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PBBM pushes for sustainable, inclusive tourism at ASEAN Tourism Forum

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Wednesday called for sustainable and inclusive tourism as the Philippines, this year's Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) chair, formally opened the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2026 in Cebu.

During the opening of the AFT 2026, Marcos underscored the cru-

cial role of the tourism sector as a "driver of opportunity for economies and communities."

"When tourism is inclusive, it becomes empowering. When policies are carried out with care, they become sustainable," Marcos said in a speech delivered by Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco.

"As we look to the

future, the Philippines invites all ASEAN member states and partners to move with us and be part of this journey. I share with you the sense of confidence and optimism that ASEAN tourism will continue to strive," he added.

Marcos said a major milestone under the ATF is the completion and adoption of the

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Over 13K CALABARZON households benefit from DSWD Sustainable Livelihood Program 2025

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna (PIA) — More than 13,000 households across the CALABARZON Region gained new and sustainable sources of income in 2025 as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) IV-A rolled out expanded livelihood opportunities under its Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP).

DSWD IV-A reported that a total of 13,792 households received P257.81 mil-

lion in livelihood assistance to support the establishment of micro-enterprises. These ventures include community stores, hog-raising, vegetable farming, duck raising, rice retailing, and other small-scale businesses aimed at strengthening local economies and promoting self-sufficiency. Of the total beneficiaries, 13,720 households have already started operating their livelihood projects.

The livelihood sup-



port covered five provinces, with Batangas recording the highest number of beneficiaries at 4,683, followed by Quezon at 3,514, Laguna at 2,718, Rizal at 1,878, and Cavite at 999, reflecting the program's wide reach across the region.

DepEd chief urges LGUs to help accelerate classroom delivery

MANILA – Education Secretary Sonny Angara on Wednesday called on local government units (LGUs) to help speed up classroom delivery nationwide through a more flexible classroom construction mechanism.

Angara made the call

during a dialogue with more than 200 city and municipal mayors at the Makabagong San Juan Theater in San Juan City.

"Kapag ang LGU ang nasa unahan ng implementasyon, mas mabilis nating naaabot ang mga paaralan na pina-ka-nangangailangan

(If LGUs will be at the forefront of the implementation, we can reach priority schools faster)," Angara said.

Under the flexible framework, the DepEd will identify priority schools in the country; provide classroom designs and technical

(Turn to p. 2)



INCLUSIVE TOURISM. President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., in a message delivered by Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco (left), calls for sustainable and inclusive tourism as the Philippines formally opens the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2026 in Cebu on Wednesday (Jan. 28, 2026). First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos (center) attended the event, which highlights tourism's role in driving economic growth, empowering communities, and strengthening regional cooperation among ASEAN member states. (PNA photo by Joyce Ann Rocamora)

into associations and trained in basic entrepreneurship, financial management, and co-operative operations. This approach aims to enhance not only income generation but also social cohesion and long-term enterprise sustainability.

For community leaders like Vilma Ma-

dridejeos, president of the Golden Harvest Cupang SLP Association in Bauan, Batangas, the program has created shared economic opportunities at the barangay level. Their 30-member association received P450,000 in start-up capital, which they in-

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specifications; approve and review plans and variation orders; secure validation and inspections; and release project funds in tranches.

For its part, the LGUs will lead the implementation from procurement to construction in adherence with national laws and DepEd-standard designs.

They will also be in charge of managing construction defects at their own expense if DepEd standards and specifications were not met.

Once classroom constructions are completed, buildings will be considered as DepEd assets but will be under joint monitoring and audit to ensure quality.

For LGUs to participate, eligibility requirements must be submitted to the DepEd.

These include a letter of intent signifying the commitment to implement classroom

projects; authority from the Sangguniang Bayan, Panlungsod, or Panlalawigan to enter into a memorandum of agreement with DepEd; and proof of site ownership or the right to use the school site, such as proof of deed, a tax declaration, or a deed of usufruct.

Meanwhile, Angara said constructions that are still under the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) will be monitored more regularly.

"Mas regular na yung meetings namin. May ginawa kaming (Our meetings are more regular. We have formed a) Technical Working Group at least once or twice, nagmi-meeting na kami (we are conducting meetings)," he said.

Prior to the operation of the TWG, Angara said progress reports on classroom construction from the DPWH may take up to four to five months or more. (PNA)

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ASEAN Tourism Sector Plan 2026-2030, which sets a clear and unified course for advancing sustainable and inclusive tourism across the region.

He said the regional tourism roadmap is designed to enrich visitor experience, empower both small- and large-scale enterprises, and strengthen ASEAN's competitiveness in the global market.

"In many ways, this roadmap reflects ASEAN's larger direction — growth that is innovative, development that is environmentally sound, and progress that prioritizes the welfare of the people," he said.

Marcos said the Philippines' ASEAN chairship is guided by five strategic thrusts called "SAIL ASEAN" or "SAIL-A," which stands for Strengthening Trade and Investment Linkages; Accelerating Digital Transformation; Integrating ASEAN's MSME Development Agenda; Leveraging the Creative Economy and Innovation; and Advancing Sustainable and Inclusive Economies.

He said the strategic thrusts would provide direction and balance to ASEAN member-states' shared journey as they work to boost tourism, which he described as

er-related fatalities, the state's health department said.

Officials, cited by the New York Times, reported that at least eight people were found dead over the weekend in New York.

In Minneapolis, the latest city rocked by unrest following US President Donald Trump's migrant clampdown, temperatures were expected to fall to minus 13F (minus 25 °C) Monday.

Further south, the normally balmy cities of San Antonio and Austin in the state of Texas were expected to hit just 20F (minus 7 °C). (Anadolu)

a key driver of growth when fueled by vision and innovation.

"In ASEAN, tourism has always been more than an industry. It is a bridge between our cultures, a pathway connecting our people, and a force that brings our region together," Marcos said.

"Here in the Philippines, tourism continues to uplift not only destinations but also lives. It supports Filipino farmers, fisherfolk, creatives, transport providers, hospitality service providers, and entrepreneurs," he added.

Marcos reaffirmed the Philippines' commitment to advancing ASEAN members' collective interests and steering the region toward shared growth.

The Philippines opened the ATF 2026 under the theme "Navigating Our Tourism Future, Together," marking a key milestone of its ASEAN Chairship.

First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos and ASEAN tourism ministers attended the event, which featured cultural performances that celebrate Philippine heritage — from indigenous chants and regional folk dances to contemporary musical pieces. (PNA)

Wind is likely to make it feel colder than the thermometer might suggest in many parts of the country.

For many, the cold front could not come at a worse time. Hundreds of thousands of people across 11 states are without power, including over 29,000 people in Texas, 182,000 in Tennessee, 140,000 in Mississippi, and 100,000 in Louisiana.

In total, nearly 539,000 people are without electricity, according to the latest data from the PowerOutage.us website. (Anadolu)

OVER 13K... FR. P. 1

vested in a duck-raising and salted egg production enterprise launched in November 2025.

According to Madridejos, "Napakalaking tulong nito sa aming mga miyembro dahil nagbibigay ito ng bagong pagkakakitaan para sa amin at sa buong barangay."

In Mabini, Batangas, Ruby Serafin, president of the Majuben's Leading Light SLP Association, highlighted the program's dual impact on income and personal development. "Maliban sa tulong pangkabuhayan, natuto akong makisalamuha sa aking mga kagrupo at lalong nahahasa ang aking kawayahan sa pagnenegosyo," said Serafin.

Their 16-member group established a community store in early 2025, generating dividends for members while strengthening their skills in teamwork and small-scale business management. Ser-

afin reported receiving P4,500 in dividends by September 2025, reflecting early gains from the enterprise.

To safeguard the continuity of these livelihood projects, DSWD Field Office IV-A continues to conduct regular monitoring, mentoring, and technical assistance through its SLP project development officers. This post-implementation support is crucial in addressing operational challenges and ensuring that enterprises remain viable beyond the initial funding period.

The SLP remains a key government strategy in poverty reduction and inclusive growth, shifting households from short-term aid to self-sustaining sources of income, while empowering communities to participate actively in local economic development. (CCM PIA CALABARZON/ DSWD4A)

Over 30 people died in US due to winter storm

HOUSTON, United States — At least 34 people have died as millions of Americans braced for extreme cold gripping wide swathes of the US this week, as the dig-out from a massive winter storm that dumped mounds of snow and ice continued on Tuesday.

Cold weather alerts have been issued for much of the central and eastern US, with a polar vortex expected to set records in some parts of the southern and northeastern areas this week. That frigid front will also complicate efforts to clear snow and ice in dozens of states, as any melt will refreeze in single-digit temperatures.

Some regions may not see temperatures hit above freezing un-

til early February. The Midwest, in particular, is forecast to be hit with exceptionally frosty temperatures.

One fatality was reported in each of the states of Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, South Carolina, and New Jersey, with two deaths reported in each Arkansas, Massachusetts, and Mississippi, alongside three fatalities each in Pennsylvania, Texas, and Louisiana, while four in Tennessee, and nine reported in New York, according to USA Today.

A woman in Kansas died due to hypothermia, another woman in Massachusetts died after being struck by snowplow, according to police, and three people died in Tennessee due to weather-

related fatalities, the state's health department said.

Officials, cited by the New York Times, reported that at least eight people were found dead over the weekend in New York.

In Minneapolis, the latest city rocked by unrest following US President Donald Trump's migrant clampdown, temperatures were expected to fall to minus 13F (minus 25 °C) Monday.

Further south, the normally balmy cities of San Antonio and Austin in the state of Texas were expected to hit just 20F (minus 7 °C). (Anadolu)

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raquel.cavitenews@gmail.com
0997409432/09329770888
Website Cavitenews.com

RAQUEL M. MAGTIBAY

Publisher

JESSIEL M. RAVANA

Editor-In-Chief

JOHN JEPREE MAGTIBAY

Lay-out-Artist

LAURO M. MAGTIBAY

Circulation Manager

ATTY. RACQUEL C. LARA

Legal Counsel



MEMBER of PRIME ALLIANCE of PUBLISHERS, EDITORS, & REPORTERS of the Philippines Inc.

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More than 600 residents benefit from PGC's Medical and Dental Mission in Brgy. Halang, Naic

More than 600 residents of Barangay Halang, Naic benefited from a successful medical and dental mission conducted by the Provincial Government of Cavite on January 20, aimed at bringing essential healthcare services closer to the community.

The activity provided a wide range of free medical services, including general medical consultations, X-ray, electrocardiogram (ECG), and fasting blood sugar (FBS) testing. Dental services such as tooth extraction and dental consultation were also made available to address the oral health needs of the beneficiaries.

The medical and dental services were rendered by the healthcare professionals from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer (OPHO), who ensured the efficient delivery of quality and accessible healthcare to residents of the barangay.

The initiative reflects the continuing commitment of the provincial government to promote the health and well-being of its constituents, especially those in grassroots communities. Residents expressed their gratitude for the timely and comprehensive services, which helped address their immediate medical and dental concerns.--- OPIO



PGC extends Medical and Dental Mission to Gentriseños

Another round of a successful Medical and Dental Mission was conducted by the Provincial Government of Cavite in Brgy. Pasong Camachile 1, Grand River Side, General Trias City on January 21.

The initiative benefited Gentriseños with a wide range of free health services designed to promote wellness and early detection. Medical consultations under the OPD reached 428 patients, while diagnostic services included 101 fasting blood sugar (FBS) tests, 24 ECG procedures, and 18 X-ray services. Meanwhile, 46 patients received dental care through the Rural Health Unit (RHU) of City of General Trias.

The mission was made possible through the combined expertise of the GEAMH medical team and the RHU dental team of General Trias City, who worked hand in hand to deliver efficient and compassionate care. To further support patients' recovery and well-being, free medicines were distributed by the Office of the Provincial Governor (OPG) medical team, ensuring continuity of treatment beyond the consultation.



Health services brought closer to home for 600+ Imuseños

More than 600 residents of Barangay Malagasang II-C, City of Imus, Cavite benefited from free medical and dental services during a one-day Medical and Dental Mission on January 23. The activity was organized by the Provincial Government of Cavite's Medical Mission Team in partnership with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, the City Health Office, and the office of Board Member Chelsea Sarno.

A total of 659 individuals availed of general medical services, including X-rays, fasting blood sugar (FBS) tests, and electrocardiograms (ECGs). In addition, 47 patients received dental extractions during the mission.

The event was also graced by Mayor Alex "AA" Advincula along with city councilors, who expressed their support for the program.

Board Member Sarno emphasized the importance of bringing essential health services directly to communities, particularly to those with limited access to healthcare. As added assistance, each patient also received five kilos of rice.

The Provincial Government of Cavite continues to roll out similar health outreach programs across the province as part of its efforts to address gaps in healthcare access, especially in rural and underserved areas.



Kaingen residents receive free medical and dental services

On January 22, the Provincial Government of Cavite's Medical and Dental Mission Team conducted a health outreach program in Brgy. Kaingen, Kawit, benefiting more than 400 residents.

The mission provided medical consultations to 391 patients and dental services to 46 residents, along with diagnostic tests such as fasting blood sugar (FBS), electrocardiogram (ECG), and X-ray examinations. Free medicines and vitamin supplements were also distributed to further support the health needs of the beneficiaries.

First District Board Member Jygs Gandia showed support for the activity, reflecting the strong commitment of the province's leaders to promoting the health and well-being of their constituents.--- OPIO

Adding support to the activity, Councilors Kyle Salazar and Jay Columna graced the event, underscoring the importance of strong local leadership and collaborative governance in advancing community health initiatives.

DEPDev chief sees economic recovery starting in Q2 2026

MANILA – The impact of government measures to support domestic economic growth is expected to begin materializing in the second quarter of 2026, Department of Economy, Planning and Development (DEPDev) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said Thursday.

Balisacan made the statement after the Philippine economy grew by 3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2025, slower than the 3.9 percent in the previous quarter and the 5.3 percent recorded a year earlier, according to the latest Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data.

The PSA said full-year growth settled at 4.4 percent, below the 5.7 percent posted in 2024 and under the revised 4.8 to 5 percent target.

On the demand side, fourth-quarter exports of goods rose 22.8 percent, imports of services increased by 4.2 percent, household consumption grew by 3.8 percent, and government spending expanded by 9.1 percent.

For the full year, exports of goods grew by 14.1 percent, government consumption by 9.1 percent, imports of services by 6.1 percent, and imports of goods by 4.7 percent.

The government targets GDP growth of 5 to 6 percent this year and 5.5 to 6.5 percent in 2027, with export growth targets of 2 percent and 3 percent, respectively. The foreign exchange assumption for both

years is PHP58.60 to a US dollar.

In a briefing, Balisacan said a return to at least 5 percent growth is possible by the second quarter, noting that achieving the full-year target would require growth to reach that level by then.

"That's the goal anyway, to go to the five to six percent for the entire year. On exactly what month or quarter, it's something definitely I couldn't say but, yes, to be able to go to 5 to 6 percent, you have to grow 5 percent by Q2," he said.

He attributed the slowdown to weather- and climate-related disruptions, issues surrounding anomalous flood control projects, and global economic uncertainties, which dampened construction activity and private consumption. Domestic demand growth slowed to 0.7 percent in the fourth quarter, while full-year expansion reached 3.7 per-

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virus cases were recently reported in West Bengal, India, with around 100 identified close contacts currently under monitoring by Indian health authorities.

DOH Assistant Secretary Albert Domingo said the Nipah virus is not new to the Philippines.

"Nakita na ito noon 2014 pa sa Sultan Kudarat, kung saan nagkaroon ng 17 na kaso (This was seen in 2014 in Sultan Kudarat where 17 cases were recorded)," he said.

He added patients

years is PHP58.60 to a US dollar.

Balisacan stressed the need to restore investor and consumer confidence through governance reforms, stronger accountability, improved project quality, and better use of public funds.

He also cited the importance of improving disaster preparedness, early warning systems, and the capacity of the state weather bureau.

For infrastructure, he said the government will accelerate the completion of ongoing projects while strengthening anti-corruption safeguards to support economic recovery and achieve more sustainable growth.

"These reforms protect public funds, strengthen our institutions, build a more resilient, inclusive economy, and ultimately, rebuild trust between government and the people we serve," Balisacan said. (PNA)



PGC marks graduation of Contact Center Services NC II trainees

The Provincial Government of Cavite successfully conducted the Commencement Exercises for the Community-Based Training on Contact Center Services NC II on January 23, at the Function Hall of the New Provincial Government Center, Trece Martires City.

The program was spearheaded by the Office of the Provincial Public Employment and Services Manager (OPPESM) in partnership with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), highlighting the province's continued commitment to strengthening workforce readiness and employment opportunities for Caviteños.

Ms. Rizalie Pinpin-Enero, Provincial PESO Manager, delivered the welcome remarks, congratulating the graduates and encouraging them to confidently apply the skills they gained during the training.

An inspirational message was delivered by 7th District Board Member Jhon Kester Aldrin R. Anacan, Chairperson of the Committee on Education, together with Provincial Administrator Engr. Gilbert V. Gandia. Both emphasized the importance of technical skills development as a pathway to sustainable employment and economic growth.

Mr. John Ray B. Malaca, Contact Center Services NC II Trainer, formally presented the candidates for graduation, followed by the acceptance of candidates by Ms. Mary Katherine L. Casauran, TESD Specialist II of TESDA Cavite.

A total of fifteen successful graduates proudly completed the community-based training program. A message was delivered by Mr. Jerwin Pague, representative from iQor, who highlighted employment opportunities in the contact center industry and reaffirmed the private sector's support for skilled graduates.

The ceremony was further enriched by messages from three graduate representatives, who shared their experiences, expressed gratitude, and conveyed their aspirations as they prepare to enter the workforce.

The activity underscored the Provincial Government of Cavite's sustained efforts to provide accessible, industry-relevant, and community-based skills training through strong partnerships with national agencies and private sector stakeholders. --- OPIO

the Epidemiology Bureau, has maintained continuous surveillance.

In 2023, the DOH issued updated guidelines on the prevention, detection and response to Nipah virus infection.

"Patuloy po ang pagbantay ng DOH Bureau of Quarantine sa lahat ng paliparan at pantalan, 24 horas,

may Nipah virus news man o wala (The DOH Bureau of Quarantine continues to monitor all airports and ports, 24 hours, with or without Nipah virus news)," Domingo told reporters in a Viber message.

The DOH advised the public to avoid contact with bats and other sick animals, ensure that meat products are

approved by the National Meat Inspection Service, and to always cook food thoroughly to reduce the risk of infection.

The health department reiterated its call for calm, saying it is closely monitoring global developments and is prepared to respond should any suspected case arise in the country. (PNA)

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Adamson ends Ateneo's winning run in UAAP boys' basketball

MANILA – Adamson University pulled off a 77-73 upset over unbeaten Ateneo de Manila University Thursday in the UAAP Season 88 boys basketball tournament at the Filoil Centre in San Juan.

Chrys Gomez scored on a jumper to give the Baby Falcons a 76-73 lead, going into the final two minutes. Jarl Artango split his charities to seal the win.

"The game plan today was to limit their import, so it's still 27-27. Our only backup plan was to try to limit their other players, we were able to do it. Offensively, I just said attack, attack, attack always," said Adamson head coach Mike Fermin.

"This win really comes with maturity. We're just pounding them and instilling in them that every game or every training, you treat this like your last. We always just think, we're not in the top four now. That's what fuels us to be better," he added.

Artango finished with 24 points, five rebounds, four assists, and three steals, while Gomez chipped in 13 points, five steals, two rebounds, and one assist. Noah Bautista contributed 10 points,



five rebounds, three blocks, two assists, and one steal, while Mac Jenodia and Fran Flores had eight points each.

Jude Eriobu led Ateneo with 27 points, 27 rebounds, four blocks, and one steal followed by Noah Banal (11 points, six rebounds, and one assist), Ziv Espinas (11 points and seven rebounds), and Jay-M Leal (nine points, five assists, four rebounds, one steal, and one block).

In the other game, Cabs Cabonilas delivered 21 points, five rebounds, two assists, two steals, and two blocks as Far Eastern University-Diliman demolished De La Salle Zobel, 79-61, for its fourth straight win.

FEU-D and Ateneo are tied for the lead with identical 5-1 records, while Adamson improved to 3-3.

Marc Burgos paced the Baby Tamaraws with 11 points, three rebounds, one assist, one steal, and one

block, followed by JB Cagurungan (11 points and five rebounds), Khean Esperanza (10 points, seven assists, five rebounds, and two steals), and Pat Sohm (six points and three rebounds).

Maco Dabao had 16 points, six rebounds, three assists, two steals, and one block while Nigerian center Yusuf Mikailu added 11 points, 16 rebounds, five blocks, and one steal for the Baby Archers. (PNA)

No Filipino casualties amid massive winter storm in US

MANILA – The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on Tuesday said no Filipinos were among those killed in the deadly winter storm that hit parts of the United States over the weekend.

The DFA said the Philippine Embassy in Washington DC, and the consulates general in New York, Chicago and Houston have so far reported no Filipino casualties in their jurisdictions.

Winter Storm Fern brought heavy snow and

Eala thru to PH Women's Open QF; German top seed Maria exits

MANILA – The Philippines' Alexandra Eala marched to the Philippine Women's Open quarterfinals after beating Japanese Himeno Sakatsume, 6-4, 6-0, at Rizal Memorial Tennis Center in Manila on Wednesday night.

Eala, seeded No. 2 in the country's first-ever WTA (Women's Tennis Association) 125 event, will be up against fifth seed Camila Osorio of Colombia, who survived Japanese Mai Hontama, 6-4, 4-6, 6-2.

"This (victory) was so enjoyable. I am so very happy with the win, of course although the first set was close," the world No. 49 Eala said. "I am so motivated, and I hope [the Filipino crowd] is just as motivated!"

Meanwhile, Russian Tatiana Prozorova ousted top seed German Tatjana Maria, 7-6 (2), 6-4, to advance against Belgian Sofia Costoulas, a 6-2, 6-4 winner over Chinese Ma Yexin.

Third seed Solana Sierra of Argentina and fourth seed Donna Vekic of Croatia also se-



RISING. Filipino Alexandra Eala prepares for an overhead smash against Japanese Himeno Sakatsume in the second round of the Philippine Women's Open at Rizal Memorial Tennis Center in Manila on Wednesday (Jan. 28, 2026). Eala won, 6-4, 6-0 to advance to the quarterfinals. (Contributed photo)

cured seats to the next round.

Sierra outplayed Yulia Starodubtseva of Ukraine, 6-4, 6-3, to forge a duel with Lamlana Tararudee of Thailand, who prevailed over Polina Kudermetova of Uzbekistan, 6-4, 6-4.

"It's really nice to see so many people watching our matches," Sierra said.

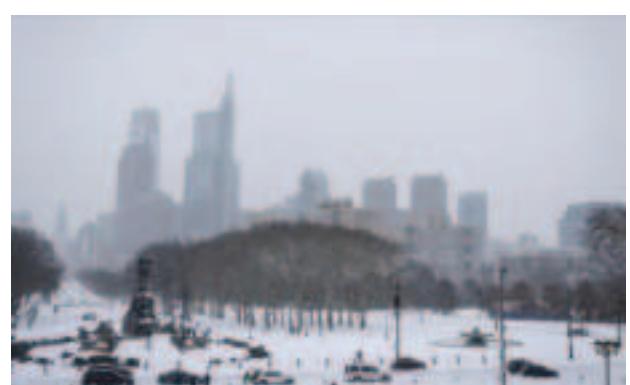
Vekic, on the other hand, triumphed over Mariia Tkacheva, 6-1, 6-2, to set up a quarter-final showdown with Zhu Lin of China, who pulled off a 6-3, 7-6 (5) victory over Mananchaya Sawangkaew of Thailand.

In doubles, Ameri-

can top seeds Quinn Gleason and Sabrina Santamaria struggled past Japanese Hiroko Kuwata and Chinese Qiu Yu Ye, 6-4, 7-5, to reach the semifinals.

Gleason and Santamaria will battle Li Yun Li of Chinese Taipei and Sara Saito of Japan, who eliminated fourth seeds Nicola Fossa Huergo of Argentina and Darja Semenista of Latvia, 7-5, 1-6, 12-10.

Second seeds Eudice Chong of Hong Kong and Liang En-shuo of Chinese Taipei also moved to the semis, beating Mana Ayukawa and Kanako Morisaki of Japan, 6-4, 6-2. (PNA)



MASSIVE STORM. A view of the Washington Monument during heavy snowfall that began on Jan. 25, 2026. Winter Storm Fern brought heavy snow and ice across the United States and is expected to continue affecting the Northeast this week. (Anadolu photo)

to contact 911 or local emergencies. (PNA) authorities in case of