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# DSWD opens new help desk for minors traveling abroad at NAIA 1

MANILA – The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) officially launched its new Minors Traveling Abroad (MTA) help desk at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 1 on Monday.

In a statement on Tuesday, Assistant Secretary Irene Dum-lao said the new help

desk will provide immediate support for traveling minors requiring urgent assistance.

“The DSWD’s MTA help desk is now open to assist families and minor travelers at the NAIA Terminal 1. The facility aims to cater to urgent concerns on the travel clearance applications for minors traveling alone and



inquiries regarding minors traveling with companions other than their parents,” the

## PhilHealth members reminded on Dec. 26 cutoff for YAKAP Clinic changes

MANILA – The Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) on Monday reminded members or their dependents who wish to transfer to a different PhilHealth YAKAP Clinic to submit their requests to local PhilHealth offices on or before Dec. 26 to ensure uninter-

rupted access to primary care benefits.

In an advisory, the agency said members or their dependents may visit the nearest Local Health Insurance Office to file their Primary Care Selection Form, regardless of whether they have completed their first

patient encounter.

Verification will be conducted through the PhilHealth Check Utility and members will receive an email once the transfer is approved, effective Jan. 1, 2026.

The PhilHealth Action Center will con-  
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1 help desk expands the agency’s reach in major airports. Other MTA help desks can be found at NAIA Terminal 3 in Pasay City, Clark International Airport (CIA), Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA), and Francisco Bangoy International Airport in Davao,” she said.

The DSWD spokes-

person emphasized that the issuance of travel clearance certificates (TCC) for minors traveling abroad alone or without their parents is necessary to safeguard children from possible abuse, exploitation and trafficking.

The issuance of the TCC is also speci-  
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## CALABARZON workers among top earners in PH



Laguna (PIA) – Workers in the CALABARZON region were reported among the top earners in the Philippines, trailing only the National Capital Region (NCR), according to the 2024

Survey of the Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA).

In a media forum, Adrian Cerezo, Assistant National Statistician, reported that CALABARZON posted a P19,711 average

monthly wage rate. It is the second-highest average monthly wage in the country, behind the National Capital Region (NCR) with an average monthly wage of P29,310.00

Other regions posting the highest average monthly wages include Central Visayas (P19,084), Central Luzon (P18,274), and the Davao Region (P17,953).

Despite national trends, women in CALABARZON earn less

Also, despite posting second in the national average, the data highlights a persistent gender pay gap among workers in CALABARZON.

On a national scale, female workers nationwide are earning more than their male counterparts—averaging P22,236.00 compared to P21,009 for males. However, the trend is reversed in CALABARZON, where female employees are earning less than their

*(Turn to p. 2)*

MANILA – Pag-IBIG Fund has extended its Acquired Assets Super Sale until Dec. 31, giving more time for interested buyers to purchase foreclosed properties at discounted rates.

In a statement on Tuesday, Pag-IBIG Fund said interest in acquired assets has remained high since the Super Sale opened on Aug. 25, with 44,861 bids received and 18,434 winning bids recorded to date.

A total of 5,074 prop-

erties are expected to be published for auction until the end of the year.

“The demand for our Acquired Assets Super Sale has been overwhelming and very encouraging, showing how dependable Pag-IBIG Fund has become in helping Filipino workers secure affordable homes,” Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development Secretary Jose Ramon Aliling, who chairs the

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fied under the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act and the Philippine Passport Act of 1996.

She reminded clients to lodge their MTA application ahead of time to avoid any inconvenience on the day of their departure.

"We are urging parents and guardians to schedule their application for TCC in advance to avoid offloading incidents or travel delays," Dumla said.

As part of the stream-  
**Peso ends week sideways vs.  
US dollar, PSEi slips**

MANILA – The Philippine peso ended Friday sideways against the U.S. dollar, but the Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) slipped due to profit-taking.

The local currency ended the week at 58.7 against the U.S. dollar from its 58.55 close a day ago.

It opened the day on a better level at 58.6 compared to the day-ago's 58.7.

It traded between 58.77 and 58.53, bringing the day's average to 58.65.

Volume reached USD1.38 billion, lower than the day-ago's USD1.65 billion.

On the other hand, the local bourse's main index slipped 1.83 percent to 5,920.87 points, and the broader All Shares by 1.43 percent to 3,397.72 points.

All the sectoral gaug-

ing and digitalization efforts of the Marcos administration, the DSWD has made the processing of TCC faster and safer online through the MTA Online System at <https://mta.dswd.gov.ph/>.

The public may also apply for TCC via the eGov PH (e-Government Philippines) mobile application by downloading the app in various digital distribution services, such as Google Play, App Store and App Gallery. (PNA)

## PHILHEALTH...FR. P. 1

tinue to accept transfer requests via hotline until Dec. 31, 2025.

Authorized representatives may also process transfers on behalf of members, provided they submit an authorization letter, a valid government-issued ID, and a completed PhilHealth Member Registration Form or Claim Form, when required.

PhilHealth clarified that members who have not undergone their FPE may request a clinic transfer at any time, with immediate effect upon approval. Those who have already availed of their FPE may only request transfers during the fourth quarter of the year, from October to December.

Members are encouraged to check the up-

dated list of accredited YAKAP Clinics at the PhilHealth website to help them select facilities near their residence or workplace.

PhilHealth President and CEO Edwin Mercado said members are free to choose their YAKAP Clinic, ideally one near their home or workplace.

The PhilHealth YAKAP Program offers free primary care services such as routine check-ups, laboratory tests, cancer screening, and outpatient medications under the PhilHealth GAMOT package.

For inquiries, members may contact PhilHealth's 24/7 hotline at (02) 866-225-88 or reach the agency through its mobile numbers. (PNA)

## Pag-IBIG...FR. P. 1

Pag-IBIG Fund Board of Trustees, said.

"With the enhancements to our Super Sale, we are making participation easier and more affordable for more buyers."

The strengthened program supports the administration's Expanded Pambansang Pabahay para sa Filipino (Expanded 4PH) Program by offering families a faster, more affordable way to secure decent housing, he added.

Under the updated guidelines, Pag-IBIG Fund reduced the required down payment for cash and short-term installment purchases to 3 percent of the net selling price, from the previous 5 percent. Bidders may also now submit offers for up to three properties per batch of published listings.

Pag-IBIG Fund Chief Executive Officer

## CALABARZON...FR. P. 1

male colleagues.

Cerezo noted a 'positive value' wage gap, favoring men in the formal sector over their female colleagues.

"Let's keep in mind that this is under formal employment, [such as] establishments."

In a separate press release, the PSA Region IV-A further noted the wage gap between male and female workers in the region.

"In 2024, male workers in CALABARZON earned a higher average monthly wage of P20,313, compared

to P19,025 for female workers."

Based on reports by the PSA, the Department of Labor Employment (DOLE), and the Department of Economy, Planning and Development (DepDev), there are 12.333 million individuals aged 15 years old and above in the CALABARZON region.

It also recorded a 93.4 percent employment rate, where six out of 10 individuals are part of the labor force. (PBP-PIA4A, Philippine Statistics Authority, DepDev IV-A)

**A TRUE FRIEND SHOWS  
LOVE AT ALL TIMES AND IS  
A BROTHER WHO IS BORN  
FOR TIMES OF DISTRESS**

*Prov. 17:17*

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## Forging synergies for inclusive growth: Cavite aligns MSME programs with MSMED Plan 2025–2028

The Office of the Provincial Cooperatives Development Officer (OPCDO), brought key stakeholders to the same room during the event “Forging Synergies for Inclusive Growth: A Consultative Meeting on MSME Program Convergence with the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Development (MSMED) Plan 2025–2028,” held on December 4, at the New Provincial Government Center in Trece Martires City.

The day-long engagement convened 48 participants representing 32 agencies, composed of local government units (LGUs), provincial offices, national government agencies, and non-government organizations. The broad participation highlighted a shared commitment to strengthening collaboration and aligning programs toward a unified, inclusive, and future-ready MSME development agenda for the province.

In her welcome remarks, Ms. Myrachel P. Cuadra, Officer-in-Charge of OPCDO, emphasized that meaningful growth for micro, small, and medium enterprises is best achieved through strong inter-agency convergence. Messages of support followed from Ms. Sheryll S. Loyola, Chairperson of the Provincial Government of Cavite Employees and Community Multi-purpose Cooperative (PGCECC) and Livelihood Division Head of OPCDO, and Ms.



Lilibeth R. Chavez, OIC Provincial Director of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Cavite, both underscoring the importance of inclusive, sustainable, and resilient MSME development.

Setting the direction for the discussions, Ms. Liza C. Gabatan, Entrepreneurial Division Head of OPCDO, presented an overview of the activity, outlining its objectives and the critical role of coordination in translating policy into impact. The morning session was highlighted by the presentation of the MSMED Plan 2025–2028 by Ms. Susan Mae Salonga, Assistant Director of the Bureau of Small and Medium Enterprise Development (BSMED)–DTI.

Her comprehensive discussion of national MSME priorities was followed by an interactive question-and-answer segment, allowing participants to clarify strategies and identify concrete opportunities for program alignment.

Existing MSME programs and services of LGUs and other stakeholders which were collated before-

hand by the OPCDO was then presented, fostering transparency and surfacing areas for complementation and convergence. In the afternoon, stakeholders took part in a workshop session on MSME program alignment with the MSMED Plan 2025–2028, translating national strategies into actionable provincial and local initiatives.

The consultative meeting concluded with action planning and presentations of the harmonized Cavite MSME Development Plan and convergence opportunities, capped by a Pledge of Support and Commitment Setting. This collective affirmation reinforced the resolve of partner agencies and stakeholders to move forward not in silos, but in synergy.

Overall, the activity marked a significant step toward institutionalizing program convergence in Cavite ensuring that MSME interventions are coordinated, inclusive, and responsive, and that economic growth across the province is not only sustained, but shared.

**A joyful heart is good medicine, But a crushed spirit saps one's strength**

*Proverbs 17:22*



## PDRRMC, LDRRMOs strengthen province-wide disaster preparedness and coordination

The Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC) and Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Offices (LDRRMOs) conducted disaster preparedness and coordination meetings on December 1 and 11, 2025, at the New Provincial Government Center in Trece Martires City, reinforcing a unified, province-wide approach to disaster risk reduction and response.

During the December 1 PDRRMC meeting, key presentations included weather conditions and forecasts by Ms. Mary May Calimoso of PAGASA; updates on volcanic activity and monitoring by Mr. Paulo Reniva of PHIVOLCS; public health readiness and disease surveillance by Ms. Cristina Amulong of the Office of the Provincial Health Officer; and discussions on disaster-related interventions, science-based support, and the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Disaster-related interventions and science-based support initiatives were presented by DOST–Cavite Provincial Director Gilda De Jesus. This was followed by the DILG–Cavite report delivered by Mr. Verdick Idanan of the Office of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Officer. Updates on humanitarian assistance and social welfare services for affected families and internally displaced persons were shared by Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer Felipa Servañez. Planning and development strategies aligned with disaster resilience were discussed by Ms. Gretzel Bea Ganaba of the Office of the Provincial Planning and Development Coordinator, while academic and research-based perspectives supporting disaster preparedness were presented by Dr. Rhodora S. Crizaldo of Cavite State University–Indang.

The meeting was supported by Board Member Alde Pagulayan, representing the Chairperson of the Provincial DRRM Council.

Building on these discussions, the 4th Quarter 2025 LDRRMOs Meeting on December 11 focused on operational readiness, including policy guidance, updated hazard outlooks, preparedness measures for the Yuletide season, and the review of disaster response plans and emergency drills.

### PHA... FR. P. 5

isting heart conditions as well as those without any prior heart issues.

In addition to palpitations and irregular heartbeat, symptoms may include chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, fatigue, lightheadedness, and fainting.

He encouraged the public to limit alcohol consumption, avoid

overeating, reduce caffeine intake and engage in regular physical exercise.

By opting for a “dry holiday,” individuals can prevent alcohol-related accidents, safeguard their health against seasonal flu and other illnesses, and protect their heart and liver from the stress of heavy drinking. (With Connie Calipay/PNA)

**LET YOUR WORDS ALWAYS BE GRACIOUS, SEASONED WITH SALT, TO THAT YOU WILL KNOW HOW YOU SHOULD ANSWER EACH PERSON**  
*Colossians 4:6*

## ATI CALABARZON launches internship program for next-gen farmers

STO. TOMAS CITY, Batangas (PIA) – The Agriculture Training Institute (ATI) is once more opening its internship program with a goal to revolutionize the local coconut industry with the help of the next generation of farmers.

In an interview with the Philippine Information Agency-Calabarzon's PIA Ngayon radio program, Vira Elyssa Jamolyn, chief of Career Development and Management Section at ATI CALABARZON, noted that the Youth Internship Program for the Children of Coconut Farmers provides hands-on training and internship for the children of coconut farmers.

"This internship program is intended for the children of coconut farmers. We also offer other internship programs for specialized areas [like] organic

agriculture, corn, and other categories."

The Youth Internship Program for the Children of Coconut Farmers is a highly-specialized, 21-month internship program designed to instill and develop among its interns an appreciation and adoption of coconut production technologies and enterprise.

In partnership with ATI's accredited Learning Sites for Agriculture (LSA) specializing in coconut production and other farm partners and cooperatives, the two-year program is divided into two tiers: hands-on internship during the first year, and mentorship based on their agri-business proposals during the second year.

Providing training both on crop production and agribusiness,



it provides start-up support and mentoring for implementing their Business Enterprise Plan involving the coconut value chain.

"We want our interns to stay at a farm where they can be mentored by our farm partners where they will stay for nine months," Jamolyn said.

With a goal to integrate farming technologies and modern practices to coconut production, the internship program is intended for the children of coconut farmers.

"We admit interns based on the region's share of the country's

total coconut production and the total land area for coconut. We are definitely one of the top coconut producing regions."

For its first run, the ATI admitted six interns for the Youth Internship Program for the Children of Coconut Farmers. Currently, the program is mentoring five interns with ongoing recruitment.

In 2022, the CALABARZON region was the fourth top-producer for coconut with 485,197 hectares or 13.3 percent share of the country's entire coconut production. (PPIA4A)

## BFAR, PFDA retirees honor WPS frontliners with holiday gifts

MANILA – The Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) and Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) retirees distributed Christmas gifts on Monday to honor frontliners in the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

In an interview, BFAR Spokesperson Nazario Briguera said the initiative recognizes the efforts of BFAR researchers and vessel crew members who "protect" marine resources in the WPS.

Beyond the material

assistance, the gesture serves as a morale booster for personnel performing challenging duties at sea.

"Gusto nilang kilalain 'yung mga efforts ng ating mga tauhan na pumapalayag sa (We want to recognize the efforts of our personnel who are sailing in the) West Philippine Sea, and we welcome that," he said.

BFAR chief engineer Armilo Pagliawan, one of the beneficiaries, expressed gratitude for the support, saying BFAR personnel remain committed to continuing their missions in the WPS



to assist local fishers despite difficult conditions.

"Lubos kaming nagpapasalamat sa handog at kami po sa manda-to ng BFAR, patuloy kaming magpupunta sa West Philippine Sea upang matulungan namin ang aming manggingisda (We sincerely thank them for

their gifts and in our mandate in BFAR, we will continually go the West Philippine Sea to help our fishers)," he said in a separate interview.

About 160 BFAR vessel personnel received the Christmas packages.

The kits include water-repellent bags,

### EXTRAJUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF ESTATE

Notice is hereby given **TO THE PUBLIC** of the deceased **FELICISMO MORAL PRESA** who died on November 09, 2023, in Barangay Prinza, General Trias, Cavite and the deceased left three (3) real properties: 1) **TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE No. T-128957** with an area of **two hundred forty (240)** square meters at Barangay Prinza, General Trias, Cavite, Philippines, 2) **TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE No. T-98742** with an area of **one hundred ninety-three (193)** square meters at Barangay Prinza, General Trias, Cavite, Philippines, and 3) **TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE No. T-197481** with an area of **two hundred ten (210)** square meters at the Barangay San Juan II, General Trias, Cavite, Philippines, and has been extrajudicially settled among his heirs through the Extrajudicial Settlement of Estate of **FELICISMO MORAL PRESA** with Waiver of Rights executed on November 30, 2025 by Atty. Nathalie T. Almazan as per Doc. No. 511, Page No. 104, Book No. III, Series of 2025 in General Trias City, Cavite.

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### AFFIDAVIT OF SELF-ADJUDICATION

Notice is hereby given **TO THE PUBLIC** of the deceased **REYNALDO MORAL PRESA** who died on March 21, 2007 at the Philippine General Hospital, Taft Avenue, Manila and **LUCITA PORCADILLA PRESA** who died on March 7, 2020 at 095 Barangay Prinza, General Trias, Cavite, Philippines, and both left one parcel of land described as **TCT No. T-190793** with an area of **two hundred ninety-two (292)** square meters located at General Trias, Cavite, and has been self-adjudicated by their sole heir, **ALEXANDER PORCADILLA PRESA**, through an Affidavit of Self-Adjudication executed on December 9, 2025 by Atty. Nathalie T. Almazan as per Doc. No. 34, Page No. 8, Book No. 18, Series of 2025 in General Trias City, Cavite.

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**PNP... FR. P. 5**

promptly report any peace and order concerns to the PNP.

"Our personnel will be on duty 24/7 to ensure safe travel and maintain security throughout the Christmas season," he said. (PNA)

long-sleeve shirts, mesh caps, water-repellent vests, and other items suitable for use on the sea. (PNA)

**This book of the Law should not depart from your mouth, and you must read it in an undertone day and night, in order to observe carefully all that is written in it; for then your way will be successful and then you will act wisely.**

## PHA warns public vs. 'holiday heart syndrome' amid Christmas feasts

MANILA – The Philippine Heart Association (PHA) on Monday reminded the public to manage food and alcohol intake during the holiday season, warning that overeating, extremely sweet dishes and excessive drinking could trigger "holiday heart syndrome," a condition associated with irregular heart rhythms.

In the latest episode of *Usapang Puso sa Puso*, PHA cardiologist Dr. Iris Garcia cautioned Filipinos against skipping maintenance medications and neglecting routine health monitoring amid Christmas celebrations.

"Despite it being a holiday, we still need proper sleep, monitor blood pressure and blood sugar, and take our maintenance medications. Hindi po cheat day ang Christmas. Maawa po tayo sa puso natin (Christmas is not cheat day. Take care of your heart)," Garcia said.

Heavy meals and alcohol consumption can elevate risks, especially for individuals with hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol, she added.

Garcia said some patients tend to skip medications during festivities, believing the season allows for flexibility in routine.

"Just because [it's a] holiday [it] doesn't mean holiday din tayo sa pag-inom ng maintenance (we're also on a holiday with regard to taking maintenance medicines)," she added.



**HEALTHY CHRISTMAS DISH.** Philippine Heart Association Advocacy Committee chair Dr. Iris Garcia (left) and Chef RV Manabat share tips on how to prepare heart-friendly Christmas dishes using natural ingredients during a cooking episode of *Usapang Puso sa Puso* on Monday (Dec. 22, 2025) in Biñan, Laguna. Garcia reminded the public to take care of their hearts during the holidays by avoiding overindulgence and continuing to take their maintenance medicines if they have any. (Screenshot from PHA video)

Disruption of normal heart rhythm, as in holiday heart syndrome, may be caused by too much stress, insufficient sleep, and high intake of salty or fatty foods, apart from drinking alcohol.

During the program, chef and food content creator RV Manabat demonstrated simple ways to make holiday dishes healthier. He encouraged the use of natural and local ingredients instead of unnecessary additives.

"When an ingredient is natural, naiintindihan mo agad 'yung nasa label (you immediately understand what's on the label).

The more natural and fresh, the better for health," Manabat said.

He advised reducing added sugar in desserts by allowing the main ingredient to stand out, noting that excessive sweetness can mask natural flavors. He recommended alternative sweeteners such as coconut sugar or

muscovado for certain recipes.

On alcohol consumption, Manabat said drinks should complement food rather than be consumed with the intention of intoxication.

"Alcohol should be paired with food. You have to learn the art of pairing," he said.

Garcia reiterated that moderation remains key for patients worried about holiday meals.

"Hindi naman bawal; in moderation lang talaga (It's not prohibited; you just have to observe moderation)," she said.

The PHA said Christmas remains a time for celebration but warned against habits that may lead to complications.

Meanwhile, Dr. Monrey Isaiah Mancilla, head of the Department of Health - Bicol Health Promotion Unit, said the holiday heart syndrome can affect those with pre-ex-

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## Japan eyes stricter residency requirement for naturalization

TOKYO – The Japanese government and ruling parties began considering tightening the requirement for acquiring Japanese nationality to 10 years of residency or longer in principle, compared with the current five years, informed sources said Monday.

By extending the necessary period of residency to at least 10 years, Japan would bring the nationality requirement in line with that for obtaining permanent residency.

The move is expected to be implemented by changing how the nationality law, which stipulates the requirements for naturalization, is administered instead of by revising the law.

In September, the Japan Innovation Party (Nippon Ishin no Kai), an opposition party at the time and now a ju-

nior ruling party, noted in a policy proposal that the requirement for naturalization, which gives successful applicants a greater legal status, is laxer than that for permanent residency.

Similar concerns have been raised in the main ruling Liberal Democratic Party, prompting Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, the party's president, to instruct her government to review the system.

The nationality law requires those seeking Japanese nationality to meet such requirements as having lived in Japan continuously for at least five years, being 18 or older, exhibiting good behavior, being able to support themselves financially, and complying with the Constitution.

The Justice Ministry says that these are the minimum require-

ments and that meeting all of them does not guarantee Japanese nationality. The ministry believes the requirements can be tightened by changing how the law is administered.

Meanwhile, the government plans to make exceptions for certain applicants, such as allowing athletes who have competed in Japan for a certain period to acquire nationality even if they do not meet the 10-year residency requirement.

The tighter residency requirement is expected to be included in an outline of the government's policy on foreign nationals slated to be released as early as next month.

According to the ministry, 12,248 people applied for naturalization in 2024, with 8,863 approved. (Jiji Press)

## PNP braces for Christmas travel rush

MANILA – The Philippine National Police (PNP) has placed all units on alert ahead of the expected surge of travelers during the holidays, the agency said Sunday.

PNP acting chief Lt. Gen. Jose Melencio C. Nartatez Jr. ordered enhanced security measures and increased police visibility in ports, terminals, and other transport hubs nationwide as millions of Filipinos travel to their home provinces for Christmas.

Local police units were instructed to carefully plan and adjust personnel deploy-

ment in major transport hubs to ensure passenger safety and the orderly movement of travelers.

"I have directed our local police units to strategize the deployment of personnel in ports and terminals to increase police presence in these public areas," Nartatez said in a statement.

"Our security measures are in place and part of them is the regular adjustments based on the situation on the ground. As expected, there have been a noticeable increase on the number of people in the terminals and

the roads leading to transportation hubs, and we have been directing our personnel and resources in these areas to ensure public safety," he added.

More than 100,000 police personnel will be deployed nationwide during the Christmas and New Year period to secure transport terminals, major roads, business districts, and residential areas.

This figure is significantly higher than last year's 60,000.

Nartatez also urged the public to follow travel rules, cooperate with authorities, and

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## Filipinas set sights on coming big battles



**MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.** The Philippine women's national football team celebrates after winning the 33rd Southeast Asian Games gold medal at the Chonburi Daikin Stadium in Thailand on Thursday (Dec. 18, 2025). The Philippines became the third country to win the crown after eight-time champion Vietnam and five-time winner Thailand. (POC Media Pool)

MANILA – The Philippine women's national football team, the newly crowned Southeast Asian (SEA) Games champion, is setting its sights on the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Asian Cup set for March next year in Australia.

The Asian Cup serves as a pathway to the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup in Brazil.

"We'll enjoy this one, we have to enjoy this one because it's been a long time coming for this country to win the SEA Games. We'll rest a little bit and then we have to get ready for the Asian Cup," coach Mark Torcaso said in a news release Friday.

The Filipinas made history after a stunning

6-5 victory over eight-time champion Vietnam on Thursday.

Torcaso is optimistic that the Filipinas will perform well in their next tournament.

"We saw how disciplined our girls can be against good teams and I truly believe that we can do that against Australia or South Korea and Iran and I truly believe that we can do something special there as well and go to another World Cup," he said.

The Philippines has to finish in the Top 2 against host Australia, South Korea, and Iran

in Group A to reach the quarterfinal round where the four winners will advance to the World Cup and the four losers will contest two other spots in the play-in matches.

"The most pleasing thing for me in this competition (SEA Games) was we showed that we've got a group of players here, both experienced and young players that are ready to fight for our country right from the start of the game to the end of the game, even penalty shootouts," Torcaso said. (PNA)

**The wicked flee when no one pursues them, But the righteous are as confident as a lion.**

*Proverbs 28:1*

## PH dominates SEA Games basketball



**TWIN VICTORIES.** The Philippines ruled the basketball competitions at the 33rd Southeast Asian Games in Bangkok, Thailand on Friday (Dec. 19, 2025). Gilas Pilipinas beat Thailand, 70-64, to retain the men's title while the Gilas women won over the Thais, 73-70, to reclaim the crown. (Photo courtesy of POC Media Pool)

MANILA – The Philippines proved its supremacy in basketball at the 33rd Southeast Asian Games after beating host Thailand in the men's and women's divisions at the Nimibutr Stadium in Bangkok Friday night.

Gilas Pilipinas relied on a 13-0 run in the fourth quarter, anchored by Jamie Malonzo, to prevail, 70-64, and retain the men's basketball title.

"Right now, it's No. 1 in my books," coach Norman Black said, comparing the hard-fought triumph to his titles in the PBA and UAAP, and his role in the Philippines' run to the gold in the 2011 Games in Indonesia.

Malonzo finished with 17 points, 12 rebounds, three assists, and five steals.

Thailand's decision to impose a ban on naturalized players and those who failed to receive a passport before the age of 16 prompted Gilas to tap five PBA players in Robert Bolick, Poy Erram, Dalph Panopio, Abu Tratter, and Von Pessumal, plus Adamson center Cedrick Man-

zano and free agents Jamie Malonzo and Justin Chua.

"I never thought I would be included. We would have liked to have seen Remy Martin, Mike Phillips, (Justin) Brownlee. We wanted to see that in the Philippines, but it didn't happen because of circumstances. They (Thailand) thought if we were the only ones, it would be easy, but we were ready," Bolick said.

Bolick, who scored 10 points, joined hands with Matthew Wright and Malonzo to put Gilas ahead in the third quarter, 41-38, from a 29-38 half-time deficit.

Led by Chanato Jakan and Emmanuel Chinedu Ejesu, Thailand wrested the upper hand at 55-54 in the fourth quarter.

Gilas fought back to regain the lead at 67-55, 4:14 remaining, but Thailand rallied to within 68-64, when Jainasuk Nakom hit three free throws off a Thirdy Ravena foul, 47.8 seconds to go.

The Gilas women's team, meanwhile, was

led by veteran skipper Afril Bernardino, who delivered 19 points and 12 rebounds en route to a 73-70 victory.

Kacey Dela Rosa chipped in 17 points and 16 rebounds, while Sophia Dignadice had 10 points and two assists.

Supavadee Kunchuan finished with 17 points and six rebounds for Thailand, which held a 7-0 run to move within 72-70.

Chuck Cabinbin's free throw made it 73-70 in the last 16.9 seconds.

"I can't say anything about the girls. I'm so proud of them. They gave their all. I also like to thank Thailand for playing a good game today. It's been a hard battle going for the gold," head coach Patrick Aquino said.

"It's sweeter because we're not in the Philippines. This is what they really worked hard for. It was a tough game. It was just luck," added Aquino, who also steered the team to the title in Manila (2019) and in Hanoi (2022). (PNA)