes this Holy Week](#) (2026-03-25 06:47)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said ferry and bus operators have committed not to increase fares this Holy Week despite rising fuel prices triggered by the war in the Middle East. In an interview with Bloomberg on Tuesday, Marcos said the government was trying to ease the burden of increases in fuel prices on the riding public and the middle class during the Holy Week. "We've gotten commitments from ferries that they will not raise their fares, we're doing the same thing with buses that they will not raise their fares and they do not limit or cut down the trips they will be taking," the President said. "We're doing everything we can so the riding public, the general public, the people who are working, the middle class, they are the ones we are most concerned about, so it does not become a drag to their livelihoods," he added.

- [House justice panel to subpoena Madriaga](#) (2026-03-25 05:51)

MANILA, Philippines—Voting 29-1, the House Committee on Justice on Wednesday ruled to subpoena Ramil Madriaga, the alleged bagman of Vice President Sara Duterte. He will be required to appear before the committee to testify and produce his affidavit dated Nov. 29, 2025 "and any other evidence in his possession." Voting 35-1, the committee granted the motion of Akbayan Rep. Chel Diokno to provide protection for Madriaga. Diokno said his motion was for the committee to "make sure that there is additional security provided to Madriaga in his present place of detention by the National Bureau of Investigation." Madriaga was detained over a kidnapping case. The committee on Wednesday started the hearing on the two impeachment complaints against Duterte to determine if there is probable cause to impeach her.

- [House justice panel to subpoena Sara's alleged bagman](#) (2026-03-25 05:51)

MANILA, Philippines — Voting 29-1, the House of Representatives' Committee on Justice on Wednesday ruled to subpoena the alleged bagman of Vice President Sara Duterte. Ramil Madriaga will be required to appear before the committee to testify and produce his affidavit dated Nov. 29, 2025 "and any other evidence in his possession." Voting 35-1, the committee granted the motion of Akbayan Rep. Chel Diokno to provide protection for Madriaga. Diokno said his motion was for the committee to "make sure that there is additional security provided to Madriaga in his present place of detention by the National Bureau of Investigation." Madriaga was detained over a kidnapping case. The committee on Wednesday started the hearing on the two icomplaints against Duterte to determine probable cause to impeach her.

- [Marikina mayor clarifies fuel subsidy payout reset in Marikina](#) (2026-03-25 04:39)

MANILA, Philippines — Mayor Maan Teodoro on Wednesday clarified that the rescheduling of Marikina's fuel subsidy payout for jeepney drivers was meant to ensure that no qualified beneficiary would be left out. Teodoro said the city decided to move the payout because it did not agree to a distribution in which only some jeepney drivers would receive assistance while others in Marikina were not even included in the list. She said the local government spoke with jeepney operators and drivers associations, along with the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB), to press for the inclusion of drivers who should be covered by the subsidy. Teodoro also lamented that some were focusing on politics and spreading fake news instead of helping during a time of crisis. "This is not a time for politics. This is a time for compassion, action, and standing with those who are in greater need," Teodoro said. The rescheduled payout in Marikina will be held on March 28.

- [PH in exploratory talks with Russia for oil imports](#) (2026-03-25 04:36)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said the Philippines has begun exploratory talks with Russia, a non-traditional trading partner, regarding the possibility of fuel importation to boost the country's stockpile. Marcos' disclosure was made in an interview with Bloomberg News. "Russia is not a traditional supplier of crude oil to the Philippines or any energy supply, but we are exploring that as well," he said. He added that the Philippines was likewise "still working" on getting China to commit to adding to its fuel supply. "Basically, we are trying anything, everything to secure supply because that's the one thing that we can do about. The pricing is going to be a much more difficult challenge because everyone is a price taker when it comes to oil," he said. Following the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East, the president said the country would be looking for alternative sources of oil. Apart from Russia and China, the government is also looking at Asian partners like Thailand, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Brunei.

- [Up to Palace to decide on fate of Asean 2026 chairmanship, says Foreign Affairs chief](#) (2026-03-25 04:32)

MANILA, Philippines — It is up to Malacanang to decide whether to postpone the Philippines' hosting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) event, Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro said. Lazaro made the remark when asked during a media forum on Wednesday on the proposal to postpone the country's chairmanship of Asean this year amid the Middle East war's effect on the vulnerable sectors like the energy, farmers, fisherfolks, and transport. "There will be an appropriate time on what the Palace will say [on the matter]. You just wait for that [pronouncement]," Lazaro said at the Kapihan sa Manila Hotel media forum. "We cannot make that decision," Lazaro said, referring to a proposal to the Palace for its "serious study" and "possible reconsideration." "It is the turn of the Philippines to lead Asean, which requires the country to host 650 ministerial and senior official meetings. These will be held in Manila, Cebu, Bohol, Boracay, Laog, Iloilo, Tagaytay, and Clark in Pampanga. In a radio interview over the weekend, former Finance secretary Gary Teves said the government would

save over P17 billion if it postpones hosting the Asean. The money could be used to offset the impact of the Middle East war on the economy. Senate President Vicente Sotto III on Monday said, "The times call for such a possible move. The Executive department might consider that." Senate President Pro Tempore Panfilo Lacson said Teves' recommendation "merits at least serious study and possible reconsideration."

- [DPWH intensifies road maintenance ahead of Holy Week travel surge](#) (2026-03-25 04:11)

MANILA, Philippines — In preparation for the anticipated influx of travelers for the upcoming Holy Week, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) has ramped up its routine road repair and maintenance activities following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive to prioritize road safety and commuter convenience. Public Works Secretary Vince Dizon on Wednesday said all DPWH regional and district engineering offices were under strict instruction to ensure that all major thoroughfares are well-maintained, and free from obstructions and potholes, and to guarantee that appropriate warning, directional, and information signages are legibly and visibly installed. Ongoing maintenance activities, Dizon said, include the repair of road defects such as potholes and cracks, repainting of faded road markings, clearing of overgrown vegetation, and restoration of damaged or missing road signs. "Our teams are working round-the-clock shifts to ensure major thoroughfares are well-maintained, and free from obstruction and potholes," said Dizon, adding that the DPWH would also provide emergency assistance to commuters before and after the observance of the Holy Week. Dizon said that one of the DPWH's main focus was the road repairs on the Andaya Highway in Sipocot, Camarines Sur, one of the main arteries of the Maharlika Highway. "Remember, it's not only people from Bicol who pass through here—everyone does, including those going to Visayas and Mindanao. At least with our Holy Week timeline, we can provide this to our fellow citizens," the DPWH chief said. He assured that travel along the highways would now be continuous as the one-way system would no longer be implemented in preparation for the Holy Week rush. "We need to ensure that before Holy Week, the Maharlika Highway is fully passable—from Quezon, Bicol, Samar to Leyte. We make sure that our [DPWH] Regional Director will deliver and that all our ongoing projects will be completed quickly so that before Holy Week all these one-way sections will already be open," added Dizon. Dizon said the planned major rehabilitation of Maharlika Highway would start after the Holy Week.

- [Marcos orders P20B emergency fund to secure fuel supply](#) (2026-03-25 03:54)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the release of P20 billion emergency fund to the Department of Energy (DOE) to secure the country's fuel supply and shield Filipinos from the impact of the global oil crisis, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said Wednesday. In a statement, the DBM said the funding, sourced from the Malampaya Gas Fund under the Special Account in the General Fund, was released through a Special Allotment Release Order and Notice of Cash Allocation to support the government's Emergency Energy Security Program. The P20 billion intervention will fund the strategic procurement of fuel products—including diesel, gasoline, and liquefied petroleum gas—to

boost national fuel inventory, stabilize pump prices, and ensure uninterrupted operations across transport, logistics, agriculture, emergency response, and other critical sectors, the DBM said. The program will be implemented by the Philippine National Oil Company–Exploration Corporation, which has already initiated procurement activities to immediately augment domestic supply. "This is about protecting the daily life of every Filipino—from the jeepney driver and delivery rider, to our farmers, frontliners, and ordinary families," Budget Secretary Rolando Toledo said. "Under the President's directive, we are moving with urgency to ensure that fuel remains available, prices are moderated, and essential services continue uninterrupted. This is government acting ahead of the crisis—not reacting after the damage is done," he added. Speaker Faustino "Bojie" Dy III on Tuesday night said the House of Representatives was prepared to move with "the same urgency, through targeted interventions, close oversight, and real relief for our people." Dy said the President's move was a timely and necessary step to shield the country from the growing impact of the Middle East conflict on fuel supply, prices, and the broader economy. The Philippine National Police (PNP) vowed to ensure the orderly implementation of regulations to maintain peace and security and encouraged everyone to stay informed, remain cooperative, and practice responsible energy use. The Armed Forces of the Philippines said it recognized that the development has a bearing on its mandate to help ensure energy security, national stability, and the overall welfare of the Filipino people. Federation of Philippine Industries Chairman Elizabeth Lee said the government's decision to declare an energy emergency was timely and necessary, especially for manufacturers whose pressure was "multi-layered" — hitting energy, transport, imported input materials and production timelines. WITH REPORTS FROM IZEL ABANILLA, CHYNNA ONG, PNA

- [House panel holds impeach probe sans Sara](#) (2026-03-25 02:50)

(UPDATE) MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives' Committee on Justice on Wednesday proceeded with the hearing on the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte even after she said that she would skip the hearing and urged lawmakers to junk the case against her. Batangas 2nd District Rep. Gerville Luistro, the committee chairman, said at the start of the hearing that "regardless of the participation of the Vice President and even in her absence, this committee will proceed. We will do our duty with resolve, without hesitation, and without delay." On Tuesday night, Luistro said the committee would proceed with the scheduled hearing despite the information it received. "We received information that the Vice President and her legal team will not be participating in tomorrow's (Wednesday) formal hearing," she said. "They are questioning the constitutionality of the proceedings, but the Committee on Justice is duty-bound to continue with its mandate under the Constitution," she said. Luistro maintained that the committee was committed to a fair and constitutional conduct of the proceedings. The committee is conducting the hearing to determine whether there is probable cause to impeach Duterte who is facing charges of culpable violation of the Constitution and betrayal of public trust over the alleged misuse of intelligence funds from the Office of the Vice President (OVP) and Department of Education where she served briefly as its

secretary before resigning. The complaints were found to be sufficient in: form, substance, and grounds. In a statement earlier on Wednesday, Duterte said she preferred to devote her time to serving Filipinos by providing assistance "to ease the financial burden of the families most in need." She also called on the committee to junk the impeachment complaints against her for "lack of evidence." Duterte said that the invitation was used to construct a media narrative of a "mini trial" based on her alleged refusal to answer and her failure to attend the hearing. "In this manner, the hearings are being used by the House of Representatives to conduct yet another third fishing expedition against me," Duterte said. She reiterated that the country's current problems were the "looming closure of businesses, the loss of jobs, and the hardship faced by every Filipino family due to the continuous rise in the prices of goods," "Once again, politics is being prioritized over the welfare of millions of Filipinos who are struggling deeply due to the high cost of commodities," Duterte said. She reiterated that there was no rule that stated that a respondent in an impeachment complaint must personally attend the hearings. "I have already submitted my Answer ad Cautelam. At this point, the Committee has nothing left to do but dismiss the complaints due to a clear lack of evidence," Duterte said.

- [2 airline companies announce stable fuel supply](#) (2026-03-25 01:57)

MANILA, Philippines — Flag carrier Philippine Airlines (PAL) confirmed on Wednesday that it has stabilized its jet fuel inventory, ensuring uninterrupted service for all scheduled domestic and international operations in the coming months. The announcement comes despite President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s declaration of a state of national energy emergency, where he noted that grounding flights was a distinct possibility due to Middle East conflict-driven shortages. "The airline recognizes that global supply conditions remain dynamic. As part of prudent planning, PAL continues to work closely with fuel suppliers, industry partners, and government stakeholders to ensure stable and efficient operations over the longer term," PAL said in a statement. While PAL acknowledged that fuel prices have more than doubled, the airline said it was working closely with government and industry partners to maintain stable and efficient operations amid dynamic global supply conditions. Meanwhile, Gokongwei-led Cebu Pacific (CEB) said that it has secured fuel supply up until the end of April, and was working on supply for May and beyond. "Things are working well for us at a time that we're very financially strong, coming from 2025 which was a record year," CEB said in a statement. CEB said that 73 percent of its network is domestic, and 72 percent of its jet fleet is Airbus NEOs, which are the new generation, fuel efficient aircraft.

- [Coast Guard, BFAR boats sent to protect fishermen](#) (2026-03-25 00:47)

THE Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) deployed multiple vessels to Bajo de Masinloc following reports of continued harassment by Chinese vessels of Filipino fishermen, authorities said. In a statement Tuesday, the PCG said two of its vessels and five BFAR fishery patrol ships were dispatched after more than 20 Filipino fishing boats were harassed by China Coast Guard (CCG) units over the weekend. The joint deployment secured the fishing grounds and ensured the safety of Filipino fishermen operating

in the area. Government personnel also distributed fuel subsidies, food packs, and ice to help sustain fishing operations and mitigate the impact of rising fuel costs. PCG Commandant Admiral Ronnie Gil Gavan ordered an aerial maritime domain awareness flight over the shoal to monitor the situation. The operation documented the presence of six CCG vessels, 20 Chinese Maritime Militia ships, and one warship from the People's Liberation Army Navy. During the patrol, the PCG recorded what it described as a first-of-its-kind incident: a CCG vessel broadcasting over radio its intent to conduct a "clearing operation" within a defined area. The coordinates covered waters between 14°14' N to 15°05' N latitude and 118°10' E to 118°25' E longitude. The PCG said the deployment formed part of efforts to safeguard Philippine sovereignty and protect the livelihood of local fishermen in the West Philippine Sea. The agency also reiterated its commitment to enforcing international law and supporting the policy direction of the Philippine government in asserting the country's sovereign rights and maritime jurisdiction in contested waters.

Meanwhile, Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. said Japan is expected to send combat troops to military exercises in the Philippines instead of the usual humanitarian assistance and disaster response trainers. Brawner linked the expected deployment to rising maritime tensions in the West Philippine Sea and the deepening defense ties between Manila and Tokyo. "As mentioned by the ambassador, for this year's Balikatan exercise, we are expecting Japan to send combat troops to join in the exercise instead of just the usual trainers of HADR, Humanitarian Assistance in Disaster," Brawner said. He said the Philippines-Japan relationship now goes beyond politics and touches on regional and global stability, as well as both countries' shared commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and a free and open Indo-Pacific. Brawner said the two countries' ties have evolved through periods of challenge and renewal and have, over the past two decades, and reached a decisive turning point as a forward-looking defense relationship. He said the transformation reflects not only stronger bilateral ties but also a shared understanding of an increasingly complex security environment. Brawner said the Philippines and Japan are being drawn closer by converging strategic interests in maritime security, regional stability, and the defense of a rules-based international order. He said those shared commitments are being tested by China's actions in contested waters. "In the face of the People's Republic of China's increasing assertiveness in the West Philippine Sea and the broader South China Sea as well as the East China Sea, the Philippines remains firmly anchored in international law, diplomacy and transparency," he said. He said the Philippines continues to uphold the 2016 arbitral award under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea while asserting its maritime rights through peaceful and lawful means. "This approach reflects a deliberate strategy, principled restraint coupled with resolve," Brawner said. He added that the Philippines has also committed itself to transparency and strategic communication so that developments at sea are clearly presented, facts are established, and the international community remains informed. "In doing so, we defend our rights while contributing to accountability and stability," he said. Brawner said Japan has consistently upheld the same principles, including respect for international law, freedom of navigation, and adherence to established norms. "As a like-minded partner, Japan reinforces a shared vision of a maritime domain governed by law, not by coercion," he said. He said both countries affirm that regional

stability depends on open sea lanes, peaceful dispute management, and respect for the rights of all states. Brawner said defense cooperation between the Philippines and Japan has expanded through capacity-building efforts, maritime security assistance, and more advanced joint and trilateral exercises. He said the growing cooperation has included radar systems provided by Japan under its security assistance programs, as well as broader efforts to improve interoperability between the two militaries. Brawner also cited the Reciprocal Access Agreement as a landmark arrangement showing both countries' commitment to a more responsive and coordinated security posture. Beyond conventional military cooperation, Brawner said the partnership is also responding to emerging threats, including what he described as illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive actions that undermine sovereignty without escalating into open conflict. He said sustained coordination, information sharing, and strategic communication are essential in exposing malign influence and reinforcing the rules-based order. In a separate interview, Brawner said there are efforts to damage the Philippines' relationship with Japan as the two countries deepen defense cooperation. "Yes, we are seeing these efforts to destroy the relationship," he said. He said it is important that the Philippines and Japan do not allow such efforts to disrupt ties that have now lasted for 70 years as independent democracies. "Eighty-one years ago in 1945, we found ourselves on opposite sides of the war," Brawner said. "This time, we find ourselves on the same side, on the same side of that effort to promote a rules-based international order," he added. Brawner said some countries are pushing their own interests in the region through coercion, which makes coalitions with like-minded partners such as Japan all the more important. He also said the Armed Forces of the Philippines is paying closer attention to cyber defense as global conflicts have shown how attacks on networks can come even before actual strikes.

- [Go urges oil crisis intervention](#) (2026-03-25 00:45)

SEN. Bong Go called for immediate economic interventions to shield Filipinos from the impact of rising global oil prices amid tensions in the Middle East. Go issued the appeal amid projections that pump prices could surge significantly due to global supply constraints and the Philippines' heavy reliance on imported oil. Industry estimates suggest gasoline prices — already hovering above P70 per liter — could rise by as much as P9 to P12 per liter, with diesel potentially increasing even more. The senator said the volatility highlights the country's vulnerability to external shocks, particularly as geopolitical crises affect key shipping routes and energy markets. Analysts note that sustained increases in fuel prices could intensify inflationary pressures, particularly in a country where transportation and logistics costs significantly influence retail prices. "This is really a domino effect," Go said, noting that rising oil prices would inevitably cascade across sectors, driving up transportation fares, food production costs and the prices of basic commodities. Go expressed willingness to support the suspension of excise taxes on fuel should global crude prices reach \$100 per barrel, a threshold he said could be breached if the war persists and supply remains tight. Meanwhile, transport groups have raised concerns over delays and gaps in the government's fuel subsidy programs. Some drivers report not receiving assistance due to pending documentation or exclusion from official

beneficiary lists submitted to implementing agencies. Transport leaders said current subsidy amounts may be insufficient to offset sustained fuel price increases, especially for drivers dependent on daily earnings. Some drivers are still completing registration and data validation requirements before they can access subsidies, further delaying relief. Others cited bureaucratic hurdles that slow the disbursement process. Go urged agencies such as the Department of Energy, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Transportation to prioritize the most affected sectors, including public utility drivers and low-income workers. “This is the Filipino people’s money. It should be returned to them during this time of crisis,” he said.

- [Hot, humid weather likely over Metro Manila, most parts of PH](#) (2026-03-24 21:47)

MANILA, Philippines – Another hot, humid weather would be experienced all throughout the day over Metro Manila and most parts of the archipelago due to the easterlies, the state-run weather bureau said on Wednesday. On one hand, cloudy skies with scattered rains and thunderstorms would be likely over Bicol Region, Quezon, Marinduque, Romblon, Oriental Mindoro, Northern Samar, and Eastern Samar also due to the effect of the same weather system, weather specialist Chenel Dominguez said. In its 5 a.m. briefing, the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said it has not monitored any weather disturbance forming inside or outside the country’s area of responsibility in the coming days. Pagasa urged the public to stay hydrated and limit outdoor activities, among others, as sultry or hotter temperatures would be possible during late morning until mid-afternoon. However, isolated downpours or thunderstorms would still be likely over the National Capital Region and the rest of the country especially during late afternoon or at night, it added.

- [Marcos: Jet fuel lack may ground planes](#) (2026-03-24 16:14)

(UPDATE) PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. warned of “a distinct possibility” of aircraft being grounded due to a looming shortage of jet fuel brought by the war in the Middle East. In an interview with Bloomberg, Marcos cited limitations in crude oil supply and slower jet fuel production as key concerns affecting airline operations. “With a scarcity, shall we say, the limitation now on crude supply, the refining of jet fuel takes a longer time. And so, we will have to depend on what is already readily available,” he said. Marcos also noted that some countries have imposed restrictions on refueling foreign aircraft, forcing airlines to carry sufficient fuel for return trips. The latest development, he said, is complicating international operations. “When our airlines fly out, several countries have said we cannot fuel your aircraft. So, you will have to carry the fuel there and back. And that’s around here. And the long haul is going to be a much more serious problem,” Marcos said. Asked whether the recent developments could lead to planes being grounded, Marcos said the country is hoping to avoid such a scenario but acknowledged the risk. “We’re hoping not, but it’s a possibility. It’s a distinct possibility,” he said. Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said Tuesday the Philippines still has an adequate fuel supply until the second weekend of May. Garin said the country has an average supply of about

45 days, based on discussions with fuel companies, noting that the estimated remaining domestic supply is 53.14 days for gasoline; 45.82 days for diesel; 97.93 days for kerosene; 38.62 days for jet fuel; 61.49 days for fuel oil; and 23.51 days for liquefied petroleum gas. Hostilities in the Middle East have triggered the closure of air spaces and travel hubs in the region including Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi, which have left tens of thousands of passengers stranded. As a result of rising costs, air travelers in the country will also face higher airfares starting next month. The Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) recently announced that flights booked from April 1-15, 2026, will see a significant airfare increase due to the lifting of the fuel surcharge to Level 8. This means an addition of up to P6,200 to ticket costs. Domestic surcharges will range from P253 to P787, while international rates will rise to P835.05 to P6,208.98, driven by high jet fuel prices. This 15-day cycle is meant to manage extreme fuel price volatility. Already, budget airline Cebu Pacific last Monday announced it would be scaling down its number of flights beginning April because of surging fuel crisis. Transport relief

Meanwhile, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) announced a package of transportation relief measures on Tuesday, highlighted by a 50-percent discount on train fares, reduced toll rates for public utility vehicles, and the nationwide rollout of a P2.5-billion fuel subsidy program. Starting March 23, all passengers of LRT-2 and MRT-3 are entitled to a 50-percent fare discount, according to documents presented during a March 24 joint press conference. Toll discounts took effect the same day for Class 1 public utility vehicles, including jeepneys and modernized jeepneys, as well as for Class 3 trucks with three or more axles and a height exceeding 7.5 feet. The discounts vary per expressway, with savings ranging from P1 to P66 for Class 1 vehicles and P8 to P197 for Class 3 vehicles. Beneficiaries must have RFID tags, be registered with the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board, and hold a certificate of franchise. For vehicles transporting agricultural products, the government also implemented a “Piso Ro-Ro” terminal fee, reducing rates to P1 for Class 3 and Class 4 vehicles. At airports, reduced fees and charges will take effect on April 1. Passengers will save up to P200 per person on terminal fees, while airlines will save up to P5,000 per landing on landing fees. The fuel subsidy program, with an approved budget of P2.5 billion, targets 245,066 driver-beneficiaries and covers 1,180,783 public utility vehicle units operated by beneficiaries. Distribution began March 24 through fuel subsidy cards, bank transfers, e-wallet transfers, and cash or check payouts. The government will shoulder all convenience fees. Under the program, subsidy amounts vary by vehicle type. Public bus operators will receive P10,000 per unit and drivers P5,000 each. Modern public utility jeepney operators will receive P10,000 per unit and drivers P1,500 each. Traditional jeepney operators will receive P5,000 per unit and drivers P1,500 each. UV Express operators and drivers will receive P5,000 and P1,500, respectively. Taxi operators will receive P2,000 per unit and drivers P5,000 each. Tricycle drivers and delivery service beneficiaries are scheduled to receive their subsidies after Holy Week. Alternative sources

The Philippines has sought help from at least five oil-producing nations to supply the country’s petroleum needs to offset the effect of high oil prices brought by the Middle East war, Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro told a Senate panel Tuesday. “We already wrote letters to certain selected countries that have been identified by the DOE (Department of Energy) concerning petroleum reserves and the possibility of obtaining our petroleum needs

from them,” Lazaro told the Senate Proactive Response and Oversight for Timely and Effective Crisis Strategy Committee. The DFA chief, however, did not identify the countries. In earlier interview, Lazaro said the Philippines is considering importing oil from Russia following the temporary lifting of sanction by the United States on Russian crude oil in transit at sea. Garin, at the same hearing, said the Philippines is looking at India as alternative source for oil. “We’ re working on that so that we’ ll have a different source.” Lazaro said the Philippines, as chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) this year, convened the Asean foreign ministers meeting on March 4 and an emergency meeting on March 13. She said the March 13 meeting was “geared towards this issue of the petroleum needs of the whole of Asean.” Lazaro also noted that Asean’ s energy ministers met in December 2025 and came up with the Asean Framework on Petroleum Security, which “modernizes the region’ s petroleum security arrangements.” Senate Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano on Tuesday welcomed the president’ s directive to form a government crisis committee, saying it reinforces the Senate’ s earlier push for a coordinated national response framework amid escalating war in the Middle East. Cayetano said the move aligns with the chamber’ s adoption of Senate Resolution (SR) 343, which he introduced earlier this month, urging the Executive Branch to establish a National Contingency Framework to guide the country’ s response to large-scale disruptions. The resolution highlighted the Philippines’ vulnerability to global shocks, particularly conflicts affecting oil supply chains involving regions such as the Middle East. Lawmakers warned that such disruptions could quickly drive up fuel prices, transportation costs, and overall inflation. WITH BERNADETTE TAMAYO AND JAVIER JOE ISMAEL

- [Back to black: Facing energy shock, Asia turns to coal](#) (2026-03-24 16:13)

ASIAN countries are ramping up use of polluting coal to tackle energy shortages and price spikes linked to the Iran war, but the crisis could have an environmental silver lining. While leaning on the fossil fuel will raise emissions in the near term, the energy crisis is demonstrating the risks of energy import dependence, and could push policymakers to embrace renewables faster, analysts said. “The ongoing Iran oil and gas crisis shows the importance of having domestic energy sources that are not exposed to the global commodity market, which coal is,” said Amy Kong, research analyst at Zero Carbon Analytics. “Countries like Vietnam who have rapidly increased their share of solar generation, have a stronger buffer against rising energy import prices,” Kong said. Much of Asia is heavily exposed to the energy crisis that has unfolded since the US-Israel attack on Iran began last month. More than 80 percent of the crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) that passes through the Strait of Hormuz heads to Asia, according to the US Energy Information Administration. Pakistan, India and Bangladesh are all major importers of LNG from Qatar, which said last week that its export capacity had been slashed by 17 percent because of Iranian attacks. It warned it would be forced to declare force majeure for up to five years on some long-term LNG contracts, signaling it may be unable to fulfill the agreements. Higher prices Compounding the problem, most Asian countries do not have underground gas storage, according to the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, leaving them especially vulnerable to price spikes. As a result, many

nations are bumping up use of coal, which can be sourced regionally or even domestically, to prevent power outages and protect citizens from severe price shocks. While it cannot be substituted directly in LNG plants, countries can run existing coal power plants at a higher capacity or bring idle units back online. The shift has come in wealthy and developing economies alike. In South Korea, a cap on how much power can be generated from coal has been lifted, while Thailand is preparing to resume operations at two coal power units decommissioned last year. In India, already highly dependent on coal for electricity generation, the fuel is now being substituted for cooking gas. And in the Philippines, Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said authorities “plan to ramp up cheaper coal, (domestic) natural gas, and renewables.” The increase in demand has pushed coal prices higher and even sparked talk of a windfall tax in coal-producing Indonesia, which reversed a decision taken last year to reduce production. The shift is bad news for the environment in the short term. Coal is a top contributor to planet-warming greenhouse gases, and also a powerful air pollutant. Transition fuel The shift will “impose substantial environmental and public health costs,” said Dinita Setyawati, senior energy analyst for Asia at think tank Ember. Asia’s vulnerability is due in part to its heavy reliance on LNG, often promoted as a “transition fuel” — a less polluting option than coal that can “bridge the gap” as countries move towards renewable energy. Upfront costs for LNG plants can be lower than for renewables that may require grid upgrades. But renewables are now cheaper in the long run, and the current crisis is illustrating their benefits in terms of stable supply, said Putra Adhiguna, managing director at Energy Shift Institute, an energy finance think tank. “The story of gas as a stable transition fuel is highly in question,” he said. And while temporary increases in coal capacity are an attractive stopgap, the banking sector is reluctant to finance construction of new coal projects, concerned about stranded assets as nations are forced to phase down fossil fuels to meet their climate obligations. That could help refocus policymakers’ attention on the benefits of renewables, said Adhiguna. “I think we already see a bit of that coming from Southeast Asian countries,” he said. “There have been all these debates about how we can’t afford to spend the money (on renewables) upfront, but I think this security of supply issue is going to override that.”

- [Coast Guard, BFAR boats sent to protect fishermen](#) (2026-03-24 16:12)

(UPDATE) THE Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) deployed multiple vessels to Bajo de Masinloc following reports of continued harassment by Chinese vessels of Filipino fishermen, authorities said. In a statement Tuesday, the PCG said two of its vessels and five BFAR fishery patrol ships were dispatched after more than 20 Filipino fishing boats were harassed by China Coast Guard (CCG) units over the weekend. The joint deployment secured the fishing grounds and ensured the safety of Filipino fishermen operating in the area. Government personnel also distributed fuel subsidies, food packs, and ice to help sustain fishing operations and mitigate the impact of rising fuel costs. PCG Commandant Admiral Ronnie Gil Gavan ordered an aerial maritime domain awareness flight over the shoal to monitor the situation. The operation documented the presence of six CCG vessels, 20 Chinese Maritime Militia ships, and one warship from the People’s Liberation Army

Navy. During the patrol, the PCG recorded what it described as a first-of-its-kind incident: a CCG vessel broadcasting over radio its intent to conduct a “clearing operation” within a defined area. The coordinates covered waters between 14°14’ N to 15°05’ N latitude and 118°10’ E to 118°25’ E longitude. The PCG said the deployment formed part of efforts to safeguard Philippine sovereignty and protect the livelihood of local fishermen in the West Philippine Sea. The agency also reiterated its commitment to enforcing international law and supporting the policy direction of the Philippine government in asserting the country’s sovereign rights and maritime jurisdiction in contested waters.

Military exercises

Meanwhile, Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. said Japan is expected to send combat troops to military exercises in the Philippines instead of the usual humanitarian assistance and disaster response trainers. Brawner linked the expected deployment to rising maritime tensions in the West Philippine Sea and the deepening defense ties between Manila and Tokyo. “As mentioned by the ambassador, for this year’s Balikatan exercise, we are expecting Japan to send combat troops to join in the exercise instead of just the usual trainers of HADR, Humanitarian Assistance in Disaster,” Brawner said. He said the Philippines-Japan relationship now goes beyond politics and touches on regional and global stability, as well as both countries’ shared commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and a free and open Indo-Pacific. Brawner said the two countries’ ties have evolved through periods of challenge and renewal and have, over the past two decades, and reached a decisive turning point as a forward-looking defense relationship. He said the transformation reflects not only stronger bilateral ties but also a shared understanding of an increasingly complex security environment. Brawner said the Philippines and Japan are being drawn closer by converging strategic interests in maritime security, regional stability, and the defense of a rules-based international order. He said those shared commitments are being tested by China’s actions in contested waters. “In the face of the People’s Republic of China’s increasing assertiveness in the West Philippine Sea and the broader South China Sea as well as the East China Sea, the Philippines remains firmly anchored in international law, diplomacy and transparency,” he said. He said the Philippines continues to uphold the 2016 arbitral award under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea while asserting its maritime rights through peaceful and lawful means. “This approach reflects a deliberate strategy, principled restraint coupled with resolve,” Brawner said. He added that the Philippines has also committed itself to transparency and strategic communication so that developments at sea are clearly presented, facts are established, and the international community remains informed. “In doing so, we defend our rights while contributing to accountability and stability,” he said. Brawner said Japan has consistently upheld the same principles, including respect for international law, freedom of navigation, and adherence to established norms. “As a like-minded partner, Japan reinforces a shared vision of a maritime domain governed by law, not by coercion,” he said. He said both countries affirm that regional stability depends on open sea lanes, peaceful dispute management, and respect for the rights of all states. Brawner said defense cooperation between the Philippines and Japan has expanded through capacity-building efforts, maritime security assistance, and more advanced joint and trilateral exercises. He said the growing cooperation has included radar systems provided by Japan under its security assistance programs, as well as broader efforts to improve

interoperability between the two militaries. Brawner also cited the Reciprocal Access Agreement as a landmark arrangement showing both countries' commitment to a more responsive and coordinated security posture. Beyond conventional military cooperation, Brawner said the partnership is also responding to emerging threats, including what he described as illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive actions that undermine sovereignty without escalating into open conflict. He said sustained coordination, information sharing, and strategic communication are essential in exposing malign influence and reinforcing the rules-based order. In a separate interview, Brawner said there are efforts to damage the Philippines' relationship with Japan as the two countries deepen defense cooperation. "Yes, we are seeing these efforts to destroy the relationship," he said. He said it is important that the Philippines and Japan do not allow such efforts to disrupt ties that have now lasted for 70 years as independent democracies. "Eighty-one years ago in 1945, we found ourselves on opposite sides of the war," Brawner said. "This time, we find ourselves on the same side, on the same side of that effort to promote a rules-based international order," he added. Brawner said some countries are pushing their own interests in the region through coercion, which makes coalitions with like-minded partners such as Japan all the more important. He also said the Armed Forces of the Philippines is paying closer attention to cyber defense as global conflicts have shown how attacks on networks can come even before actual strikes.

- [Filipino worker hurt in Israel missile attack](#) (2026-03-24 16:11)

(UPDATE) THE Philippine Embassy in Israel said a 30-year-old Filipino worker sustained a leg injury during a missile strike launched by Iran on the town of Arad on March 21. The unidentified Filipino was brought to Soroka Medical Center, where he received treatment. He was expected to be discharged Tuesday. The embassy's rapid reaction team visited him at the hospital March 22 to check on his condition and provide emergency assistance. The team also visited other Filipinos in Arad and Dimona whose apartments sustained minor damage to check on their well-being and distribute food packages, the embassy said. They are temporarily staying with fellow Filipinos, while some are being accommodated in a hotel near the Dead Sea. In a Facebook post, the embassy said it "continues to monitor the recovery of the injured Filipino and the well-being of affected kababayan (fellow Filipinos), and will provide psychosocial and mental health support services in the coming days." There are more than 30,300 Filipinos in Israel, most of whom are caregivers. The rest are hotel workers, agricultural students, and missionaries. The BBC reported that about 180 people were injured, some seriously, in Iranian missile strikes on two southern Israeli towns near a nuclear facility. Israel's health ministry said 116 people were injured in Arad and 64 in Dimona after ballistic missiles hit the towns Saturday evening. Iranian state TV earlier said the strikes were in response to an attack on Iran's Natanz nuclear facility Saturday. The embassy urged Filipinos to immediately enter a "mamad," or bomb shelter, as soon as they receive an emergency alert. "Remember that there is only 90 seconds, or less in Northern Israel, to go inside a mamad/shelter if the missile comes from Lebanon," the embassy said in Filipino. Meanwhile, the Philippine Embassy in Lebanon urged Filipinos living in the southern part of the country to move to Beirut or northern areas for

safety after Israel bombed a bridge linking southern Lebanon to the rest of the country. The bombing of the Qasmiyeh bridge was reportedly part of Israel's campaign against the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah, which recently fired rockets into Israel to avenge the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei by a joint US-Israel attack on Iran. In an advisory Monday, the embassy said "movement may become difficult due to the ongoing targeting of infrastructure by the IDF (Israel Defense Forces)." "Ensure that your important documents (passport and iqama) are secure and easily accessible," the embassy posted on Facebook. There are more than 14,100 Filipinos in Lebanon as of February 2026, the Department of Foreign Affairs said. "We strongly encourage all Filipinos to take advantage of the voluntary repatriation program, open since October 2023, while the opportunity is still available," it added. The embassy said Lebanon continues to be under Alert Level 3 status due to airstrikes and mass displacement across the country. It earlier advised Filipinos "to stay away from any Lebanese government infrastructures, avoid all demonstrations and large gatherings." "Everyone is highly encouraged to stay indoors. Monitor advisories and keep track of targeted areas," the embassy said. It earlier reminded Filipinos "to practice due diligence in following accredited news channels for updates on the current situation."

- [DepEd launches 'ambitious' school feeding program](#) (2026-03-24 16:10)

THE Department of Education (DepEd) is set to begin what it described as its "most ambitious" School-based Feeding Program (SBFP) after it was given a record P25.6 billion budget for school year 2026-2027. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Education Secretary Sonny Angara launched the program during a recent visit to the Jose Zurbito Sr. Elementary School in Masbate City. DepEd will bring the program closer to urban communities through a multiservice school engagement Wednesday at the Batasan Hills National High School in Quezon City. The event will feature a Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair for senior high school graduates, a Gulayan sa Paaralan visit, and a lecture for learners on energy conservation to promote responsible energy use. The funding for school-based feeding, which is double the P11.8 billion allocated in 2025, aims to provide a lifeline to a record 4.63 million learners starting this June. Angara underscored that the program is about more than nutrition; it is also about restoring the dignity and academic potential of every Filipino child. "We are fulfilling President Bongbong Marcos' directive to end the cycle of malnutrition in our schools by giving our learners the health to reach their goals," Angara said. Under school year 2026-2027, the SBFP will target the universal feeding of kindergarten to Grade 1 students, undernourished learners in Grades 2 to 6, pregnant adolescent learners, and vulnerable and marginalized learners beyond Grade 6. DepEd said teachers noted that the consistent meal program has already improved daily attendance and classroom engagement. The department also said the program has rapidly expanded — from serving 1.67 million students in 2023, to 2.11 million in 2024, and 3.39 million in 2025. In 2022, the initiative operated on P3.3 billion that covered only 30 feeding days for 3.48 million learners. The SBFP grew to P5.7 billion in 2023 to cover 120 feeding days, and P11.7 billion in 2024 to cover 175 feeding days. DepEd said that by extending the feeding to 200 days, the administration is embedding nutrition into the basic education

framework, moving beyond short-term relief to guarantee long-term learning readiness.

- [Duterte impeachment hearings begin today, March 25](#) (2026-03-24 16:10)

THE House Committee on Justice will start the hearing proper on the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte today, March 25. The committee will convene at 10 a.m. at the House of Representatives' People Center where it will lay down ground rules and resolve motions. "If the complainants are ready, we can actually proceed to presentation of evidence and witnesses," said Batangas 2nd District Rep. Gerville Luistro, the committee chairman. In the hearing proper, the committee will determine whether there is probable cause to impeach Duterte, based on two complaints that it found sufficient in form and substance. One complaint, filed by priests and others, alleged that Duterte committed a culpable violation of the Constitution and betrayed the public trust in connection with confidential funds allocated to the Office of the Vice President (OVP) for 2022 and 2023 and confidential funds allocated for 2023 to the Department of Education (DepEd) which Duterte led as secretary before she resigned in 2024 from that post. This complaint also alleged that Duterte committed culpable violation of the Constitution, betrayed the public trust and committed high crimes "in contracting to murder or assassinate" President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., first lady Liza Araneta-Marcos, and former speaker Martin Romualdez. The complaint cited a Nov. 23, 2024 briefing with the media in which she said, "[...] may kinausap na ako na tao. Sinabi ko sa kanya kapag pinatay ako, patayin mo si BBM, si Liza Araneta, at si Martin Romualdez. (I've spoken to someone. I told him if I am killed, kill BBM, Liza Araneta and Martin Romualdez)." Duterte has denied making an assassination threat to Marcos. The other impeachment complaint filed on Feb. 18, 2026, by lawyer Nathaniel Cabrera alleged that Duterte "committed acts that constitute culpable violation of the Constitution, betrayal of public trust, and other high crimes, by publicly admitting the contracting of an assassin." The complaint also alleged that she "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. Duterte had said the complaints should be dismissed since the charges "cannot withstand serious scrutiny." She 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," she said.

- [Prosecution presents Alcantara as witness against Co](#) (2026-03-24 16:09)

THE prosecution team on Tuesday presented Henry Alcantara as a witness in the case against former lawmaker Elizaldy Co at the Sandiganbayan's Sixth Division. The Office of the Ombudsman filed the case last November against Co and several others for alleged malversation of public funds through falsification of documents in connection with a road dike construction project in Oriental Mindoro. Defense lawyers objected to presenting the witness, but the court decided to allow it. The prosecution presented Alcantara, a state witness and former district engineer of the Bulacan 1st District Engineering Office, in connection with the allegation that Co had beneficial interest in Sunwest. The time relevant to the case was

“sometime in March 2024 to June 2025.” The prosecution adopted Alcantara’s judicial affidavit as his direct testimony, and the defense lawyers did not conduct a cross-examination. Accused Gerald Pacanan, Gene Ryan Altea, Ruben Santos Jr., Juliet Calvo, Dennis Abagon, Dominic Serrano, Montrexis Tamayo, Lerma Cayco, and Felisardo Casuno were present. The court has denied their bail petitions, while Co and several others remain at large. On March 17, the prosecution team presented former Public Works undersecretary Roberto Bernardo as a witness.

- [Amid oil crunch, Asean fuel-sharing pact eyed](#) (2026-03-24 16:08)

SEN. Francis Escudero on Tuesday urged the Philippines to take a leading role in advancing a regional fuel-sharing mechanism as it chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) this year, citing rising global oil volatility and supply chain risks. In a statement, Escudero said that Manila plays a critical role in speeding up the finalization of the Asean Petroleum Security Agreement (APSA). This proposed framework aims to promote mutual assistance among member states during times of fuel shortages. The APSA seeks to establish an emergency petroleum-sharing system triggered when a member country faces a supply deficit of at least 10 percent of its domestic requirements. Under the arrangement, neighboring states would provide fuel support to stabilize supply and prevent economic disruption. The senator emphasized that the mechanism is designed to strengthen Asean’s collective resilience, particularly as geopolitical tensions, especially in the Middle East, continue to drive oil price increases and threaten global supply routes. “The current volatility highlights the urgency of regional action. We have to act as one Asean,” Escudero said. Escudero noted that APSA is patterned after the system used by the International Energy Agency, which coordinates emergency oil-sharing among its member countries during supply crises. By adopting a similar structure, Asean would institutionalize cooperation in times of energy shocks, ensuring that member states can respond swiftly and collectively. “By accelerating APSA’s completion, Asean can establish its own mechanism for emergency fuel supply,” he said. Key role of energy-producing members The senator said that the success of the agreement would depend heavily on the participation of oil-producing countries within the bloc, including Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia. “These countries play a crucial role in anchoring the agreement,” Escudero said. “By pooling resources, Asean can ensure that emergency supplies are not only pledged but delivered when needed.” He added that beyond logistics, the initiative is also about reinforcing trust and reciprocity among member states. “Fuel-sharing is not only about barrels of oil. It is also about the assurance that no member state will be left behind,” he said. Escudero said the APSA supports Asean’s broader strategic pillars — peace and security, economic prosperity, and people empowerment — by promoting stability and cooperation across the region. The Philippines’ chairmanship, he added, presents both a responsibility and an opportunity to drive the initiative forward. “This is our chance to lead Asean toward energy resilience,” Escudero said. Fast-tracking APSA, he added, would be a concrete step toward shielding Asean economies from volatility, ensuring stability in fuel supply, and reinforcing the bloc’s capacity to respond to future crises.

- [Philippines and Japan elevate strategic partnership to new heights](#) (2026-03-24 16:07)

THE Philippines and Japan have reached a “new height” of strategic partnership, Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Endo Kazuya said Tuesday, citing security and economic ties. Speaking at the Forum on Strengthening Strategic Ties: 70 Years of Japan–Philippines Diplomatic Relations organized by the Stratbase Institute, Endo said that both countries face similar challenges to maritime order, making closer security cooperation a “natural necessity.” “As economies with various complementarities, situated in proximity and empowered by diligent peoples, our close economic ties are inevitable,” the ambassador said, adding that bilateral defense collaboration will continue to grow. Endo also announced that the Japanese Embassy has expanded its military representation, welcoming an additional military attaché this month, bringing the total to three — covering the air, general and ground self-defense forces. “I anticipate strengthened participation of the Japan Self-Defense Forces in upcoming exercises held in the Philippines, particularly in Balikatan,” he said. “By working together to safeguard peace and promote prosperity, we are expanding the possibilities for the future.” The ambassador’s remarks come amid 70 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, commemorated in March as part of a celebration of “weaving the future together,” which symbolizes shared commitment to peace, prosperity and regional stability.

- [‘Trucks carrying fuel exempt from coding’](#) (2026-03-24 16:06)

(UPDATE) THE Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said all fuel trucks, including LPG bullet carriers, and vehicles carrying basic commodities are now exempted from the number coding scheme. In a press briefing at the MMDA’s head office in Pasig City, MMDA General Manager Nicholas Torre III said the Metro Manila Council approved a resolution that took effect immediately on Tuesday, March 24. Torre also clarified that LPG bullet carriers are covered by the exemption because they are included among fuel tankers. “The MMC resolution has already been approved, so all of the fuel trucks are not included in number coding anymore... the same goes for our basic commodities,” he said. The resolution also covers exemptions from the truck ban for fuel trucks and cargo trucks carrying essential goods. MMDA Chairman Don Artes said the measure was approved following requests from the Department of Energy and the Department of Trade and Industry to help speed up the transport of petroleum products and essential goods. He said the move would help ensure the unimpeded movement of energy sources and ease the mobility of goods amid rising fuel prices. The MMDA said it is coordinating with the DTI, which will identify the essential goods that will qualify for the exemption. Torre said the move was approved in recognition of what he described as a situation that had gone beyond normal, with the directive meant to help ease conditions for the public. He also said LPG bullet carriers were already being treated as part of fuel tankers from the start of the policy discussions. Torre added that initial MMDA monitoring on EDSA from Monday to Wednesday last week showed only a 5- to 7-percent drop in vehicle volume, or around 20,000 to 30,000 vehicles a day, under the adjusted traffic measures. Torre said the agency would continue reviewing traffic data to determine why some motorists still experienced heavy congestion despite the reduced vehicle count.

- [Lawmaker reiterates push for bike lanes](#) (2026-03-24 16:05)

PARAÑAQUE 2nd District Rep. Brian Yamsuan has urged Congress to pass his measure institutionalizing active transport by creating pedestrian-friendly and safe “bike-able” pathways nationwide. Under his House Bill 7863, or the “Safe Pathways Network Act,” cities and municipalities, in coordination with national government agencies, are mandated to identify and develop walkable and bike-friendly lanes in their respective localities. In a statement on Tuesday, Yamsuan said that many Filipinos preferred to commute, bike, or walk to save money amid disruptions in global oil prices, which he said will not be the last. “Our roads have been built mainly to favor cars, with sidewalks either too narrow or blocked, and bike lanes missing, disconnected, and unsafe,” Yamsuan, also vice chairman of the House Committee on Transportation, said. He added that his bill recognizes the fact that most trips are not made by private vehicles. “Millions of Filipinos commute and complete their journey on foot when they travel, while others prefer to use bikes. The problem is that our roads and sidewalks are not safe for them. This is what we want to change,” Yamsuan added. Under the measure, local government units (LGUs), in consultation with the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), shall identify and establish a temporary or permanent network of bicycle lanes. For national roads in Metro Manila, bike lanes shall be done by the DOTr in coordination with the DPWH and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA). The LGUs are also tasked with designating or constructing walkways, which may be shared with non-motorized vehicles or personal mobility devices, considering pedestrians’ safety. To complement these safe pathways, the bill also mandates LGUs to designate a network of temporary or permanent “slow streets” that will have limited access or speed limits for motorized vehicles on certain days or hours. The government will also mandate public places, government offices, schools, places of work, and commercial establishments like malls, banks and hospitals to provide adequate racks and other end-of-trip facilities for bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles. Yamsuan said that this is an “opportune time” to enact the Safe Pathways Act, considering that the current Public Works Secretary Vivencio Dizon has been pushing for safe and more inclusive public spaces for pedestrians and commuters. Aside from helping cushion the impact of oil price shocks, Yamsuan said that establishing a network of walkable and bike-friendly pathways will also help ease traffic congestion, promote healthy lifestyles, and benefit the environment by lessening air pollution and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from motorized vehicles. He also stressed that active transport is widely recognized as essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals under the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- [New parking rule in Morato-Timog area enforced soon](#) (2026-03-24 16:04)

(UPDATE) QUEZON CITY Mayor Joy Belmonte on Tuesday said that a regulated parking system will soon be implemented in the Tomas Morato-Timog area, pursuant to an ordinance. A dry run was rolled out on Monday for the proposed public parking regulations in the city’s commercial district. “The pilot forms part of the city’s push to better organize and manage public spaces in the Tomas Morato-Timog district — one of Quezon City’s busiest commercial and nightlife

hubs,” the mayor said. The pilot will run until the passage of the proposed Public Pay Parking Ordinance, which will institutionalize a regulated parking system in the area, she added. According to the city government, the initiative builds on recent upgrades under the QC ReVibe program, which focuses on revitalizing key commercial areas through improved infrastructure, safer walkways, and more accessible public spaces. Completed improvements include rehabilitated roads and sidewalks, installation of tactile paving, upgraded street lighting, and the clearing of obstructions to reduce safety risks and urban clutter, it said. The mayor said that the rollout is a crucial step toward making commercial districts more orderly and inclusive. “As we improve and beautify our commercial areas, we must also ensure that public spaces are used fairly and efficiently. This parking system is about creating order, improving access, and making our streets work better for everyone,” Belmonte said. During the dry run, parking would remain free and available on a first-come, first-served basis. However, vehicles may only occupy designated slots for a maximum of three hours to allow more motorists to access limited parking. Drivers will receive a parking ticket upon arrival, indicating their time of entry, and are expected to vacate their slots within the three-hour limit. Vehicles that exceed the allowed duration will be issued a notice of violation in line with dry run guidelines, which must be settled at the TTMD main office.

- [Bill to fortify sexual harassment laws filed](#) (2026-03-24 16:03)

HOUSE Bill 8717, a measure aiming to strengthen the Safe Spaces Act, also known as the Bawal Bastos Law, was filed Monday at the House of Representatives by Mamamayang Liberal Rep. Leila de Lima. “This measure seeks to strengthen the Safe Spaces Act by expanding the definitions of prohibited acts, including the recognition of grooming as a form of predatory conduct, and by addressing gender-based online harassment committed through emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence,” de Lima said in the bill’s explanatory note. The bill defined “grooming” as “predatory conduct, act, or pattern of acts, of establishing a relationship of trust, or emotional connection with a child or someone who is believed to be a child, by a guardian, teacher, coach, counselor, spiritual adviser, caregiver, or any other person in the position of authority or trust with respect to the said child or someone believed to be a child, regardless of whether the conduct, act or pattern of acts are done in person or through electronic and other similar devices, for the purpose of perpetrating sexual abuse or exploitation.” If enacted, the bill would amend the law to state that gender-based online sexual harassment includes acts that use “artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.” Under the bill, internet intermediaries must immediately block access to or remove the address, website or content violating the law within 24 hours of notice from a competent authority. Also under the bill, they must preserve within six months from the transaction date “all subscriber’s or registration information and traffic data” in their control and possession. Extending the period for another six months or during case pendency is allowed under the bill. Content data shall be preserved for one year and, “upon notice by the competent authority,” this period shall be extendible for another six months. De Lima said the bill “imposes stiffer penalties for gender-based sexual harassment in workplaces and educational or training institutions, where

power imbalances may place victims in particularly vulnerable situations." Among the sections the bill seeks to add to the law is one enumerating penalties "for fomenting, promoting, or exhorting sexual harassment, misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic, and sexist slurs by public and government officials and employees." "By strengthening penalties, expanding protections, and reinforcing accountability mechanisms, this proposed measure seeks to ensure that the Safe Spaces Act continues to effectively safeguard dignity, equality, and safety in workplaces, educational institutions, public spaces, and digital environments," said de Lima, a former chairman of the Commission on Human Rights.

- [Over 15K 'Valenzuelano' students get educational aid](#) (2026-03-24 16:02)

VALENZUELA Mayor Weslie Gatchalian said on Tuesday that the local government has begun distributing the educational assistance to graduating students in public schools, benefiting a total of 15,848 learners. Among the beneficiaries are 10,620 elementary completers and 5,228 Senior High School (SHS) Grade 12 graduates, each receiving a P1,500 grant. The provision of assistance for elementary graduates was based on an ordinance passed in 2016, which grants financial support to students who have completed their elementary education. Meanwhile, the assistance for senior high school graduates is covered by a 2023 measure that provides support to Grade 12 completers from all public schools in the city. The distribution was expected to be completed in five days, covering all public schools to ensure an organized and efficient rollout, the city government said. This schedule allows the city government to systematically reach each beneficiary while maintaining smooth coordination with school administrators. "Through this initiative, the city government recognizes the dedication and perseverance of Valenzuelano students who have completed key stages of their academic journey," Gatchalian said. "Beyond recognition, the assistance also serves as practical support for families as students prepare for their next steps, whether in higher education or future career paths," he added. The program reflects Valenzuela's continued investment in education as a cornerstone of community development, according to the local government. With sustained efforts, Valenzuela remains committed to creating opportunities for every learner and ensuring that progress in education is accessible, inclusive and meaningful for all, the mayor said.

- [US-Israeli war on Iran is 'breach of international law' — German president](#) (2026-03-24 13:52)

BERLIN — German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier spoke on Tuesday of a "deep rift" with traditional ally the United States and said the US-Israeli war on Iran was a "breach of international law". In unusually strong comments, the German head of state said that just as there was no going back from Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, "there will be no going back to before January 20, 2025", when US President Donald Trump entered the White House for a second time. "The rift is too deep and the trust in American power politics has been lost, not only among our allies but... worldwide," he said at an event to mark the 75th anniversary of the German foreign ministry. Although Steinmeier's role is largely ceremonial, his words carry weight in Germany, which has not officially condemned the war against

Iran. Steinmeier, a former foreign minister, said: "Our foreign policy does not become any more convincing simply because we do not call a breach of international law a breach of international law." He stressed that the US-Israel war on Iran was, "in my view, in breach of international law." "There is little doubt that, in any case, the justification of an imminent attack on the US does not hold water," he added. Germany's head of government, Chancellor Friedrich Merz, has harshly criticised Iran's leadership and backed several key US-Israeli war goals. But he has also stated that, had Berlin been consulted in advance, it "would have advised against" the war. 'Den of thieves' Steinmeier called the military campaign "a politically disastrous mistake" and "a truly avoidable, unnecessary war". "Realism means we must be pragmatic in our dealings with this US administration and focus on our core interests," he said. "But realism also means we must not compromise our own principles." He added: "The US government has a different world view to ours, one that shows no regard for established rules, partnership or hard-won trust." "We cannot change that. We must deal with it. But this is my conviction: we have no reason to align ourselves with this world view." Volker Beck, president of the German-Israeli Society, labelled Steinmeier's comments on the war "grossly inappropriate" and said they displayed a "smug know-it-all attitude". "The mullah regime has been threatening and waging war against Israel's very existence for years," he claimed, accusing Steinmeier of turning a "blind eye to these dangers". Tuesday's comments were not the first time the German president has criticized the United States. In January, shortly after the US intervention in Venezuela, Steinmeier spoke of a "breakdown of values" in the United States and insisted the world must not be allowed to turn into a "den of thieves".

- [Duterte to skip House impeachment hearing](#) (2026-03-24 13:32)

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Sara Duterte will not appear before the House of Representatives' justice committee on her first impeachment hearing on Wednesday, according to the spokesman of her defense team. "Yes, she will not attend," Michael Wesley Poa told The Manila Times in a phone interview on Tuesday night. The committee invited Duterte to answer the allegations raised against her. Justice Committee Chairman and Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro said Duterte's presence during the hearings was "significant" since it would be an opportunity for her to question the complaints and provide information that would help the committee decide on the case. Duterte is accused, among others, of allegedly violating the Constitution and betraying public trust over her alleged misuse of confidential funds under the Office of the Vice President and the Department of Education when she was its secretary. Duterte has repeatedly denied the allegations.

- [Marcos issues EO declaring National Energy Emergency](#) (2026-03-24 13:07)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday issued Executive Order No. 110, declaring a national energy emergency and authorizing a unified package covering livelihoods, industry, food, and transport. The issuance was prompted by hostilities in the Middle East, which have disrupted supply chains, driven volatility, and placed upward pressure on international oil prices—posing a threat to the country's energy security. "As a net

importer of petroleum products, the Philippines remains highly dependent on external sources of fuel supply and is therefore vulnerable to disruptions in global oil production and transportation, which may affect the availability and timely delivery of petroleum products necessary to sustain domestic energy requirements,” the order read. “The declaration of a state of national energy emergency will enable the government, through the Department of Energy (DOE) and other concerned agencies, to implement responsive and coordinated measures under existing laws to address risks posed by disruptions in global energy supply and their impact on the domestic economy,” it added. To ensure the stability of domestic energy supply, the uninterrupted delivery of essential services, the continuity of economic activity, and the welfare of all citizens—particularly vulnerable sectors—and to mitigate the impact of the conflict in the Middle East, EO No. 110 establishes the Unified Package for Livelihoods, Industry, Food, and Transport (UPLIFT). The UPLIFT framework is described as a “coordinated, whole-of-government response,” consisting of energy supply management measures to be implemented by the DOE and its attached agencies, alongside complementary measures to support consumers and affected sectors led by other government bodies. The UPLIFT Committee will be chaired by the President, with the Executive Secretary and the secretaries of the Departments of Energy; Transportation; Social Welfare and Development; Agriculture; Finance; Economy, Planning, and Development; and Budget and Management as members. Among the committee’s primary tasks are to monitor and ensure the orderly movement, supply, distribution, and availability of fuel, food, medicines, agricultural products, and other essential goods, as well as to maintain the continuous operation of public transportation, public services, public utilities, healthcare facilities, and other critical infrastructure. Executive Order No. 110 takes effect immediately.

- [Marcos warns grounding of local aircraft 'a distinct possibility'](#) (2026-03-24 10:59)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. warned of “a distinct possibility” of aircraft being grounded due to an impending shortage of jet fuel brought by the war in the Middle East. In an interview with Bloomberg News released on Tuesday, Marcos lamented how “long haul is going to be a much more serious problem” in the near future, adding to the already very heavy burden of the Philippines grappling with the high prices of petroleum products and basic commodities. “Several countries have already told our airlines they cannot fuel their aircraft, so they have to carry fuel there and back,” he said. “We’re hoping not, but it’s a distinct possibility,” he added. Hostilities in the Middle East have triggered the closure of airspaces and travel hubs in the region including Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi, which have left tens of thousands of passengers stranded. This also ultimately caused oil prices to spike in the global market. Apart from the threat of aircraft grounding, air travelers in the country will also be slapped with higher fares starting next month. The Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) recently announced that flights booked from April 1–15, 2026 will see a significant fare increase due to its lifting the fuel surcharge to Level 8. This means an additional of up to ₱6,200 to ticket costs. Domestic surcharges will range from ₱253 to ₱787, while international rates will rise to ₱835.05–₱6,208.98, driven by high jet fuel prices. This 15-day cycle is meant to manage extreme

fuel price volatility.

- [2026 Balikatan biggest yet despite US war with Iran, says PH Armed Forces chief](#) (2026-03-24 10:34)

MANILA, Philippines — Despite the US' ongoing war with Iran, this year's Balikatan (shoulder-to-shoulder) exercises with the US military will be the biggest ever yet, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said. “No, no...,” AFP chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. told reporters in an interview on the sidelines of the Stratbase forum on the Japan-PH diplomatic relations. “We received the confirmation from Admiral (Samuel) Paparo himself. He said that this will still be the biggest Balikatan exercise despite the war going on in the Middle East. He said we will not be affected. Our planned activities will continue and the scale and scope are still the same,” Brawner said. Balikatan is the most important annual, large-scale joint military drill between the AFP and the US military which often included allies. In 2025, over 14,000 troops showcased high-level combat training, including the introduction of anti-ship missile systems (NMESIS) and coastal defense strategies. Scheduled this April in Luzon, the 40th iteration of the Balikatan will involve approximately 8,000 personnel, including the first-time participation of 1,000 Japanese troops - a first movement of Imperial military forces since World War II. “So aside from having more participants this year, we will see the participation of Japan which will expand the scope of our defensive operations because we not only have the United States and Australia in the preparation of our defense of the entire archipelago and our common areas as well,” Brawner said.

- [Airport fees slashed to ease fuel hike burden](#) (2026-03-24 08:18)

MANILA, Philippines — Aeronautical fees at airports, under the Civil Aviation authority of the Philippines (CAAP), will be reduced by as much as 50 percent to mitigate the impact of rising global fuel prices effective April 1, 2026. The aviation regulator said on Tuesday that this was intended to ease the burden on both passengers and the aviation industry amid escalating oil costs. CAAP said the modified rates would include landing and takeoff charges, with some fees dropping by as much as P5,000 per landing. Meanwhile, the Passenger Service Charge (PSC) for international travel at international airports will be reduced from P900 to P700. Similarly, domestic travel fees at these airports will drop from P350 to between P150 and P200. For Principal Class 1 airports, fees will be reduced from P300 to P150–P200, while Principal Class 2 airports will see a decrease from P200 to P100. Community airport charges will likewise be lowered from P100 to P50. While travelers pay Passenger Service Charges, aeronautical fees are shouldered by airlines. “We recognize the challenges brought by the ongoing regional tension and its impact on passengers and the aviation industry. CAAP is implementing reductions in passenger service charges and aeronautical fees to provide immediate relief and support, ensuring that air travel remains accessible during these difficult times.” said CAAP Director General Raul del Rosario. The CAAP reaffirms its commitment to implementing responsive measures that ease the public burden while supporting the aviation stability.

- [DOLE issues April holiday pay rules](#) (2026-03-24 08:06)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has reminded all employers to strictly observe the proper pay rules for employees working during the declared holidays this April. Labor Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma on Tuesday issued Labor Advisory 5, Series of 2026, to remind employers on the observance of four declared regular holidays next month, which include the Catholics traditional observance of the Holy Week. The issuance, Laguesma pointed out, guaranteed workers of their rightful wages for regular holidays on April 2 (Maundy Thursday), April 3 (Good Friday), and April 9 (Araw ng Kagitingan), and for the special (non-working) on April 4 (Black Saturday), pursuant to Proclamation 1006, Series of 2025. For regular holidays, the advisory states that employees who do not work are entitled to 100 percent of their daily wage, provided they report to work or are on approved leave of absence on the workday immediately preceding the regular holiday (Basic wage x 100 percent). When the day immediately preceding the regular holiday is a non-working day in the establishment or the employees' scheduled rest day, they shall 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. Employees who render work during the regular holiday shall receive 200 percent of their daily wage for the first eight hours (basic wage x 200 percent). Should the employee perform work beyond eight hours, they shall be paid an additional 30 percent of the hourly rate for that day (Hourly rate of the basic wage x 200 percent x 130 percent x number of hours worked). If the regular holiday falls on the employee's rest day and work is rendered, the employee shall be paid an additional 30 percent of the 200 percent basic wage (Basic wage x 200 percent x 130 percent). Overtime work under the same conditions shall likewise be compensated with an additional 30 percent of the hourly rate on said day (Hourly rate of the basic wage x 200 percent x 130 percent x 130 percent x number of hours worked). For April 4 (Black Saturday), declared a special (non-working) day, the "no work, no pay" principle shall apply unless a favorable company policy, practice, or collective bargaining agreement (CBA) grants payment on a special day. If an employee reports for work during the special day, the employee is entitled to an additional 30 percent of their basic wage for the first eight hours (Basic wage x 130 percent). Overtime work shall be paid an additional 30 percent of the hourly rate on said day (Hourly rate of the basic wage x 130 percent x 130 percent x number of hours worked). Should the employee perform work on the special day that also falls on the employee's rest day, the employer shall pay an additional 50 percent of the basic wage for the first eight hours of work (Basic wage x 150 percent). Overtime work under the same condition shall likewise be compensated with an additional 30 percent of the hourly rate on that day (Hourly rate of the basic wage x 150 percent x 130 percent x number of hours worked). For clarifications, the public is advised to call the DOLE Hotline 1349, or coordinate with the DOLE Regional Office in their respective areas.

- [PH eyes five countries as alternative oil source](#) (2026-03-24 07:57)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines, through the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), has sought help from at least five oil-producing nations to supply the country's petroleum needs to offset the effect of high oil prices brought by the Middle East war. Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma.

Theresa Lazaro revealed this during the organizational meeting of the Senate Proactive Response and Oversight for Timely and Effective Crisis Strategy Committee. "We've also been on the diplomatic cooperation. We've also been dealing with Department of Energy (DOE)," Lazaro said in briefing the Protect panel which was created to assess the government's readiness to address the oil crisis. "We already wrote letters to certain selected countries that have been identified by the DOE concerning petroleum reserves and the possibility of obtaining our petroleum needs from them," Lazaro said. The DFA chief, however, did not identify the concerned countries where the Philippines wanted to import oil to replenish its stocks. In interview, Lazaro said the Philippines was considering to import oil from Russia following the temporary lifting of sanctions by the United States on Russian crude oil in transit at sea. Energy Secretary Sharon Garin, at the same hearing, said the Philippines was looking at India as alternative source for oil. "We're working on that so that we'll have a different source."

- [MMDA exempts fuel trucks, basic goods from coding amid fuel price hikes](#) (2026-03-24 07:45)

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said all fuel trucks, including LPG bullet carriers, and vehicles carrying basic commodities were now exempted from number coding scheme. In a press briefing at the MMDA's head office in Pasig City, MMDA General Manager Nicholas Torre III said the Metro Manila Council approved a resolution that took effect on Tuesday. Torre also clarified that LPG bullet carriers were covered by the exemption because they were included among fuel tankers. "The MMC resolution has already been approved so all of the fuel trucks are not included in number coding anymore...the same goes for our basic commodities," Torre said. Torre said the move was approved in recognition of what he described as a situation that had gone beyond normal, with the directive meant to help ease conditions for the public. He also said LPG bullet carriers were already being treated as part of fuel tankers from the start of the policy discussions. He added that the Initial MMDA monitoring on EDSA from Monday to Wednesday last week showed only a 5- to 7-percent drop in vehicle volume, or around 20,000 to 30,000 vehicles a day, under the adjusted traffic measures. Torre said the agency would continue reviewing traffic data to determine why some motorists still experienced heavy congestion despite the reduced vehicle count.

- [House panel hears Duterte impeach complaints on Wednesday](#) (2026-03-24 06:51)

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives Committee on Justice will start the hearing proper on the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte on Wednesday. The committee will convene at 10 a.m. at the People Center where it will lay down ground rules and resolve motions. "If the complainants are ready, we can actually proceed to presentation of evidence and witnesses," said Batangas 2nd District Rep. Gerville Luistro, the committee chairman. The hearing proper, which will determine whether there is probable cause to impeach Duterte, comes after the two impeachment complaints filed against Duterte were found to be sufficient in form, substance and grounds. The third impeachment complaint filed

by priests and others alleged, among others, 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) for 2022 and 2023 and confidential funds allocated in 2023 to the Department of Education (DepEd) when Duterte was appointed secretary before resigning in 2024. The third complaint also alleged that Duterte committed culpable violation of the Constitution, betrayed public trust and committed high crimes "in contracting to murder or assassinate" President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., First Lady Liza Araneta Marcos, and former speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez. The complaint cited a Nov. 23, 2024 briefing with the media wherein she said, "[...] may kinausap na ako na tao. Sinabi ko sa kanya kapag pinatay ako, patayin mo si BBM, si Liza Araneta, at si Martin Romualdez." Duterte has denied making an assassination threat to Marcos. The fourth impeachment complaint was filed on Feb. 18, 2026 by lawyer Nathaniel Cabrera. This complaint alleged that Duterte "committed acts that constitute culpable violation of the Constitution, betrayal of public trust, and other high crimes, by publicly admitting the contracting of an assassin". The same complaint alleged that she "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. Duterte countered that the complaints must be dismissed. As to the allegations that she committed plunder through malversation, malversation, graft and corruption, and technical malversation in relation to confidential funds of the OVP and DepEd, Duterte said these "cannot withstand serious scrutiny." It read, "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." Duterte 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. Duterte said the complaints did not allege the "ultimate facts necessary to sustain the charges." Cabrera rejected Duterte's response. Lawyer Amando Virgil Ligutan said the answer "conspicuously failed to specifically deny each and every material allegation in the" third complaint. Ligutan said there was an "obvious conflation of what is otherwise a clear and basic distinction between ultimate facts, on one hand, and evidentiary facts, on the other hand".

- [MMDA suspends number coding traffic scheme, deploys 2,500 personnel for Holy Week](#) (2026-03-24 06:15)

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) will suspend number coding in Metro Manila from April 1 to April 6 and deploy around 2,500 personnel for the expected Holy Week exodus, MMDA General Manager Nicholas Torre III said on Tuesday. Torre said the suspension would run from Holy Wednesday until 6 a.m. on Easter Monday, after the Holy Week to help ease travel as more people leave and return to Metro Manila. He added that the MMDA would deploy personnel to traditional chokepoints and pilgrimage areas, including Visita Iglesia routes and destinations such as Grotto and Antipolo. The agency will also position 12 tow trucks to respond to any vehicle breakdowns, or incidents and help clear roads faster. Torre added that the agency would enforce a no-day-off and no-absent policy during the period. Torre also said provincial buses would be allowed on

EDSA during the Holy Week travel period. He said buses coming from the south would be allowed up to the Parañaque Integrated Terminal Exchange (PITX), while buses from the north would be allowed up to EDSA-Cubao. The MMDA said the temporary measures were part of its preparations for the annual surge in passenger and vehicle movement during Holy Week.

- [PH Embassy in Lebanon urges Filipinos in the southern part to move to Beirut](#) (2026-03-24 06:10)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Embassy in Lebanon urged Filipinos living in the southern part to move to Beirut or northern areas for safety after Israel bombed a bridge linking Lebanon's south to the rest of the country. The bombing of the Qasmiyeh bridge was reportedly part of Israel's campaign against the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah which recently fired rockets into Israel to avenge the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei by United States-Israel joint attack on Iran. In an advisory on Monday, the embassy said "movement may become difficult due to the ongoing targeting of infrastructure by the IDF (Israeli Defense Force)." "Ensure that your important documents (passport and iqama) are secure and easily accessible," the embassy posted on Facebook. There are over 14,100 Filipinos in Lebanon as of February 2026, the Department of Foreign Affairs said. "We strongly encourage all Filipinos to take advantage of the voluntary repatriation program, open since October 2023, while the opportunity is still available," it added. The embassy said Lebanon continues to be under Alert Level 3 status due to airstrikes and mass displacement across the country. It advised Filipinos "to stay away from any Lebanese government infrastructures, avoid all demonstrations and large gatherings." "Everyone is highly encouraged to stay indoors. Monitor advisories and keep track of targeted areas," the embassy said. It reminded Filipinos "to practice due diligence in following accredited news channels for updates on the current situation."

- [Philippines eyes 'temporary' coal push to counter energy turmoil](#) (2026-03-24 05:56)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines will try to boost the output of its coal-fired power plants to keep electricity costs down as the Middle East war wreaks havoc with gas shipments, its energy secretary said Tuesday. The archipelago nation of 116 million, which has some of the region's highest energy costs, relies on coal for about 60 percent of its electricity generation. Sharon Garin told reporters Tuesday that with the cost of LNG (liquefied natural gas) soaring, the country would "temporarily" be forced to lean even more heavily on the carbon-belching fossil fuel. While hoping to "maximize" the use of local coal, the Philippines was also keeping the option of upping its purchases of coal from top supplier Indonesia, the energy secretary said. "We talked to the generation companies, the coal-powered plants, to check how much they can increase their generation," Garin said, calling it a "temporary measure" that could start as early as April 1. "If we are successful in implementing this, at least we can decrease the electricity rate hikes because of the conflict in the Middle East," she said. Indonesia, meanwhile, had assured the Philippines it would place no limits on coal orders. "There's no restriction on our importation of coal from Indonesia as of today," Garin said, adding increased purchases may not be necessary. The Philippines -- regularly affected by

electricity outages -- is heavily dependent on imported fuel to keep its power plants running. Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in January announced a "significant" discovery of natural gas made near the country's rapidly depleting Malampaya offshore natural gas field. It was hoped the discovery could extend the life of the field, which supplies about 40 percent of power to main island Luzon and was expected to run dry within a few years.

- [2,000 residents of Batangas town sign petition for Meralco service](#) (2026-03-24 05:23)

MANILA, Philippines — Around 2,000 residents in a town in Batangas signed a petition calling on its cooperative to allow Meralco to service their area. In a statement, residents of Laiya in San Juan cited reliability issues concerning the Batangas II Electric Cooperative (Batelec II), as frequent power outages are affecting their livelihoods, as the town is heavily reliant on tourism. A recent survey by Capstone Intel found that 93 percent of Batelec II consumers have been experiencing one to three hours of multiple power interruptions and that the community “endured prolonged and increasingly difficult conditions that have severely affected residents’ daily lives” and has compromised public safety. “The petition outlines five key issues, foremost of which is the frequent and prolonged power outages, many of them unplanned and without prior notice. These disruptions have hampered work, online classes and livelihoods, causing widespread inconvenience and financial loss,” the statement read. “Petitioners also cited unstable and unreliable power voltage, which has resulted in damage to household and business appliances such as refrigerators, electric fans, televisions and other essential equipment,” it added. The petition also cited that consumers lamented poor customer service and inadequate maintenance of facilities. It also questioned Batelec II’s capacity in meeting the area’s ongoing electricity demand, citing population growth and lack of clear measures in upgrading their infrastructure. “The petition is a community driven effort, underscoring the residents’ unified and urgent demand for reliable and improved electricity service,” the petition said. “We believe that Meralco’s entry into our barangay will provide reliable, stable and high quality electricity service — critical to sustained growth, safety and improved daily life in our community,” it added.

- [Prosecution presents key witness in flood control scam vs ex-lawmaker Zaldy Co in court](#) (2026-03-24 04:30)

MANILA, Philippines — The prosecution team on Tuesday presented Henry Alcantara as witness in the trial of a case against former congressman Zaldy Co pending before the Sandiganbayan. The Office of the Ombudsman filed the case last November 2025 against Co and other people for alleged malversation of public funds through falsification of documents. The case was in connection with a road dike construction project in Oriental Mindoro. The prosecution presented Alcantara, a state witness and a former district engineer of the Bulacan 1st District Engineering Office, in connection with the allegation that Co had beneficial interest in Sunwest, a company that he had allegedly founded. The prosecution adopted Alcantara's judicial affidavit as his direct testimony and defense lawyers did not conduct a cross examination. Accused Gerald Pacanan, Gene Ryan Altea, Ruben Santos Jr., Juliet Calvo, Dennis

Abagon, Dominic Serrano, Montrexis Tamayo, Lerma Cayco, and Felisardo Casuno were present. The court has denied their bail petitions while Co and several others are at large.

- [Japan set to send combat troops to Philippine exercises — Brawner](#) (2026-03-24 02:58)

MANILA, Philippines — Japan is expected to send troops to military exercises in the Philippines instead of the usual humanitarian assistance and disaster response trainers, Armed Forces of the Philippines chief General Romeo Brawner Jr. said on Tuesday. Speaking at the Peninsula Manila in Makati City, Brawner linked the expected deployment to rising maritime tensions in the West Philippine sea and the deepening defense ties between Manila and Tokyo. “And again, as mentioned by the Ambassador, for this year’s Balikatan exercise, we are expecting Japan to send combat troops to join in the exercise instead of just the usual trainers of HADR, Humanitarian Assistance in Disaster,” Brawner said. He said the Philippines and Japan are being drawn closer by converging strategic interests in maritime security, regional stability, and the defense of a rules-based international order. Brawner said those shared commitments were being tested by China’s actions in contested waters. “In the face of the People’s Republic of China’s increasing assertiveness in the West Philippine Sea and the broader South China Sea as well as the East China Sea, the Philippines remains firmly anchored in international law, diplomacy and transparency,” he said. He said the Philippines continued to uphold the 2016 arbitral award under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea while asserting its maritime rights through peaceful and lawful means. Brawner said Japan has consistently upheld the same principles, including respect for international law, freedom of navigation, and adherence to established norms. He said defense cooperation between the Philippines and Japan has expanded through capacity-building efforts, maritime security assistance, and more advanced joint and trilateral exercises.

- [Marcos leads govt rollout of expanded transport relief measures amid Mideast crisis](#) (2026-03-24 02:24)

(UPDATE) MANILA, Philippines – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Tuesday led the government's rollout of relief measures meant to ease the impact of the fuel crisis caused by the ongoing war in the Middle East. Marcos announced the expansion of fuel subsidy distribution to more public utility vehicle (PUV) operators nationwide during the distribution of financial assistance to public utility vehicles at Parañaque Integrated Terminal Exchange (PITX). “We are now providing P10,000 subsidy for each bus unit. All types of payment methods can be used. We can do it through digital payment like GCash, the ATM, checks, or cash,” the president told business operators in English and Filipino. The Department of Transportation (DOTr) said 27 operators of the 1,096 bus units in the PITX received the subsidy. “Please help us so that our riding public will not be too hard hit by high fares. We all know what’s been happening, oil prices are volatile all over the world. This is the response of the government. And of course, we are always in need of assistance and the help and cooperation with the operators, with the drivers, the whole system. So, this is what we’re doing here now,” he said. Meanwhile, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development

(DSWD) announced a 50-percent discount on train fares, reduced toll rates for public utility vehicles, and the nationwide rollout of a P2.5-billion fuel subsidy program respectively. All passengers of LRT-2 and MRT-3 are entitled to a 50-percent fare discount, which started on March 23, 2026, according to documents presented during a press conference this Tuesday. Toll discounts took effect the same day for Class 1 public utility vehicles, including jeepneys and modernized jeepneys, as well as for Class 3 trucks with three or more axles and a height exceeding 7.5 feet. The discounts vary per expressway, with savings ranging from P1 to P66 for Class 1 vehicles and P8 to P197 for Class 3 vehicles. Beneficiaries must have RFID tags, be registered with the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board, and hold a certificate of franchise. For vehicles transporting agricultural products, the government also implemented a “Piso Ro-Ro” terminal fee, reducing rates to P1 for Class 3 and Class 4 vehicles. At airports, reduced fees and charges will take effect on April 1. Passengers will save up to P200 per person on terminal fees, while airlines will save up to P5,000 per landing on landing fees. The fuel subsidy program, with an approved budget of P2.5 billion, targets 245,066 driver-beneficiaries and covers 1,180,783 public utility vehicle units operated by beneficiaries. Distribution began March 24 through fuel subsidy cards, bank transfers, e-wallet transfers, and cash or check payouts. The government will shoulder all convenience fees. Under the program, subsidy amounts vary by vehicle type. Public bus operators will receive P10,000 per unit and drivers P5,000 each. Modern public utility jeepney operators will receive P10,000 per unit and drivers P1,500 each. Traditional jeepney operators will receive P5,000 per unit and drivers P1,500 each. UV Express operators and drivers will receive P5,000 and P1,500 respectively. Taxi operators will receive P2,000 per unit and drivers P5,000 each. Tricycle drivers and delivery service beneficiaries are scheduled to receive their subsidies after Holy Week.

- [Quezon City to regulate parking system in commercial district soon](#) (2026-03-24 02:10)

MANILA, Philippines — Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte on Tuesday said that an ordinance would be passed to regulate a parking system along Tomas Morato-Timog area. Belmonte said a dry-run was rolled out on Monday for the proposed public parking regulations in the city’s commercial district. “The pilot forms part of the city’s push to better organize and manage public spaces in the Tomas Morato–Timog district—one of Quezon City’s busiest commercial and nightlife hubs,” the city chief executive said. It will run until the proposed Public Pay Parking Ordinance is passed. According to the city government, the initiative builds on recent upgrades under the QC ReVibe program, which focuses on revitalizing key commercial areas through improved infrastructure, safer walkways, and more accessible public spaces. Completed improvements include rehabilitated roads and sidewalks, installation of tactile paving, upgraded street lighting, and the clearing of obstructions to reduce safety risks and urban clutter, it said. The mayor said that the rollout was a crucial step toward making commercial districts more orderly and inclusive. “As we improve and beautify our commercial areas, we must also ensure that public spaces are used fairly and efficiently. This parking system is about creating order, improving access, and making our streets work better for everyone,” Belmonte said. During the dry run, parking will remain free and available on a first-come, first-served

basis. However, vehicles may only occupy designated slots for a maximum of three hours to allow more motorists to access limited parking.

- [Filipino injured from missile attack on Arad town in Israel](#) (2026-03-24 01:55)

MANILA, Philippines — A male Filipino worker sustained a leg injury during a missile impact -- from Iran's attack -- in Arad town, was treated at the Sorokoa Medical Center and was expected to be discharged on Tuesday, the Philippine Embassy in Israel said. The embassy's rapid reaction team visited the unidentified 30-year-old worker on March 22, 2026, a day after the attack, to check on his condition and provide emergency assistance. The team also visited other Filipinos in Arad and Dimona, whose apartments sustained minor damage, to check on their wellbeing and distribute food packages, the embassy said. They are temporarily staying with fellow Filipinos, while some are being accommodated in a hotel near the Dead Sea. The embassy on Facebook said it "continues to monitor the recovery of the injured Filipino and the wellbeing of affected kababayan, and will provide psychosocial and mental health support services in the coming days." The BBC reported that about 180 people were injured - some seriously - in Iranian missile strikes on two southern Israeli towns close to a nuclear facility. Israel's health ministry said 116 people were injured in Arad and another 64 in Dimona, after ballistic missiles hit the towns on Saturday evening. Iranian state TV said the strikes were in response to an attack on Iran's Natanz nuclear facility on Saturday.

- [PH deploys vessels to protect fishermen amid reported Chinese harassment in Bajo de Masinloc](#) (2026-03-24 00:59)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) deployed multiple vessels to Bajo de Masinloc following reports of continued harassment by Chinese vessels against Filipino fishermen, authorities said. In a statement issued Tuesday, the PCG said two of its vessels and five BFAR fishery patrol ships were dispatched after more than 20 Filipino fishing boats encountered harassment from China Coast Guard units over the weekend. The joint deployment secured the fishing grounds and ensured the safety of Filipino fishermen operating in the area. Government personnel also distributed fuel subsidies, food packs, and ice to help sustain fishing operations and mitigate the impact of rising fuel costs. PCG Commandant Admiral Ronnie Gil Gavan ordered an aerial maritime domain awareness flight over the shoal to monitor the situation. The operation documented the presence of six China Coast Guard vessels, 20 China Maritime Militia ships, and one warship from the People's Liberation Army Navy. During the patrol, the PCG recorded what it described as a first-of-its-kind incident: a China Coast Guard vessel broadcasting over radio its intent to conduct a "clearing operation" within a defined area. The coordinates covered waters between 14°14'N to 15°05'N latitude and 118°10'E to 118°25'E longitude. The PCG said the deployment formed part of ongoing efforts to safeguard Philippine sovereignty and protect the livelihood of local fishermen in the West Philippine Sea. The agency also reiterated its commitment to enforcing international law and supporting the policy direction of the Philippine government. in asserting the country's sovereign rights and maritime

jurisdiction in contested waters.

- [Tropical cyclone still possible during warm, dry season – Pagasa](#) (2026-03-23 21:47)

MANILA, Philippines – The state-run weather agency said on Tuesday that there is still a possibility of a tropical cyclone forming inside the Philippine Area of Responsibility although the country is now under the warm and dry season. Weather specialist Veronica Torres of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), in a 5 a.m. briefing, also said that the northeasterly winds would still be likely over extreme Northern Luzon despite the termination of the northeast monsoon or ‘amihan’ season. She said the easterlies – winds that pass through the Pacific Ocean and carry warm and humid weather – would prevail in most parts of the archipelago including Northern Samar and Eastern Samar at which cloudy skies with scattered rains and thunderstorms would occur. The same weather system would be affecting Metro Manila and the rest of the country where partly cloudy to overcast skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms would be likely over the next 24 hours, the national weather bureau said. “Generally, the country can expect fair weather all throughout the day but hotter temperatures can be felt especially in late morning until mid-afternoon,” the Pagasa forecaster said.

- [ICI turns over documents to Justice department](#) (2026-03-23 19:33)

MANILA, Philippines—Independent Commission for Infrastructure (ICI) Chair Andres Reyes met with Department of Justice (DOJ) officials on Monday to turn over documents and other materials it gathered during investigations into anomalous flood control projects. Reyes met with Justice Secretary Frederick Vida, National Bureau of Investigation Director Melvin Matibag and Prosecutor General Richard Anthony Fadullon, among others. “The DOJ will study these documents to see if they point to any leads we could use in filing cases eventually,” DOJ spokesman Polo Martinez told reporters. On Friday, the ICI also turned over to the Ombudsman all documents and evidence for case build-up. Reyes had recommended that the ad hoc body wind down its operations by the end of March, citing recommendations and other findings completed by the panel. The ICI was created as a fact-finding body late last year to look into alleged irregularities in flood control projects, which drew scrutiny following claims of corruption involving billions of pesos in government funds. It has submitted its accomplishment report to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., detailing the panel’s activities and achievements from Sept. 15, 2025 to Jan. 18, 2026. PNAThe panel filed nine referrals before the Office of the Ombudsman, coordinated the referral of 66 individuals to the DOJ and contributed to the freezing of 6,692 bank accounts estimated at PHP24.7 billion.

- [US, Iran threaten to hit power plants](#) (2026-03-23 16:18)

ARAD, Israel — The United States and Iran threatened to target critical infrastructure on Sunday as the war in the Middle East, now in its fourth week, puts lives and livelihoods at risk throughout the region. As the destruction continued, the head of the International Energy Agency (IEA) said the global economy faces a “major, major threat” because of the Iran

war. “No country will be immune to the effects of this crisis if it continues to go in this direction,” Fatih Birol said, noting that the crisis in the Middle East has had a worse combined impact than the two oil shocks of the 1970s and the effect on gas markets of the Russia-Ukraine war. His comments came as Israel launched a new wave of attacks early Monday against Tehran while Iran rejected a 48-hour deadline set by US President Donald Trump for it to open the Strait of Hormuz to shipping. Iran said the strait, crucial to oil and other exports, would be “completely closed” immediately if the US follows up on Trump’s threat to attack its power plants. Trump late Saturday set a 48-hour deadline to open the strait. Israeli leaders visited one of two southern communities near a secretive nuclear research site struck by Iranian missiles late Saturday, with scores of people wounded. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it was a “miracle” no one was killed. Netanyahu claimed Israel and the US were well on their way to achieving their war goals. The aims have ranged from weakening Iran’s nuclear program, missile program and support for armed proxies to enabling the Iranian people to overthrow the theocracy. But there has been no sign of an uprising, nor of an end to the fighting that has shaken the global economy, sent oil prices surging and endangered some of the world’s busiest air corridors. The war, which the US and Israel launched on Feb. 28, has killed over 2,000 people. The Iranian-backed Hezbollah claimed responsibility for an air strike that killed a man in northern Israel, while Lebanese President Joseph Aoun called Israel’s new targeting of bridges in the south “a prelude to a ground invasion.” “More weeks of fighting against Iran and Hezbollah are expected for us,” said Israeli military spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin. Meanwhile, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates said early Monday their air defenses were dealing with missile and drone attacks as air raid sirens sounded in Bahrain. Energy, desalination plants threatened Iran has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz that connects the Persian Gulf to the rest of the world, while claiming safe passage for vessels from countries other than its enemies. Roughly one-fifth of global oil supply passes through it, but attacks on ships have stopped nearly all tanker traffic. Trump said if Iran didn’t open the strait, the US would destroy its “various POWER PLANTS, STARTING WITH THE BIGGEST ONE FIRST!” The US has argued that Iran’s Revolutionary Guard controls much of the country’s infrastructure and uses it to power the war effort. Under international law, power plants that benefit civilians can be targeted only if the military advantage outweighs the suffering it causes them, legal scholars say. Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf responded on X that if Iran’s power plants and infrastructure are targeted, then vital infrastructure across the region — including energy and desalination facilities critical for drinking water in Gulf nations — would be considered legitimate targets and “irreversibly destroyed.” Qalibaf later added that “entities that finance the US military budget are legitimate targets.” Attacks on power plants would be “inherently indiscriminate and clearly disproportionate,” and a war crime, Iran’s UN ambassador wrote to the Security Council, according to the state-run IRNA news agency. New nuclear concerns Iran said its strikes in the Negev Desert late Saturday were in retaliation for the latest attack on Iran’s main nuclear enrichment site in Natanz, according to state-run media. Tehran praised its attack as a show of strength, even as Israel’s military asserts that Iranian missile launches have decreased since the war began. Southern Israel’s main hospital received at least 175 wounded from Arad and Dimona, deputy director Roy

Kessous told the Associated Press. Israel is widely believed to possess nuclear weapons, though it doesn't confirm or deny their existence. Israel denied responsibility for hitting Natanz on Saturday. The Pentagon declined to comment on the strike. The International Atomic Energy Agency has said the bulk of Iran's estimated 972 pounds (441 kilograms) of enriched uranium — the issue at the heart of tensions — is elsewhere, beneath the rubble at its Isfahan facility. Fighting intensifies An Israeli civilian was killed in his car in the northern town of Misgav Am in what Israel's military originally said appeared to be a rocket attack. It later was looking into the possibility that the death was caused by Israeli soldiers' fire. Israeli authorities identified him as 61-year-old farmer Ofer Moskovitz. Two days ago, he told a radio station that living near the Lebanese border was like "Russian roulette." Hezbollah launched strikes on Israel soon after the war began, calling it retaliation for the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Israel then targeted Hezbollah with air strikes and expanded its ground presence in southern Lebanon. Israel on Sunday expanded its target list to include bridges over the Litani River that Defense Minister Israel Katz said Hezbollah is using to move fighters and weapons to the south. Israel later struck the Qasmiyeh bridge near Tire, giving an hour's warning. Destroying bridges further isolates residents from the rest of Lebanon. Katz also ordered the military to accelerate destruction of Lebanese homes near the border. Lebanese authorities say Israel's strikes have killed more than 1,000 people and displaced more than 1 million. Meanwhile, Hezbollah has fired hundreds of rockets into Israel. Iran's death toll in the war has surpassed 1,500, its health ministry has said. In Israel, 15 people have been killed by Iranian strikes. More than a dozen civilians in the occupied West Bank and Gulf Arab states have been killed in strikes. A Qatari military helicopter crash on Saturday, blamed on a technical malfunction, killed all seven aboard, Qatari authorities said. Severely damaged IAEA's Birol said 40 energy assets in nine countries across the region were "severely or very severely damaged." The official added that he was consulting with governments in Europe and Asia about the prospect of releasing further stockpiled oil.

- [Marcos to create crisis committee on food, fuel](#) (2026-03-23 16:17)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the creation of a crisis committee to ensure the country's food and fuel supplies remain stable amid the war in the Middle East, Malacañang said on Monday. In a press briefing, Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro maintained that even before there were suggestions for such a body to be established, the president has already ordered its creation. Castro said the main objective of the crisis committee is to ensure that there will be no disruptions in the supply of essential goods such as petroleum products and food. She also said while the hostilities in the Middle East have triggered prices of oil to skyrocket, an oil supply crisis has yet to be declared in the Philippines. What is happening in the country is a "price disruption" that is also happening in other parts of the globe, Castro said. "At present, this is not considered an oil crisis because we have complete and sufficient oil supply. The DOE (Department of Energy) and this government, upon orders of President Marcos, [are] working to ensure there will be no disruptions in the supply of oil and petroleum products in the country," Castro said. While the government would

like to temper high pump prices, the Oil Deregulation Law prevents it from doing so since prices are based on prevailing benchmarks in the international market and not on acquisition costs. “Under the deregulated downstream oil industry framework, based on RA (Republic Act) 8479, oil companies will base their product prices on prevailing international benchmark prices primarily Mean of Platts Singapore, or MOPS, in each pricing cycle. So, oil companies are using FIFO — First In First Out accounting. This is what they are using now where the product they are selling is based on the price at current or near current international market prices and not on the historical acquisition cost when it comes to their inventory,” Castro said. “So, their pump prices now reflect current global market conditions even though they purchased their inventory at a lower price. That’s what exists in this type of system if there is an Oil Deregulation Law,” she added. To help ease the burden of the public, particularly those from the transport sector, the government, through the DOE, are now in negotiations for additional fuel imports. Labor wants representation Organized labor called on President Marcos to include a workers’ representative in the “crisis committee” being created to address the Middle East conflict’s impact on the country. The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), the largest national trade union center in the country, made the appeal on Monday. The government, the TUCP said, should prioritize workers’ needs and include them in the decision-making process, as they are often the hardest hit by economic shocks yet are frequently excluded from decision-making tables. “If workers are not represented in the committee, who else will be the one to tell the true state of the nation?” the group said. The union noted that workers’ demands for a wage hike, value-added tax abolition and subsidies are being met with silence, and said excluding them from the crisis committee will only make things worse. “A crisis committee that fails workers will fail the nation,” the TUCP said. Worst-case scenario Also on Monday, Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian said a Senate panel is coming up with a worst-case projection where the Middle East war extends for up to six months and oil prices surge to \$200 per barrel. “In such a scenario or at any point of the conflict, the country should be ready to implement an appropriate and targeted contingency plan,” Gatchalian said in a statement. “We don’t have any control of what [is] happening outside the country. But the important thing is we are ready [to address the situation],” he said in Filipino. The senator said this was the reason why he pressed for an “accelerated timeline” for the Senate’s ad hoc committee hearings to address the impact of the Middle East conflict on the local economy. Gatchalian, chairman of the Proactive Response and Oversight for Timely and Effective Crisis Strategy (Protect) Committee, raised the urgency of crafting a contingency framework within one to two weeks. “Our timeline here is hopefully [we finish the contingency framework] in one or two weeks because there is a sense of urgency,” said Gatchalian, also Senate Committee on Finance chairman. He said the Protect committee was formed as the Senate’s “proactive measure in the face of multifaceted challenges besetting the country amid the aggravating situation in the Middle East.” Sen. JV Ejercito, meanwhile, sought the creation of an interagency task force to prepare for the impact of the Middle East war on the economy and energy sector. The senator urged the government to craft contingency measures amid risks of fuel supply disruptions brought by the US-Israel war on Iran. He said that the Congress has already authorized the president to suspend excise taxes on fuel to help cushion price shocks on consumers. “Let us not wait for the crisis to worsen. We

should be proactive and prepare for the worst, and view it just like a Covid (Coronavirus disease [2019]) pandemic situation,” Ejercito said in Filipino and English. He said the war’s impact “extends beyond fuel prices as it could also affect supply chains and production costs worldwide.” Ejercito noted that many Asian economies, including China, rely heavily on Middle Eastern oil, which in turn powers manufacturing and exports. “It has a domino effect because the global market is dependent on oil from the Middle East,” the Senate deputy majority floor leader added.

- [Schools urged to keep graduation rites simple](#) (2026-03-23 16:16)

THE Department of Education (DepEd) ordered all public schools in the country to keep graduation rites simple, saying they must be done “without excessive spending or extravagant attire.” “We must ensure that this milestone remains a celebration of achievement rather than a financial ordeal for our parents, especially as we navigate the economic impact of rising fuel costs,” Education Secretary Sonny Angara said. “Our schools must prioritize the welfare of learners by keeping these ceremonies simple, meaningful and entirely free of unnecessary expenses,” Angara said. DepEd Memorandum 015 prohibits collecting a contribution or fee for graduation ceremonies. The DepEd urged that the ceremonies be held in simple venues like school grounds or covered courts. The department also clarified that nonacademic activities should not be requirements for graduation. “For public schools, all necessary expenses for the ceremonies are to be sourced from the school’s Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses funds,” the DepEd said. About 1.9 million Grade 6 learners and 1.8 million Grade 12 learners were expected to graduate for School Year 2025–2026, the department said. It has set all end-of-school-year activities for March 30 or 31.

- [More Pinoys back from Middle East](#) (2026-03-23 16:15)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday welcomed back the fourth batch of Filipinos repatriated from the Middle East. The chartered Philippine Airlines flight from Riyadh landed at the Villamor Air Base in Pasay City at past 6 a.m. carrying 317 overseas Filipino workers and 26 dependents from different parts of the region — Saudi Arabia (109), Kuwait (99), Bahrain (79) and Qatar (56). Their return was facilitated by the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). They were accompanied by OWWA Administrator Patricia Yvonne Caunan, who led on-ground operations in Riyadh to assist Filipinos arriving from land crossings. Marcos mingled with the repatriates and their families, and oversaw the distribution of assistance and services, including financial assistance, medical support and psycho-social counseling. He also led the send-off for repatriates with domestic flights to the Visayas and Mindanao on the same day. Over the weekend, the president vowed the unhampered provision of government assistance to Filipinos affected by the hostilities in the Middle East. According to the DMW, the government of Saudi Arabia helped in the transit of Filipinos from neighboring countries, noting that the kingdom served as a key hub for evacuation efforts. Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac said “it was a land-crossing effort” as air spaces in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar are either closed or restricted due to the

war. Cacdac further disclosed that they are expecting 1,200 more returnees by batches in the coming days.

- [P145.56B to fund Central Mindanao Highway](#) (2026-03-23 16:14)

ACTING on the orders of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to accelerate infrastructure development nationwide, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has secured the release of P145.56 billion for the Central Mindanao High Standard Highway Construction Project. This would ensure uninterrupted funding for the initiative that will cut travel time nearly in half and spark economic growth across the region, DBM said. The move underscores the president's push to speed up high-impact infrastructure projects that directly improve mobility, strengthen regional economies and create more opportunities for Filipinos, especially in Mindanao. The Central Mindanao High Standard Highway will significantly enhance connectivity between Cagayan de Oro and Malaybalay, cutting travel time from 6.5 hours to just 3.5 hours. This means faster travel, lower transport costs and more efficient movement of goods — benefits that will directly impact commuters, farmers, businesses and local communities. Beyond convenience, the project is expected to boost trade competitiveness, attract investments and stimulate growth in key sectors such as agriculture, logistics and tourism — unlocking new opportunities across Northern and Central Mindanao. The project is proposed to be financed through loan proceeds from the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Asian Development Bank, alongside the Philippine government's counterpart funding. "With the President's directive to accelerate infrastructure development, we are ensuring that the project will not be delayed due to lack of funds. With this FOA (forward obligational authority), continuous financing is guaranteed until completion — so that Filipinos, especially in Mindanao, can feel the benefits of smoother, faster and safer travel sooner," acting Budget Secretary Rolando Toledo said in Filipino in a statement. "This is not just about building a road — it is about connecting communities, shortening the distance between opportunities and making everyday life easier for our countrymen," he added.

- [DepEd backs shifting to 3-term calendar](#) (2026-03-23 16:13)

by REINA TOLENTINO THE Department of Education (DepEd) said it supports the Cabinet-level endorsement of the three-term school calendar that will start next school year. The Department of Economy, Planning and Development had approved the transition. The Social Development Committee-Cabinet Level endorsed the policy. In a statement, the DepEd said the trimester school year (SY) is "a decisive reform that places quality teaching and learning at the center of basic education in the country." "This reform strategically addresses long-standing systemic inefficiencies, such as the documented loss of up to 53 school days in SY 2023–2024. By redesigning how time is structured in schools, the reform ensures deep learning," the DepEd said. Under the new setup, the school year would start with a five-day Opening Block "for learner profiling, baseline assessments and essential administrative processes." It would be followed by an Instructional Block composed of about 60 days "of uninterrupted teaching and learning," the DepEd said. "The shift from four quarters to three terms significantly

streamlines grading cycles and reduces reporting peaks, easing administrative burden and allowing educators to concentrate on what matters most effective instruction,” it said. The reform was the fruit of “a rigorous, multistage consultation process that” started last January, the DepEd said. “Learners, teachers, school leaders, parents and other stakeholders, as well as the House of Representatives and the Senate were engaged,” the department said. The reform is part of “a broader, integrated reform agenda” that aims to raise learning outcomes, it said. “Complementary initiatives include accelerated classroom construction, expanded school-based feeding and strengthened nutrition programs, intensified literacy interventions, provision of textbooks for all learners and a refined interagency policy on class suspensions,” it added.

- [Palace defends naming acting agency heads](#) (2026-03-23 16:12)

MALACAÑANG on Monday reiterated that the decision of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to appoint heads of departments in the executive branch as “acting secretaries” was not meant to demean or take for granted the power of the Commission on Appointments (CA). Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro issued the statement in reaction to Sen. Imee Marcos’ criticism that the president’s “rampant practice” of appointing agency heads in acting capacities is an “emerging modus operandi” that seems to render the CA inutile of its mandate to give or withhold consent to appointments. Senator Marcos’ callout is “very harsh,” Castro said during a press briefing. “The President means no offense to the Commission on Appointments. The President is merely exercising his constitutional prerogatives. He can make an appointment in temporary or permanent positions.” Among the officials still to face the CA are acting Executive Secretary Ralph Recto; acting Presidential Communications Office Secretary Dave Gomez; acting Public Works Secretary Vince Dizon; acting Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez; acting Justice Secretary Frederick Vida; acting Finance Secretary Frederick Go; acting Budget Secretary Rolando Toledo; and acting Environment Secretary Juan Miguel Cuna. Castro said that acting secretaries can perform their roles “for a period of one year.” “The President will submit the appointments [to the CA] in due time,” she said. The CA is a constitutional body that confirms or disapproves appointments made by the president, such as those for Cabinet positions, ambassadors and military generals. It is composed of 25 members from the Senate and House of Representatives.

- [CHR: Protect Filipinos’ economic, social rights](#) (2026-03-23 16:11)

THE Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has called on the government to protect the economic and social rights, particularly of persons with disabilities, elderly, persons living with illness and Indigenous peoples. The CHR on Monday issued the statement as it expressed concern over the rising fuel costs and their impact on the enjoyment of economic and social rights, particularly among vulnerable and marginalized sectors. “The State is advised to take concrete steps to protect these sectors through targeted social protection, wage support, subsidies and accessible public services, consistent with its duty to progressively realize economic and social rights without discrimination,” CHR Chairman Richard Palpal-latoc said. The government must also

ensure the protection of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) through timely assistance, repatriation when necessary and reintegration support, especially for those affected by conflict and economic disruptions abroad, Palpal-latoc said. The agency, an independent constitutional body mandated to protect all the rights of all people in the country and monitor government compliance with international human rights treaties, likewise called on the business sector to respect human rights during this period of economic strain. Enterprises must refrain from unjustified price increases, exploitative practices or arbitrary layoffs that undermine workers' rights and access to basic goods and services, and must avoid aggravating the situation of vulnerable populations, the CHR said. Palpal-latoc noted that the global economic and geopolitical uncertainties have cascading effects on the Philippine economy, driving up the prices of transportation, food, and other essential goods and services. These pressures undermine the right to an adequate standard of living, including the rights to food, mobility and basic services, as recognized under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. "The burden falls disproportionately on low-income households, daily wage earners, transport workers, farmers, fisherfolk and those in the informal economy," Palpal-latoc said. "The impact on vulnerable people can be calamitous," he pointed out. As prices rise, these groups face shrinking purchasing power, heightened risk of hunger and reduced access to essential services. OFWs and their families are also affected, as global instability and conflict may lead to job insecurity, displacement and higher living costs in host countries.

- [House bill provides free academic records](#) (2026-03-23 16:10)

A BILL that aims to require higher education institutions (HEIs) to provide, for free, documents that fresh graduates would need to apply for a job has been filed in the House of Representatives by Majority Leader and Ilocos Norte 1st District Rep. Ferdinand Alexander Marcos. House Bill 8701, or the proposed Academic and Labor Pathways Assistance for Students Act, filed last March 18, entitles students, within 12 months from graduation, at least five copies of their transcript of records (ToR) "or, where the transcript of records is not yet available," five copies of a certificate of graduation and five certified true copies (CTCs) of their diploma. They are entitled to five more copies of their ToR and five CTCs of their diploma, "likewise free of charge." The bill mandates HEIs to have a digital academic records system "to facilitate the efficient submission and processing of requests, storage, issuance and verification of academic records, including transcript of records, certificates of graduation, certified true copies of diplomas and other academic certifications." "By making essential academic records more accessible and improving the efficiency of records processing systems in higher education institutions, this measure helps ensure that Filipino graduates are better equipped to pursue employment opportunities and contribute meaningfully to the nation's workforce," Marcos said in the bill's explanatory note. The Commission on Higher Education will assume oversight in implementing the measure.

- [Nominations now open for outstanding women](#) (2026-03-23 16:09)

THE Civil Service Commission (CSC) called on government agencies, human resource practitioners and the public to nominate exemplary women in government service for the 2026 Gawad Lingkod Bayani. Nomination of individual female civil servants and women led groups for any of the three major awards — “Gawad Lingkod Bayan ng Pangulo,” “Gawad Dangal ng Bayan” and “Gawad Pagasa” — will be accepted until March 31, CSC Chairman Marilyn Yap said on Monday. “Every day, women prove that public service knows no gender and no rank. Beyond their achievements in science, business and family life, women continue to demonstrate extraordinary dedication and intelligence essential to national development,” Yap said. “As the nation observes National Women’s Month 2026, it is only right that we honor and highlight their impact,” she said. Last January, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. conferred the 2025 Gawad Lingkod Bayani on outstanding government workers, including several women whose leadership and service advanced public interest, safety and innovation nationwide. One of the awardees was Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte, who has received multiple awards and recognition from various fields and groups, locally and internationally. Yap said the president also conferred the Gawad Dangal ng Bayan on five women for their consistent display of exemplary behavior based on the eight norms of conduct under Republic Act 6713, or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees. For Gawad Pagasa, the same number of women and women led teams were recognized for their innovative ideas or outstanding performance that directly benefited multiple government agencies, she said. Complete details and nomination guidelines for the 2026 Gawad Lingkod Bayani are available at <https://www.csc.gov.ph/programs/honor-awards-program/gawad-lingkod-bayani> said.

- [Philippine weather bureau announces the start of dry season](#) (2026-03-23 16:08)

(UPDATE) THE Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) on Monday declared the start of the warm, dry season as the northeast monsoon, or “amihan,” ended. Pagasa Administrator Nathaniel Servando said that the shift of wind direction from northeasterly to easterly due to the formation of the high-pressure area over the Northwestern Pacific signifies the termination of the northeast monsoon. “It also indicates the start of the warm and dry season,” Servando said. He, however, said that some areas in Northern Luzon may still experience occasional northeasterly winds. The Pagasa chief said the weather will gradually become warmer. He advised the public to take precautionary measures to minimize heat stress.

- [Planet trapped record heat in 2025 – UN](#) (2026-03-23 16:07)

GENEVA, Switzerland — The amount of heat trapped by the Earth reached record levels in 2025, with the consequences of such warming feared to last for thousands of years, the UN warned Monday. The 11 hottest years ever recorded were all between 2015 and 2025, the United Nations’ WMO weather and climate agency confirmed in its flagship State of the Global Climate annual report. Last year was the second or third hottest year on record, at about 1.43 degrees Celsius above the 1850–1900 average, the World Meteorological Organization said. “The global

climate is in a state of emergency. Planet Earth is being pushed beyond its limits. Every key climate indicator is flashing red," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. "Humanity has just endured the 11 hottest years on record. When history repeats itself 11 times, it is no longer a coincidence. It is a call to act." For the first time, the WMO climate report includes the planet's energy imbalance: the rate at which energy enters and leaves the Earth system. Under a stable climate, incoming energy from the Sun is about the same as the amount of outgoing energy, the Geneva-based agency said. However, the increase in concentrations of heat-trapping greenhouse gases — carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide — "to their highest level in at least 800,000 years" has "upset this equilibrium," the WMO said. "The Earth's energy imbalance has increased since its observational record began in 1960, particularly in the past 20 years. It reached a new high in 2025." Ocean heat record WMO chief Celeste Saulo said scientific advances had improved understanding of the energy imbalance and its implications for the climate. "Human activities are increasingly disrupting the natural equilibrium, and we will live with these consequences for hundreds and thousands of years," she said. More than 91 percent of the excess heat is stored in the ocean. "Ocean heat content reached a new record high in 2025 and its rate of warming more than doubled from 1960–2005 to 2005–2025," the WMO said. Ocean warming has far-reaching consequences, such as degradation of marine ecosystems, biodiversity loss and reduction of the ocean carbon sink, the agency said. "It fuels tropical and subtropical storms and exacerbates ongoing sea-ice loss in the polar regions." The Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets have both lost considerable mass, and the annual average extent of Arctic sea ice in 2025 was the lowest or second-lowest ever recorded in the satellite era. Last year, the global mean sea level was around 11 centimeters higher than when satellite altimetry records began in 1993. Ocean warming and sea level rise are projected to continue for centuries. 'Dire picture' WMO scientific officer John Kennedy said global weather is still under the influence of La Niña, a naturally occurring climate phenomenon that cools surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. It brings changes in winds, pressure and rainfall patterns. Conditions oscillate between La Niña and its warming opposite El Niño, with neutral conditions in between. The warmest year on record, 2024, was around 1.55 C above the 1850–1900 average, and started in a strong El Niño. Forecasts indicate neutral conditions by the middle of 2026 with a possible El Niño developing before the end of the year, said Kennedy. If so, "then we're likely to see maybe elevated temperatures again in 2027," he told a press conference. The World Meteorological Organization's deputy chief, Ko Barrett, said the outlook was a "dire picture." She said the WMO provided the evidence it sees, hoping that the information "will encourage people to take action." But there was "no denying" that "these indicators are not moving in a direction that provides for a lot of hope," she said. With war gripping the Middle East and fuel prices soaring, Guterres said the world should heed the alarm call. "In this age of war, climate stress is also exposing another truth: our addiction to fossil fuels is destabilizing both the climate and global security," he said. "Today's report should come with a warning label: climate chaos is accelerating and delay is deadly," he said.

- [Israel extends re-entry visas for foreign workers](#) (2026-03-23 16:06)

RE-ENTRY visas for foreign workers that expired or are set to expire between Feb. 28 and April 21 this year have been extended until April 30 amid the Middle East war, the Philippine Embassy in Israel said. The Israeli government made the move "due to the current security situation and airspace restrictions in Israel," the embassy said in an advisory posted on Facebook. "This extension applies only to workers who are currently outside Israel and who departed while holding a valid re-entry visa," the embassy said on Sunday. "No action is required, as the updated expiration date is reflected in the system. These workers may re-enter Israel up to April 30," it added. There are over 30,300 Filipinos in Israel, the majority of whom work as caregivers. The rest of Filipinos in Israel are workers in hotels, agricultural students and missionaries. The embassy earlier said that it repatriated 100 Filipinos, including 55 workers and their dependents, and 45 non-workers such as tourists, pilgrims and students. Some of the repatriates left Israel through the Taba Border Crossing. Upon reaching Taba in Egypt, they were assisted by personnel from the Philippine Embassy in Cairo and the rapid response team from the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration. They were housed temporarily in Egypt while they awaited their flight home.

- [Peace process in Bangsamoro fragile – observers](#) (2026-03-23 16:05)

THE Third Party Monitoring Team (TPMT), an independent international body tasked with overseeing the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, called on the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to reaffirm their commitments under the landmark accord, warning that delays in its execution have placed the peace process at a "very sensitive juncture." The TPMT was established as part of the CAB to ensure both parties comply with their obligations, monitor progress, and provide independent assessments to the public and stakeholders. Its role is widely seen as a neutral "watchdog" to maintain accountability and foster trust in the peace process in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. In a statement marking the 12th anniversary of the CAB's signing on March 27, the TPMT said the agreement had "established a pathway to a more peaceful future" for the Bangsamoro region and the Philippines, acknowledging significant progress by both sides since 2014. However, the monitoring body said the agreement remains only partially implemented, citing continuing delays and obstacles that threaten to undermine gains achieved over the past decade. "The path can only be traveled together," the TPMT said, emphasizing the principle of "parity of esteem" outlined in the agreement, which requires mutual respect and equal commitment from both the Government of the Philippines and the MILF. The team highlighted the need for sustained dialogue and joint implementation, noting that neither party can succeed without working in tandem. It also emphasized the importance of establishing a "truly democratic" Bangsamoro political entity, pointing to the need to proceed with the first parliamentary elections in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao scheduled in September this year. While the elections have faced postponements for various reasons, the TPMT stressed that residents of the region must ultimately choose their representatives. The TPMT said it would continue working with all stakeholders to ensure full implementation of the CAB, reaffirming its commitment to the peace process. "The CAB has opened the path to

lasting peace for the Bangsamoro,” it said. “We call upon the parties to continue to manifest their full commitment to the spirit and letter of the agreement, including at the highest levels.

- [PH among top 5 countries with high TB cases](#) (2026-03-23 16:04)

THE World Health Organization (WHO) Western Pacific region said that the Philippines is among the top five countries with a high burden of tuberculosis (TB) cases. In a statement on Monday for World TB Day, the WHO said there were an estimated 2.9 million TB cases globally, with the Philippines, Indonesia and China ranking among the top five high-burden countries. Despite improvements in TB prevention and treatment, the WHO said the Philippines continues to face challenges such as stagnant funding, persistent risk factors including undernutrition, smoking and alcohol use, and diabetes, and competing health priorities. The WHO emphasized the need for stronger political commitment, innovation and decentralized care to address TB effectively. “Ending TB in the Western Pacific Region is achievable — if we transform care, decentralize services, and act with ever greater urgency,” said Dr. Saia Ma’u Piukala, WHO regional director for the Western Pacific. The WHO said that ending TB is achievable if countries strengthen primary health care, expand access to diagnostic tools, and protect progress made in combating the disease. Integrated TB services at the primary health care level are seen as a pivotal strategy to improve early detection, reduce treatment delays, and prevent transmission. WHO urged governments in high-burden countries like the Philippines to accelerate the use of near-point-of-care molecular tests, which detect TB more quickly and accurately. These tools are critical to improving diagnosis and treatment outcomes in underserved areas. It also highlighted the importance of sustained domestic investments in TB care, claiming that every dollar invested in TB programs can generate up to \$43 in health and economic returns.

- [P708M airport firefighting trucks unveiled](#) (2026-03-23 16:03)

THE Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) on Monday unveiled a new fleet of firefighting trucks to boost the emergency response capabilities of the country’s airports. The acquisition of eight Oshkosh Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting units, procured in 2024, represents the initial phase of a multi-year modernization program, according to CAAP Director General Raul del Rosario. The firefighting vehicles arrived in Batangas on March 18 and will be deployed to key regional hubs, including Laoag International Airport, Puerto Princesa International Airport, Butuan, Siargao, Busuanga, Bicol International Airport, General Santos, and Tacloban. The P708-million acquisition is part of a long-term strategy to procure 46 fire trucks by 2031. An additional 16 units are already proposed for future acquisition. The US-made Oshkosh trucks are specialized high-performance vehicles designed specifically for ARFF operations. Each truck has a capacity of 12,500 liters of water, 1,750 liters of aqueous film-forming foam, and 250 kilograms of dry chemical powder. The trucks can navigate difficult off-road terrain and discharge extinguishing agents while in motion. The blessing ceremony was attended by Transportation Undersecretary Jim Sydiongco, Assistant Secretary Donald Mendoza, Batangas Customs District Collector Carmelita Talusan, and US Embassy Senior Commercial Officer Paul

Taylor, together with other government officials and stakeholders.

- [Police to intensify Holy Week presence](#) (2026-03-23 16:03)

THE Philippine National Police (PNP) on Monday said it will intensify police presence in tourist spots, convergence zones, places of worship and roads in anticipation of the influx of travelers and vacationers during Holy Week and the summer season. Close to 60,000 officers have been mobilized nationwide as part of Ligtas Sumvac (Summer Vacation) 2026, a security operation from March 29 to May 31. Captain Amie Centro-Tiu, chief of PNP's Tourist Security and Protection Section, told reporters that 39,340 of the deployments were PNP personnel, 5,185 were augmentation forces from various uniformed personnel, and 14,691 were from advocacy groups. Tiu said 3,277 tourist hotspots in the country will be secured by the PNP through foot patrols and the establishment of assistance desks. In Metro Manila alone, the National Capital Region Police Office will deploy 12,370 officers in areas of concern, transport hubs and major streets. "The proactive presence is intended to create a safe and secure environment for local and foreign tourists during the Holy Week," she said. The most prevalent crime, particularly during the Holy Week, is reckless imprudence resulting in damage to property common among partygoers and drinking individuals, Tiu said.

- [Pasig shifts focus to small projects](#) (2026-03-23 16:02)

PASIG City Mayor Vico Sotto on Monday said that with bigger reforms and major projects in place, the city government can now shift its attention to smaller, day-to-day fixes that directly affect residents. Speaking during the city's flag-raising ceremony, Sotto said the city was "more or less OK" on big-ticket reforms and large-scale projects, though he stressed that these were not perfect. He said the city can now focus on smaller concerns that may look minor but still create a significant impact when taken together. Among the examples he cited were sidewalk projects and old pedestals that continue to block pedestrians, which he said should be addressed through better coordination with agencies such as the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH). Sotto thanked the City Engineering Office, which hosted the ceremony. He also congratulated Pasig students who won in various competitions, including talent festivals, sports and press conferences. After the ceremony, Sotto said the city was scheduled to turn over new electric vehicles for the local government's coaster or bus fleet. He also discussed the ongoing distribution of assistance for transport groups under the national government's Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation program through the Department of Social Welfare and Development. He said the city was trying its best so that each tricycle unit under transport organizations could receive assistance. Sotto said coordination with transport groups and city offices was important in validating the beneficiary list and avoiding delays. He said some applications were being delayed because some people were trying to be listed in two or three local government units. In distributing aid to TNVS and jeepney drivers, the city was coordinating through the City Social Welfare and Development Office and the city's traffic management office, along with other agencies like the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB), Sotto said.

- [Parents urge stricter vape rules](#) (2026-03-23 16:01)

A GROUP of parents advocating against vaping urged the government to enforce laws keeping tobacco and vape products away from schools and to ensure that marketing does not target young people. According to the Department of Science and Technology-Food and Nutrition Research Institute (DOST-FNRI), vaping among Filipino youth has increased by over 1,000 percent — from 37,513 in 2021 to more than 423,000 in 2023. In a statement on Monday, following a session with members of the Speaking at the School-Parent-Teachers Association (SPTA) Federation District 2 in Quezon City, Rebie Relator, president of Parents Against Vape (PAV), attributed the increase to the high accessibility of tobacco products to minors. Relator said the Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003, which prohibits the sale or distribution of tobacco products within 100 meters of a school, failed to deter minors from vaping. “It is clear that current measures in the regulation and enforcement of vape products are not enough. We call for urgent amendments to the vape law,” he said. The group also found that some children describe vaping as “oxygen,” underscoring how normalized the habit has become. Allen Limos “As parents, we are witnessing the impact on our children firsthand. Awareness alone is no longer enough — we need concrete action to keep them away from the risks of addiction and harm,” said Lailanie Ternola of SPTA Federation District 2. The group called for amendments to the vape law to plug gaps in access, marketing and enforcement, warning that if regulation fails to curb the rise, a total ban may be necessary. The Department of Health floated the idea of a vape ban and encouraged local government units to strictly enforce the ban in their areas.

- [HPG urges motorists to keep cool amid Holy Week rush](#) (2026-03-23 15:28)

MANILA, Philippines - The Highway Patrol Group (HPG) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) on Monday urged motorists to keep their cool on the road this coming Holy Week and make road safety a priority over rage. Historically, traffic volume increases during the observance of the Holy Week as people begin to travel to the provinces for the long weekend. Data from the PNP-HPG showed that from March 30 to May 30 last year, a total of 35,985 road crash incidents were recorded nationwide mostly involving motorcycles with overspeeding and human error cited as leading causes. “Tuloy-tuloy ‘yung cooperation natin with LGU and other local police para maiwasan ‘yung mga ganitong accident. Shared responsibility ito, cooperation ng ating mga kasama at mga nagmamaneho,” HPG deputy director for operations PCol. Bernard Marzal said. Marzal reminded motorists to plan trips ahead to avoid road congestion. Despite the oil crisis, the PNP-HPG assured the public that its operations were not affected, particularly police visibility and response teams deployed along major highways.

- [PH Coast Guard MOU with China Coast does not include joint patrols](#) (2026-03-23 15:11)

MANILA, Philippines -- The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the China Coast Guard (CCG) would not include "sensitive operations" or "joint patrols." The DFA made the clarification Monday night to address public concerns on the MOU's impact on

national interests. The Foreign Affairs department said the PCG and CCG entered into an MOU on the establishment of a joint coast guard committee on maritime cooperation in 2016. Since 2024, both parties have been engaged in discussions to amend and update that agreement. "The proposed amendments are limited in scope," said DFA Maritime Affairs spokesman Rogelio Villanueva, Jr. He said they are focused on re-establishing the Joint Coast Guard Committee to serve as a channel of communication between the two coast guards. "The MOU does not contemplate cooperation in sensitive operational areas, joint patrols foremost among them," Villanueva said in a statement. "The Department reaffirms that engagement and vigilance are complementary, not contradictory," he stressed. The Philippines, he said, would continue to "pursue practical maritime cooperation where appropriate, while remaining steadfast in the defense of its national interests." "These discussions are consistent with President [Ferdinand] Marcos's standing directive to maintain open lines of communication and engagement with China, even as the Philippines firmly upholds its sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction under international law," he said. The negotiations, he said, have been conducted through proper diplomatic channels and are not confined to Bilateral Consultation Mechanism meetings, which serve as a venue for the Philippines and China to manage their differences amicably. He said they have been duly reported to National Security Adviser Eduardo Año, in his capacity as National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea chairman; DFA Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro, and PCG Commandant Ronnie Gavan.

- [Over 30,000 Manila drivers to receive P5,000 aid starting tomorrow](#) (2026-03-23 14:44)

MANILA, Philippines—Over 30,000 drivers and riders in Manila will begin receiving their P5,000 cash assistance starting Tuesday, March 24, Manila City Mayor Isko Moreno announced Monday. During his Facebook live broadcast, Moreno said the beneficiaries include drivers of motorcycle taxis (MC taxis), Transport Network Vehicle Services (TNVS), public utility jeepneys (PUJs), and delivery riders. The aid will be distributed through the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) program, which allocated a portion of its P30 billion budget to aid transport workers amid the rising fuel costs. Starting March 24, 6 am to 5 pm at Kartilya ng Katipunan, 2,629 TNVS will receive their financial aid, 2,488 PUJs on March 25, 21,127 delivery riders on March 26 and 27, and 3,989 MC taxis. Moreno urged the beneficiaries to strictly follow the schedule and instructions provided to avoid delays.

- [Palace to let Ombudsman rule on ICI flood control findings](#) (2026-03-23 14:32)

MANILA, Philippines — Malacañang on Monday said it would leave it to the Office of the Ombudsman to act on the findings of the Independent Commission on Infrastructure (ICI) regarding alleged large-scale corruption in the government's flood control projects. This includes portions of the ICI report that purportedly clear former House Speaker Martin Romualdez of involvement in anomalous flood control projects worth billions of pesos. At a press conference, Presidential Communications Office (PCO) Undersecretary Claire Castro said the results of the fact-finding body's investigation have already been submitted to the

Ombudsman for appropriate action. “Regarding the ICI recommendation, it has already been submitted to the Ombudsman. We will just let the Ombudsman reveal it out of respect,” she said in Filipino. “And if the ICI is also asked, it would be better for the commission itself to present its recommendations,” she added. Meanwhile, the Palace Press Officer clarified that the ICI’s P41 million operational budget remains valid until the end of the year and may still be used for necessary expenses, including activities related to the panel’s wrap-up. The ICI earlier announced that its operations will officially end on March 31. Any unused funds will be returned to the National Treasury as part of the unappropriated surplus of the general fund, Castro noted..

- [JV Ejercito urges creation of inter-agency task force over Middle East war](#) (2026-03-23 13:32)

MANILA, Philippines -- Sen. Joseph Victor Ejercito on Monday sought the creation of an inter-agency task force to prepare for the impact of the Middle East war on the economy and energy sector. The senator has urged the government to craft contingency measures amid risks of fuel supply disruptions brought by the United States-Israel war on Iran. He said that the Congress has already authorized the President to suspend excise taxes on fuel to help cushion price shocks on consumers. “Let us not wait for the crisis to worsen. We should be proactive and prepare for the worst, and view it just like a Covid (Coronavirus disease [2019]) pandemic situation,” Ejercito said in Filipino and English. He said the Senate adopted Resolution 43 last week, urging the Executive branch to set up a national contingency framework using a whole-of-government and whole-of-nation approach. Ejercito said the measure, which he co-authored, should push for early action amid possible fuel supply disruptions, and create a task force that would provide daily updates to keep the public informed. He said the war’s impact “extends beyond fuel prices as it could also affect supply chains and production costs worldwide.” Ejercito noted that many Asian economies, including China, rely heavily on Middle Eastern oil, which in turn powers manufacturing and exports. “It has a domino effect because the global market is dependent on the oil from the Middle East,” the Senate deputy majority floor leader added.

- [Bam Aquino backs state of nat’ l emergency to curb soaring prices, but cautions vs abuse](#) (2026-03-23 13:02)

MANILA, Philippines -- Sen. Bam Aquino has expressed support for the declaration of a state of national emergency to control soaring prices of basic commodities driven by the sharp increase in oil costs brought by the Middle East war. The senator on Sunday said country is already at crisis level as record-high oil price hikes led to surge in the cost of goods, which “could place a heavy burden on the public and various industries.” Under a state of national emergency, the President may exercise broader authority to direct government resources to provide financial and other forms of assistance to various sectors, boost funding for the repatriation of overseas Filipino workers in affected areas, and implement price control measures. “That’s why we support the call for the declaration of national emergency to address the continuous oil price

increases and lighten the burden of the people affected by the high costs of basic goods," Aquino said in Filipino. "The government, hopefully, should not wait for the situation to worsen since there is no certainty as to when the war in the Middle East would end," he added. However, Aquino stressed the need to strictly monitor the implementation of these measures to ensure that assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries and that no abuses or irregularities occur. He also reiterated his call for financial assistance to transport workers, micro, small, and medium enterprises, and vulnerable sectors of the middle class to keep the economy afloat.

- [Senators push postponement of Asean Summit](#) (2026-03-23 12:38)

MANILA, Philippines — Senate leaders on Monday endorsed to Malacañang "for serious study" the proposal of former Finance secretary Gary Teves for the Philippines to postpone the hosting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Summit this year. In a radio interview over the weekend, Teves said the government would save over P17 billion if it postpones hosting the Asean. The money could be used to offset the impact of the Middle East war on the economy. The country's chairmanship of Asean requires hosting 650 ministerial and senior official meetings. These will be held in Manila, Cebu, Bohol, Boracay, Laoag, Iloilo, Tagaytay, and Clark in Pampanga. "The times call for such a possible move. The Executive department might consider that," Senate President Vicente Sotto III said. Sen. Panfilo Lacson said Teves' proposal "merits at least serious study and possible reconsideration." "I think our Asean neighbors would understand," Lacson said in a text message. But Teves admitted that the Philippines has to "look into the legality [of postponing Asean Summit] and the diplomatic concerns [of other member-countries]." "They need to ask their Asean counterparts if they would agree for us to reset [hosting the Asean Summit]," Teves said in Filipino.

- [Over 30,000 Manila drivers to receive P5,000 aid starting March 24](#) (2026-03-23 12:35)

MANILA, Philippines — Over 30,000 drivers and riders in Manila will begin receiving their P5,000 cash assistance starting Tuesday, March 24, Mayor Isko Moreno said Monday. The mayor said in his Facebook broadcast that the beneficiaries include drivers of motorcycle taxis (MC taxis), Transport Network Vehicle Services (TNVS), public utility jeepneys (PUJs), and delivery riders.

- [Imee Marcos' criticism 'very harsh' — Palace](#) (2026-03-23 10:28)

MANILA, Philippines—Malacañang on Monday described Sen. Imee Marcos' criticism of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. decision to appoint acting secretaries as heads of departments "very harsh," saying the move was not meant to demean or take for granted the power of the Commission on Appointments (CA). Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro reacted to Senator Marcos' statement that the President's "rampant practice" of appointing agency heads in acting capacities is an "emerging modus operandi" that seems to render the CA inutile. Castro said Senator Marcos' callout was "very harsh." "The President means no offense to the Commission on Appointments. The President is merely exercising his constitutional prerogatives. He can make an appointment in temporary or permanent

positions,” she said. Among the officials still to face the CA are acting Executive Secretary Ralph Recto; acting Presidential Communications Office Secretary Dave Gomez; acting Public Works Secretary Vince Dizon; acting Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez; acting Justice Secretary Fredderick Vida; acting Finance Secretary Frederick Go; acting Budget Secretary Rolando Toledo; and acting Environment Secretary Juan Miguel Cuna. Castro said that acting secretaries can perform their roles “for a period of one year.”

- [Indonesia eyes \\$4.7 bn in savings to brace for Mideast war impacts](#) (2026-03-23 07:02)

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Indonesia is eyeing up to 80 trillion rupiah (\$4.7 billion) in savings to cushion its economy from the fallout of the war in the Middle East, according to the government. Southeast Asia's largest economy is also mulling fuel-saving measures including one day of remote working per week for government and certain public sector workers as US-Israeli strikes on Iran and Tehran's retaliatory response in the Gulf have sent global oil prices soaring. In an interview recorded last week, President Prabowo Subianto was asked about a possible shift in budget priorities for the country that heavily subsidises fuel for its population of just over 284 million. The former general said the government was "making every effort" to cut costs by curbing energy consumption and boosting production of renewables, mainly solar power. During the interview, presidential spokesman Prasetyo Hadi suggested the government is seeking savings of 80 trillion rupiah -- a number confirmed to AFP by the presidency on Monday. Prasetyo did not detail where the money would come from. The government has repeatedly insisted Prabowo's signature free meals program -- budgeted at \$19.7 billion for 2026 -- will remain untouched. It has also so far staunchly defended its fuel subsidy, which covers about 30 to 40 percent of the cost for consumers and represents around 15 percent of the budget. These form part of Prabowo's goal to raise the economic growth rate from 5.1 percent last year to eight percent by 2029, fuelled by public spending. Unlike many of its neighbours, Southeast Asia's biggest economy has not yet seen long fuel queues as global oil prices have soared. "There are still many other cost saving measures that we can implement," Prabowo said in an interview with journalists and experts aired by local media over the weekend. The government will finalise its work-from-home policy and announce it to the public "as soon as possible", Prasetyo said Saturday.

- [Japanese national returns home after monthslong detention in Iran](#) (2026-03-23 06:50)

TOKYO — Japan's top government spokesperson said Monday that one of two Japanese nationals detained in Iran has safely returned home in good health. Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara's confirmation came one day after Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi announced the person's release. Motegi, speaking on a Fuji Television talk show Sunday, said the person had been detained since last year and was released on Wednesday. He said the person took a flight from Azerbaijan. Kihara, at a regular news conference Monday, confirmed that the former detainee returned to Japan on Sunday in good health. Kihara said another Japanese national who was arrested earlier this year is still in custody but "we have confirmed that there is no problem with the safety and health" of the person and that Japan is continuing to press

Iran for a release as soon as possible. Motegi said the release came after his repeated demands to Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and that he is "working to win an early release" of the other detainee while communicating with his family and other concerned parties. The Committee to Protect Journalists has named the person detained in Iran in January as a journalist at Japan's public broadcaster NHK. The CPJ said the NHK journalist was arrested Jan. 20 by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and was transferred Feb. 23 to Evin Prison, quoting unidentified sources citing fear of persecution. Motegi did not identify either of the people detained but said the released Japanese national was detained in 2025. The Foreign Ministry said earlier this month the detainees were safe and in good health, but only acknowledged that one was detained last year and the other one in January. The ministry has given no further details and did not say whether the two cases were related.

- [International Energy Agency head says global economy faces 'major, major threat' because of Iran war](#) (2026-03-23 06:46)

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — The head of the International Energy Agency said Monday that the global economy faces a "major, major threat" because of the Iran war. "No country will be immune to the effects of this crisis if it continues to go in this direction," Fatih Birol told Australia's National Press Club in Canberra on Monday. He said the crisis in the Middle East has had a worse combined impact than the two oil shocks of the 1970s and the effect on gas markets of the Russia-Ukraine war. His comments came as Israel launched a new wave of attacks early Monday against Tehran. A top American commander also told Iranians to remain in shelters for the foreseeable future, while Iran renewed strikes on its Gulf neighbors and threatened to start hitting their power plants. Birol said 40 energy assets in nine countries across the region were "severely or very severely damaged." The official added that he was consulting with governments in Europe and Asia about the prospect of releasing further stockpiled oil. "We will see, we will look at the markets," he said. "If it is necessary of course we will do it, but we will look at the conditions, we will analyze, assess the market and discuss with our member countries." As Iran continues its stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz, U.S. President Donald Trump gave a 48 hour deadline for Tehran to open the strategic waterway to all ships, saying that otherwise the United States would "obliterate" Iran's power plants. Trump posted the threat to social media early Sunday in Middle East time zones.

- [Pagasa declares start of dry season](#) (2026-03-23 06:14)

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) on Monday declared the start of the warm, dry season as the northeast monsoon or amihan ended. Pagasa administrator Nathaniel Servando said that the shift of wind direction from northeasterly to easterly due to the formation of the high pressure area over the Northwestern Pacific signifies the termination of the northeast monsoon. "It also indicates the start of the warm and dry season," Servando said. He, however said that some areas in Northern Luzon may still experience occasional northeasterly winds. The Pagasa chief said the weather will gradually become warmer. He advised the public to take precautionary measures to

minimize heat stress.

- [Trillanes files cyber libel case against 18 former Marines](#) (2026-03-23 05:28)

MANILA, Philippines — Former senator Antonio Trillanes 4th on Monday filed cyber libel complaints against 18 former Marines who claimed that they delivered cash to his residence purportedly for the International Criminal Court. The complaints, lodged at the Department of Justice, stemmed from statements the group made to the media asserting that they collectively handed over cash to Trillanes. “The story kept changing in every interview,” Trillanes said, noting discrepancies between the former Marines’ statements and their previous joint affidavit. Key pieces of evidence cited in the complaint included the group’s press conference on February 23, their joint affidavit from a March 1 interview, a March 5 press conference in Pasig City, and recent media interviews. Several members of the media were also included in the case. Trillanes vowed to pursue the case against the group. “Within the next few weeks, the full picture of this story would emerge. Some of their former colleagues had already started cooperating and were close to revealing the truth,” he said. Trillanes earlier filed a separate perjury complaint against the same group.

- [Warm, humid weather to prevail - Pagasa](#) (2026-03-23 04:54)

MANILA, Philippines — Warm and humid weather will prevail in most parts of the country, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said Monday. Weather specialist Aldczar Aurelio said that the easterlies, winds that pass through the Pacific Ocean that bring warm air, will likely last until the weekend. “We can expect sultry weather or hotter temperatures especially during late morning until mid-afternoon,” Aurelio said. Pagasa said the highest temperature today would be in Davao City at 39 degrees Celsius, which falls under the extreme caution category. Metro Manila will be cooler at 34 degrees Celsius.

- [Marcos orders creation of crisis committee to ensure stable fuel, food supply](#) (2026-03-23 04:48)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the creation of a crisis committee to ensure stable food and fuel supplies amid the war in the Middle East, Malacañang said on Monday. In a press briefing, Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro maintained that even before there were suggestions for such a body, the president has already ordered the creation of one. “So, let’s just wait for the document to be released. It is being finalized,” she said in Filipino. “I can’t give you the full details yet, although I have the draft.” Castro said that the main objective of the crisis committee is to ensure that there will be no disruptions in the supply of essential goods such as petroleum products and food. She clarified that while the war in the Middle East caused oil prices to soar, an oil supply crisis has yet to be declared in the Philippines. “At present, this is not considered an oil crisis because we have complete and sufficient oil supply. The DOE (Department of Energy) and this government, upon orders of President Marcos Jr., is working to ensure there will be no disruptions in the

supply of oil and petroleum products in the country,” Castro said.

- [Middle East war may raise BARMM poll costs by up to 25% - Comelec](#) (2026-03-23 04:06)

MANILA, Philippines — A prolonged war in the Middle East would jack up the cost of holding the parliamentary elections in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) by as much as 25%, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) said Monday. Comelec Chairman George Erwin Garcia said that the spikes in petroleum prices are expected to drive up expenses, particularly for logistics and supplies, which are critical to their preparations. Garcia estimated that under current conditions, the total cost of the BARMM polls could rise by up to 25 percent, possibly more if the Middle East war will continue in the months leading up to the planned September 14, 2026 election. He explained that election materials, including automated machines and official ballots, must be transported across the Bangsamoro region by land and sea, where fuel costs are significantly higher. With logistics expenses already projected to increase by at least 20 percent, and supply costs by around 20 to 25 percent, Garcia admitted that Comelec’s current budget may fall short.

- [Manibela announces two-day nationwide transport strike amid soaring fuel prices](#) (2026-03-23 02:39)

MANILA, Philippines — Transport group Manibela announced on Monday a two-day nationwide transport strike this week, citing rising fuel prices as the primary cause of their protest. “In the coming Thursday and Friday, we will launch a nationwide transport strike,” said Mar Valbuena, spokesman for Manibela. Valbuena added that the strike would include members of transport network vehicle services (TNVS), UV Express operators, truckers, and motorcycle taxi drivers. The group warned that the strike could significantly disrupt public transportation and cargo delivery across the country, as drivers and operators unite to demand immediate relief measures against escalating petroleum costs. Manibela has long campaigned for government intervention to address what it describes as “unsustainable fuel prices” affecting commuters and transport workers alike.

- [Marcos welcomes over 300 Filipinos who fled Middle East war](#) (2026-03-23 01:32)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday welcomed back the fourth batch of Filipinos repatriated from the Middle East. The chartered Philippine Airlines flight from Riyadh landed at the Villamor Air Base in Pasay City past 6 a.m. It carried 317 OFWs and 26 dependents from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar. The Department of Migrant Workers said they expect 1,200 more Filipinos to come home in the coming days. After mingling with the repatriates and their families, Marcos led the send-off for repatriates with domestic flights to the Visayas and Mindanao on the same day. Over the weekend, the president vowed the unhampered provision of government assistance to Filipinos affected by the war in the Middle East.

- [Trump touted bigger tax refunds this year, but Americans will likely spend them on gas](#) (2026-03-23 01:02)

WASHINGTON — The U.S. economy was supposed to start the year with a bang, fueled by an unusually large jump in tax refunds from President Donald Trump's tax cut legislation. Yet spiking gas prices are on track to eat up those refunds, leaving most Americans with little extra to spend. "Next spring is projected to be the largest tax refund season of all time," Trump said in a prime-time speech in December that was intended to address voters' concerns about the economy and stubbornly high prices. But that was before the Iran war, which began Feb. 28. Oil and gas prices have soared since then, with the nationwide average price of gas reaching \$3.94 Sunday, up more than a dollar from just a month earlier. Gas prices are likely to remain elevated for some time, even if the war ends soon, because shipping and production have been disrupted and will take time to recover. Economists now expect slower growth this spring and for the year as a whole, as dollars that are spent on gas are less likely to be used for restaurant meals, new clothes, or entertainment. Lower and middle-income households are likely to be hit particularly hard, because they receive lower refunds, while spending a greater proportion of their earnings on gas. "The energy shock is to going to hit those who have the least cushion," said Alex Jacquez, chief of policy at the left-leaning Groundwork Collaborative and a former economist in the Biden White House. "And it doesn't look like those tax refunds are going to be here to save them." Neale Mahoney, director of the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, calculates that gas prices could peak in May at \$4.36 a gallon, based on oil price forecasts by Goldman Sachs, followed by slow declines for the rest of the year. The notion that gas prices decline much more slowly than they rise is so ingrained among economists that they refer to it as the "rocket and feathers" phenomenon. In that scenario, the average household would pay \$740 more in gas this year, nearly equal to the \$748 increase in refunds that the Tax Foundation has estimated the average household will receive. Through March 6, refunds have risen by much less than that, according to IRS data: They have averaged \$3,676, up \$352 from \$3,324 in 2025. Still, average refunds could rise as more complex returns are filed. Other estimates show similar impacts. Economists at Oxford Economics, a consulting firm, estimate that if gas prices average \$3.70 a gallon all year, it will cost consumers about \$70 billion — more than the \$60 billion in increased tax refunds. The gas price spike comes with many consumers already in a precarious position, particularly compared to 2022, when gas prices also soared because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. At that time, many households still had fattened bank accounts from pandemic-era stimulus payments and companies were hiring rapidly and sharply lifting pay to attract workers. Now, hiring is nearly at a standstill and Americans' saving rate has steadily fallen in the past few years as many households borrow more to sustain their spending. "When you start looking across the perspective from a consumer side, you're seeing people who have maxed out their credit cards, are using 'buy now, pay later' to purchase their groceries," said Julie Margetta Morgan, president of The Century Foundation, a think tank. "They're making it work for now, but that can fall apart quite quickly." The impact will likely worsen the "K-shaped" narrative around the U.S. economy, analysts said, in which higher income households have fared better than lower-income households. The bottom 10% of earners spend nearly 4% of their incomes on gasoline, Pantheon Macroeconomics estimates, while the top 10% spend just 1.5%. For now, most analysts still expect the U.S. economy to expand this year, even if more slowly, given the gas price shock. Higher gas prices will likely

worsen inflation in the short run, but over time weaker spending will also slow growth. American consumers and businesses have repeatedly shaken off shocks since the pandemic — soaring inflation, rising interest rates, tariffs — and continued to spend, defying concerns that the economy would tip into recession. Many economists note that the proportion of their incomes that Americans spend on gas and other energy has fallen significantly compared with a decade ago. Data from the Bank of America Institute, released Friday, showed that spending on gas on the bank's credit and debit cards shot 14.4% higher in the week ended March 14 compared with a year ago. Before the war, such spending was running 5% below the previous year, a benefit to consumers. Spending on discretionary items — restaurant meals, electronics, and travel — is still growing, the institute said, evidence of consumer resilience. But there is little sign it is accelerating, as many economists had hoped. "The longer these gasoline prices persist, the more that will gradually sap consumer discretionary spending," said David Tinsley, senior economist at the institute. Other analysts expect growth will slow because of the war. Bernard Yaros and Michael Pearce, economists at Oxford Economics, forecast that the U.S. economy will grow just 1.9% this year, down from an earlier estimate of 2.5%. "We had anticipated a lift in spending from a bumper tax refund season," they wrote, "but the rise in gasoline prices, if sustained, would more than offset that boost."

- [Israeli settlers smash cars and set fires in the West Bank as 4 Palestinians killed in Gaza](#) (2026-03-23 00:54)

RAMALLAH, West Bank — At least 10 Palestinians were injured Sunday night in attacks in the occupied West Bank by Israeli settlers, who rampaged through nearby villages after holding a funeral for a settler killed in a car crash a night earlier. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said the wounded in Deir al-Hatab included a 45-year-old man shot in the foot and a woman suffering from smoke inhalation. Videos obtained by The Associated Press show cars and homes set ablaze as army flares lit up the sky near the village east of Nablus and next to the Israeli settlement of Elon Moreh. The arson and assaults in four Nablus-area villages on Sunday came a day after the official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported simultaneous attacks in at least six communities overnight — the latest spates of violence in the occupied West Bank. Sunday night's rampage came after mourners in the settlement of Elon Moreh held a funeral for Yehuda Sherman, an 18-year-old Israeli settler. Authorities said he was killed in a collision with a Palestinian vehicle in an area north of the villages attacked. Police said they were investigating the settlers' claims that the collision was deliberate. Israel's military did not respond to questions about Sunday night's attacks. The violence came as Israel's government presses ahead with new settlements in the occupied West Bank and attacks by settlers — including arsons, shootings and beatings — have intensified as attention shifts to the Iran war. Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, the head of Israel's military last week condemned such attacks and said it was especially unacceptable during wartime for the military "to confront a threatening minority from within." Wafa reported Saturday night's attacks in the villages of Silat al Dahr and Fandaqumiya, both near Jenin; in Jalud and Salfit, both south of Nablus; and in the agricultural regions Masafer Yatta and the Jordan Valley. Homes and cars were set ablaze, Palestinians were

pepper-sprayed and at least five people were wounded in the overnight assaults, which took place during the Eid al-Fitr holiday marking the end of Ramadan, the agency said. Israel's military said that late Sunday security forces detained five Israeli civilians and confiscated some weapons as they attempted to restore order. It said security forces came under attack from Israeli civilians and a soldier as well as a number of Palestinian civilians were injured. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported 25 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli settlers and soldiers this year as of March 15. Four Palestinians killed in Gaza. Also on Sunday, four Palestinians were killed in Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip, hospital authorities said. One strike hit a vehicle in the central Nuseirat refugee camp and killed three police officers, according to the Awda Hospital, which received the casualties. Ten others were wounded, it said. Another Palestinian was killed in Gaza City, according to Shifa Hospital. The deaths were the latest fatalities among Palestinians in the coastal enclave since an October ceasefire deal attempted to halt a more than 2-year war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. While the heaviest fighting has subsided, the ceasefire has still seen almost daily Israeli fire. Israeli forces have carried out repeated airstrikes and frequently fire on Palestinians near military-held zones, killing more than 670 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials. The Israeli military did not immediately comment on Sunday's strikes but has previously said Israel will respond to violations of the ceasefire threats to its soldiers.

- [Trump's changing course on Strait of Hormuz strategy raises questions about US war preparation](#) (2026-03-23 00:51)

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida — At war with Iran, President Donald Trump is cycling through an increasingly desperate list of options as he searches for a solution to the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz. He has jumped from calls to secure the waterway through diplomatic means to lifting sanctions and now escalating to a direct threat against civilian infrastructure in the Islamic Republic. Trump and his allies insist they were always prepared for Iran to block the strait, yet the Republican president's erratic strategy has fueled criticism that he is grasping for answers after going to war without a clear exit plan. On Saturday came his latest attempt, via an ultimatum to Iran: Open the strait within 48 hours or the United States will "obliterate" the country's power plants. Trump's aides defended the threat as a hard-edged tactic to press Iran into submission. Opponents framed it as the failure of a president who miscalculated what it would take to get out of a geopolitical mire. "Trump has no plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, so he is threatening to attack Iran's civil power plants," said Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass, adding: "This would be a war crime." "He's lost control of the war and he is panicking," said Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., responding to Trump's post. Over the course of about a week, Trump has repeatedly shifted his approach on the crucial waterway for global oil and gas transport. There is growing urgency for Trump as soaring oil prices rattle global markets and pinch American consumers months before pivotal midterm elections. Trump and diplomacy Trump tried his hand at a diplomatic solution last weekend when he called for a new international coalition to send warships to the strait. Allies turned him down. Trump then said the U.S. could manage on its own. On Friday he suggested other countries would have to take over as the U.S. eyes an

exit. Hours later he indicated the waterway would somehow "open itself." "You can't all of a sudden walk away after you've kind of created the event and expect other people to pick it up," Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C. told ABC's "This Week." Trump's Treasury Department on Friday made its latest attempt to get a handle on soaring gas prices, by lifting sanctions on some Iranian oil for the first time in decades. That relieved some of the pressure that Washington traditionally has used as leverage against Tehran. The goal was to send millions more barrels of oil into the global market. It is not clear, however, how much of a dent that would make in lowering pump prices or how the administration could prevent Iran from cashing in on the renewed sales. The administration earlier temporarily lifted sanctions on some Russian oil. An ultimatum to Iran Trump's ultimatum, conveyed while he spent the weekend in Florida, carries a threat of remarkable aggression. His previous messaging mostly focused on U.S. success in hitting Iran's air force, navy and missile production. This time, the threatened target is the energy infrastructure that powers hospitals, homes and more. His social media post — 51 words, much of it in capital letters — did not have the appearance of a message that underwent the careful legal scrutiny needed to justify an attack on civilian infrastructure, said Geoffrey Corn, a law professor at Texas Tech University and a retired lieutenant colonel in the Army who served as a military lawyer. "It certainly has a feeling of ready, fire, aim," Corn said of Trump's moving strategy. "He overestimated his ability to control the events once he unleashed this torrent of violence." That type of widespread attack would probably be a war crime, Corn said. For military leaders, it could force a choice between obeying an order to carry out a war crime or refusing and facing criminal sanction for willful disobedience, he said. Laws governing warfare do not explicitly forbid attacks on power plants, but the tactic is allowed only if an analysis finds that the military advantages outweigh the civilian harm, legal scholars say. It is seen as a high bar to clear because the rules of war are, at their core, designed to separate civilian and military targets. Iran's U.N. ambassador, in a letter to the Security Council, warned that the deliberate targeting of power plants would be inherently indiscriminate and a war crime, according to the state-run IRNA news agency. The White House has already faced intense backlash after the U.S. was blamed for a missile strike on an Iranian elementary school that killed more than 165 people. Trump aides justify latest attempt to rein in the crisis Trump provided scant detail on which plants might be targeted and how. He gave Iran until Monday to reopen the strait or else the U.S. will strike "various POWER PLANTS, STARTING WITH THE BIGGEST ONE FIRST!" Trump's team came to his defense Sunday, offering justification for striking Iran's energy grid. Mike Waltz, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said Iran's Revolutionary Guard controls much of the country's infrastructure and is using it to power the war effort. He said potential targets include "gas-fired thermal power plants and other types of plants." Speaking on Fox News, Waltz said he wanted to get ahead of "hand-wringing" from the global community, calling the Revolutionary Guard a terrorist organization. "The president is not messing around," he said. NATO's secretary-general, Mark Rutte, who has allied himself closely to Trump, tried to calm tensions. He said he understood Trump's anger and stressed that more than 20 countries are "coming together to implement his vision" of making the strait navigable as soon as possible. Israel's ambassador to Washington, Yechiel Leiter, cautioned against an all-out attack like the one Trump threatened. "We want to leave everything in the country intact, so that the

people who come after this regime are going to be able to rebuild and reconstitute," he told CNN's "State of the Union." Trump's threat could prove counterproductive: If it's carried out, Iranian leaders said they would completely close the strait and retaliate against U.S. and Israeli infrastructure.

- [N. Korea's Kim Jong Un reappointed as president of state affairs](#) (2026-03-23 00:44)

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea's rubber-stamp legislature has re-elected Kim Jong Un as president of state affairs, state media reported Monday. Kim's reappointment as head of the authoritarian nation's highest policy-making and governing body, the State Affairs Commission, was announced by the state news agency, KCNA. "The Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK reelected Comrade Kim Jong Un as President of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the First Session, the first state affairs activity of its 15th term, on March 22," the KCNA report said. The report said the decision to elect Kim to the "top post" in the North Korean state reflected "the unanimous will and desire of all the Korean people." Kim Jong Un is the third-generation ruler of the nuclear-armed state founded by his grandfather Kim Il Sung in 1948 and has ruled the country since his father's death in 2011. Analysts say the current assembly session may also take up possible constitutional amendments that could include formally codifying inter-Korean relations as those between "two hostile states."

- [Cuba starts to restore power after new blackout](#) (2026-03-23 00:32)

HAVANA, Cuba — Cuban authorities started to gradually restore power to the island Sunday after the second nationwide blackout in a week, as the grid struggles due to an aging infrastructure and a US oil blockade. Two-thirds of Havana had power again in the afternoon, the capital's electricity company said, a day after the energy ministry reported a "total disconnection" of the national electric system in the country of nearly 10 million people. The grid was reconnected across most of the country on Sunday, from Pinar del Rio in the far west to Santiago de Cuba in the far east, with two provinces left to link up, the state-owned Electric Union of Cuba said on X. The outage comes as Cuba's communist government has faced growing pressure from US President Donald Trump, who imposed the de facto oil blockade in January and mused this week about "taking" the Caribbean island. A top Cuban diplomat said the country's military was "preparing these days for the possibility of military aggression." "We truly hope that it doesn't occur," Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernandez de Cossio told NBC's "Meet the Press" in an interview taped before the blackout. He said Havana was willing to continue talking with the United States, but discussing changes to its political system was off the table. "Cuba has no quarrel with the United States. We do have the need and the right to protect ourselves. But we are willing to sit down," Fernandez de Cossio said in the interview, which aired Sunday. 'Restless night' There have been seven nationwide blackouts since 2024, making life more difficult for Cubans who fear food will spoil in refrigerators, among other problems in a country in economic crisis. "The truth is, it gets harder every day to live with this situation," Alina Quinones, a 48-year-old nurse, told AFP as she headed to the Havana hospital where she works, after barely sleeping. She had no power, internet or phone connection, making it

impossible to reach relatives in Matanzas, a city east of the capital. Francisco Gonzalez, a 79-year-old retiree, also said he had a sleepless night in the dark, "sitting in an armchair at home, waiting for the power to come back on." Regular outages, as well as persistent shortages of food, medicine and other basics, are fueling public frustration, with people banging pots at night as a form of protest. In a rare moment of violence, demonstrators vandalized a provincial office of the Cuban Communist Party last weekend. The breakdowns have intensified since Cuba's main regional ally and oil supplier, Venezuela's socialist leader Nicolas Maduro, was captured in a US military operation in January. Trump subsequently threatened to impose tariffs on countries that sell oil to Cuba. No oil has arrived since January 9, hitting the power sector, while public transport has dwindled and airlines have curtailed flights to the island, a blow to its all-important tourism sector. 'Very severe' The latest blackout was due to an outage in a generating unit at one of the country's aging thermoelectric plants, triggering a domino effect in the system, according to authorities. The new blackout occurred as an international aid convoy began to arrive in Cuba this week, bringing sorely-needed medical supplies, food, water and solar panels to the Caribbean island. But getting oil to power its decades-old thermoelectric plants is becoming increasingly urgent. "It is very severe. And we are acting as proactively as we can to cope with the situation," Fernandez de Cossio told NBC. "We do hope that fuel will reach Cuba one way or the other and that this boycott that the United States has been imposing does not last and cannot be sustained forever," he said.

- [Iran awaits Trump threat to blow up power plants](#) (2026-03-23 00:28)

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran on Monday faces a deadline by President Donald Trump to open up the crucial Strait of Hormuz or face a major US assault on power plants, as Israel warned of weeks more of war. Israel also gave the clearest signs yet it intends a ground campaign into Lebanon, destroying a key bridge as it vows to crush Hezbollah, the Shia Muslim movement backed by Iran. Trump, after enthusiastically backing Israel in the war the two countries launched on February 28, is under political pressure as fuel prices rise, the result of Iran's attempts to retaliate in the oil-rich Gulf. Trump on Saturday threatened to "obliterate" Iran's power plants if it did not within 48 hours end its partial blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway into the Gulf through which one-fifth of the world's oil flows. The deadline, based on the time of his social media posting, would be 23:44 GMT, early morning Tuesday in Iran and Monday evening in Washington. Iran's military command responded defiantly, saying that if Trump goes ahead, it would strike Israel's "power plants, energy and information and communications technology infrastructure" -- along with power plants in regional countries hosting US bases and companies with American shareholders. "If the United States' threats regarding Iran's power plants are carried out... the Strait of Hormuz will be completely closed, and it will not be reopened until our destroyed power plants are rebuilt," a process that could take years, the operational command warned. Iran's powerful parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf warned that vital infrastructure across the region would "be considered legitimate targets and will be irreversibly destroyed". And the energy minister said US-Israeli strikes have already inflicted "heavy damage" on Iran's water and energy infrastructure. Trump's threats drew rare

concern from exiled Iranians supportive of the war, launched weeks after the Islamic republic crushed widespread demonstrations, killing thousands of people. Reza Pahlavi, son of the late shah ousted in the 1979 Islamic revolution, called on Washington and Israel to target the "apparatus of repression" but to protect "Iran's civilian and vital infrastructure, which our people need to rebuild the country". Lebanon fears Israeli ground invasion Trump has offered varying timelines and objectives for the war, saying Friday he was considering "winding down" the operation, a day before his threat to power plants, which would mark a significant escalation. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has spoken of a long-term campaign against Iran's government, a rare state sponsor of Hamas, which carried out the unprecedented October 7, 2023 attack against Israel which responded by devastating Gaza. "Citizens of Israel, we face more weeks of fighting against Iran and Hezbollah," Israeli military spokesman Brigadier General Effie Defrin said. In Lebanon, where Israel occupied a southern section for 18 years until 2000, Israeli forces were given orders to destroy bridges they said were used by Hezbollah to cross the key Litani river, 30 kilometres (20 miles) north of the border. More than 1,000 people have died in Lebanon since Israel launched strikes, according to the health ministry, with more than one million people displaced. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun warned that the bridge attacks "represent a dangerous escalation and flagrant violation of Lebanon's sovereignty, and are considered a prelude to a ground invasion". But the country's Prime Minister Nawaf Salam also put blame on Hezbollah, which began firing on Israel in retaliation for its killing at the war's start of Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei. "It was declared that this war was in retaliation for the assassination of Khamenei, so this means this war was imposed upon us," Salam told the Al Hadath network. Israel's army chief Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir warned that the "operation against the Hezbollah terrorist organisation has only begun". Iran takes toll in Israel Israel has prided itself on air defences, and Trump and Netanyahu both claim to have knocked out key Iranian military sites. But Iranian missiles on Saturday managed to land in two southern towns including Dimona, close to Israel's desert nuclear facility. Dozens were injured. "We thought we were safe," Galit Amir, a 50-year-old care provider, told AFP in Dimona. "We didn't expect this." AFP journalists heard blasts early Sunday in Jerusalem as Iran fired a fresh barrage of missiles. Netanyahu vowed to pursue senior commanders of Iran's Revolutionary Guards "personally" as he inspected the damage in Arad, the other town struck by an Iranian missile. According to rescuers, a missile landed about five kilometres from what is widely believed to be the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal, although Israel has never admitted to possessing nuclear weapons, insisting the site is for research. Iran said the Dimona strike was in response to an earlier attack on its nuclear site at Natanz. Asked about Natanz, Israel's military said it was "not aware of a strike". In Iran, at least 3,230 people have died in the war, including 1,406 civilians, according to the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency. AFP is not able to access the sites of strikes nor independently verify tolls in Iran. Iran eyes Hormuz tax Oil prices rose again early Monday, with US benchmark crude briefly touching the \$100-per-barrel mark. In recent days, Iran has allowed some vessels from countries it considers friendly to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, while warning it would block ships from countries it says have joined the "aggression" against it. Iran's parliament is mulling imposing tolls on shipping through the strait, with parliament speaker Ghalibaf saying maritime traffic would "not

return to its pre-war status". Patrick Pouyanne, the head of French oil giant TotalEnergies, said the economic outlook would worsen the longer the conflict dragged on. "If it's more than six months, we will have some real impacts. All the economies of the world will be damaged," he told Chinese broadcaster CGTN.

- [Iraqi pro-Iran group extends pause in US embassy attacks](#) (2026-03-23 00:24)

BAGHDAD, Iraq — An Iran-backed armed group announced on Monday that it would continue its five-day pause on attacking the US embassy in Baghdad. Since the start of the war in the Middle East, pro-Iran armed groups have claimed responsibility for near-daily attacks on US interests in Iraq and across the region, while strikes have also targeted these groups. On Thursday, Kataeb Hezbollah, designated a "terrorist organisation" by Washington, said it would stop attacking the Baghdad embassy under certain conditions, including an end to attacks on residential parts of Iraq and the southern suburbs of Beirut. The latter area is a bastion of Lebanon's Hezbollah, which is also Iran-backed and is at war with Israel. "The deadline given to the embassy of American evil will be extended by an additional five days," Kataeb Hezbollah said in a statement on Monday. It added that it would respond to "any violations by the enemy accordingly" and inform a mediator of its "response mechanism". Iraq has been unwillingly drawn into the regional conflict triggered by US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28. Kataeb Hezbollah's announcement comes after a series of overnight strikes targeting a US diplomatic and logistics centre at the Baghdad International Airport. Late Sunday, three strikes also hit south of Baghdad, with a local emergency crisis cell saying they targeted a stronghold of former paramilitary coalition Hashed al-Shaabi, also known as the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF). A Kataeb Hezbollah official said on condition of anonymity that his group had been targeted.

- [Iran threatens US infrastructure](#) (2026-03-22 16:15)

IRAN on Sunday threatened to attack key infrastructure across the Middle East if US President Donald Trump follows through on his vow to "obliterate" the Islamic republic's power plants unless the Strait of Hormuz swiftly reopens. Trump, after signaling he may wind down the war, ratcheted up pressure on Iran's leadership, announcing a countdown over the Islamic republic's de facto blockade on the crucial trade route. "If Iran doesn't FULLY OPEN, WITHOUT THREAT, the Strait of Hormuz, within 48 HOURS from this exact point in time, the United States of America will hit and obliterate their various POWER PLANTS, STARTING WITH THE BIGGEST ONE FIRST!" Trump posted on his Truth Social platform. But Iran's military operational command responded that if the country's facilities were hit, "all energy, information technology and desalination infrastructure belonging to the US" in the region would be targeted. Tehran's defiance comes after it retaliated for an attack on its nuclear site at Natanz with two direct hits on southern Israel. Slipping past the country's air defenses, the missiles crashed into the towns of Dimona, which hosts a nuclear facility, and Arad, wounding more than 100 people. Israel said it launched a fresh wave of strikes on Iranian capital Tehran on Sunday in response. But Trump turned his attention to the blockaded strait, which typically carries a fifth of the global crude oil trade. The standoff has rattled markets and sent oil prices soaring, with North Sea Brent crude now trading

above \$105 a barrel, as concerns grow about the long-term consequences for the global economy. Trump has slammed NATO allies as "cowards" and urged them to secure the strait. A total of 22 countries — including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, South Korea, Australia, the UAE and Bahrain — condemned on Saturday the "de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iranian forces" As thousands more American Marines head to the Middle East, US Central Command said bunker-busting bombs were dropped on an underground Iranian coastal facility this week, degrading Iran's ability to threaten freedom of navigation in the strategic waterway. Iran's missile attack on Israel indicated that its arsenal still poses a threat across the region, even after Trump and Netanyahu claimed to have decimated Tehran's forces. The Iranian hits on the towns of Arad and Dimona tore open the fronts of residential buildings and carved craters into the ground — among the most destructive attacks of the three-week war. An Agence France-Presse (AFP) footage from Arad showed rescue workers sifting through rubble for wounded people in a bombed-out building. "There was a 'boom, boom!', my mother was screaming," 17-year-old Arad resident Ido Franky told AFP near the impact site, where an AFP correspondent saw three damaged buildings and firefighters reported a blaze. "This was terrifying... this town had never seen anything like this." Dimona hosts what is widely believed to be the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal, although Israel has never admitted to possessing nuclear weapons, insisting the site is for research. The missile fell about five kilometers from the nuclear facility, leaving about 30 people wounded, according to rescuers. UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi reiterated his call for "military restraint to avoid any risk of a nuclear accident." Meanwhile, Iran has kept up retaliatory attacks on Gulf nations it accuses of serving as a launchpad for US strikes. Saudi Arabia said Sunday it detected three ballistic missiles around capital Riyadh and the kingdom's forces intercepted three drones. The United Arab Emirates said it responded to new missile and drone attacks from Iran, after the Islamic republic warned its neighbor against allowing strikes from disputed islands near the Strait of Hormuz. Iran also launched an unsuccessful ballistic-missile attack on the US-UK base at Diego Garcia, around 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles) away, a UK official told AFP — which would have been the longest-range Iranian strike yet had it succeeded. Iran has not claimed this attack. Analysts say Iran's government has survived the loss of its top leaders and that its strike capacity is proving more durable than expected. "They're showing a lot of resilience that we didn't perhaps expect, that the US didn't expect, when it took this on," Neil Quilliam of Chatham House told the think tank's podcast. Tehran, meanwhile, marked the end of Ramadan and the Persian New Year, Nowruz, as the war entered its fourth week. Iran's supreme leader traditionally leads Eid al-Fitr prayers, but Mojtaba Khamenei — who came to power earlier this month after his father Ali Khamenei was killed — has remained out of the public eye. Instead, the head of the judiciary, Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei, attended prayers at central Tehran's overflowing Imam Khomeini grand mosque. "The atmosphere of the New Year was spreading through the city," said Farid, an advertising executive reached by AFP through an online message. But "the thought that some people could be dying right at the New Year dinner table was painful," he added.

- [Philippines allows lower-grade fuel amid oil crisis](#) (2026-03-22 16:13)

(UPDATE) AS part of efforts to ease the impact of the Middle East war on the Philippines, the Department of Energy (DOE) on Sunday said it is temporarily allowing the sale of lower-grade fuel in the local market. The agency said it has issued a circular authorizing the temporary and controlled introduction of Euro II petroleum products for selected transport and industrial uses. It issued the circular following consultations with the oil and automotive industries last week. Euro II petroleum products refer to fuel standards that comply with the European emission standards established in the mid-1990s, specifically designed to limit pollution from vehicle engines. The products have higher pollutant ratings than modern and cleaner fuel tiers like Euro IV or Euro V. Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said the authority is narrowly targeted and strictly regulated, and does not replace the country's Euro IV fuel standards, which remain in force under existing laws and regulations. "We are adopting a prudent and temporary measure to help ensure an adequate and accessible fuel supply for sectors that may require limited flexibility during this period. This temporary authority is subject to strict quality controls, clear notification requirements, and appropriate consumer protection measures," Garin said. Under the circular, the interim use of Euro II fuels is limited to in-use vehicle models from 2015 and earlier, traditional jeepneys, industrial applications such as power plants and generators, and the marine and shipping industry. To prevent misuse and preserve product integrity, the DOE announced that downstream oil industry participants must maintain full segregation of Euro II and Euro IV fuels across storage, transport and retail systems. It added that participants intending to offer Euro II fuels must also notify officials and related authorities, through the Oil Industry Management Bureau, and identify the retail outlets where such products will be available. The DOE said compliance will be enforced through random product sampling and testing across downstream oil facilities. To protect consumers, the DoE required the prominent posting of advisories at fuel stations and other retail outlets offering Euro II products. The advisories must clearly state that the fuel carries Euro II specifications and that consumers must verify vehicle compatibility before use. Inclusive aid Meanwhile, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has repeated his assurance that no one will get left behind as the government addresses the effects of the war in the Middle East. In his vlog released Sunday, Marcos gave updates on the government's measures to cushion the impact of soaring fuel prices. "It is clear that this war in the Middle East has had a huge impact on the entire world and here in the Philippines. Of course, we cannot let this burden fall on the commuters," he said in Filipino. Free rides and fare discounts for commuters, as well as cash assistance for transport workers, are among the short-term measures being rolled out, he said. "We understand the sentiments of those protesting from this sector. But I want to reiterate to you, you will not be left behind. The government will not abandon you," the president said. He said the government is in talks with India, China, Japan, Thailand, Brunei, and South Korea on possible fuel supply arrangements. Marcos said prices of basic goods and commodities remain stable, and the government is preparing to impose price caps on rice. "We will continue to coordinate with our manufacturers of basic commodities that are critical during this time. As for rice, the P20 rice is still available in 177 LGUs, and we will increase the supply," he said. The president said the government is coordinating with power generation companies to boost electricity supply, with 23 projects expected to add 900 megawatts to the grid in the coming months. Coordination is

also ongoing to utilize Malampaya natural gas at full capacity. Expanded cash aid On Sunday, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said it will expand the distribution of cash relief assistance to public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers outside the National Capital Region (NCR) after Holy Week to ease the impact of the oil price hikes on their livelihood. DSWD Assistant Secretary Irene Dumlao, who is also the department's spokesman, said preparations for the next phase of cash distribution are in progress, even while payouts in the NCR continue. A cash subsidy of P5,000 was distributed to tricycle drivers last week. A total of 27,635 transport network vehicle service drivers are scheduled to receive assistance on Tuesday, followed by more than 21,700 public utility jeepney drivers on Wednesday. Delivery riders, estimated at 137,700, will receive their cash assistance on March 26 and 27, while 27,600 motorcycle taxi drivers will get their cash aid on March 28. To ensure a fast and systematic payout, the DSWD enforces strict verification measures, including requiring the physical presence of beneficiaries and validating their identities to avoid duplication and discrepancies in the list.

- [TMT journalism school to hold communication masterclass](#) (2026-03-22 16:12)

THE Manila Times School of Journalism will hold a one-day masterclass, titled “Communicate with Confidence & Impact,” on April 11 at the Sitio Grande Building in Intramuros, Manila. The workshop aims to help participants strengthen their public speaking, communication and presentation skills — key tools for future journalists, media practitioners and professionals alike. Leading the session is Gianna Abao, a well-known public speaker, content creator and communication coach. Abao has built a large online following by sharing practical public speaking, writing, and confidence-building tips, especially through her TikTok account, where she empowers viewers to improve their communication skills. She is also recognized for her work in helping young people and professionals overcome stage fright and speak more confidently in front of audiences, through her engaging online presence and advocacy for clear communication. The masterclass will run from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and is open to high school students. The Manila Times School of Journalism continues its commitment to equipping the next generation of journalists and communicators with real-world skills. Those interested in joining may scan the official QR code shared on The Manila Times' social media platforms or register through the link: <https://tmt.ph/reg-form-masterclass?rb.src=QR>

- [Eala stops Linette to enter Miami Open 4th round](#) (2026-03-22 16:11)

ALEX Eala advanced to the WTA 1000 Miami Open Round of 16 after dropping Polish Magda Linette, 6-3, 7-6 (2), in their round of 32 match at the Hard Rock Stadium Grandstand Court Sunday morning in Manila. World No. 29 Eala trailed by a game thrice (3-4, 4-5, 5-6) in the second set but came back each time to force a tiebreak. The Filipina dominated from there, racing to a 3-0 start in the tiebreak with loaded serves and returns to win the match and level her head-to-head record against world No. 50 Linette at 2-2. Eala even broke the 34-year-old Linette's serve three times, with the last break finishing the match after one hour and 48 minutes. “I think patience was a very key aspect of how I played today,” said Eala in the

post-match court interview. “You said it first. Magda is such a fighter, and every time I played against her, she put me in such difficult positions. So, kudos to her for playing well, and I really enjoyed the battle,” she added. Seeded 31st in the tournament, Eala faces 13th seed Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic in the fourth round. The world No. 14 defeated British Katie Boulter in their round of 32 match, 6-3, 7-5. Eala is unofficially 0-11 (not confirmed by WTA) against Czech players. The latest of those losses came from world No. 13 Linda Noskova in their Indian Wells round of 16 clash, 2-6, 0-6, on March 11. Even if her losing run against Czech players continues, Eala will still end up with \$105,720 in prize money (P6.36 million) for reaching the fourth round. If Eala defeats Muchova in the round of 16, she will add a \$193,645 payout (P11.65 million) to her winnings.

- [PH, US troops complete sea exercise](#) (2026-03-22 16:10)

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the United States Indo-Pacific Command (Usindopacom), together with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), completed a bilateral maritime cooperative activity (MCA) in Manila Bay and the waters off Mariveles, Bataan, on Friday. The MCA “was aimed at enhancing interoperability among participating forces in support of maritime security and sustaining maritime response in the Philippine Maritime Zones,” the AFP said in a statement. Participating Philippine assets included the BRP Antonio Luna, two A-29B Super Tucano, a C-208B aircraft, and Sokol search and rescue aircraft, as well as the BRP Gabriela Silang from the Philippine Coast Guard. The United States deployed the US Navy’s 7th Fleet flagship USS Blue Ridge for the activity. The participating units carried out a series of exercises, including a communications check and a photo exercise. 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. It reiterated its commitment to building strong defense partnerships and building up its capability to protect the country’s maritime interests.

- [Aquino backs declaration of national emergency](#) (2026-03-22 16:09)

SEN. Bam Aquino has supported the proposal to declare a state of national emergency to control the prices of necessities amid soaring fuel costs due to the war in the Middle East. Aquino said Sunday that the country is already in a crisis as record-high oil price hikes led to a surge in the cost of goods, which could place a heavy burden on the public and various industries. Under a state of national emergency, the president may exercise broader authority to direct government resources to provide financial and other forms of assistance to various sectors, increase funding for the repatriation of overseas Filipino workers in affected areas, and implement price control measures. “That’s why we support the call for the declaration of a national emergency to address the continuous oil price increases and lighten the burden of the people affected by the high costs of basic goods,” Aquino said. “The government, hopefully, should not wait for the situation to worsen since there is no certainty as to when the war in the Middle East would end,” he added. The senator, however, emphasized the need to strictly monitor the implementation of these measures to ensure that assistance reaches the intended

beneficiaries and that no abuses or irregularities occur. He also reiterated his call for financial assistance to the transport sector, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and vulnerable middle-class groups to keep the economy afloat.

- [Sen. Tulfo pushes for transparency in oil pricing to protect consumers](#) (2026-03-22 16:08)

SEN. Erwin Tulfo raised the need to protect the public from arbitrary oil price increases as he urged gas firms to refrain from unilaterally declaring fuel price hikes based on external global events. The senator co-authored Senate Bill (SB) 641 aimed at imposing transparency in the Philippine downstream oil industry. Under SB 641, the Department of Energy (DOE) will be mandated to order oil companies to submit the actual costing of their fuel prices. This requirement would be triggered whenever the average price of Dubai crude oil hits a specific threshold per barrel, based on the Mean of Platts Singapore. “We must put an end to this seemingly taking advantage of external events to pass the burden to the consumers,” Tulfo said on Sunday. He noted that many citizens have raised concerns regarding premature hikes and suspicious market activities. “Many of our kababayan (fellow Filipinos) reach out to me asking why there are premature hikes,” Tulfo said in a statement. “And there’s even this fishy scheme where some gas stations declare that they’re out of supply — as if waiting for the mega price hike before opening their doors again to consumers. This has to stop,” he said. During a previous hearing of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, the DOE said it already issued notices to some gas stations to explain allegations that they took advantage of the Middle East war to jack up prices. However, the DOE admitted that its actions remain limited under the existing Oil Deregulation Law. “We want to institutionalize an automatic trigger where oil companies will be mandated to provide a list of their actual costs. This is to ensure that Filipinos are well-informed on why they’re paying a certain amount for gas,” Tulfo said.

- [‘Lifting weights may benefit women more than men’](#) (2026-03-22 16:07)

DURING her first year of college, Elisabeth Bradley was inspired to try weightlifting after she followed a woman tracking her fitness transformation on social media, one barbell at a time. Then, Bradley found herself to be the only woman in the weight room at San Diego State University. “I felt like I stuck out a lot, and I just thought, ‘OK, I’m gonna look dumb,’” she says. Intimidated by a room full of grunting, muscular men, she moved over to the cardio area, mirroring countless women who, for various reasons, avoid the free weights and machines. But with research mounting on the benefits of resistance training, experts say a few things need to change at the gym to make it more enticing to women. Michelle Segar, a behavioral scientist at the University of Michigan who studies exercise habits, said that making the environment more palatable and familiarizing women better with weights will lead more to use them. More representation will in turn get more women to continue. Why women should lift weights The National Institutes of Health recommends that everyone — men and women — do resistance training at least twice a week. That includes all kinds of activities that require physical force, such as weight machines, resistance bands, or body-weight exercises like pushups and squats. Resistance training has been found to help prevent heart disease, improve long-term

mobility and lower blood pressure, said Brad Schoenfeld, professor of exercise science at Lehman College in New York City. Some research suggests that women may even benefit more than men from weight training because it staves off osteoporosis and age-related muscle loss, which women are more susceptible to, he said. “The bottom line is, resistance training is a cure for all sorts of issues,” Schoenfeld said. Why many women don’t want to Daisy Arauza, a 30-year-old mother of two in Menifee, California, does some Pilates and cardio-based exercise at home using videos and online tutorials, and would like to invest in a gym membership to help with strength and weight management. But she lacks confidence, she said, and doesn’t know enough yet about weights and gym etiquette. “I have a lot of self-consciousness because of how my body looks right now. When you think of the gym, you think about people that are already more fit. And so it feels like I have to make myself fit into this mold before I can feel comfortable being in a gym setting working out in front of other people,” she said. There’s also still a stigma about women lifting weights, Bradley said. Told for years that being skinny is the ultimate goal, some falsely believe strength training will make them look bulky. Schoenfeld said few women need to worry about building too much muscle because it’s hard for anyone to gain a significant amount — especially women, who have lower levels of the muscle-building hormone testosterone. And it’s easy to reduce training intensity if you don’t like the results, he said: “It’s very, very easy to lose muscle.” What gyms and women can do about it Months after her initial bad impression, Bradley shared her strength-training goals with a male weightlifter in her dorm, who showed her the bodybuilding ropes. The boost inspired her to found Girl Gains, a female weightlifting club that now has dozens of chapters at colleges across the country. “Other things get shoved down our throats, like Pilates and cardio and yoga, but they complement each other,” Bradley said. “Being stronger in the gym is going to help you progress in Pilates. Having muscle is going to help make you a faster, better runner.” Women embarking on strength training should do so with an empowering and realistic message, advocates say. Complementary introductory training sessions can help, but a cursory introduction from a trainer in a revealing outfit won’t, said Segar. “Most women have tried to achieve the perfect body for decades, and it only leads to a sense of failure,” she said. Instead of focusing on how the exercise makes them feel, they’re thinking about how they’re being perceived. Women who find community in the weight room work together on their own targets, getting stronger and pushing themselves, Bradley said. “One of the things we always say is, ‘The gains look good on you.’ ” Women’s gyms and child care Some women find they can focus better on their workout when men aren’t around. At the women-only Goddess Gym in Peterborough, England, Charlie Sturgeon said she’s happier than she was in mixed-sex gyms where she had “some quite weird experiences where people would just stare, pull faces, make comments. And here, with being women only, it just feels like there’s a sense of community.” Some gyms try to make women more comfortable by offering day care on site. Michelle Kozak of Phoenix, who has two young children, canceled her membership when her gym stopped offering child care.

- [3 key opportunities for Philippines in China's 15th Five-Year Plan](#) (2026-03-22 16:06)

A CHINESE development planning expert has identified three concrete opportunities for the Philippines and other countries under China's newly approved 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), emphasizing joint industrial development, a greener Belt and Road Initiative, and greater access to China's domestic market. Dr. Li Zhi, assistant dean of the China Institute for Development Planning at Tsinghua University, presented the opportunities in a video message during a forum organized by the Manila-based think tank Asian Century Philippine Strategic Studies Institute (ACPSSI). Li described China's Five-Year Plan as a "dynamic grand strategic design" built through an "Open Door Planning" process that incorporates millions of public suggestions. For the 15th plan, he said, over three million online suggestions were received, with more than 1,500 ideas integrated into national policy. The plan aims to transition China's economy from "big" to "strong" through technological innovation and what Li called "new quality productive forces," including artificial intelligence, self-driving vehicles, the low-altitude economy, and green technology. Li stressed that China's development is not meant to be a solo effort, outlining three areas where the Philippines could benefit. Upgrading together "Building a modern industrial system doesn't mean building all industries for ourselves and by ourselves," Li said. "We want to upgrade together with regional partners." He suggested concrete partnerships, asking: "If we are buying today BYD electric vehicles, why shouldn't we be building BYD electric vehicles with China in the Philippines? If we are setting up solar farms in the Philippines, why aren't we building solar panels with Chinese companies in the Philippines, joint venture?" Li noted that China's automation equipment and industrial robots could help countries like Vietnam and Thailand "smarten up their factories," and that similar cooperation could extend to the Philippines. High-quality Belt and Road Li said the next phase of the Belt and Road Initiative would shift from building roads and bridges to exporting China's green development experience. "In Africa, in Southeast Asia, we are not just building roads and bridges anymore. We are bringing China's green development experience," he said, citing examples of solar plants in deserts and wind projects in Kenya that provide cheaper and more stable green electricity. He suggested that China's experience in building solar facilities could be applied in other countries, turning desert areas into sources of clean energy. Expanding market access The third opportunity, Li said, lies in China's growing domestic market. Over the next five years, China will implement zero-tariff treatment for more developing countries, allowing agricultural products to enter at lower cost. "Chinese consumers are willing to pay for high-quality agricultural products," Li said. "In the next five years, we will see more and more agricultural products from Asia and Africa crossing oceans to appear on Chinese family dinner tables. For farmers and exporters in Asia and Africa, that will be real cash."

- [Go seeks expanded sports programs](#) (2026-03-22 16:05)

SEN. Bong Go underscored the growing role of Filipina athletes in national development as he pushed for expanded sports programs for them. The senator also sought more institutional support and legislative measures promoting their welfare during the All-Women Sports Awards 2026 held on March 20. The Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) in partnership with the

Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), recognized 83 outstanding Filipina athletes, para-athletes, teams, coaches, and sports contributors based on their achievements in 2025. Among the top honorees were the Philippine women's national football team, also known as the Filipinas, which was named Athlete of the Year. In his speech, Go acknowledged the significance of the occasion and its alignment with the celebration of Women's Month. The chairman of the Senate Committee on Sports said that the ceremony "went beyond recognition." He said it was a "reflection of the discipline and sacrifices of Filipina athletes." Go congratulated the awardees and encouraged them to continue striving for success while promoting healthy lifestyles. He lauded PSC Commissioner Bong Coo for supporting athletes and strengthening sports development nationwide. Go also reiterated the importance of sustaining grassroots programs to cultivate young talent and improve the country's competitiveness in international competitions. He cited Republic Act (RA) 11470, which he authored and co-sponsored, as a key measure integrating academic education with high-level athletic training for young Filipino athletes. Established in New Clark City, Capas, Tarlac, the National Academy of Sports (NAS) offers a dual-track system combining quality secondary education with a specialized sports curriculum. Go said that to expand access to this model, he filed Senate Bill (SB) 171, or the proposed National Academy of Sports Regional Expansion Act of 2025, which seeks to establish regional NAS campuses nationwide. He authored SB 1743 which seeks to amend RA 10699 to ensure inclusive incentives for para-athletes. He also filed SB 413, or the Philippine National Games bill, which aims to institutionalize a nationwide grassroots sports competition serving as a recruitment platform for National Sports Associations. Go also filed SB 678, or the proposed National Tertiary Games Act, which seeks to formalize a national collegiate multisport tournament to further develop athletic talent at the tertiary level.

- [Marcos approves 3-term school calendar](#) (2026-03-22 16:04)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. approved key education reforms, including the adoption of a three-term school calendar for public education institutions beginning academic year 2026-2027, Malacañang said. Palace said the move would ensure uninterrupted learning and improve educational outcomes as the administration seeks to fill the country's learning gap. Marcos issued the directive following the recommendation of the Economic and Development (ED) Council during its eighth meeting, held March 19 in the Palace. During the meeting, the president emphasized the need to fast-track approvals for priority government projects alongside key sectoral reforms, particularly in the education sector. The shift from four grading periods or quarters to a three-term academic calendar aims to address the long-standing issue of compressed learning periods caused by class suspensions due to natural hazards and overlapping major events. Under the plan, the current four-term structure will be streamlined into three terms, each with dedicated instructional and assessment periods. The first term will have 54 instructional days and a 10-day assessment period, including a five-day opening block. The second term will include 55 instructional days and a 10-day assessment period, while the third term will have 61 instructional days and a shorter six-day assessment period. Education officials said the approved structure is expected to benefit learners by

providing longer, uninterrupted instructional days, reducing lesson fragmentation, allowing structured recovery periods, and improving the overall instructional pacing. For teachers, the shift would remove one full grading cycle, introduce dedicated consolidation periods, embed up to 32 hours of professional development, and provide scheduled wellness intervals to reduce recurring workload pressures. The Department of Education (DepEd) noted that the new academic calendar is targeted for implementation starting school year 2026-2027. The new academic calendar still needed pilot testing. But consultations were conducted with educational institutions before its presentation. Marcos underscored the importance of maintaining the mandated 180-day contact period for both teachers and students, even amid potential disruptions. He likewise instructed the DepEd to ensure that the proposed shorter school structure adequately supports struggling learners, aligns with the current semestral system in Senior High School, and prepares schools nationwide for full implementation. The approved reform is part of the administration's efforts to ensure quality education, resilience, and continuity amid recurring disruptions.

- [House OKs 18 priority bills before Holy Week break](#) (2026-03-22 16:03)

THE House of Representatives passed 18 of the 52 measures prioritized by the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (Ledac) before Congress went on Holy Week break. House Majority Leader and Ilocos Norte 1st District Rep. Ferdinand Alexander Marcos credited Speaker Faustino Dy III for the passage of the priority bills. "We even passed the bill giving the president the power to reduce or suspend the excise tax on petroleum products, because this is what our countrymen need: immediate relief from high fuel prices and the corresponding increases in the costs of basic goods, transport and other commodities," Marcos said. The approved proposed legislations include the bill moving the first regular elections in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, National Center for Geriatric Health measure, amendments to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act, measure strengthening the Energy Regulatory Commission, waste-to-energy bill, amendments to the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education Act, Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations bill, amendments to the National Building Code, blue economy bill, national reintegration bill, amendments to the Teachers Professionalization Act, bill extending the estate tax amnesty, department of water resources bill, amendments to the Bank Deposits Secrecy Law, bill abolishing the travel tax, digital payments bill, amendments to the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, presidential merit scholarship program bill, and amendments to the Biofuels Act. The House adjourned last Wednesday and will resume session on May 4. Six Ledac priority measures were already approved by concerned mother committees at the House: the bill to modernize the Bureau of Immigration, amendments to the Magna Carta for micro, small and medium enterprises, disaster risk financing insurance bill, classroom-building acceleration program bill, bill reprogramming the seal of good local governance, and right to information bill. Twenty-five other Ledac priority measures were under deliberation at either the committee or technical working group level. Based on the House's Bills and Index Service, 8,705 bills and 927 resolutions were filed. "The numbers show a working House, but more important

than the numbers is what they represent: laws in progress, reforms taking shape, and a chamber that has kept moving even under a crowded calendar," Marcos said.

- [QC, SM Cares expand drive for human milk](#) (2026-03-22 16:02)

THE Quezon City government, through its Human Milk Bank (HMB), has partnered with SM Cares to intensify its milk-donation drive, mobilizing more mothers to share their breast milk for vulnerable infants in need. Mayor Joy Belmonte said on Sunday that the initiative brought together lactating mothers, mallgoers specifically at SM Fairview, and regular donors to promote responsible breastfeeding and strengthen its growing milk donation network in time with the city's celebration of Women's Month. Participants also attended expert-led sessions on proper breastfeeding, maternal nutrition, and prenatal screening, ensuring mothers and caregivers are equipped to give infants the best possible start in life, the local government said. The city chief executive cited the importance of expanding access to safe, life-saving nutrition for babies. "We value this partnership with SM Cares. Strengthening our referral network allows us to reach more mothers — and more importantly, more infants who depend on life-saving milk." Belmonte said. "Breastmilk remains the best for babies. But when it's not available, we make sure every child still receives the nutrition they need to grow healthy," she pointed out. Data from QCHMB's 2025 report highlights the program's far-reaching impact: 56 percent of pasteurized human milk was distributed to nonresidents, while 44 percent benefited QC citizens, emphasizing the city's critical role in supporting infants across Metro Manila and nearby provinces. This expanding reach is supported by a landmark partnership sealed last year, which established dedicated milk depots in four SM Supermalls: SM Fairview, SM North EDSA, SM Novaliches, and SM Sta. Mesa, according to the mayor. These accessible drop-off points make it easier for mothers to donate excess breastmilk and support infants in need, the local government said. Combined with regular milk-letting drives in health centers, these depots are helping safeguard the health of the most vulnerable — especially premature babies and those with medical conditions, it added.

- [26 rescued Filipinos home from Malaysia – BI](#) (2026-03-22 16:01)

TWENTY-SIX overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) rescued from a labor trafficking syndicate in Malaysia have returned home, according to the Bureau of Immigration (BI). The Immigration Protection and Border Enforcement Section informed Commissioner Joel Anthony Viado that the group — consisting of nine women and 17 men — arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) 3 last week. Most of the victims disclosed they left the Philippines through "backdoor" routes in the south, where they were clandestinely transported by boat to Malaysia. In Malaysia, they were arrested for lack of travel documents and detained before being sent home. "Malaysian immigration authorities apprehended the victims due to their undocumented status. Most were detained before their repatriation," Viado said. He added that the BI continues to observe a pattern wherein trafficking syndicates exploit illegal migration corridors or "backdoor" exits to transport victims out of the country and circumvent established immigration controls. One female victim recounted that she was

recruited to work as a waitress but was later coerced into engaging in sex work. Meanwhile, several male victims recruited to work in construction reported maltreatment, including nonpayment or underpayment of wages. Viado slammed trafficking syndicates for exploiting Filipinos seeking better lives abroad. “Many Filipinos leave the country with hopes of improving their lives, but traffickers take advantage of this vulnerability. These victims were deceived by false promises and subjected to exploitation,” he said. “The Bureau stands firm in its mandate to assist victims and combat trafficking in all its forms.” He said the BI is tightening border controls and working with partners to stop illegal departures, especially at southern exit points. The victims are now receiving assistance, while the Iacat authorities prepare cases against perpetrators of the illegal scheme.

- [School principal arrested in drug bust](#) (2026-03-22 11:54)

MANILA, Philippines — A school principal was arrested in an anti-drug operation conducted by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency Regional Office 13 in Surigao del Sur on March 20, officials said. The 45-year-old man, a District 1 School Supervisor (Principal III) in Tagbina, was subjected to extensive verification and surveillance by different drug law enforcement units to validate and confirm his involvement in illegal drug activities. Two heat-sealed transparent plastic sachets containing suspected shabu were seized during the operation. Also recovered were the marked buy-bust money used during the transaction. Authorities emphasized the significance of the arrest, noting that the involvement of an individual in a key position in the education sector poses a serious threat to public trust and the moral guidance expected of educators, especially the youth. “This development highlights the importance of vigilance and accountability in public service. Positions of authority must never be used to undermine the law or endanger the community,” Laurefel Gabales, Regional Director of PDEA Regional Office 13, said.

- [Govt allows sale of low-grade fuel](#) (2026-03-22 10:00)

MANILA, Philippines — As part of efforts to ease the impact of the Middle East war on the Philippines, the Department of Energy (DOE) on Sunday said it is temporarily allowing the sale of lower-grade fuel in the local market. The agency said it has issued a circular authorizing the temporary and controlled introduction of Euro II petroleum products for selected transport and industrial uses. It issued the circular following consultations with the oil and automotive industries last week. Euro II petroleum products refer to fuel standards that comply with the European emission standards established in the mid-1990s, specifically designed to limit pollution from vehicle engines. The products have higher pollutant ratings than modern and cleaner fuel tiers like Euro IV or Euro V. Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said the authority is narrowly targeted, and strictly regulated, and does not replace the country’s Euro IV fuel standards, which remain in force under existing laws and regulations. “We are adopting a prudent and temporary measure to help ensure an adequate and accessible fuel supply for sectors that may require limited flexibility during this period. This temporary authority is subject to strict quality controls, clear notification requirements, and appropriate consumer

protection measures,” Garin said. Under the circular, the interim use of Euro II fuels is limited to in-use vehicle models from 2015 and earlier, traditional jeepneys, industrial applications such as power plants and generators, and the marine and shipping industry. To prevent misuse and preserve product integrity, the DoE announced that downstream oil industry participants must maintain full segregation of Euro II and Euro IV fuels across storage, transport, and retail systems. It added that participants intending to offer Euro II fuels must also notify officials and related authorities, through the Oil Industry Management Bureau, and identify the retail outlets where such products will be available. The DOE said compliance will be enforced through random product sampling and testing across downstream oil facilities. To protect consumers, the DoE required the prominent posting of advisories at fuel stations and other retail outlets offering Euro II products. The advisories must clearly state that the fuel carries Euro II specifications and that consumers must verify vehicle compatibility before use.

- [Alert Level 1 raised over Bulusan Volcano](#) (2026-03-22 08:56)

MANILA, Philippines — State seismologists on Sunday raised the alert over Bulusan Volcano in Sorsogon province to Level 1, following a sustained series of volcanic earthquakes that began last week. Teresito Bacolcol, director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs), said that 475 volcanic earthquakes have been recorded by the Bulusan Volcano Network. Most of these were weak volcano-tectonic earthquakes associated with rock fracturing at shallow depths beneath the volcano and are similar in general characteristics to seismicity before the June 2022 and April 2025 eruptions, Bacolcol said. The Phivolcs chief said ground deformation data from continuous GPS (global positioning system) and electronic tilt monitoring indicate inflation, or swelling of the western and southeastern flanks since the last week of January and the first week of March 2026, respectively. Citing data and analysis, he said degassing activity from the active vents, when visible, has been weak to moderate. This is consistent with weak volcanic sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) emissions of 91 tons per day, which are considered below background averages. “Overall, these parameters could indicate that shallow hydrothermal processes are underway beneath the volcano, which could lead to steam-driven or phreatic eruptions at any of its summit vents,” Bacolcol said. Level 1 means the Sorsogon volcano is in a state of low-level unrest with an increased chance of phreatic eruptions. Phivolcs reiterated its warning to local government units and the public that the four-kilometer-radius Permanent Danger Zone should be strictly avoided. “Also, vigilance in the two-kilometer extended danger zone on the southeast sector should be exercised due to the possible impacts of volcanic hazards such as pyroclastic density currents or PDCs, ballistic projectiles, rockfall, avalanches, and ashfall on these danger areas,” Bacolcol said.

- [No one will be left behind as govt addresses oil crisis — Marcos](#) (2026-03-22 07:18)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. reassured the public anew that no one will be left behind as the government addresses the effects of the war in the Middle East. In his vlog released Sunday, Marcos gave updates on the government’s measures to address soaring fuel prices and its effects. “It is clear that this war in the Middle East has had a huge impact on

the entire world and here in the Philippines. Of course, we cannot let this burden fall on the commuters,” he said in Filipino. Free rides and fare discounts for commuters and cash assistance for transport workers are among the short-term measures rolled out, the President said. “We understand the sentiments of those protesting from this sector. But I want to reiterate to you, you will not be left behind. The government will not abandon you,” he added. He gave assurances that prices of basic goods and commodities remain stable. The government is also considering imposing price caps on rice. “We will continue to coordinate with our manufacturers of basic commodities that are critical during this time. As for rice, the P20 rice is still available in 177 LGUs, and we will increase the supply,” Marcos said.

- [Parts of Metro Manila, Rizal and Cavite to have water interruptions this week due to maintenance works](#) (2026-03-22 04:59)

MANILA, Philippines—Some places in Metro Manila, Rizal and Cavite will have water interruptions this week because of maintenance works and because of high demand, Manila Water Company Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. said on Sunday. Manila Water said that some areas in the villages of West Kamias, Socorro, Pasong Tamo, and Matandang Balara will have service interruptions on March 24-25 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of zero pressure testing activities to check on the systems' zonal integrity. Some places in Brgy. Culiati, Alpha Village, Country Villas, and Capitol Drive in Brgy. Matandang Balara will have no water on March 26-27 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of zero pressure testing works. In Taguig City, some locations in Brgy. Bagumbayan will have water interruptions on March 24-25 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of the replacement of a line meter. Meanwhile, some places in Brgy. Wackwack in Mandaluyong City, and some parts of Brgy. Greenhills in San Juan City will have service interruptions on March 25-26 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of the declogging of a line meter and strainer in a nearby water system. In Marikina City, some locations in the villages of San Roque and Sta. Elena will have water interruptions on March 25-26 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. due to step testing activities to detect possible system leaks. In Pasig City, some parts of Brgy. Bagong Ilog will have no water on March 26-27 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. due to the declogging of a line meter and strainer in a nearby water system. Some places in Brgy. Pinagbuhatan, Pasig City will also have water interruptions on March 26-27 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. due to the decommissioning of a water line. In Rizal, some portions of Brgy. Bagong Nayan, Antipolo will have service interruptions on March 23-24 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of the replacement of a line meter. Also, some areas in the villages of San Luis and Dela Paz in Antipolo will have no water on March 25-26 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. due also to the replacement of a line meter in a nearby water system. Some parts of Brgy. San Isidro in Antipolo will have water interruptions on March 26-27 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. due to step testing activities. Still in Rizal, some locations in the villages of Mahabang Parang and Mambog in Binangonan will have no water on March 24-25 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of zero pressure testing activities. In Cainta, Rizal, some parts of Brgy. San Andres and Brgy. San Roque will have service interruptions on March 23-24 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of zero pressure testing works. Some locations in Brgy. San Isidro and in Taytay will also have no water

on March 24-25 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of step testing activities and the replacement of a line meter in a water system. Maynilad meanwhile announced that in Malabon City, some locations in Brgy. Tonsuya will have water interruptions on March 23-24 between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. because of network maintenance activities. In Caloocan City, some areas in the villages of 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30, 31, 176 and 178 will have water service interruptions on March 23-24 between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. because of network maintenance activities. In Valenzuela City, some places in the villages of Gen. T. De Leon and Parada will have no water on March 23-24 between 10 p.m. and 8 a.m. due to interconnection works. Some areas in the villages of Gen. T. De Leon, Karuhatan, Malinta, Marulas, Maysan, and Parada in Valenzuela City will again have service interruptions on March 24 and on March 27 between 12:01 a.m. and 4 a.m. because of network maintenance activities. In Las Piñas City, some locations in the villages of Pamplona Uno, Pulang Lupa Uno and Pulang Lupa Dos will have service interruptions on March 24-25 between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. due to water auditing activities to identify water use and efficiency improvements, and to track water balance from source to discharge. 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 23-25 between 5 a.m. and 12 a.m. because of high demand at the Patindig Araw pumping station.

- [Some areas in Metro Manila, 4 provinces to have power interruptions this week due to maintenance works](#) (2026-03-22 01:54)

MANILA, Philippines—Some areas in Metro Manila, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal will have power interruptions this week because of maintenance works, Meralco said on Sunday. In Metro Manila, some parts of Brgy. Bagong Ilog in Pasig City will have no electricity on March 23 between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. because of the installation of additional primary facilities along F. Pike, Lanite and Yakal Sts. in Brgy. Bagong Ilog. In Quezon City, some places in Brgy. Project 6 will have power interruptions on March 23 between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. because of line reconstruction works along Road 3. Also, some parts of Brgy. Pasong Tamo, Brgy. Matandang Balara, Brgy. Holy Spirit, and Brgy. Culiati will have no power on March 25-26 between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. because of line reconstruction and reconductoring works and replacement of electricity facilities. In Pasay City, SM Corporate Office Buildings B, C, and D, SMDC Shell Residences and SMDC Sail Residences in Central Business Park Island A will have no electricity on March 24-25 between 10:30 p.m. and 5:30 a.m. because of the replacement of electricity facilities in the area. In Makati City, some areas in Brgy. Guadalupe Viejo and Brgy. Guadalupe Nuevo will have power interruptions on March 26-27 between 10:30 p.m. and 4:30 a.m. because of the relocation of electricity facilities affected by the Guadalupe Bridge Rehabilitation Project of the Department of Public Works and Highways. In Bulacan, some areas in Brgy. Sta Cruz in

Angat, and some places in the villages of Baraka and Poblacion in Norzagaray will have power interruptions on March 23-24 between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. because of the replacement of a broken electricity pole along Quirino Highway. In Cavite, some locations in the villages of Punta I, Santol and Bunga in Tanza and Sitio Palindong in Brgy. Pasong Kawayan 1, Gen. Trias City will have no electricity on March 23 between 10:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. because of line reconductoring works and replacement of electricity facilities. In Laguna, some places in the villages of Makiling, Tulo and Turbina in Calamba City will have no power on March 22-23 between 11 p.m. and 4 a.m. because of line reconductoring works and line reconstruction works along Maharlika Highway. Some locations in Brgy. Canlalay, Biñan, Laguna will also have power interruptions on March 23 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. because of line reconstruction works. In Rizal, some parts of Sun Valley 5D Subdivision in Brgy. Inarawan, Antipolo City will have no electricity on March 25 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. because of line reconductoring works along Upper Skyway Drive.

- [G7 ready to take necessary measures to support global energy supply](#) (2026-03-22 01:27)

ISTANBUL — G7 foreign ministers said Saturday (Sunday in Manila) they are ready to take "necessary measures" to support global energy supplies and safeguard maritime routes, including through the Strait of Hormuz. A statement by the foreign ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US, alongside the EU's High Representative Kaja Kallas, pointed to the International Energy Agency's stockpile release decision on March 11 as an example of the kind of action they were prepared to support. "We reaffirm the importance of safeguarding maritime routes, and safety of navigation ... as well as the safety and security of supply chains and the stability of energy markets," it said. The ministers also condemned in "the strongest terms" Iranian strikes on energy infrastructure in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Iraq, demanding their "immediate and unconditional cessation." They reaffirmed their support for the right of targeted countries to defend themselves. The G7 reiterated its longstanding position that Tehran must never obtain a nuclear weapon, must halt its ballistic missile program and "end its destabilizing activities in the region and around the globe." The Strait of Hormuz has been effectively disrupted since early March, as part of retaliation for US and Israeli attacks on Iran that started Feb. 28, pushing oil prices higher. The US-Israeli strikes have reportedly killed 1,300 people, including then-Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. The Strait of Hormuz is a key oil transit route that normally handles about 20 million barrels per day and roughly 20 percent of global liquefied natural gas trade.

- [Trump's mixed messages on Iran: 'Winding down' the war and easing sanctions but adding more troops](#) (2026-03-22 01:08)

President Donald Trump frequently contradicts himself, sometimes in the same speech, social media post or even sentence. Within the space of a few hours Friday, he sent a torrent of mixed signals about the Iran war that raise more questions about the direction of the conflict and his administration's strategy. During this time, Trump said he was considering winding down the war, his administration confirmed it was sending more troops to the Middle East and, in an

effort to lessen the economic impact on global energy markets, the United States lifted sanctions on some Iranian oil for the first time in decades — relieving some of the pressure that Washington traditionally has used as leverage. The confusing combination of actions deepens a sense among Trump's critics that there is no clear, long-term strategy for the war the U.S. and Israel launched against Iran. Now in its fourth week, the war remains on an unpredictable path and a credible endgame is unclear even as the global economy is being roiled. Just 24 hours after saying the U.S. was thinking of walking away from the conflict, Trump issued another contradictory statement Saturday evening, threatening to escalate the conflict by targeting Iran's power plants unless the country lets oil shipments pass through the Persian Gulf. ' Winding down' the war After another rough day in the financial markets, Trump said Friday afternoon on his social media network: "We are getting very close to meeting our objectives as we consider winding down our great Military efforts in the Middle East." Trump contended the U.S. has adequately degraded Iranian naval, missile and industrial capacity and prevented Tehran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. The Republican president then suggested the U.S. could pull out of the conflict without stabilizing the Strait of Hormuz, the channel through which about one-fifth of the world's oil supply travels. The strait has been ravaged by Iranian missile, drone and mine attacks during the war. "The Hormuz Strait will have to be guarded and policed, as necessary, by other Nations who use it — The United States does not!" Trump wrote. But, in another contradiction, he said the U.S. would help if asked, "but it shouldn't be necessary once Iran's threat is eradicated." While oil that traverses the strait is usually bound for Asia and other places rather than North America, the chaos still affects the United States. Oil is bought and sold globally, so a shortage in oil for Asian countries leads to bidding up prices on oil sold to companies in America, too. That fact, coupled with an Israeli strike on Iran's gas fields and an Iranian retaliation that crippled a major terminal to ship liquefied natural gas from Qatar, helped tank U.S. equity markets Friday, with the S&P 500 dropping 1.5%. There also was a sharp increase in U.S. fuel prices. Trump's concern about the persistent blockage of the strait erupted Saturday night when the president posted on social media that he'd "hit and obliterate" Iran's power plants unless the country opens the strait within 48 hours. The threat against Iran's civilian infrastructure was yet another escalation. More US military might to the Middle East Even as Trump said the U.S. was close to winding down the war, the administration announced it was sending three more warships to the Middle East with about 2,500 additional Marines. It was the second time in the week that the administration said it was deploying more forces to the conflict. The military says some 50,000 are supporting the war effort. Trump has ruled out sending in ground troops, though his administration has hinted at a possible deployment of special forces or similar units. The Marines being sent to the region are an expeditionary unit designed for quick amphibious landings, but their deployment does not mean a ground invasion is certain. Analysts have suggested it may require the presence of U.S. forces on the ground to ultimately secure the strait. The surge in troops came just a day after news emerged that the Pentagon was seeking an additional \$200 billion from Congress to fund the war. That extraordinarily high number does not suggest that the war was being wound down. Sanctions on Iranian oil sales The administration said it would lift sanctions on the sale of Iranian oil, provided it was already at sea as of Friday. The move was an attempt to help lower

skyrocketing energy prices by allowing freer sale of oil that Iran has let pass through the strait. It also extends a financial lifeline to the Iranian government that Trump is targeting. His administration has tried other methods to lower oil prices. It has tapped the U.S. strategic petroleum reserve and lifted sanctions on some Russian oil. Yet Brent crude remained at \$112 per barrel Friday, and analysts say oil prices are likely to remain high for months regardless of the next steps in the war. The Iranian oil eventually would have reached another country, but now the United States and its allies can bid on it as well, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent wrote on X. "At present, sanctioned Iranian oil is being hoarded by China on the cheap," Bessent wrote. "By temporarily unlocking this existing supply for the world, the United States will quickly bring approximately 140 million barrels of oil to global markets, expanding the amount of worldwide energy and helping to relieve the temporary pressures on supply caused by Iran." While 140 million barrels may seem like a lot, that is only a couple of days worth of oil on the global market. Patrick De Haan, the head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy, a U.S. fuel-tracking service, said he does not expect the temporary suspension to have a major impact on gas prices. The de facto closure of the strait has a much greater effect, he said. "Prices will likely still continue to rise so long as the Strait remains silent," De Haan said. And the contradictions in the position were obvious in Bessent's post announcing the move, which labeled Iran "the head of the snake for global terrorism." He said the administration would take steps to prevent Tehran from cashing in on the sales, but it was unclear how that would be done. Even among some Republicans, the contradictions triggered rare public skepticism. "Bombing Iran with one hand and buying Iran oil with the other," Rep. Nancy Mace of South Carolina posted on X Saturday.

- [Fair weather expected in PH due to easterlies](#) (2026-03-22 00:56)

MANILA, Philippines – The entire archipelago would be experiencing fair weather throughout the day due to the easterlies, the state-run weather agency said on Sunday. Weather specialist Veronica Torres of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said it has not monitored any low-pressure area forming inside or outside the country's area of responsibility. She reiterated that the easterlies – winds that pass through the Pacific Ocean and carry humid and warm weather – would likely persist for the next two to three days. The national weather bureau said the same weather system will affect Metro Manila and the rest of the country, with partly cloudy to cloudy skies and isolated rain showers or thunderstorms prevailing within the next 24 hours. The heat index, the Pagasa forecaster said, the highest temperature within the day would hit Zamboanga City, Zamboanga del Sur and Cotabato City, Maguindanao at 40 degrees Celsius, which falls under the extreme caution category. Meanwhile, the heat index in Metro Manila could be between 33 and 35 degrees Celsius, particularly in Quezon City and Pasay City, she added.

- [Former FBI Director Robert Mueller, who investigated Russia-Trump campaign ties, dies](#) (2026-03-22 00:51)

WASHINGTON — Robert S. Mueller III, the FBI director who transformed the nation's premier law enforcement agency into a terrorism-fighting force after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and who later became special counsel in charge of investigating ties between Russia and Donald Trump's presidential campaign, has died. He was 81. "With deep sadness, we are sharing the news that Bob passed away" on Friday night, his family said in a statement Saturday. "His family asks that their privacy be respected." At the FBI, Mueller set about almost immediately overhauling the bureau's mission to meet the law enforcement needs of the 21st century, beginning his 12-year tenure just one week before the Sept. 11 attacks and serving across presidents of both political parties. The cataclysmic event instantaneously switched the bureau's top priority from solving domestic crime to preventing terrorism, a shift that imposed an almost impossibly difficult standard on Mueller and the rest of the federal government: preventing 99 out of 100 terrorist plots wasn't good enough. Later, he was special counsel in the Justice Department's investigation into whether the Trump campaign illegally coordinated with Russia to sway the outcome of the 2016 presidential race. His investigation concluded that Russia interfered in the election on Trump's behalf and that the Trump campaign welcomed the help, but Mueller and his team ultimately found insufficient evidence of a criminal conspiracy and did not make a prosecutorial decision about whether Trump had obstructed justice. Mueller was maligned throughout the two-year investigation by Trump, who regularly derided it as a "witch hunt." But the patrician Princeton graduate and Vietnam veteran who walked away from a lucrative midcareer job to stay in public service remained silent throughout the criticism, exhibiting an old-school, buttoned-down style that made him an anachronism during a social media-saturated era. Trump posted on social media after the announcement of Mueller's death: "Robert Mueller just died. Good, I'm glad he's dead." The Republican president added, "He can no longer hurt innocent people!" Republican President George W. Bush, who nominated Mueller, said in a statement that he was "deeply saddened" by Mueller's death and praised him for having "dedicated his life to public service" and for overhauling the FBI's mission. Democratic President Barack Obama, who kept Mueller on even after his 10-year term had expired, called him "one of the finest directors in the history of the FBI" who saved "countless lives" after transforming the bureau. "But it was his relentless commitment to the rule of law and his unwavering belief in our bedrock values that made him one of the most respected public servants of our time," Obama added. The FBI did not respond to a request seeking comment and current Director Kash Patel, a Trump loyalist, did not immediately note the death on social media. The FBI Agents Association cited Mueller's "commitment to public service and to the FBI's mission." A second act as an investigator of a sitting president The second-longest-serving director in FBI history, behind only J. Edgar Hoover, Mueller held the job until 2013 after agreeing to Obama's request to remain on the job after the conclusion of his term. After several years in private practice, Mueller was asked by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein to return to public service as special counsel in the Trump-Russia inquiry. Mueller's stern visage and taciturn demeanor matched the seriousness of the mission, as his team spent nearly two years quietly conducting one of the most consequential, yet divisive, investigations in Justice Department history. He held no news conferences and made no public appearances during the investigation, remaining quiet despite attacks from Trump and his supporters and creating an aura of mystery around his work. All

told, Mueller brought criminal charges against six of the president's associates, including his campaign chairman and first national security adviser. His 448-page report released in April 2019 identified substantial contacts between the Trump campaign and Russia but did not allege a criminal conspiracy. Mueller laid out damaging details about Trump's efforts to seize control of the investigation, and even shut it down, though he declined to decide whether Trump had broken the law, in part because of department policy barring the indictment of a sitting president. But, in perhaps the most memorable language of the report, Mueller pointedly noted: "If we had confidence after a thorough investigation of the facts that the president clearly did not commit obstruction of justice, we would so state. Based on the facts and the applicable legal standards, however, we are unable to reach that judgment." The nebulous conclusion did not deliver the knockout punch to the administration that some Trump opponents had hoped for, nor did it trigger a sustained push by House Democrats to impeach the president -- though he was later tried and acquitted on separate allegations related to Ukraine. The outcome also left room for Attorney General William Barr to insert his own views. He and his team made their own determination that Trump did not obstruct justice, and he and Mueller privately tangled over a four-page summary letter from Barr that Mueller felt did not adequately capture his report's conclusions. Mueller deflated Democrats during a highly anticipated congressional hearing on his report when he offered terse, one-word answers and appeared uncertain in his testimony. Frequently, he seemed to waver on details of his investigation. It was hardly the commanding performance many had expected from Mueller, who had a towering reputation in Washington. Over the next months, Barr made clear his own disagreements with the foundations of the Russia investigation, moving to dismiss a false-statements prosecution that Mueller had brought against former national security adviser Michael Flynn, even though that investigation ended in a guilty plea. Mueller's tenure as special counsel was the capstone of a career spent in government. FBI transformed into a national security agency At his 2001 confirmation hearing, Mueller spoke emphatically about the FBI's role in combating everything from health care fraud to crimes against children and described the agency he would soon lead as "vital to the preservation of our civil order and our civil rights." "One could hardly overstate the significance of the FBI in the life of every American," he said. It quickly became clear that his time as FBI director would be defined by the Sept. 11 attacks and its aftermath as an FBI granted broad new surveillance and national security powers scrambled to confront an ascendant al-Qaida and interrupt plots and take terrorists off the street before they could act. It was a new model of policing for an FBI that had long been accustomed to investigating crimes that had already occurred. When he became FBI director, "I had expected to focus on areas familiar to me as a prosecutor: drug cases, white-collar criminal cases and violent crime," Mueller told a group of lawyers in October 2012. Instead, "we had to focus on long-term, strategic change. We had to enhance our intelligence capabilities and upgrade our technology. We had to build upon strong partnerships and forge new friendships, both here at home and abroad." In response, the FBI shifted 2,000 of the total 5,000 agents in the bureau's criminal programs to national security. In hindsight, the transformation was a success. At the time, there were problems, and Mueller said as much. In a speech near the end of his tenure, Mueller recalled "those days when we were under attack by the media and being clobbered by

Congress; when the attorney general was not at all happy with me."Among the issues: The Justice Department's inspector general found that the FBI circumvented the law to obtain thousands of phone call records for terrorism investigations. Mueller decided that the FBI would not take part in abusive interrogation techniques of suspected terrorists, but the policy was not effectively communicated down the line for nearly two years. In an effort to move the FBI into a paperless environment, the bureau spent over \$600 million on two computer systems -- one that was 2½ years overdue and a predecessor that was only partially completed and had to be scrapped after consultants declared it obsolete and riddled with problems. For the nation's top law enforcement agency, it was a rocky trip through rough terrain. But there were many successes as well, including thwarted terror plots and headline-making criminal cases like the one against fraudster Bernie Madoff. The Republican also cultivated an apolitical reputation on the job, nearly quitting in a clash with the Bush administration over a surveillance program that he and his successor, James Comey, considered unlawful. He famously stood alongside Comey, then deputy attorney general, during a dramatic 2004 hospital standoff over federal wiretapping rules. The two men planted themselves at the bedside of the ailing Attorney General John Ashcroft to block Bush administration officials from making an end run to get Ashcroft's permission to reauthorize a secret no-warrant wiretapping program. In an extraordinary vote of confidence, Congress, at the Obama administration's request, approved a two-year extension for Mueller to remain at his post. "A great American died today, one I was lucky enough to learn from and stand beside," Comey said in an Instagram post. Another former FBI director, Christopher Wray, who was appointed during Trump's first term and then served under President Joe Biden, said in a separate statement that Mueller was the "consummate straight shooter." "As everyone at the FBI who worked for, or with him, is well aware, Bob Mueller embodied the virtue of prioritizing service to the country over self, and he always put the mission first," Wray said. A Marine who served in Vietnam before becoming a prosecutor Mueller was born in New York City and grew up in a well-to-do suburb of Philadelphia. He received a bachelor's degree from Princeton and a master's degree in international relations from New York University. He then joined the Marines, serving for three years as an officer during the Vietnam War. He led a rifle platoon and was awarded a Bronze Star, Purple Heart and two Navy Commendation Medals. Following his military service, Mueller earned a law degree from the University of Virginia. Mueller became a federal prosecutor and relished the work of handling criminal cases. He rose quickly through the ranks in U.S. attorneys' offices in San Francisco and Boston from 1976 to 1988. Later, as head of the Justice Department's criminal division in Washington, he oversaw a range of high-profile prosecutions that chalked up victories against targets as varied as Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega and New York crime boss John Gotti. In a mid-career switch that shocked colleagues, Mueller left a job at a prestigious law firm to join the homicide division of the U.S. attorney's office in the nation's capital. There, he immersed himself as a senior litigator in a bulging caseload of unsolved drug-related murders in a city rife with violence. Mueller was driven by a career-long passion for the painstaking work of building successful criminal cases. Even as head of the FBI, he would dig into the details of investigations, some of them major cases but others less so, sometimes surprising agents who suddenly found themselves on the phone with the

director."The management books will tell you that as the head of an organization, you should focus on the vision," Mueller once said. But "for me there were and are today those areas where one needs to be substantially personally involved," especially in regard to "the terrorist threat and the need to know and understand that threat to its roots."Two terrorist attacks occurred toward the end of Mueller's watch: the Boston Marathon bombing and the Fort Hood shootings in Texas. Both weighed heavily on him, he acknowledged in an interview two weeks before his departure."You sit down with victims' families, you see the pain they go through and you always wonder whether there isn't something more" that could have been done, he said.

- [4 killed as Russia and Ukraine trade attacks ahead of US talks](#) (2026-03-22 00:45)

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia and Ukraine traded attacks that killed at least four people Saturday, officials said, ahead of U.S.-Ukraine talks on ways to end Russia's invasion of its neighbor. A man and a woman were killed and six people wounded, including two children, when a Russian drone hit a house in the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia, regional head Ivan Fedorov said. Russian strikes also knocked out power across much of the northern Ukrainian region of Chernihiv, according to local officials. In Russia, two women were killed and another wounded by Ukrainian shelling of the Belgorod border region, Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said. The attacks came ahead of U.S.-Ukraine talks in Miami that U.S. Special Envoy Steve Witkoff said on X were "constructive." He said the meetings, which included U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, were "part of ongoing mediation efforts, with discussions focused on narrowing and resolving remaining items to move closer to a comprehensive peace agreement." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said late Thursday he had sent a delegation to the U.S. in a bid to move forward suspended U.S.-brokered talks on ending Russia's invasion. Trilateral talks involving Russia, which have yet to produce any breakthrough on key issues, have been on ice while the Iran war has dominated international attention. Zelenskyy said the main goal of the meeting was to ensure that the trilateral talks resume and that Washington continues to allow other NATO countries to purchase American weapons to send to Ukraine. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that a new round of U.S.-mediated negotiations between Moscow and Kyiv will likely take place soon. Western European officials have over the past year repeatedly accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of dragging his feet in negotiations while he tries to press his bigger army's battlefield initiative and capture more Ukrainian land. Russian forces hold nearly 20% of Ukraine. The latest conflict in the Middle East that began Feb. 28 with Israeli and U.S. strikes on Iran has diverted international attention from Ukraine's plight. At the same time, Russia is getting a financial windfall from a temporary U.S. waiver on oil sanctions, while Ukraine is desperately short of cash and still waiting for a 90-billion-euro (\$103 billion) loan promised by the European Union.

- [ICE officers soon will help with airport security unless Democrats end shutdown, Trump says](#) (2026-03-22 00:40)

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida — President Donald Trump said Saturday he will order federal immigration officers to take a role in airport security starting Monday unless Democrats agree

on a bill to fund the Department of Homeland Security. In a series of social media posts, Trump said he was making plans to put officers from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in airports if the congressional standoff continues. After the Senate failed to find a resolution at a rare weekend session, Trump appeared resolute in his plan: "ICE is ready to go on Monday," he said. He made the announcement as a partial shutdown contributes to long lines to pass through screening at some of the nation's largest airports. The Republican president said ICE agents would bring the administration's immigration crackdown into the nation's airports, promising to arrest "all Illegal Immigrants." "I look forward to moving ICE in on Monday, and have already told them to, 'GET READY.' NO MORE WAITING, NO MORE GAMES!" Trump wrote while spending the weekend in Florida. The move appears to be a pointed effort to expand the type of immigration enforcement that has become a sticking point in Congress. Democrats pledged to oppose funding for DHS unless changes were made in the wake of a crackdown in Minnesota that led to the fatal shootings of two protesters. Democrats are asking for better identification for federal law enforcement officers, a new code of conduct for those agencies and more use of judicial warrants, among other measures. The Minnesota operation was tied in part to allegations of fraud involving Somali residents. On Saturday, Trump said ICE officers sent to airports would focus on arresting immigrants from Somalia who are in the United States illegally. Repeating his criticism on Somalis, he said they "totally destroyed" Minnesota. "If the Democrats do not allow for Just and Proper Security at our Airports, and elsewhere throughout our Country, ICE will do the job far better than ever done before," Trump said. Trump's posts did not offer detail on how ICE would take a role in airport security and what it meant for the Transportation Security Administration, which screens passengers and luggage for hazardous items. The vast majority of TSA employees are considered essential and continue to work during the funding lapse, but they are doing so without pay. Call-out rates have started to increase at some airports, and DHS said at least 376 have quit since the partial shutdown began Feb. 14. On Saturday, the Senate rejected a motion by Democrats to take up legislation to reopen TSA and pay workers who are now going without paychecks. Republicans argue that they need to fund all parts of the DHS, not just certain ones. A bill to fund the Cabinet department failed to advance in the Senate on Friday. There were signs of progress, though, with the restarting in recent days of stalled talks between Democrats and the White House. On Saturday, Republican and Democratic senators were set to meet for a third consecutive day with White House officials behind closed doors as Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York spoke of "productive conversations." Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., urged the bipartisan group to act quickly. He has said repeatedly that Democrats and the White House need to find compromise as lines at airports have grown. "If that group that's meeting can't come up with a solution really quickly, things are going to get worse and worse," Thune said Saturday.

- [Records shattered as US heatwave moves eastward](#) (2026-03-22 00:30)

WASHINGTON, United States — A record-breaking heatwave afflicting the western half of the United States moved eastward Saturday toward the center of the country, bringing unseasonably warm temperatures to places that were at freezing or below just a week

prior. Dozens of cities from California to Colorado recorded their highest temperatures ever for the month of March, according to the National Weather Service Weather Prediction Center. On Saturday, areas that saw new records for the highest temperatures in March included 92 Fahrenheit (33.3C) recorded in Kansas City, Missouri, and North Platte, Nebraska. In addition to monthly all-time highs, the heatwave reached several other temperature milestones. For instance, in Chanute, Kansas, temperatures went from a record low of 13F (-10.5C) on March 16 to a record high of 91F (32.8C) just four days later. And in Phoenix, Arizona, one of the hottest cities in the United States, the daily low was a balmy 70F (21.1C) on Saturday, the earliest in the year such a level had been reached, the weather agency said. Cities recording all-time daily highs Saturday included Denver (86F), Grand Island, Nebraska (98F) and Midland, Texas (98F). On Friday the heatwave had brought temperatures up to 44.4C (112F) in several areas along the southern California-Arizona border, a national US record for March. The National Weather Service issued an extreme heat warning for the same desert areas on Saturday, as well as a red flag warning -- indicating high wildfire risk -- for much of the central Plains states of Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma. Scientists say there is overwhelming evidence that current heatwaves are a clear marker of global warming, a process driven chiefly by the burning of fossil fuels. With winter in the northern hemisphere officially ending on Friday -- the first day of astronomical spring -- the soaring temperatures were wreaking havoc on wildlife in the West. Many plants and trees are already blooming, and vegetation is growing at a fantastic clip, fueled by heavy rains in December and January.

- [Cuba announces second nationwide blackout in less than a week](#) (2026-03-22 00:24)

HAVANA, Cuba — A power outage struck the entire island of Cuba on Saturday, the energy ministry said, in the second nationwide blackout in less than a week as its grid struggles under a US oil blockade. Buildings began to lose power in Havana before nightfall, shortly before 6:30 pm (2230 GMT) and just five days after the previous one plunged the country into darkness. A "total disconnection" of the national electricity system took place, the energy ministry said in a post on X, adding that work had begun to restore power. The blackout occurred as an international aid convoy began to arrive in Havana this week, bringing sorely-needed medical supplies, food, water and solar panels to the island. Cuba's ageing electricity generation system is in shambles, with daily power outages of up to 20 hours the norm in parts of the island, which lacks the fuel needed to generate power. But since the January 3 US ouster of Cuba's top ally, Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela, the island's economy has been hammered further as President Donald Trump maintains a de facto oil blockade. No oil has been imported to the island since January 9, hitting the power sector while also forcing airlines to curtail flights to the island, a blow to the all-important tourism sector. The crisis in the country of 9.6 million people comes as Trump has made no secret of his desire to see regime change in Havana. The blackouts as well as regular shortages of food, medicine and other basics are spurring frustrations, with demonstrators vandalizing a provincial office of the Cuban Communist Party last weekend.

- [Iran missiles hit southern Israel, injuring more than 100](#) (2026-03-22 00:10)

Jerusalem — Two Iranian missiles struck southern Israel on Saturday, injuring more than 100 people in the most destructive attack of the three-week war, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowing to retaliate "on all fronts". The strikes tore open the facades of residential buildings and carved craters into the ground. First responders said 75 people were injured in the town of Arad, 10 of them seriously. Hours earlier, 33 were wounded in nearby Dimona, where AFP TV footage showed a large hole gouged into the ground next to piles of rubble and twisted metal. Dimona hosts a facility widely believed to be the site of the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal, although Israel has never admitted to possessing nuclear weapons. The Israeli army told AFP there had been a "direct missile hit on a building" in Dimona, with casualties reported at multiple sites, including a 10-year-old boy in serious condition with shrapnel wounds. In Arad, emergency workers combed through the rubble of heavily damaged buildings. Netanyahu vowed to continue striking Iran after what he called a "very difficult evening". Iran said the targeting of Dimona was retaliation for Israeli strikes on its Natanz nuclear facility. Following the Natanz attack, UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi reiterated his call for "military restraint to avoid any risk of a nuclear accident". The Natanz facility hosts underground centrifuges used to enrich uranium for Iran's disputed nuclear programme and sustained damage in the June 2025 war. Asked about Natanz, the Israeli military said it was "not aware of a strike". The Israeli military also said Saturday it had struck a facility inside a Tehran university "utilised by the Iranian terror regime's military industries and ballistic missile array to develop nuclear weapon components and weapons".

Hormuz base The destruction in Israel capped three weeks of heavy US-Israeli bombardment that appeared to have done little to blunt Iran's ability to retaliate with missile and drone attacks across the region. The United Arab Emirates said Saturday it faced aerial attacks after Iran warned it against allowing strikes from its territory on disputed islands near the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Iran has choked off the vital waterway, which is used for a fifth of global crude trade during peacetime. US Central Command chief Admiral Brad Cooper said American warplanes had dropped 5,000-pound bombs on an underground Iranian coastal facility storing anti-ship cruise missiles and mobile launchers, leaving Tehran's ability to threaten the waterway "degraded". The strike also destroyed "intelligence support sites and missile radar relays" used to monitor ship movements, Cooper said. A statement from the leaders of mainly European countries, including the UK, France, Italy and Germany, but also South Korea, Australia, the UAE and Bahrain, meanwhile condemned the "de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iranian forces". "We express our readiness to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait," they said.

US President Donald Trump has slammed NATO allies as "cowards" and urged them to secure the strait. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran had only imposed restrictions on vessels from countries involved in attacks against Iran, and would offer assistance to others that stayed out of the conflict. The standoff in the strait has sent crude oil prices soaring, with a barrel of North Sea Brent crude up more than 50 percent over the past month and now comfortably more than \$105. Remarkable endurance? Analysts say Iran's Islamic government has survived the loss of its top leaders and that its strike capacity is proving more durable than expected. "They're showing a lot of resilience that we didn't perhaps expect, that the US didn't expect, when it took this on," Neil Quilliam of Chatham House told the London-based think

tank's podcast. Tehran, meanwhile, marked the end of Ramadan as the war was entering its fourth week. Iran's supreme leader traditionally leads Eid al-Fitr prayers, but Mojtaba Khamenei, who came to power earlier this month after his father Ali Khamenei was killed, has remained out of the public eye. Instead, the head of the judiciary, Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei, attended prayers at central Tehran's overflowing Imam Khomeini grand mosque. "The atmosphere of the New Year was spreading through the city," said Farid, an advertising executive reached by AFP through an online message. But "the thought that some people could be dying right at the New Year dinner table was painful", he added. Diego Garcia Iran launched a ballistic-missile attack on the US-UK base on Diego Garcia, an island in the Indian Ocean around 4,000 kilometres (2,500 miles) from Iran, which a UK official told AFP was "unsuccessful." Had the salvo reached its target it would have been the longest-range Iranian strike yet. Israel's military chief Eyal Zamir said Iran had used a "two-stage intercontinental ballistic missile with a range of 4,000 kilometers," adding in a televised statement: "These missiles are not intended to strike Israel. Their range reaches European capitals." The attack "shows that they can still move these mobile launchers around, undetected, spin up and fire without being struck," former Royal Navy commander Tom Sharpe told AFP.

- [US, allies ammo production in PH \(2026-03-21 16:20\)](#)

(UPDATE) WASHINGTON, D.C. — 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. Opposition from the left The leftist Makabayan Bloc at the House of Representatives said that the creation of an arms facility in the Philippines under PIPIR is a “war industry integration for US strategic needs” and should be opposed by Filipinos. In a statement on Saturday, the bloc, led by ACT Teachers Party-list Rep. Antonio Tinio, Gabriela Rep. Sarah Jane Elago, and Kabataan Rep. Renee Louise Co, said the Philippines must

not be turned into a logistical extension of US warmongering. “Any move to host ammunition production lines for weapons used by aircraft and armored vehicles is direct material support for militarism and aggression, while also making our territory more exposed to retaliation, sabotage, accidents and escalation,” they said. They also said that it only deepens the country’s dependence on foreign military strategy and supply chains while dressing it as a “partnership.” “We reject the attempt to normalize arms manufacturing as an acceptable economic program. Weapons production is not neutral industry: it is built on profiteering from conflict and it funnels public policy toward militarization,” they said.

- [US, allies push ammo production in PH \(2026-03-21 16:20\)](#)

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- [Naval exercises held in Manila Bay, Bataan](#) (2026-03-21 16:18)

(UPDATE) THE Philippines and the United States have completed naval exercises in Manila Bay and the waters off Mariveles, Bataan, aimed at strengthening maritime security and interoperability between their forces. In a statement on Saturday, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said the exercise, dubbed Bilateral MCA 26-3.1, involved the United States Indo-Pacific Command and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG). “The activity was aimed at enhancing interoperability among participating forces in support of maritime security and sustaining maritime response in the Philippine Maritime Zones,” the AFP said. Philippine units included the BRP Antonio Luna (FFG15), two A-29B Super Tucano aircraft, one C-208B aircraft, one Sokol Search and Rescue aircraft, and the PCG’s BRP Gabriela Silang (OPV 8301). The US, on the other hand, deployed the USS Blue Ridge (LCC-19), flagship of the US Navy’s 7th Fleet. The exercise featured a series of activities such as communications drills and a photo exercise. Two Philippine Air Force A-29B Super Tucano aircraft also flew over the USS Blue Ridge during the operations. “The successful conduct of the MCA (maritime cooperative activity) reflects 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,” it added. The US 7th Fleet, meanwhile, clarified that these drills, along with other MCAs, are 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 (Scarborough Shoal) against the backdrop of China’s sustained presence in the West Philippine Sea.

- [Will China, Asean set aside self interest to finalize COC?](#) (2026-03-21 16:17)

2ND OF TWO PARTS SINCERITY against self-interest. China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) have to deal with this dilemma if they are indeed resolved to end the almost 20-year-old journey to finish a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea (SCS). The “burden” to finalize the COC this year fell on the Philippines in 2023 when Asean leaders decided that the COC should be concluded in three years — or in 2026, which happened to be the Philippines’ turn to lead the 11-member regional bloc. With a combined population of over 703 million as of March 2026, the Asean is composed of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Timor-Leste, Thailand and Vietnam. The completion of the COC dragged on for 17 years due to the so-called “milestone” issues, some of

which were linked to the parties' need to protect their interests in the Spratly Islands in the SCS. The negotiation for a COC stemmed from the need to address mounting tension in the 1990s amid the overlapping claims in the SCS. China referred to the Spratlys as South China Sea Islands. The quest for a COC began in 2002 after the signing of the Declaration on the Conduct (DOC) of Parties in the South China Sea on Nov. 4, 2002, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The DOC states that Asean and China reaffirmed that the "adoption of a code of conduct in the South China Sea would further promote peace and stability in the region and agree to work, on the basis of consensus, towards the eventual attainment of this objective." The Philippines' signatory at that time was then Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) secretary Blas Ople. For the Chinese side, it was Wang Yi, then special envoy and vice minister of foreign affairs. Wang is now China's top envoy. Some of the nagging contentious issues that stalled COC completion include geographical scope, the link between the DOC and COC, the legally binding element or characteristic of the COC, and the definition of self-restraint relative to the claimants' actions in the SCS. The reefs, atolls, and islets in the SCS — believed to be rich in gas and mineral deposits — are being claimed in whole by China and in part by Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines. Taiwan also has a stake in the region. The Philippines, through the DFA, maintained that international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos), should be upheld in the formulation of the COC. Enforced in 1994, the International Maritime Organization said Unclos laid down a comprehensive regime of law and order for the world's oceans, including the establishment of rules for the allocation of States' rights and jurisdiction in maritime spaces and the peaceful use of oceans and the management of their resources. Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro, in January, said that Asean and China are "heavily invested" in "termination of negotiations" for a COC during the Philippines' chairmanship of Asean this year. China wants early conclusion. The Chinese Embassy in the Philippines said the "consultation on a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea has reached critical time." The embassy, in an email to The Manila Times (TMT), expressed confidence that the parties would "follow the roadmap for the next stage of COC talks, speed up the negotiation, and reach an agreement as soon as possible." The Manila Times sought to interview Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Jing Quan to seek his view on Beijing's involvement in the COC discussion. But the embassy said Jing's schedule was too tight and could not grant an interview. Hence, the TMT opted to email these questions to Jing: Is China sincere to conclude a COC with Asean; is the crafting of the COC this year doable amid the "milestone issues" hampering its finalization; who will benefit the most if the COC is finalized — Asean or China; and what are the factors that could further delay its completion? The TMT also asked the embassy if it could elaborate on the remarks of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi when he urged the Philippines to "resist the pull of self-interest" in the COC deliberation. The embassy did not answer the TMT's queries point by point and instead replied in general terms. The embassy said China and Asean countries have maintained close communication on implementing the DOC and negotiating the COC. "All parties agree that safeguarding peace and stability in the South China Sea is of great significance, and support enhancing dialogue, exercising restraint, properly handling differences, strengthening mutual trust, and upholding maritime stability," the embassy said. "All these are ample proof that peace, cooperation and

friendship should be the new narrative of the South China Sea. Making waves wins no hearts, and fomenting trouble finds no takers," it added. In a separate statement posted on Facebook, embassy spokesman Ji Lingpeng said China "will continue to work with directly concerned parties to resolve disputes through negotiation and consultation, and together with Asean countries to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea." Ji said China will also strive for the early conclusion of the COC, "so as to provide rules and guidance for maritime interactions among all parties and to make the South China Sea a sea of peace, friendship, and cooperation." In another social media post, the embassy said, "Together with the parties, China has the confidence and the resolve to remove interference, bridge differences, expand common ground." "The COC will provide the golden rules for the parties to effectively manage differences, build trust, and advance cooperation," the embassy said.

**Call for transparency**

Victor Manhit, Stratbase Institute for Strategic and International Studies founder, underscored the need for transparency in the negotiation. But at the same time, he urged the DFA to uphold the country's interest in the discussion. According to the Stratbase website, Manhit was appointed as one of the Asean regional forum experts and eminent persons by the DFA. "My concern is that, is it simply overpromising on our part? Because if everyone is invested, I hope our government is also invested in making it transparent," Manhit told the TMT in an interview. He noted that the crafting of the COC has been on the Asean's agenda for almost two decades. "It has never been concluded because some countries have their own interests to protect." "In our case, as chair, we have our interests to protect. We should assert our maritime rights, our territorial integrity, based on international law, based also on our 2016 Arbitral Award. And the DFA should remember that," Manhit said.

What if the call for transparency in COC discussion might jeopardize the process? Manhit said, "Again, I go back [to] — national interest. The Filipino people is the national interest of the Department of Foreign Affairs, and I cannot believe that we are at the stage right now that what is more important is Asean interest over [Philippine] national interest." In July 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, the Netherlands, invalidated China's expansive claim in the SCS, which encroached on the Philippines' 200-mile exclusive economic zone. China rejected the ruling and declared it illegal. In a separate statement on March 17, Ji said China has never laid claim to the entirety of the South China Sea as territorial territory. "The Philippine side's deliberate distortion of China's position is unconstructive and has no merit." Beijing had refused to participate in the arbitration since Manila brought the case to the PCA without its consent. Ji said China, as a sovereign state, "enjoys the right to independently choose the procedures for dispute settlement." "The experience of the past decade has demonstrated that 'arbitration' has not resolved the disputes between China and the Philippines; rather, it has exacerbated bilateral tensions," Ji said. "China's position on the South China Sea issue has always been consistent and clear: not an inch of China's territory can be relinquished, and what does not belong to China will not be taken," Ji pointed out. Pressed whether China and concerned Asean members are sincere to conclude the crafting of the COC, Manhit said, "Will they be sincere? I don't know." "But the Philippines as chair of Asean [this year] should be sincere in ensuring peace and stability in the region, but also to protect our national interests over Asean interests, over China's interest," he said. He said national interests are the core of any foreign policy. "And what

is our national interests? No code of conduct should come out that will undermine our victory in the Unclos' argument with regards to the 2016 Arbitral Award," Manhit said. "International law has made us equal with our strong neighbor out there. So, we cannot even sacrifice any little part of that Arbitral Award in 2016," he said. Asked who would benefit the most between China and Asean if the COC is finalized, Manhit said it depends. "Again, that's where we demand transparency. [It's] hard to comment on something that we have not [yet] read because what is being shared is bits by bits," he said. "I do not see our government agreeing to a code of conduct that does not respect the 2016 arbitral award." "I don't think in any form of analysis that China will let go of their interests. The best way to deal with them is also for China to know what our interests are. And if we'll find commonality, so be it. But that commonality, that common ground, should not sacrifice our 2016 arbitral award, victory," he said. "We signed an Unclos. We support international law. China uses it when it favors them. We use it because we respect what we sign, what we agree on. And I hope our diplomatic officials always take note of that," he said. Manhit said there was no rush to complete the COC. "It has dragged on for decades. So what's wrong? Why rush it [now]? Just because we are Asean in chair? I'm quite confused by that," he said. "Why should it be our burden? Why was it not the burden of Malaysia? Why was it not the burden of the previous chair of Asean? I don't mind it as long as we don't again sacrifice ourselves for the name of Asean," Manhit said. "Our chairmanship is about us and the rest of Asean. I think we are doing our part with our fellow member Asean. But when somebody outside of Asean will railroad to protect their interests, the Philippines should not allow itself to be pushed around," he added. On March 8, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed hope that as this year's Asean chairman, the Philippines "will recognize and fulfill its responsibility, resist the pull of self-interest, and play a positive role for peace and stability in the region." In response, Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro said as Asean chairman in 2026, the Philippines "approaches this issue with a clear sense of responsibility to the region and to the international community." She said guided by the theme, "Navigating Our Future, Together," the Philippines is "committed to take credible, professional and steady stewardship of the Asean chairship this year as we seek collective solutions to regional concerns, including in the maritime domain." The Philippines, Lazaro said, is committed to ensuring that the SCS remains a sea of peace, stability and cooperation, and to working constructively with all Asean member states and China to conclude an "effective, substantive, and legally binding" COC within the year in line with the agreed guidelines. "The Philippines has always advocated that the COC should be consistent with international law, particularly Unclos, not carve out a special regional regime, not diminish the rights and interests of third-party states, and effectively govern behavior at sea," Lazaro said. Lasting peace and stability in the South China Sea "requires all countries, whether big or small, to meet their obligations and responsibilities under international law, particularly Unclos," she added. The DFA chief said countries "have to exercise self-restraint and avoid actions that could complicate the situation or increase tensions at sea." "The Philippines will firmly uphold Asean unity and centrality in addressing regional maritime issues, even as we are unequivocal in protecting our sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction," Lazaro said. Part 1: Asean, China "heavily invested" in SCS Code of Conduct <https://www.manilatimes.net/2026/03/09/news/national/asean-china-heavily-invested-i>

n-scs-code-of-conduct/2295542

- [UNICEF: 99% of foods marketed to Filipino kids fail global health standards](#) (2026-03-21 16:16)

THE United Nations Children’s Fund (Unicef) revealed that 99 percent of food products marketed to Filipino children do not meet global standards, underscoring the need for stronger legislative measures to protect minors from aggressive marketing tactics used on foods or drinks high in sugar, salt, or unhealthy fats. In a statement late Friday, Unicef revealed that among the 1,035 digital food advertisements marketed to children in the country, 99 percent of the products did not meet the World Health Organization (WHO) standards for marketing to children. This, they claim, contributed to the rise of obesity in school-aged children, with 12.9 percent compared to only 10.4 percent in 2019. They attributed the rise to diets shifting toward ultra-processed foods and sugary drinks, which, they said, are heavily marketed and designed to be convenient. If not addressed, they warned that by 2035, an estimated 4 billion people globally — which comprises half of the world’s population — could be overweight or obese. With that, 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 shield children from aggressive marketing tactics promoted on foods or drinks high in sugar, salt, or unhealthy fats. Kyungsun Kim, Unicef Philippines representative, stressed the importance of the bill, saying, “The healthy food environment bill will strengthen food marketing safeguards for children where they live, learn and play, and make it easier for families to make healthier food choices.” The proposed measure aims to strengthen restrictions on marketing to children, implement front-of-pack nutrition labeling, and set school food standards. About 20 versions of the bill have been filed in Congress. The measure also seeks to establish a framework for classifying food based on its nutritional content. Acting WHO Representative to the Philippines, Eunyoung Ko, underscored the need for comprehensive policy action. “Creating healthier food environments is essential if we are serious about preventing childhood overweight, obesity, and diet-related noncommunicable diseases. This includes putting in place strong policies to protect children from the harmful marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks, and clear front-of-pack nutrition labeling to help families make healthier choices more easily. WHO will continue supporting the Government of the Philippines with technical guidance and evidence-based assistance to advance these measures,” said Acting WHO Representative to the Philippines Dr. Eunyoung Ko. Aside from pushing for legislation, the NNC is strengthening its overweight and obesity management and prevention program under the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) 2023–2028. The initiative aims to address obesity by promoting healthy habits among children, improving data systems, and expanding access to affordable and nutritious food. “Obesity is not a failure of individuals — it is often a failure of systems. We must transform our food environments, strengthen our policies, and work together to ensure that healthy choices become the easiest choices for every Filipino,” said Rosalina Bascao, OIC executive director IV of the National Nutrition Council.

- [World pays steep price for Mideast war](#) (2026-03-21 16:15)

THE war in the Middle East has triggered a nightmare scenario for the global energy system, slashing so much supply that consumers around the world must both pay up big and lower consumption. The effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow channel along the Iranian coast, has stopped the passage of 20 percent of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas since the US and Israel began airstrikes on Iran on Feb. 28. Meanwhile, ongoing strikes by Iran and Israel have targeted Middle East energy infrastructure, doing damage to gas fields, oil refineries, and terminals that industry representatives say will take years to repair. All of that adds up to what the International Energy Agency (IEA) has already called the worst global energy disruption in history, eclipsing even the Arab oil embargo of 1973 that caused fuel shortages and triggered widespread economic damage. "You're not going to conserve your way around this. What it's going to translate to is price rises high enough that people stop consuming," said Dan Pickering, chief investment officer for Pickering Energy Partners. So far, the crisis has removed about 400 million barrels — about four days of world supply — from the market, triggering price increases of around 50 percent. Oil, gas, and their refined byproducts are critical to many parts of the modern world, from fueling cars, trucks and planes to powering homes and industry to producing plastics and fertilizers. "The breadth of what is at risk here in fuels, chemicals, LNG and fertilizer inputs is what makes this moment qualitatively different from previous episodes of Gulf tension," said Aditya Saraswat, senior vice president at consultancy Rystad Energy. Energy price shocks also fuel inflation, hitting consumers and businesses hard. This has become a major political liability for US President Donald Trump as he seeks to justify the war to the American public. Trump has assailed NATO allies over their lack of support for the US-Israeli war against Iran, calling the longtime US allies "cowards." Price shock Global benchmark oil prices LCOc1 have already risen more than 50 percent to over \$110 a barrel since the war started. The effects are more pronounced for Middle East crudes — a staple for Asian economies — with prices hitting records near \$164. That has translated to soaring prices for transport fuels, pressuring consumers and businesses across the globe, and triggering government action to conserve supplies. Thailand, for example, ordered civil servants to conserve energy by suspending overseas trips and using stairs instead of elevators, while Bangladesh closed its universities. Sri Lanka has imposed fuel rationing, China has banned refined fuel exports, and the UK government's energy contingency plan includes a cut in speed limits to save fuel. On Friday, the International Energy Agency outlined other proposals to reduce demand, such as working from home and avoiding air travel, which has already been severely disrupted after the war forced the closure of key Middle Eastern hubs. The IEA earlier this month agreed to make a record 400 million barrels of oil available from emergency stockpiles. But analysts say the measure is too small since 400 million barrels covers only about 20 days of the war's impact. Natasha Kaneva, a JP Morgan analyst, said reducing demand is the only solution when supplies fall short. "The market is facing an acute shortage of products (...) that cannot be consumed simply because they are not available," she said. For everything that remains, prices are surging. Jet fuel prices in Europe, for example, hit a record of around \$220 per barrel — a cost that is likely to filter down fast in the form of more expensive airline tickets. In the US, which imports very little Middle Eastern oil, retail gasoline prices are up more than a dollar a gallon since Feb. 28 to around \$4 a gallon. Natural gas prices in Europe and Asia are

soaring after tit-for-tat strikes by Israel and Iran in recent days slammed Gulf gas installations. Consumer power costs could also leap. Israel struck Iran's South Pars gas field on Wednesday, and Iran hit Qatar's massive Ras Laffan LNG complex the day after. QatarEnergy's CEO Saad al-Kaabi told Reuters Iranian attacks will knock out 12.8 million tons per year of LNG — about 3 percent of world supply — for three to five years. The situation is critical since oil and gas products are vital to everything from pharmaceuticals to plastics and fertilizers, said Menelaos Ydreos, secretary general of the International Gas Union, a grouping of world gas producers. "We, again, call for an immediate stop to the targeting of energy facilities and for the resumption of cargo traffic through the Strait of Hormuz as fertilizers, petrochemicals for the pharmaceutical industry, oil, grain, and gas are all critical to our existence," he said in a statement. Food threat The war also threatens food supply. It has severely disrupted fertilizer markets because about a third of global trade in fertilizers typically passes through the Strait of Hormuz and is now stuck. Prices for nitrogen-based products like urea, the most critical fertilizer product, have risen 30 percent to 40 percent since the conflict began. US farmers were already reporting empty shop shelves ahead of spring planting.

- [Comelec sets Nov. 2 for manual barangay, SK elections; no tech upgrades planned](#)  
(2026-03-21 16:14)

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) announced that the barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections will be held on Nov. 2 using a fully manual system. The commission noted that no major technological upgrades will be implemented as it aims for stricter measures against vote-buying and other violations. Comelec Chairman George Erwin Garcia said voters will again write candidates' names on ballots, which will be counted and canvassed by hand at the precinct level. Unlike national elections, results will not be electronically transmitted and may be proclaimed within the villages. "There may be no major technological innovations to be seen," Garcia said. He clarified that Congress, not Comelec, set the election date. "Whether it is appropriate or not, Comelec is bound to follow Nov. 2," he added. Ballot printing has been completed, while verification is ongoing. Voter registration runs until May 18, with no extension planned. So far, about 3 million applications have been recorded. The Comelec expects around 73 million voters nationwide, including 25 million SK voters. Garcia said the manual setup also means stricter rules on campaigning. Candidates are considered official upon filing their certificates of candidacy, making early campaigning punishable. "If they start campaigning early, they can be disqualified and charged with an election offense," he said. With no new technology in place, Comelec will intensify its "Kontra Bigay" campaign against vote-buying, including monitoring suspicious cash distribution, e-wallet transfers and the use of government aid for political gain. Authorities may also conduct warrantless arrests of offenders caught in the act. "These funds do not belong to candidates. Using public money for political gain is even more offensive," Garcia said. Campaign spending is capped at P3 per voter, and candidates' statements of contributions and expenditures (SOCE) will be published online through the e-SOCE platform. Garcia said vote-buying and misinformation remain the biggest threats, noting that stronger laws are needed to regulate social media during elections. He urged voters,

especially the youth, to choose leaders wisely.” Vote according to your conscience and judgment — not because of influence or favors,” he said. “The ballot is the answer.”

- [Go Named Adopted Son of Don Salvador Benedicto, Negros Occidental](#) (2026-03-21 16:13)

DON SALVADOR BENEDICTO, Negros Occidental — Sen. Bong Go has been formally recognized as an adopted son of Don Salvador Benedicto after local officials unanimously approved a resolution honoring his contributions to the town’s development. The recognition was granted through Resolution 2026-149, approved by the Sangguniang Bayan during its regular session on March 9. The conferment was later formalized through a certificate issued by the Office of the Municipal Mayor. The certificate stated that the municipality considers it a “distinct honor and privilege” to confer the title on Go, citing the unanimous approval of the resolution. It formally declared the senator as an adopted son of the town in Negros Occidental. Local officials said the recognition was based on Go’s “significant contributions to the development and welfare” of the municipality. They highlighted his initiatives spanning infrastructure, health care, education and assistance to vulnerable sectors, which they said have “profoundly impacted” the community. According to the resolution, Go was recognized as a “duly elected Senator of the Republic of the Philippines” known for his dedication to public service and advocacy for the welfare of Filipinos, particularly those in underserved communities. The measure further noted that the senator has extended support to the municipality through various programs and projects that “greatly contributed to the progress and well-being of its residents.” Officials also emphasized the positive reception of Go’s efforts among locals, noting that his “genuine concern” for the municipality’s growth and responsiveness to local needs have earned him “the respect and admiration” of the people of Don Salvador Benedicto. The conferment reflects the local government’s recognition of Go’s engagement with grassroots communities and signals continued collaboration between the senator and municipal officials in pursuing development initiatives. In a brief statement, Go reaffirmed his commitment to public service. “We will continue to serve you because it is my habit to serve, and I believe that service to people is service to God, that is service to Allah,” he said.

- [Academic: China's Policy Continuity a Model for Development Success](#) (2026-03-21 16:12)

A SINGAPORE-BASED academic has cited China’s policy continuity as a critical factor for its successful long-term development planning, contrasting it with the Philippines’ characteristically disruptive system. Henry Chan, a distinguished visiting fellow at the Cambodian Center for Regional Studies, made the observation during a forum on China’s recently concluded “Two Sessions” and its 15th Five-Year Plan, organized by the based think tank Asian Century Philippine Strategic Studies Institute. Speaking via Zoom, Chan was responding to a question on the key methodologies and philosophies behind China’s successful five-year planning process. “Policy continuity is very important,” Chan said. “In fact, even China’s five-year plans are continuously refined by people tasked with fine-tuning them.” He noted that despite the detailed planning, China maintains flexibility in implementation. “What you learn today about the 15th Five-Year Plan may be implemented

differently next year. The objectives remain the same, but the approach and the measures can change over time.” The academic contrasted this approach with the Philippine political system, where the six-year presidential term and its accompanying transition period result in sweeping changes.” Unfortunately, if you look at the presidential system — particularly in the Philippines — every six years you can expect sweeping changes, including among many of those so-called working-level officials,” Chan said. He stressed the importance of officials at the assistant secretary level, describing them as the “workhorse” and the ones carrying “institutional memory.” “They’re supposed to be the ones carrying the so-called institutional memory. Now they’re all being replaced,” Chan said, emphasizing the disruption this causes to policy implementation. Chan identified “continuity and pragmatism” as the “two key secrets behind the Chinese success in their five-year plan.” “Number one, Chinese are pragmatics. They do fine-tuning all the time,” he said as he elaborated on the pragmatic aspect of China’s success. The academic noted that beyond the issue of political leadership transitions, there are fundamental societal factors that contribute to development success.” There are many things that go beyond politics — such as how much your people aspire for education, how many late nights they are willing to endure, and how many examinations they are prepared to sacrifice for their future.”

- [DSWD: Payout for NCR PUV drivers on March 24](#) (2026-03-21 16:11)

THE Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) will resume the distribution of cash relief assistance (CRA) to public utility vehicle drivers in the National Capital Region (NCR) beginning March 24. According to the agency, the rollout follows the completion of payouts for tricycle drivers, with more transport sectors set to benefit next. DSWD Assistant Secretary Irene Dumlao said on Saturday that the initial phase will cover transport network vehicle services (TNVS) drivers affected by rising fuel prices. “The distribution of CRA for TNVS drivers in Metro Manila will begin on Tuesday, March 24, to provide immediate assistance to drivers affected by oil price hikes,” Dumlao said. “After the payout for TNVS drivers, this will be followed by jeepney drivers on Wednesday, delivery riders on Thursday and Friday, and finally, motorcycle taxi riders on Saturday,” she added. The DSWD said more than 34,000 TNVS drivers, 20,000 jeepney drivers, 83,000 delivery riders and 34,000 motorcycle taxi riders are expected to receive assistance. It noted that the program aims to help drivers cope with the continued increase in fuel prices. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. earlier directed the DSWD to extend financial assistance to transport workers affected by rising oil prices. Also, the DSWD said it is coordinating with the Department of Transportation, and the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board for the program’s implementation. The CRA is being implemented under the agency’s Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation program as part of the government’s efforts to provide immediate relief to vulnerable sectors.

- [Pasay roads to close early Sunday for marathon](#) (2026-03-21 16:10)

SEVERAL roads in Pasay City will be closed early Sunday for the Apo Half Marathon 2026 from 1:30 a.m. to 7 a.m., according to the Pasay Traffic and Parking Management Office. The office

said the temporary road closure was to ensure participants' safety and support the orderly staging of the event this morning, March 22. Areas affected by the advisory include Liwasang Ulalim at the CCP Complex, the southbound stretch of Roxas Boulevard from Quirino Avenue to Parañaque City, Sotto Street, including the zipper lane on the PICC side, and Jalandoni Street northbound. Motorists were advised to plan their trips and take alternate routes to avoid delays during the closure period.

- [New Philippines Senate Bill Aims to Protect Drivers From Unjust Detention](#) (2026-03-21 16:09)

SEN. Erwin Tulfo has filed Senate Bill 1924, or the proposed Defensive Driving Act, which aims to prevent the automatic arrest and detention of motorists involved in traffic accidents without clear evidence of negligence. The bill, introduced on March 3, seeks to balance public safety with constitutional protections by requiring law enforcement to establish probable cause before taking motorists into custody. In his explanatory note, Tulfo raised concerns over what he described as a prevailing practice among authorities to presume driver negligence — particularly in accidents resulting in death or serious injury — leading to immediate custodial detention. He noted that motorists are often detained even when available evidence, such as CCTV footage, dashcam recordings or eyewitness testimony, may show they exercised due diligence or that the incident was caused by other factors. "Such automatic detention undermines the constitutional guarantee that no person shall be deprived of liberty without due process of law," Tulfo said. The proposed measure reinforces protections under the Philippine Constitution, particularly the presumption of innocence and the right to due process. It clarifies that mere involvement in a traffic accident does not constitute sufficient grounds for arrest or detention. Tulfo underscored the principle that criminal liability must be established solely based on objective and competent evidence. This includes the requirement for demonstrable proof of negligent conduct, as well as a direct link between the behavior and the resulting harm. The bill also aligns with existing provisions under the Revised Penal Code of the Philippines, specifically Article 365, which penalizes reckless imprudence and negligence. Among the proposed measure's core provisions are a probable cause requirement, protection against unlawful detention, accountability mechanisms and the preservation of victims' rights. Tulfo clarified that the bill does not absolve negligent drivers of responsibility but instead promotes responsible and defensive driving while ensuring that innocent motorists are not unjustly deprived of liberty. "The measure does not excuse negligent drivers. Rather, it ensures that detention is anchored on probable cause and objective evidence," he said.

- [Cayetano Backs Healthcare Proxy Act for Patient Autonomy](#) (2026-03-21 16:08)

SENATE Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano has expressed support for a proposed measure that would allow Filipinos to designate a trusted individual to make medical decisions on their behalf, even if that person is not legally recognized as family. Cayetano made the statement after signing the committee report on the proposed Healthcare Proxy Act, a measure that seeks to strengthen patient autonomy within the country's health care system. "I haven't seen a

real shift in how we look at our health system, and part of improving it is making sure patients are heard even when they can no longer speak for themselves,” he said. The bill, formally filed as Senate Bill 1985, is sponsored by Senators Risa Hontiveros and Loren Legarda. It proposes allowing individuals to appoint a health care agent who can make decisions on their behalf during times when they are incapacitated or otherwise unable to communicate their wishes. Under the measure, hospitals and health care providers would be required to recognize these designated agents as part of broader efforts to promote advance care planning and supported decision-making. Lawmakers emphasized that the proposal does not seek to redefine legal family structures, but instead addresses practical gaps in patient care — particularly in cases where individuals rely on partners, close friends or companions who may not be legally considered next of kin but are most familiar with their medical needs and personal preferences. The proposed legislation underscores the importance of dignity, informed consent and respect for patient wishes, especially during critical medical situations. Cayetano noted that real-life relationships often extend beyond legal definitions, highlighting the need for policies that reflect the realities faced by many Filipinos navigating illness and hospitalization.” With this measure, we recognize that trust, care and shared responsibility are just as important as legal ties when it comes to making deeply personal health decisions,” he said. The bill also aims to address long-standing concerns in the health care system, where patients without immediate family members — or those estranged from them — may be left without a clear advocate during emergencies.

- [DOH: Over 100K TB cases recorded in NCR \(2026-03-21 16:07\)](#)

THE Department of Health-Metro Manila Center for Health Development (DOH-MMCHD) reported a total of 101,807 tuberculosis (TB) cases in the National Capital Region (NCR), emphasizing the need to intensify the early detection campaign. In a statement on Saturday, the DOH-MMCHD said the figure stresses 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 remains 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 urged the public to see a doctor if they experience symptoms of TB, including coughing lasting more than three weeks, chest pain, coughing up blood or sputum, fever, night sweats and weight loss. In 2025, more than 3.1 million individuals in the region were screened for TB as part of expanded case-finding efforts. The DOH-MMCHD is also promoting TB preventive treatment (TPT), particularly among high-risk groups, including close contacts of TB patients and other vulnerable populations. TPT aims to prevent the progression of latent TB infection into active disease and help break the chain of transmission in communities. “Our goal is one: a community that is more knowledgeable, more careful and more willing to act for the health of everyone. Let us remember, the fight against TB is the fight of every Filipino, regardless of age, regardless of sector,” Tan added. To further raise awareness, the agency held a “TB-Free Generation Fun Run” in Taguig City, encouraging the public to undergo screening

and support TB prevention efforts.

- [Volunteer firefighters call for vigilance](#) (2026-03-21 16:06)

VOLUNTEER firefighters in Manila urged the public to be vigilant and embrace collective responsibility to avoid fires, as the country observes fire prevention month. In a statement on Saturday, the San Andres Manila Fire and Rescue Volunteer Association Inc. (SAMFRVAI) urged residents to adopt basic safety measures — such as checking electrical wiring, unplugging unused appliances, properly monitoring LPG tanks and conducting evacuation drills with family members — as these can help prevent fires. “Fire prevention is a mindset. It’s about being vigilant every day, not just during Fire Prevention Month. Safety should always come first,” said James Paul Benzon, director of SAMFRVAI. The group noted that beyond firefighting, operational challenges persist, particularly in Metro Manila areas that are difficult to penetrate due to narrow streets and alleys. According to John Michael Reyes, public information officer of SAMFRVAI, many overlook smoke and suffocation as causes of death, noting that most lives are lost due to this scenario. “Many people think flames are the biggest threat. But most lives are lost because of smoke and suffocation. That’s why every escape plan, every safety measure and every fire drill is important,” Reyes said. In January 2025, Metrobank Foundation (MBFI) supported the brigade with an 8,000-liter-capacity fire tanker to enhance their capability to respond to fire incidents. “The tanker is a symbol of trust and partnership. Every deployment must be professional, purposeful, and with care. It reminds us that our responsibility is to the community,” Reyes said. Meanwhile, Philip Francisco Dy, president of MBFI, said the partnership highlights the importance of supporting responders and promoting public preparedness. “Fire Prevention Month reminds us that safety is a shared responsibility. By supporting community-based responders like SAMFRVAI, we hope to empower those on the frontlines while encouraging every household to remain vigilant and prepared,” said Dy.

- [New batch of Pinoys heading home -- OWWA](#) (2026-03-21 16:05)

A NEW batch of Filipinos are on their way home amid the ongoing war in the Middle East, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) said Saturday. OWWA Administrator Patricia Yvonne Caunan is in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, together with members of the OWWA Rapid Response Team, leading the repatriation of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) back to the country. The OWWA said 80 OFWs from Bahrain and 99 OFWs from Kuwait safely arrived in the Saudi capital for their repatriation, while an undisclosed number of OFWs from Qatar are also being assisted by an OWWA team to Riyadh. “Their arrival in Riyadh is part of preparations for the fourth government-chartered flight amid the current situation in the region. This is also the second chartered flight organized by OWWA, scheduled to depart from Riyadh to the Philippines this Monday for our fellow Filipinos from Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia,” OWWA said on a Facebook post in Filipino. According to OWWA, this will mark the first time that OFWs from four countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia) will be brought together on a single chartered flight as part of the government’s repatriation operations. “The government team continues to process documents and visas, arrange land and air

transportation, provide accommodation, and ensure that every step of their return is smooth and safe,” OWWA said. Three previous government-chartered flights brought home Filipinos from the United Arab Emirates, with 318 Filipinos returning home in the third flight. Meanwhile, on Friday, the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) reported that a fourth batch of OFWs from Israel, consisting of 22 OFWs, a child, and three tourists, is expected to come home for the weekend.

- [Leaders highlight key values during Eid'l Fitr \(2026-03-21 16:04\)](#)

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 al-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. The president earlier declared March 20, 2026, a regular holiday nationwide through Proclamation 1189 to mark Eid al-Fitr. However, the Bangsamoro Darul-Ifta’ announced Thursday evening that the crescent moon was not sighted, moving the celebration to March 21. Eid al-Fitr, or the Festival of Breaking the Fast, marks the end of the monthlong fasting of Ramadan. It symbolizes gratitude, generosity, and renewed devotion, as Muslims around the world mark the end of a monthlong period of fasting, prayer, and reflection. Speaker Faustino Dy III has called on Filipinos to uphold the values of “sacrifice, compassion and unity” as the Muslim community celebrates Eid al-Fitr. “As our Muslim brothers and sisters celebrate Eid al-Fitr, we honor a journey of faith marked by discipline, sacrifice and generosity — values that can guide us as we face the challenges ahead, and work to overcome these as one nation,” Dy said in a statement on Saturday. He further stressed that the occasion highlights the importance of reflection, humility and solidarity, which remain essential in strengthening both communities and public institutions. Also on Saturday, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), led by Secretary Dante Ang II, extended its greetings to the Filipino Muslim community around the world in celebration of Eid al-Fitr. In a statement, the CFO expressed solidarity with Muslim Filipinos both in the Philippines and abroad, recognizing the significance of Eid al-Fitr as a time of thanksgiving, reflection, and communal unity after a month of fasting and prayer. “May this joyous occasion bring peace, unity, and abundant blessings to every home,” the agency said, adding that the celebration serves as a

reminder of the values of compassion, generosity and spiritual renewal. The CFO also underscored the importance of strengthening bonds among Filipinos across cultures and faiths, especially within the global diaspora. It noted that the spirit of Eid resonates beyond religious observance, encouraging inclusivity and shared humanity among communities worldwide.

- [Fuel Price Relief: Aquino urges swift implementation of excise tax suspension](#) (2026-03-21 16:03)

SEN. Bam Aquino on Saturday called for the swift implementation of a Senate-approved suspension of excise taxes on fuel, alongside the immediate rollout of financial assistance to transport workers, and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), amid rising costs. The call comes amid continued volatility in global oil prices and inflationary pressures affecting household expenses in the Philippines. Economists have warned that without timely intervention, rising fuel costs could further strain consumers and small businesses already navigating post-pandemic recovery challenges. Aquino emphasized that the suspension of excise taxes on petroleum products — already passed by the Senate — should be enforced without delay to provide relief to consumers. “The people will see that the prices of diesel and gasoline at gasoline stations will go down,” Aquino said. He noted that lower fuel prices would not only benefit motorists but also help stabilize the cost of basic goods, as transportation expenses significantly influence market prices. The senator underscored the need for direct support to transport workers and MSMEs, sectors that employ a large portion of the Filipino workforce. “Let’s not allow our micro, small and medium enterprises to close,” Aquino said, stressing that sustaining business operations is critical to preserving jobs and economic stability. He added that substantial funding for assistance programs has already been allocated under the 2026 national budget and urged government agencies to ensure these resources are deployed efficiently and without delay. While acknowledging similarities in economic strain, Aquino clarified that the current situation differs from the Covid-19 crisis. Nevertheless, he highlighted the importance of preparedness and responsiveness in government action. “What’s important is that we keep businesses open, schools open and the government ready, responsive and effective when it comes to the assistance that the people are seeking,” he said.

- [House wants to restructure PH Film Council](#) (2026-03-21 16:02)

THE House Special Committee on Creative Industries is pushing for an overhaul of the Philippine film sector after the panel discussed the proposed Local Film Industry Development Act during its recent fifth regular meeting. The bill is a consolidated measure that would restructure the Filipino film industry and enhance its international competitiveness. Under the bill, the Film Development Council of the Philippines will be converted into a “more robust” Philippine Film Commission to modernize governance within the film sector. Salient measures of the bill include the creation of a Tax Incentive System, which would give a 20-percent base tax credit for films; the establishment of dedicated hubs called “Creative Production Zones” in coordination with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), a streamlined system called

the “Film Production One-Stop Shop to simplify and accelerate permitting processes; and the “Film Endowment Board,” which would support for the creation of original Filipino content. It would also improve workforce development for Filipino filmmakers by implementing specialized training programs, creating a centralized database to track and promote local talent through the National Skills Registry, and opening formal pathways for Filipino creatives to work globally. During the hearing, movie actress and producer Bela Padilla stressed the importance of creating a new film commission to help foreigners film in the Philippines in a way that not only would allow them to shoot efficiently, but also protect Filipino filmmakers. “There are so many creative Filipino talents. We have amazing actors, directors, writers, but right now we’re not seeing, I guess, what the government can do for us also,” Padilla said. According to committee chairman and Negros Occidental 3rd District Rep. Javier Miguel Benitez, the proposed bill would be a “landmark reform” that will define the industry for decades. “We are committed to developing a more competitive creative sector that can stand proud on the global stage,” Benitez added. The meeting followed the 2nd Asean-United Kingdom Creative Economy Symposium held from March 14 to 15, and part of the Philippines’ chairmanship of Asean 2026, bringing together regional leaders and UK partners to foster collaborative policy dialogue and business engagement. Benitez personally attended the symposium, which he said would “build bridges” between talent and policy. “Together, we are transforming creative hubs into engines of national identity and global competitiveness. Our creativity is not just art, but also a foundation of our economy and honor as Filipinos,” Benitez said.

- [House pushes restructure of PH Film Council to enhance international competitiveness](#)  
(2026-03-21 15:07)

The House Special Committee on Creative Industries has pushed for the overhaul of the Philippine film sector after it tackled the proposed Local Film Industry Development Act in its fifth regular meeting held recently. The bill is a consolidated measure that would restructure the Filipino film industry and enhance its international competitiveness. Under the bill, the Film Development Council of the Philippines will be converted into a “more robust” Philippine Film Commission, which aims to modernize governance within the film sector. During the hearing, movie actress and producer Bela Padilla stressed the importance of the creation of a new film commission that would help foreigners who want to film in the Philippines that would not only allow them to shoot efficiently, but to protect Filipino filmmakers. “There are so many creative Filipino talents. We have amazing actors, directors, writers, but right now we’re not seeing, I guess, what the government can do for us also,” Padilla said. The meeting followed the 2nd ASEAN-United Kingdom (UK) Creative Economy Symposium that was held on March 14-15 and is part of the Philippines’ chairmanship of ASEAN 2026, bringing together regional leaders and UK partners to foster collaborative policy dialogues and business engagements. Panel chairman and Negros Occidental 3rd District Rep. Javier Miguel Benitez personally attended the symposium, which he said would “build bridges” between talent and policy. “Together, we are transforming creative hubs into engines of national identity and global competitiveness. Ang ating pagkamalikhain ay hindi lamang sining, ito ay pundasyon ng ating ekonomiya at dangal bilang

mga Pilipino (Our creativity is not just art, but also a foundation of our economy and honor as Filipinos)," Benitez said.

- [Makabayan bloc rejects US plan to build arms factory in PH](#) (2026-03-21 14:55)

MANILA, Philippines - The leftist Makabayan bloc in the House of Representatives has opposed the planned establishment of an arms facility in the Philippines under the United States-led Partnership for Indo-Pacific Industrial Resilience (PIPIR), calling it a form of “war industry integration for US strategic needs.” A report by Reuters said the partnership is considering the Philippines as a host for a facility that would “load, assemble, and package 30mm cannon rounds” —a type of ammunition widely used by military aircraft and ground vehicles. In a statement issued Saturday, the bloc—led by ACT Teachers Party-list Rep. Antonio Tinio, Gabriela Rep. Sarah Jane Elago, and Kabataan Rep. Renee Louise Co—said the country must not be turned into a logistical extension of US “warmongering.” “Any move to host ammunition production lines for weapons used by aircraft and armored vehicles is direct material support for militarism and aggression, while also making our territory more exposed to retaliation, sabotage, accidents, and escalation,” they said. “Ginagawa tayong target. Ginagawa tayong bodega ng bala (We are being targeted and turned into a storage site for ammunition),” they added.

- [OWWA admin says new batch of Pinoys heading home](#) (2026-03-21 14:32)

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) on Saturday said a new batch of Filipinos are on their way home, amid the ongoing war in the Middle East. As of press time, OWWA Administrator Patricia Yvonne “PY” Caunan is in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, together with members of the OWWA Rapid Response Team, in leading the repatriation of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) back to the country. The OWWA said that 80 OFWs from Bahrain and 99 OFWs from Kuwait safely arrived in the Saudi capital for their repatriation, while an undisclosed number of OFWs for Qatar are also being assisted by an OWWA team to Riyadh. “Their arrival in Riyadh is part of preparations for the fourth government-chartered flight amid the current situation in the region. This is also the second chartered flight organized by OWWA, scheduled to depart from Riyadh to the Philippines this Monday for our fellow Filipinos from Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia,” OWWA said in a Facebook post in Filipino. “This marks the first time that OFWs from four countries will be brought together on a single chartered flight as part of the government’s repatriation operations,” they added.

- [More toll operators to offer discounts for PUVs starting March 23](#) (2026-03-21 14:20)

More tollway operators will extend discounted rates to public utility vehicles (PUVs) — including traditional and modern jeepneys, buses, and freight vehicles — starting March 23. The expressways offering toll discounts include the Manila-Cavite Toll Expressway, R-1 Expressway Extension, Muntinlupa-Cavite Expressway, and the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (Tipo-Tarlac). Eligible PUVs may save up to P66 for Class 1 vehicles, P131 for Class 2, and P197 for Class 3. In a statement issued Saturday, Department of Transportation (DOTr) Secretary

Giovanni Lopez expressed gratitude to toll operators, noting the relief the program will bring to transport stakeholders and commuters. The discounts will be in effect for an initial two-month period and may be extended after a review. “We are thankful to the toll operators because these discounts are a big help to our PUV drivers. We understand the daily challenges faced by the transport sector, which is why we continue to implement programs that directly benefit them,” Lopez said. The discounts will be processed through a rebate mechanism and credited weekly to qualified vehicles.

- [Lone bettor wins P10M in Lotto 6/42 draw for March 21](#) (2026-03-21 14:07)

MANILA, Philippines — A lone bettor won the ₱10,000,000.00 jackpot prize in the Lotto 6/42 draw on Saturday, March 21, 2026, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office announced. The winning combination was 18-12-37-02-30-24. According to PCSO, the winning ticket was purchased at a lotto outlet in Cavite. Meanwhile, no bettor won the Grand lotto 6/55 jackpot worth ₱45,000,000.00. The winning combination for the 6/55 draw was 02-18-47-12-32-11.

- [UST surges to third straight win, clips Ateneo](#) (2026-03-21 09:32)

MANILA, Philippines — The UST Golden Tigresses recovered from an opening set loss to surge to their third straight win at Ateneo Blue Eagles' expense, 21-25, 25-11, 25-22, 25-12, in the UAAP Season 88 women's volleyball tournament at the Araneta Coliseum Saturday. Tied at 6-6 in the fourth set, UST blasted a 13-4 run to seize a 23-10 lead and eventually finish the match. Angge Poyos hammered 25 points laced with 11 excellent receptions and five digs to lead the Golden Tigresses, who rose to 5-3 for a share of third place with the FEU Lady Tamaraws. Regina Jurado aided Poyos with 20 points and 21 excellent digs. Ana Hermosura drilled 11 points, and logged 12 digs and nine receptions to pace Ateneo, which barged back to the losing column after taking its first win against UE last timeout. The Blue Eagles dropped to 1-7 for seventh place in the 8-team league.

- [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’ I 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’ I 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’ I Fitr. However, the Bangsamoro Darul-Ifta’ announced Thursday evening that the crescent moon was not sighted, moving the celebration to March 21. Eid’I-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 re-nationalize 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 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 approach A 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 implementation The 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 disclosure 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 sanitation

Fairness and privacy protections

The 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, passenger 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'I 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'I 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 offer 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.