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Pag-IBIG housing loan releases reach P140.54B in 2025

MANILA – More Filipino workers were able to secure homes as the Pag-IBIG Fund's housing loan releases reached PHP140.54 billion in 2025, marking an 8-percent increase from the PHP129.73 billion released in 2024.

Pag-IBIG Fund, in a news release on Wednesday, reported its home loan programs benefited 90,727 Filipino workers, who used the loans to purchase housing units or finance home construction, renovation,

or improvement.

The agency said the milestone reflects sustained momentum in affordable housing finance, noting that Pag-IBIG Fund was recently cited by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. during the National Housing Expo last October for its efforts to expand access to affordable housing nationwide.

"We are pleased to report that Pag-IBIG Fund's housing loan accomplishment in 2025 reflects our sustained work under the

Expanded Pambansang Pabahay para sa Pilipino Program, or Expanded 4PH, to help more Filipino workers secure decent homes," Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development Secretary Jose Ramon Aliling said.

Aliling, who also chairs the Pag-IBIG Fund Board of Trustees, added the agency will build on these gains in 2026 by working more closely with shelter partners to speed up loan releases.

DepEd turns over 4-story classroom building in Cavite

MANILA – The Department of Education (DepEd) on Tuesday turned over a four-story, 16-classroom school building at the Santiago Elementary School in General Trias, Cavite in line with the directives of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to address

classroom shortage.

In a statement, Education Secretary Sonny Angara said the turnover shows the government's resolve in easing the current pressure on both time and space in public schools.

"Proven naman po yan, kapag siksikan

ang mga silid, hindi makapagturo nang maigi ang teachers. Ayaw na po natin ng (That's proven, when rooms are overcrowded, educators cannot teach efficiently. We do not want) shifting as much as possible," he said.

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Pag-IBIG Fund chief executive officer Marilene Acosta said the agency's housing

loan programs are designed to keep homeownership affordable for Pag-IBIG Fund

members in the Philippines and overseas, while supporting the (Turn to p. 2)

DA Calabarzon sustains Kadiwa ng Pangulo in 2026

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The Department of Agriculture (DA) in Calabarzon is sustaining the Kadiwa ng Pangulo and Kadiwa Pop-Up markets in 2026, bringing affordable agricultural products closer to consumers while supporting local farmers and fisherfolk across the region.

In partnership with local government units (LGUs), law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders, DA

Calabarzon stated that it will continue rolling out Kadiwa activities in key areas of Quezon, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal, and Batangas starting January 2026.

In Quezon Province, Kadiwa Pop-Up markets will be held on January 29 at the Quezon Police Provincial Office (PPO) Covered Court in Camp BGen. Guillermo P. Nakar, Lucena City, and the Kadiwa ng Pangulo will take place on January 21 at Perez Park,

Quezon Provincial Capitol, also in Lucena City.

Meanwhile, Cavite started hosting Kadiwa Pop-Up on January 16 at the Cavite PPO Covered Court in Camp Gen. Pantaleon Garcia, Imus City. Kadiwa ng Pangulo activities are also scheduled on January 23 and 30 in Barangay Maitim 2nd East, Tagaytay City.

In Laguna, a Kadiwa Pop-Up is set on January 29 at the Police Re-



gional Office in Camp Vicente Lim, Calamba City. Kadiwa ng Pangulo will be conducted

on January 16 at the Municipal Compound in Lumban and on January 30 at the Calamba

City Hall Lobby.

For Rizal, a Kadiwa ng Pangulo market (Turn to p. 2)

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government's goal of uplifting Filipino families through access to decent shelter.

Of the total housing loans released in 2025, Pag-IBIG Fund said 7,056 Expanded 4PH socialized housing units worth PHP7.63 billion were financed under the program's subsidized 3-percent interest rate.

Another 4,811 housing units worth PHP6.2 billion were financed under the agency's 4.5 percent promotional rate for loans of up to PHP1.8 million.

"Pag-IBIG Fund remains fully aligned with the directive of President Marcos Jr. to expand access to quality and affordable housing, especially for minimum wage earners and middle-income members," Acosta said.

She added Pag-IBIG Fund rolled out various home loan programs last year to address members' varying needs, including subsidized and promotional interest rates, as well as financing for home repair and improvement.

Under the Pag-IBIG Housing Loan for the Expanded 4PH, qualified local members and all overseas Filipino workers who are first-time homebuyers may avail of loans to purchase socialized housing units at a 3-percent annual interest rate for the first five

years, extendable for another five years for qualified borrowers.

The agency said the subsidized rate lowers monthly payments to PHP4,005 for house-and-lot units priced up to PHP950,000 and about PHP8,432 for condominium units priced up to PHP2 million.

Pag-IBIG Fund acquired assets within socialized housing price ceilings are also covered, with the first 30,000 qualified borrowers eligible for the subsidized rate for the first 10 years under the Early Bird Promo.

It also offers a 4.5-percent promotional rate for qualified first-time homebuyers on loans of up to PHP1.8 million, which the agency said significantly reduces monthly amortization compared with the regular rate.

For members seeking to improve their current homes, Pag-IBIG Fund said it continues to offer the Pag-IBIG Home Improvement Loan, allowing qualified members to borrow up to PHP300,000 for repairs or upgrades, payable within five years, with simplified requirements and a promotional 3-percent annual interest rate for the first 10,000 borrowers. (PNA)

DA... FR. P. 1

will be held on January 28 at Sumulong Park, Antipolo City.

In Batangas, multiple Kadiwa Pop-Up activities are lined up, including on January 16 at Fernando Airbase in Lipa City and Malvar's Park in the City of Sto. Tomas, January 27 at BATELEC I in Calaca City, and January 28 at the Batangas PPO Covered Court in Camp Gen. Miguel C. Malvar, Batangas City.

Regular Kadiwa Pop-Up markets are also conducted every Monday at the LAR-ES Compound in Barangay Marawoy, Lipa City. A Kadiwa ng Pangulo activity is scheduled on January

30 at Recto Gym in Ibaan.

DA Calabarzon emphasized that the Kadiwa ng Pangulo program continues to serve as a direct marketing platform, linking producers to consumers.

The agriculture department added that Kadiwa is helping stabilize food prices while promoting food security and supporting the livelihood of local farmers and micro-entrepreneurs.

The public is encouraged to visit the nearest Kadiwa sites to avail of fresh and affordable agricultural products. (PIA4A/DA4A)

DepEd... FR. P. 1

The four-story building boosts the school's capacity, which currently caters to more than 2,400 primary learners.

It comes with smart televisions, armchairs, and safety features, including fire alarms and emergency lights.

The accelerated school building construction was made possible through the partnership between the DepEd and the city government, which utilized its Special Ed-

ucation Fund.

In less than three years, more than 100 classrooms have been constructed or are under construction across the schools division of General Trias City.

Angara previously said that similar flexible measures are in place to speed up classroom construction and delivery nationwide, with the help of the expanded public-private partnerships, as well as the Adopt-A-School Program. (PNA)

STUDY: HELPING BEES... FR. P. 5

ranging them thoughtfully can help reduce opportunities for viruses to spread.

Conservation efforts also need to consider the surrounding landscape, as virus risk depends on floral resources within a wider area, not just a single site.

The findings also suggest better controlling interactions between wild and managed bees. By carefully

placing beehives and timing their activity, farmers and beekeepers can reduce overlap with wild pollinators and limit virus transmission.

Agencies can integrate these disease insights into pollinator protection programs to strike a more effective balance between habitat restoration and the health of bee populations. (TPS-IL)

PhilHealth pays P300-B in benefit claims in 2025

MANILA – The Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) said Tuesday it has paid more than PHP300 billion in benefit claims nationwide in 2025, reflecting a significant increase in payments to both private and government health facilities.

Based on reports of checks issued and advice of payment, PhilHealth disbursed PHP300.45 billion in benefit payments from January to December 2025.

Of the total amount, PHP177.70 billion was paid to private health facilities, while PHP122.75 billion went to government hospitals.

The figure represents an 81.72 percent in-

crease compared to the same period in 2024, when total benefit payments amounted to PHP165.34 billion.

In 2024, PhilHealth paid PHP74.02 billion to private facilities and PHP91.32 billion to government hospitals.

PhilHealth said the substantial increase underscores its continued commitment to ensuring the timely payment of benefit claims and strengthening financial risk protection for its members.

The state health insurer reiterated that it remains focused on improving access to quality healthcare services while supporting both public and private healthcare providers nationwide. (PNA)

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

Proverbs 17:22



PGC Delivers Health Services to Indang Community

On January 15, 2026, the Provincial Government of Cavite (PGC) conducted a Medical and Dental Mission in Brgy. Buna Lejos 1, Indang, Cavite, delivering free healthcare services to 542 beneficiaries.

The health activity delivered 332 medical consultations and 53 dental services, along with diagnostic procedures including 95 fasting blood sugar (FBS) tests, 32 ECGs, and 30 X-ray examinations.

Medical and dental doctors from Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo Memorial Hospital (GEAMH), in collaboration with the AMIGA District Hospital team, led the provision of health services, with assistance from Barangay Health Workers (BHWs) to ensure the smooth conduct of the mission.

The event was supported and graced by 7th District Board Member Aldrin Anacan, highlighting the local government's continued efforts to bring accessible and quality healthcare services closer to Cavite communities.--- OPIO



PGC brings free medical and dental services to Brgy. San Gabriel, GMA

Recently, the Provincial Government of Cavite successfully conducted another round of medical and dental mission, providing much-needed healthcare services to residents of Brgy. San Gabriel, General Mariano Alvarez.

The mission served a total of 502 patients, offering free medical consultations, dental and diagnostic services including fasting blood sugar, ECG tests, and X-ray examinations. Free prescribed medicines and vitamins were also distributed to patients.

Fifth District Board Members Aidel Belamide and Ivey Jayne Reyes graced the mission, expressing full support for the province's continuing efforts to ensure that quality healthcare reaches every community.--- OPIO

DFA... FR. P. 1

when scientific data is still evolving.

"The health and safety of infants and young children remain a non-negotiable priority," it added.

The FDA said it is guided by the precautionary principle, noting that reports of adverse symp-

toms such as vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain warrant immediate regulatory attention and intervention even if a direct causal link has yet to be conclusively established.

"When early indicators of potential harm emerge, particularly

involving infants, the FDA will not wait for conclusive outcomes before acting. Our mandate is prevention, not reaction," the agency said.

While acknowledging that voluntary recalls are appropriate and necessary, the FDA stressed that such actions do not end regulatory scrutiny. It said ongoing assess-



Free medical & dental mission in Barangay Milagrosa

Governor Abeng Remulla's Medical Mission Team, in collaboration with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, and the City Government of Carmona, successfully conducted a Medical and Dental Mission on January 16, at Barangay Milagrosa, Phase III.

With the support of Mayor Dahlia Loyola, the City Council, and 5th District Board Member Ivey Reyes, the mission served 526 patients with free consultations, medicines, and health services, including 56 tooth extractions, 67 FBS tests, 12 ECGs, and 12 X-rays.

The initiative underscores the local government's continuing commitment to accessible healthcare, disease prevention, and the promotion of community well-being.--- OPIO



PGC medical mission expands access to healthcare in GMA

Recently, the Office of the Provincial Governor – Medical Mission Team, in collaboration with doctors and volunteers from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer (OPHO), conducted a medical mission in Barangay. Aldiano Olaes, GMA, Cavite.

The activity served a total of 390 patients who were provided with comprehensive medical consultations, physical examinations, and free medicines. Diagnostic services included fasting blood sugar (FBS) testing for 100 patients, 13 electrocardiogram (ECG) procedures, and 23 X-ray examinations.

The initiative was also supported by 5th District Board Member Aidel Belamide, who graced the activity, a testament to the continued commitment of the Provincial Government and its healthcare arm to improving access to basic medical services. The strong cooperation among the organizers, healthcare professionals, volunteers, and the local community contributed significantly to the success of the activity and to the promotion of community health and well-being.--- OPIO

ments, close coordination with health authorities, and reviews of supplier chains remain in place as part of its intensified oversight.

The FDA added that manufacturers must be able to demonstrate at every stage that their

products meet the highest standards of safety and quality, warning that stronger regulatory and legal actions will be taken should similar incidents recur or investigations establish negligence or culpability.

The agency assured the public that it continues to closely monitor reported cases, evaluate available scientific evidence, and implement all necessary regulatory measures to protect consumers. (PNA)

DENR-EMB mulls circular economy to improve waste management in Calabarzon



CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources–Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) Calabarzon continues to promote the adoption of a circular economy approach to strengthen waste management systems and reduce environmental pollution across the region.

DENR-EMB Environmental Monitoring and Enforcement Division Chief Corazon Gasapos emphasized that a circular economy shifts the traditional “take–make–dispose” model into a more sustainable system where materials are reduced, reused, recycled, and recovered, allowing waste to be transformed into resources that can still generate value.

“Currently, what we are doing is the linear economy, we are taking resources from our environment. We are making good products, only the ones we need, but when we use them, we throw them in the trash. So that’s the linear economy. Our direction is towards the circular economy where the things that we can still benefit from, we recover them

and we use them,” Gasapos stated during an interview with Philippine Information Agency.

The circular economy is a global sustainability framework that aims to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation by maximizing the efficient use of resources.

Unlike the linear economy, which relies heavily on extraction and disposal, the circular economy focuses on extending the life cycle of products, minimizing waste generation, and reducing pressure on natural resources, Gasapos further explained.

“(For) example is plastics, when it burns, it releases toxic smoke, or it clogs the drains. Now, what we will do is, after we use these plastics, we will recover these plastics, we can melt them, we can make good products. Or we can grind them, we can incorporate them into concrete products. We will incorporate them into what we throw away, we will continue to use the things that still have benefits through recycling and cycling,” the DENR-EMB official adds.

In the Philippines, the circular economy is

increasingly being recognized as a key sustainable strategy to address mounting waste concerns, particularly plastic pollution, landfill congestion, and marine debris.

It complements existing environmental policies such as Republic Act No. 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, and Republic Act No. 11898, or the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022, which directs large companies to recover and recycle their plastic packaging waste.

Moreso, DENR-EMB Calabarzon actively promotes waste segregation at source, recycling programs, composting of biodegradable waste, and the establishment of materials recovery facilities (MRFs). The bureau also works closely with LGUs and the private sector to encourage compliance with RA 9003.

The bureau then stressed that public participation remains essential, noting that households and communities play a vital role in reducing waste through mindful consumption, reuse, and proper waste disposal. (AM/PIA Calabarzon)

FDA flags 65 recalled infant formula in Luzon monitoring

MANILA — The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has flagged dozens of recalled Nestlé products during its monitoring activities in Luzon as part of the agency’s nationwide efforts to ensure the proper implementation of the voluntary recall of selected infant and milk products.

In an advisory on Tuesday, the FDA said enforcement teams flagged 65 Nestlé products across multiple establishments in Luzon during inspections conducted from Jan. 13 to 15, 2026, covering recalled batches of NAN Optipro and NANKID Optipro.

The affected products found in Luzon were already pulled out from shelves, returned to suppliers, or properly segregated and documented for retrieval, the FDA added.

In one establishment where a recalled batch was still on display, the item was immediately removed.

The agency stressed that no continued sale of recalled products was observed during the inspections.

In the Visayas, inspections covered several establishments carrying Nestlé products, with affected items found in only one outlet.

The FDA said retrieval was already underway during the inspection, with remaining stocks blocked from sale and committed for full



MONITORING. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Field Regulatory Operations Office through its Regulatory Enforcement Units conducts nationwide monitoring of selected NAN Optipro and NANKID Optipro products from Jan. 13 to 15, 2026. The activity aims to ensure that recalled products are promptly removed from the market and that recall procedures are properly implemented nationwide. (Photo courtesy of FDA)

pull-out. No continued sale was noted.

In Mindanao, the FDA teams verified 206 Nestlé products across numerous establishments.

Most outlets reported having no affected products on sale. Recalled stocks were promptly removed from selling areas, inventoried, sealed and secured for return to suppliers or distributors, it said.

The monitoring was carried out by the FDA’s Field Regulatory Operations Office (FROO) through its Regulatory Enforcement Units (REUs), in coordination with its Regional Field Offices (RFOs), as part of intensified post-market surveillance.

The agency reminded parents and caregivers to check product labels and batch numbers, immediately stop using affected products, and follow the recall instructions issued by the manufacturer.

Parents were also advised to seek medical advice if any health

concerns are observed and to report incidents to the FDA through ereport@fda.gov.ph.

Safety of infants ‘non-negotiable’ priority

In a separate advisory, the FDA said that the safety of infant formula products is “non-negotiable,” warning manufacturers that the absence of established safety limits does not excuse potential risks to infants and young children.

The FDA underscored that manufacturers remain fully responsible for ensuring the safety, quality and integrity of products intended for infants, regardless of whether specific regulatory thresholds or definitive scientific conclusions have been established.

“The absence of specific safety limits is not a shield against accountability,” the FDA said, emphasizing that companies producing infant formula are expected to exercise the highest degree of precaution, especially

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DSWD thanks Indian gov't for humanitarian aid to typhoons-hit families

MANILA – As the Vice-Chair for Disaster Response of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) gratefully received the non-food humanitarian assistance donated by the People and Government of India for the families affected by Typhoons “Tino” and “Uwan” in November last year.

Ambassador of India to the Philippines, His Excellency Shri Harsh Kumar Jain, handed over the donated goods to Undersecretary Diana Rose Cajipe of the DSWD's Disaster Response Management Group (DRMG) in a ceremony held Tuesday at the Clark Airbase, Pampanga.

“On behalf of the Philippine Government, DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian, and other agencies who will help us in bringing your assistance to the affected Filipinos in Central Luzon, we are grateful to accept these donations from the Republic of

India,” Cajipe said as quoted in a news release Wednesday.

The donated goods consist of 500 pieces each of sleeping mats, mosquito nets, and blankets; 750 sleeping bags; 1,550 dignity kits for males; 1,350 dignity kits for female children —including 50 dignity kits for women; and 1,000 solar lamps.

These donations will be distributed to the disaster-affected families of Dilasag, Aurora.

The Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog, Hita & Maitri (BHISHM) Cube was also donated to the Department of Health (DOH), which consists of various medical equipment and medicines approved by the country's Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Kumar Jain also shared that the Indian government will provide trainers to ensure Filipino doctors or paramedics are fully equipped to operate the unit.

The training can be

conducted by a team of trainers flown to the Philippines, by sending a team of Filipino doctors or paramedics to New Delhi, or by videoconferencing.

The Department of Human Settlement and Urban Development (DHSUD) also received 150 tarpaulins and 100 sets of tents to support the rehabilitation of damaged houses of the disaster-affected families.

To date, DSWD continues to provide relief assistance to Uwan and Tino-affected families and help them recover, especially in the province of Aurora in Central Luzon.

“These non-food items, medicines, and shelter materials will indeed go a long way in helping our countrymen find comfort as they recover and eventually lead normal lives,” Cajipe said.

The DSWD official also gave assurance that the department will ensure the assistance provided by the Republic of India will reach the intended beneficiaries. (PR)

Study: Helping bees could backfire, flowers may spread viruses

JERUSALEM – Planting more flowers is widely seen as a simple way to help struggling bees. But a new study suggests that, without careful planning, those same flowers can also help spread viruses among pollinators, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem announced.

An international research team found that the flowers bees visit — and how many flowering plants are available across the surrounding landscape — play a major role in where bee viruses appear and how they move between species.

The findings highlight the need to consider disease risks alongside habitat restoration, particularly as conservation efforts expand in agricultural areas.

Wild bee populations around the world, including in Israel, have been declining in recent decades.

Habitat loss, intensive agriculture, pesticide use, climate change, and disease exposure all contribute to this decline. Bees are essential pollinators for both wild plants and many crops, so their decline threatens biodiversity, food security, and ecosystem health.

Even small reductions in wild bee numbers can have ripple effects: fewer bees mean less pollination, which can reduce the yield of fruits, vegetables, and nuts, and limit the reproduction of wild plants.

The study was led by PhD student Idan



(TPS-IL photo)

Kahnonitch under the guidance of Prof. Yael Mandelik of the Hebrew University and Dr. Asaf Sadeh of the Volcani Institute.

The international research team also included Prof. Nor Chejanovsky of the Volcani Institute and Prof. Michelle Fleniken and Dr. Katie Daughenbaugh of Montana State University. The Volcani Institute is the research arm of Israel's Ministry of Agriculture.

Published in the peer-reviewed journal *Ecological Applications*, the study focused on wild solitary mining bees of the genus *Andrena*, an important group of native pollinators.

Researchers surveyed wild bees across multiple sites in a Mediterranean agroecosystem and screened them for several common bee viruses, many of which are typically linked to managed honey bees.

The results showed that, while virus levels in wild bees were generally low, their presence followed clear ecological patterns.

Viruses were more likely to be found in areas with certain types of flowering plant communities and where floral resourc-

es were abundant not just at a single site, but across the surrounding landscape, extending up to one kilometer away.

“Our findings show that flowers are not just food sources for pollinators,” the researchers said. “They also shape disease dynamics within pollinator communities. This means that decisions about habitat management and restoration, often focusing actions on the plant communities, can have unintended consequences for pollinator health if disease transmission is not taken into account.”

Flowers act as shared gathering points where different pollinators feed side by side, increasing contact between individuals and species. This creates opportunities for viruses to move from bee to bee, including between managed honey bees and wild native bees. The study found evidence of such virus sharing, reinforcing concerns that intensive agriculture and widespread beekeeping may affect the health of wild pollinators.

The study indicates that choosing specific plant species and ar-

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Seoul eyes joint UNESCO bid with Pyongyang for taekwondo

NAKHON RATCHASIMA, Thailand – Swimmer Gary Bejino set the tone for the Philippine delegation by not only winning the first gold medal of the 13th ASEAN Para Games but also setting a new meet record.

Bejino, who competed in the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021, reset the meet record in the men's 400-meter freestyle S6 event with a time of five minutes and 32.08 seconds here at the 80th Birthday Aquatics Center last Wednesday.

But more than resetting his previous record of 5:38.26 in Cambodia back in 2023, it was a fitting birthday gift for his son Gray, who turned two on the first day of the tournament in this competition for differently-abled bodies.

"I am happy to get the gold and have my time be a bit faster," Bejino said.

"It so happened that the first day of the competition coincided with my son's birthday as well as my coach Bryan Ong and coach Leo Ramos' birthday yesterday. It added more motivation for me to win."

A few minutes after Bejino's victory, veteran tanker Ernie Gawilan followed suit as he won the gold medal



Swimmer Gary Bejino (File photo)

in the men's 400m freestyle S7 with 5:02.39.

Gawilan is dedicating his gold medal to his wife and their incoming daughter, who will be born next month.

"First of all, I dedicate this victory to the country and to my baby who will be born soon," Gawilan said.

Angel Mae Otom, who saw action at the 2024 Paris Paralympics, added one more gold after dominating the women's 50m backstroke S4-S5 with a time of 47.29 seconds.

Meanwhile, both the national men's and women's 3x3 wheelchair basketball squads settled for silver medals after losing to hosts Thailand in the final at Hall 1 of Terminal 21 Korat.

The Pilipinas Warriors suffered a 13-20 loss to the Thais while the Lady Warriors suffered a 5-12 defeat.

Marydol Pamati-an also clinched a silver medal in the women's 41-kilogram event at para powerlifting af-

ter tallying a total lift of 77kgs while Denesia Esnara got a bronze medal in the 45kg event after lifting 73kgs.

Michael Bayani grabbed a bronze medal in para cycling while Francisco Ednaco also took the bronze medal in the singles event of Tenpin Bowling. (Jean Malanum/PNA)

Mayon-affected families get P10.2-M gov't aid

MANILA – More than PHP10 million worth of assistance has been provided by the government and other stakeholders to families affected by the ongoing restiveness of Mayon Volcano in Albay, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said in its latest update.

The assistance, amounting to PHP10,266,746.41 worth of food and other essential items, was provided to 1,131 fam-

Agra secures 1st pickleball title at PPL Luzon Open

MANILA – Lawyer Jessica Agra always gives her best in every match, whatever the sport is.

The former national junior tennis player, who is also the country's No. 1 padel player, bagged her first title at the Philippine Pickleball League (PPL) Luzon Open held at the Dink Lab in Kawit, Cavite on Sunday.

She teamed up with Fritz Chris Verdad, a pro tennis player, to beat Elise Geluz and Raoul Amirul, 15-14, in the 18+ Advanced mixed doubles finals.

"I'm so happy that we were able to get the gold medal. We were just excited to join our first national tournament in pickleball and of course, we hoped to get a podium but no expectations," Agra said in an interview Tuesday.

"We were out there to have fun and to give it our all and wanted to see how far we could go. It's a bonus to win the tournament. We were down 10-14 in the finals before we won. I'm also happy to team up with Fritz because I know that no matter what's the score of the game, he'll fight



DYNAMIC DUO. Jessica Agra with Fritz Chris Verdad won the 18+ Advanced Mixed Doubles title in the Philippine Pickleball League (PPL) Luzon Open in Kawit, Cavite on Jan. 18, 2026. They beat Elise Geluz and Raoul Amirul, 15-14, in the finals. (Contributed photo)

until the end. It's always fun to play with someone who really has the heart to play," she added.

Agra reached No. 1 in the Asia Pacific Padel Tour (APPT) in June 2024, becoming Asia's top player after strong performances, including a win in Phuket (Thailand) and a runner-up finish in Bali (Indonesia).

She enjoyed the experience of playing in the pickleball tournament and was very thankful for the opportunity.

"I want to train more, get better and join more pickleball tournaments this year. It's so exciting to have a

racket sport which has this much support here in our country," Agra, who peaked at No. 145 in the International Padel Federation (FIP) rankings in mid-2025, said.

Next in the PPL calendar of events are the Pampanga Ligliligan (Luzon leg) on Feb. 27 to March 1, and March 6 to 8 in San Fernando and the Mindanao Open on March 13 to 15, and March 20 to 22 in Davao del Sur.

They beat Claire Nacito and Lorenzo Jose Manuel Cruz, 11-7, in the quarterfinals and Ayra Rasuman and Toey Bagumbun, 15-6, in the semis. (PNA)

ogy (Phivolcs) raised the alert status of Mayon Volcano from Level 2 (increasing unrest) to Level 3 (increased tendency toward a hazardous eruption).

Repeated collapse of the unstable summit dome of Mayon Volcano has generated an increasing number and volume of rockfall events.

Since Jan. 1, a total of 346 rockfall events and four volcanic earthquakes were recorded, compared to 599 rockfall events from No-

vember to December 2025.

These rockfall events had durations of one minute to five minutes and transported lava debris within a kilometer range of the southern upper slopes.

State seismologists added that the volume of discrete rockfall, with observed incandescence at nighttime, increased on Monday, signaling an increase in dome growth and the onset of extrusion of new lava at the crater. (PNA)