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A Legacy Anchored: The Filipino Shipmate Monument Unveiled

By: Noel Joseph V. Vizcocho

Subic Bay Freeport Zone- A momentous tribute to Filipino-American sailors was unveiled on January 14 with the ribbon cutting ceremony of the Filipino Shipmate Monument here at Subic Freeport. The monument honors the dedication and service of tens of thousands of Filipino American men and women who have proudly served in the United States Navy and Coast Guard from 1901 to the present.

The ceremony brought together veterans, government officials, community leaders, and families to commemorate the enduring legacy of Filipino sailors sacrifices, loyalty and gallantry in defending world peace and freedom. The monument stands as a lasting symbol of gratitude and recognition for their sacrifices and patriotism and will serve as a powerful reminder of the strong friendship and alliance between the Philippines and the United States of America.

Distinguished guest speakers during the event led by CDR Ryan Newmeyer, from the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) Philippines, Olongapo City Mayor Rolen C. Paulino Jr and Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) Chairman and Administrator Engr. Eduardo Jose L. Alino, highlighted the historical ties between the Philippines and the U.S. Navy, emphasizing the courage and commitment of Filipino shipmates over more than a century of exemplary and faithful service. The monument also serves as an educational landmark, inspiring future generations to remember and honor the shared heritage and valor of Filipino-American service members.

"These statues embody the collective contributions of Filipino sailors, their sacrifices made far from home, their unwavering loyalty to the United States Armed Forces & their gallantry in the face of adversity," said Doce Salazar, United States Sailors Alliance of the Philippines (USSAP) Chairman.

The Subic Bay Freeport Zone, with its rich naval history and once the home of the largest overseas American naval base until its closure in 1992, was chosen as the fitting site for the monument , bridging past and present connections between the two nations maritime forces.

The eight feet tall Filipino Shipmate monument modeled after the likeness of Fireman Second Class Telesforo Trinidad, the lone Filipino US sailor who received the Medal of Honor, is the flagship project of the 1000 strong USSAP and will now stand as a proud emblem of friendship, sacrifice, and the unbreakable bond between Filipino sailors and the United States Navy and Coast Guard.



Unveiled: Filipino Shipmate Monument Stands watch over West Philippine Sea at Subic Freeport. *From Left to Right: USSAP Secretary Noel Vizcocho, Treasurer Earl Arguelles, Vice Chairman Tony Balatbat, Olongapo City Mayor Rolen Paulino Jr, SBMA Chairman & Administrator Eduardo Jose Alino, USSAP Chairman Doce Salazar, CDR Rob Newmeyer of JUSMAG/US Embassy and VA Rep. Joseph Agra led the ribbon cutting & unveiling ceremony of the Filpino Shipmate Monument on January 14.* **SBNphoto by Vic Lenin Vizcocho**





DOT certifies 2 Subic Freeport hotels for passing Halal standard

Subic Bay Freeport – The Department of Tourism-Region 3 (DOT3) has awarded two hotels here for passing the standard of a Halal-friendly hotel.

DOT3 Regional Director Richard Daenos, together with SBMA Tourism Manager Mary Jamelle Camba, handed the certificates of recognition to representatives of The Aurora Subic Hotel and The Mansion Garden Hotel during the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) flag raising ceremony at the administration building on December 22, 2025.

Aurora General manager Rhett M. Villaruz and Mansion Garden Hotel Operations Manager Sheanelle F. Calayag received the certificates for their compliance with the requirements of DOT Memorandum Circular 2024-003, which provides the Amended Guidelines for Recognizing Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishments (MFAEs).

A Muslim-friendly accommodation offers prayer facilities (Qibla direction, mats, prayer rooms), Halal food options (certified kitchens/ meals), and amenities like water-friendly toilets and culturally sensitive staff training from official certifying bodies such as CrescentRating and local tourism departments.

Camba cited that the award is a testament to the capabilities of hotel establishments here in handling various needs of tourists of different religious affiliations, adding that the Freeport is a viable tourist

see DOT certifies, page 02

Flagship U.S. English Program Invests in Filipino Students

The U.S. Embassy in the Philippines announces three new cohorts of the English Access Program Scholarship in Davao City, Bohol, and Bataan, benefiting 150 high-achieving Filipino students. The program is a partnership between the U.S. Embassy's Regional English Language Office, the Philippine Department of Education, and public schools in each location.

Students and teachers selected through a competitive, merit-based process gain invaluable skills from American innovation and excellence in English language content and instruction, preparing them to enter the workforce.

Funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the two-year, intensive after school program strengthens English proficiency while building digital, leadership, and critical thinking skills among public school students aged 13 to 15. Participants also participate in cultural activities, including celebrating American excellence in partnership with U.S. officials as part of America's 250th anniversary and the 80th anniversary of U.S.-Philippine diplomatic relations in 2026.

"By focusing on advanced literacy and professional-level communication, we are preparing these high-achieving students for the demands of the global workforce," said U.S. Embassy Regional English Language Officer Jeff McIlvenna. "Their success is a direct investment in the future of the U.S.-Philippine relationship and our shared goals—ultimately making both our nations safer, stronger, and more prosperous."

On January 8, the Regional English Language Office launched the first 2026 cohort at Pablo M. Piatos Sr. Integrated School in Bunawan, Davao City, with 50 exceptional students joining from various schools across the area.

"The English Access Scholarship Program plays a significant role in raising the English proficiency of learners, especially

see FLAGSHIP program, page 02





Left: Fifty students in the Davao City cohort of the English Access Program pose for a group photo during the January 8 launch at Pablo M. Piatos Sr. Integrated School in Bunawan, Davao City. Right: U.S. Embassy Regional English Language Officer Jeff McIlvenna (center) speaks with students from the Davao City cohort of the English Access Program.

SEC launches unified online ticketing system with real-time tracking

Transacting with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) just got easier, as the Commission launched its upgraded online ticketing system that now covers all services and allows for the real-time tracking of the status of inquiries or complaints.

The Commission on December 4 launched the upgraded iMessage, its web-based ticketing system for managing and processing public inquiries, complaints, incidents, and requests, which can be accessed at https://imessage.sec.gov.ph/.

iMessage centralizes the online submission of queries and complaints to the SEC, providing a unified workflow for the efficient assignment, monitoring and resolution of inquiries, service requests, as well as complaints.

iMessage enables users to track the status of their tickets in real-time and features an option that allows them to directly contact the divisions or departments where their requests are pending.

"Streamlining our requirements and processes has been one of our top priorities as part of our commitment to further improving the ease of doing business in the country and elevating the quality of the public services we deliver," SEC Chairperson Francis Lim said.

He added: "iMessage helps the SEC process requests, inquiries, reports and complaints in a more organized and efficient manner, allowing us to deliver our services to our stakeholders without delays while promoting transparency and accountability in every step. At the same time, iMessage allows the transacting public to track the status of their inquiries, requests or complaints in real time, and ensure that their transactions are processed within the prescribed periods and in accordance with the established procedures."

To access iMessage, users are required to sign in using their account under the Electronic SEC Universal Registration Environment, or eSECURE. Once logged in, the user needs to enter the service they want to avail and fill out the rest of the form.

To check the ticket status, the user needs to go to the tickets tab to view the list of every ticket filed. By clicking the ticket reference number, the user can access the thread which contains the entire history of the request.

iMessage also features a reply option which allows the user to send a message directly to the department assigned for their query, and attach files, as needed.

iMessage is available for services offered by all offices and departments in the SEC Headquarters in Makati City, and extension offices in Baguio, Ilagan, Laoag, Tarlac, Lipa, Legazpi, Iloilo, Cebu, Bacolod, Tacloban, Zamboanga, Koronadal, Davao, Cagayan de Oro, and Butuan.

Cebu Pacific Launches 30th Anniversary Brand Film 'Si Cebie at Ako'

Cebu Pacific (CEB) opens 2026 with the release of its new brand film, "Si Cebie at Ako," which follows the journey of an aspiring flight attendant and illustrates a truth that many can relate to: Every dream we hold close, comes with challenges—but it's our willingness to keep going that turns those dreams into reality.

The release of the film marks the start of CEBs' 30th Anniversary celebration this year.

"For three decades, Cebu Pacific has lived this truth," says Candice Iyog, CEB Chief Marketing and Customer Experience Officer. "Through hurdles, setbacks, and moments of uncertainty, what kept us going was the belief that every flight we operate brings someone closer to their dream—closer to family, to opportunities, to new beginnings."

Over the years, CEB has flown Filipinos wherever they need to be—whether for reunions, cultural experiences, or long-awaited adventures.

Beyond connecting people between destinations, the airline has also been part of journeys that turn personal aspirations into milestones, enabling EveryJuan to move closer to their goals with every flight.

In navigating these journeys, CEB witnesses both obstacles and triumphs among the people it serves every day. Having faced similar experiences itself, the airline highlights the inspiring stories of perseverance, grit, and hope of every Juan it flies.

Watch the full brand film here and be reminded that no matter where the journey leads, dreams are always worth chasing.

DOT certifies.....fom page 01

destination for clientele from different cultures and beliefs.

She added that certain key features required by the DOT in Muslim-friendly establishments include dedicated prayer rooms, Qibla direction markers in rooms, prayer mats (Sejjadah), Quran available, Islamic TV channels; Halal-certified kitchens with separate utensils, and Halal minibar options, or menus clearly marking Halal dishes.

She also mentioned that Megaworld Hotels & Resorts were also certified under this guideline.

Other features include water-friendly toilets (bidet sprays/ water source for ablution/ Wudu), and staff trained in Muslim customs, availability of nearby mosque information, and culturally sensitive service.

Flagship program.....page 01

those from far-flung schools. Through well-structured weekly lessons, interactive, learner-centered activities, and support from mentors, the program builds learners' confidence and communication skills in English, empowering them to express themselves more effectively and opening wider academic and future opportunities," said Department of Education Davao City Assistant Superintendent Rebecca Sagot.

The second cohort launched on January 10 in Panglao, Bohol, with 50 students at Lourdes National High School.

The third cohort, also with 50 students, will launch on January 17 at the City of Balanga National High School in Balanga City, Bataan.

Since its inception in 2004, over 200,000 students in more than 85 countries have received the English Access Program Scholarship, including nearly 1,500 alumni in the Philippines. Educators in the program also join a global network of Access teachers to strengthen their instructional skills through American English excellence to better serve their communities.

It'sS a Love-and-Luck kind of February at SM



















SM Supermalls will celebrate two of the most joyful occasions of the season— Chinese New Year and Valentine's Day with a month-long series of activities focused on love, luck, and unforgettable experiences. Welcome the Year of the Horse with festive finds, romantic moments, and prosperity-filled activities designed to make every visit extra meaningful.

From February 1 to 28, SM Supermalls will host the Lucky Feels Bazaar, a combined Chinese New Year and Valentine's Day pop-up featuring gift items, lucky charms, and prosperity-themed products. Mall-wide Lucky Feels installations will also be on display during this period, enjoy romantic Valentine's spots shown from February 1 to 15 then watch the mall shift into bold and joyful Chinese New Year themes from February 16 to 28.

Shoppers can visit Bites and Buys from February 1 to 28, offering crafts, collectibles, food items, and interactive claw machines. Don't skip The Snap the Lucky Feels photo area, featuring a money tree with ang paos and Valentine's elements, will be available throughout the month. Starting February 16, SM Supermalls will also feature #CNYMustTry, a guide to Chinese New Year food selections such as tikoy, dumplings, tanghulu, and milk tea.

Selected SM malls will host additional activities. Feel the festive energy as dragon and lion dance performances, led by a charming dragon and lion, bring movement and music to the mall on Feb 17 / 20-22, Unlock Lock games with prizes from February 17 to 22, and Chinese mascot meet-and-greet sessions. A TikTok Fortune Filter will be available online from February 1 to 28. The celebration will cap off with a spectacular finale as the sky lights up during the CNY 2026 fireworks, ending the season on a high and lucky note.

For more information, visit the FB Page of SM City Olongapo Central and SM City Olongapo Downtown.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

NOTICE is hereby given that the intestate estate of the late **VICTORIO VERBEZ VIZCOCHO, JR.**, who died without a will, consisting of one (1) motor vehicle, particularly described as Ford Everest, Plate No. CBE 3329, MV File No. 0301-00001697757, Engine No. YNWORNPS3521, Certificate of Registration No. 46040759-2, and Official Receipt No. 038625000002694, has been extra-judicially settled by and among the sole and legitimate heirs of the decedent, as evidenced by a **Deed of Extra-Judicial Settlement of Estate with Waiver of Rights**, duly executed and entered in the notarial register of Notary Public Atty. Juanito C. Atienza, as Doc. No.415; Page No. 84; Book No.XII; Series of 2026.

All interested parties, creditors,and persons having money claims against the decedent are hereby required to file their claims with the court appointed executor of their estate.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

NOTICE is hereby given that the intestate estate of the late **VICTORIO VERBEZ VIZCOCHO, JR.**, who died without a will, consisting of one (1) motor vehicle, particularly described as BMW, Plate No. CAT 7918, MV File No. 0301-00001170319, Engine No. 0040W135847D20A, Certificate of Registration No. 37571875-5, and Official Receipt No. 0386-000000151815, has been extra-judicially settled by and among the sole and legitimate heirs of the decedent, as evidenced by a **Deed of Extra-Judicial Settlement of Estate with Waiver of Rights**, duly executed and entered in the notarial register of Notary Public Atty. Juanito C. Atienza, as Doc. No.414; Page No. 84; Book No.XII; Series of 2026.

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

NOTICE is hereby given that the intestate estate of the late **CECILIA CASTILLO MOSELINA**, who died without leaving any Last Will and Testament, consisting of one (1) motor vehicle, particularly described as Mitsubishi Mirage GLX L2G, Year Model 2016, Plate No. CAD 9206, Engine No. 3A92UDS8317, Certificate of Registration No. 277840824, and Series of Chasis No. MMBXTA03AGH023210, has been extra-judicially settled by and among the legal and sole heirs of the decedent, as evidenced by a **Deed of Extra-Judicial Settlement of Estate**, duly executed and entered in the notarial register of Notary Public Atty. Federico T. Macabangun, as Doc. No.323; Page No. 66; Book No.XII; Series of 2025.

All interested parties, creditors,and persons having money claims against the decedent are hereby required to file their claims with the court appointed executor of their estate.

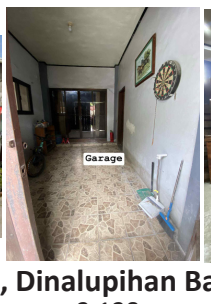
FOR SALE

PROPERTY FOR SALE

Saguing, Dinalupihan Bataan

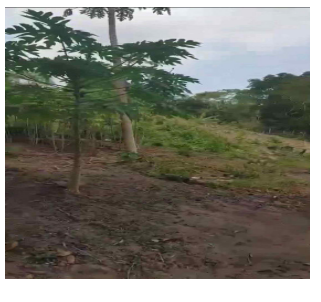
-Clean title -108 sqr meters -Commercial space (front)
-3 Bedrooms (Ground flr) - 1 Small room for laundry area
2nd floor: -Balcony -1 small room



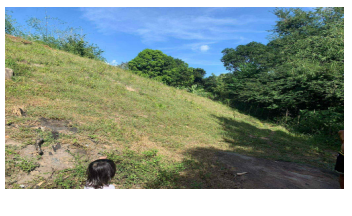




Sapang Balas, Dinalupihan Bataan



- 2,128 sqr mters Farm Lot
- clean title
Contact: Katrina
09198553561 / 09071997243



AROUND CENTRAL LUZON

BCDA beats 2025 revenue target, hits P14.1B in cash inflows



The Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) closed 2025 with Php14.1 billion in cash revenues, surpassing its Php10 billion target by over 40 percent and exceeding the Php11.66 billion recorded in 2024 by 20.9 percent.

The strong performance underscores BCDA's solid liquidity position and improved cash generation, supported by increased private-sector activity in its economic zones and the strategic use of land assets for priority national infrastructure projects.

"BCDA's 2025 results show that investor confidence in our economic zones is strengthening, driven by disciplined asset management and projects that are ready for execution," said BCDA President and Chief Executive Officer Engr. Joshua M. Bingcang. "This allows us to convert land value into real cash flows that directly support government priorities."

He added that the transfer of BCDA properties for priority infrastructure projects reflects the agency's role in advancing connectivity and inclusive economic growth.

Cash revenues refer to actual collections received within the year, providing a clear picture of BCDA's liquidity and cash performance. This differs from prior disclosures based on accrual accounting reflected in audited financial statements, which include revenues recorded but not yet collected.

BCDA's 2025 cash revenues were generated from a combination of land dispositions, lease arrangements, concession fees, and investment-related receipts across BCDA-administered economic zones. These were supported by higher private-sector investments, improved performance of transport-related concessions, and continued investor uptake in strategic growth areas such as New Clark City and Camp John Hay.

Supporting AFP modernization

From the Php14.1 billion cash revenues generated in 2025, an estimated Php3.29 billion is expected to be remitted to support the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Modernization Program.

This is on top of BCDA's cumulative Php103 billion contribution to the AFP Modernization Program and the replication of military facilities from May 1993 to December 2025, in line with Republic Act No. 7227 or the Bases Conversion and Development Act.

Under the law, BCDA transforms former U.S. military bases and Metro Manila camps into centers of economic growth, generating revenues through land development and partnerships, while channeling proceeds to national defense, priority infrastructure, and socioeconomic programs of the government.

"BCDA remains focused on sustaining strong cash performance," Engr. Bingcang said. "This enables us to reinvest in high-impact projects, help strengthen national defense, and deliver long-term value for the Filipino people."

Young farmer from Subic earns DA recognition for digital farming innovation



Nicole Viloria receives her certificate as provincial awardee of the Young Farmers Challenge 2025 during the awarding ceremony in Pampanga. (Subic Municipal Agriculture Office)

SUBIC, Zambales — The Department of Agriculture (DA) recognized young farmer Nicole Viloria of Barangay Pamatawan, Subic, Zambales, as a provincial awardee of the Young Farmers Challenge 2025.

This recognition underscores the role of young farmers in introducing innovative and business-oriented solutions that help address challenges in the agriculture sector, particularly in farm management and market access.

Viloria earned the award for her Business Model Canvas titled "GoSAKA: Solution for Agriculture, Knowledge and Access," a digital platform developed to support farmers.

Subic Municipal Agriculturist Lucy Victorio said goSAKA was created to respond to common challenges faced by farmers, especially in marketing and farm management.

"Ang 'goSAKA' ay isang website na naglalayong magbigay ng market linking para sa mga magsasaka, magpatibay ng community building at online learning, at i-digitize ang proseso ng pagtatanim at i-automate ang financial statements ng mga magsasaka," she said. (The 'goSAKA' is a website that aims to provide market linking for farmers, strengthen community building and online learning, and digitize the farming process while automating farmers' financial statements.)

The goSAKA platform allows farmers to record their revenues and expenses and print financial records that may be used when applying for loans from lending conduits. The system is intended to help farmers manage their farm enterprises in a more organized manner.

As a provincial awardee, Viloria received a certificate of recognition and P80,000 in financial assistance to support the initial implementation of her agribusiness project.

The Young Farmers Challenge is a DA program that recognizes and supports young individuals with viable agribusiness ideas through financial assistance and other forms of support. (PIA Region 3-Zambales)

THE NATION

Navy's new offshore patrol vessel Rajah Sulayman arrives in PH



NAVY'S NEWEST SHIP. The Philippine Navy on Monday (Jan. 19, 2026) announced that one of the six offshore patrol vessels ordered from South Korea shipbuilder HD Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI), the prospective Rajah Sulayman (PS-20), arrived in the country on Jan. 17 and is now scheduled for technical inspection and assessment before being commissioned and accepted into service. (Photo courtesy of the Philippine Navy)

The Philippine Navy (PN) on Monday announced that one of the six offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) it ordered from South Korean shipbuilder HD Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI), the prospective Rajah Sulayman (PS-20), arrived in the country on Jan. 17.

The vessel is scheduled for technical inspection and assessment before it is commissioned and officially accepted into service.

"The PN's newest OPV, the future BRP Rajah Sulayman (PS-20), has arrived in the country from South Korea, which marks another significant addition to the Navy's growing modern fleet, on January 17, 2026," PN public affairs office chief Commander Marie Angelica Sisican said in a statement.

South Korean media earlier reported that the ship departed Ulsan on Jan. 13 for its voyage to the Philippines. Upon entering Philippine waters, the vessel was met off the coast of Zambales by the country's first guided-missile frigate, BRP Jose Rizal (FF-150), in accordance with standard naval protocols.

"After completing coordination and meeting procedures at sea, the future BRP Rajah Sulayman will begin post-delivery activities and technical checks," Sisican said.

She added that BRP Rajah Sulayman is scheduled to undergo acceptance and pre-commissioning processes before its formal entry into active service.

"(This) underscores the PN's commitment to strengthening its maritime defense and law enforcement capabilities through a modern, multi-domain, and self-reliant force," Sisican said.

BRP Rajah Sulayman was launched on June 11, 2025, at the HD HHI shipyard in Ulsan, South Korea.

The BRP Rajah Sulayman is the first of the six OPVs ordered from shipbuilder HD HHI, worth around PHP30 billion in 2022. (PNA)

Marcos orders PCG to board, inspect all Manila Bay dredgers



President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has ordered the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) to board and inspect all dredgers operating in Manila Bay reclamation projects amid renewed concerns over vessel identity, ownership and compliance with Philippine laws.

"The President orders the PCG to board all the dredgers operating in Manila Bay as part of the reclamation project and inspect their vessel registration and AIS (automatic identification system) transmission," Palace Press Officer Claire Castro told reporters in a message on Tuesday.

The directive comes days after a maritime security analyst flagged a Chinese-origin dredger allegedly broadcasting multiple identities while operating in Philippine waters.

In an article published on Monday, Ray Powell, director of maritime intelligence group SeaLight, reported that the dredger Kang Ling 539 has transmitted at least 30 different vessel identities while shuttling between Manila Bay and a dredging site in Zambales for more than two years.

According to the report, the dredger has operated under at least six different flag states, including the Philippines, Sierra Leone, China, São Tomé and Príncipe and Panama, raising red flags over possible violations of maritime and domestic regulations.

Under Philippine law, dredgers transporting sand between Philippine points must be at least 60 percent Filipino-owned, Philippine-flagged and registered, and crewed by Filipino nationals.

Foreign-owned or foreign-flagged vessels are prohibited from undertaking dredging operations unless they are reflagged and placed under qualified domestic ownership.

The President's latest directive follows his earlier order in May 2025 for a nationwide probe into dredging and reclamation activities, issued amid mounting environmental concerns and reports that sand sourced from Philippine waters may have been diverted to Chinese land reclamation projects. (PNA)

Mobile command vehicle strengthens emergency response operations in Zambales

IBA, Zambales — The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) has deployed a Mobile Command and Control Vehicle (MOCCOV) to the provincial government of Zambales through its Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO).

This aims to improve the province's ability to manage disasters and emergencies by providing responders with a mobile facility for coordination and communication in affected areas.

DOST Provincial Science and Technology Office Zambales Supervising Science Research Specialist Diana Cecilia Zambrano-Estrella said the MOCCOV was provided to help strengthen local government capacity for disaster preparedness and emergency response.

"The MOCCOV was provided under our Community Empowerment through Science and Technology Program," she added.

For his part, Governor Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. acknowledged the support of the DOST in providing the MOCCOV, noting its role in enhancing disaster preparedness and emergency response in the province.





The Department of Science and Technology Central Luzon deploys a Mobile Command and Control Vehicle to the provincial government of Zambales through its Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office. (DOST Zambales)

The MOCCOV functions as a movable operations center that can be deployed during emergencies to support on-site coordination and response activities.

To ensure proper use of the vehicle, personnel from the PDRRMO underwent hands-on training on its operation, maintenance, setup, and dismantling.

The training was facilitated by MetroAsia Marketing and Building Corporation as part of the project's implementation and official turnover. (PIA Region 3-Zambales)

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AFP capable of defending new Malampaya gas field



Malampaya East-1. (PNA file photo)

A ranking naval official on Tuesday said that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), along with the Philippine Navy (PN), is more than capable of protecting the newly discovered major natural gas reservoir in the Malampaya gas field off the Palawan coast.

"Monitoring is not about numbers; it is about capability. The PN-the AFP as a whole has the capability to monitor Malampaya East-1 (MAE-1), it being five kilometers adjacent to the Malampaya Project," PN spokesperson for the West Philippine Sea Rear Admiral Roy Vincent Trinidad said when asked by the Philippine News Agency on whether they are capable of protecting this latest energy discovery of the country against hostile intruders.

He added the unit tasked to secure MAE-1 is Western Command (Wescom), particularly Joint Task Force (JTF) Malampaya.

"The AFP has the monitoring and response capability through JTF Malampaya," Trinidad said.

The PN official said the Wescom is the unit tasked for the detection and response should Chinese maritime forces conduct any harassment in the area.

"The operational requirements (detection, response, etc.) falls under the purview of the Wescom. The AFP is prepared to support any surge in their operation," Trinidad said.

For her part, PN spokesperson Captain Marissa Martinez said the Navy has "capabilities deployed" at the Wescom that can conduct sustained naval patrols in MAE-1.

"MAE-1 falls part of the area of responsibility of Wescom and is located approximately five kilometers (2.69 nautical miles) from the existing Malampaya gas platform). The PN has capabilities deployed at Wescom that conduct sustained naval patrols in the area," she told the PNA in a message.

She said the PN for more than a decade has maintained continuous presence at Malampaya through JTF Malampaya, employing naval surface, air, and special operations assets to ensure its protection.

"The Navy continues to modernize through the acquisition of advanced ships and aircraft. Among these is the newly acquired offshore patrol vessel (OPV), BRP Rajah Sulayman (PS-20) which arrived at the Naval Operating Base Subic on 17 January and was formally welcomed during an arrival ceremony on 20 January 2026," she added.

Martinez said these assets will further strengthen the Navy's ability to safeguard the country's maritime domain, patrol the exclusive economic zone, and protect vital infrastructure such as the Malampaya gas platform.

MAE-1 is estimated to hold around 98 billion cubic feet of gas in place and marks the first milestone under the Malampaya Phase 4 drilling campaign, which also includes the Camago-2, Camago-3, and Bagong Pag-asa wells, aimed at securing additional gas resources.

The project is being undertaken by the SC3A consortium led by Prime Energy, in partnership with UC38, PNOC Exploration Corporation and Prime Oil & Gas Inc. (PNA)

U.S. Navy Rescues Three Filipino Fishermen in the South China Sea

By U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs

SOUTH CHINA SEA—On January 1, 2026, at approximately 12:45 p.m., the crew aboard the Lewis and Clark-class dry cargo ship USNS Cesar Chavez (T-AKE 14) rescued three fishermen in distress aboard a fishing vessel while transiting the South China Sea.

Upon spotting the distressed vessel, watch standers immediately notified the bridge, and the ship launched a rigid-hulled inflatable boat to recover the fishermen. The three individuals, later identified as citizens of the Republic of the Philippines, were brought aboard Cesar Chavez and evaluated by the ship's medical staff. All three were found to be in good health. Philippine authorities were immediately notified.

The fishermen reported that their vessel's engine flooded on December 28 due to heavy seas, leaving them adrift. They had departed port on December 27 and survived on rationed food and water before being located by Cesar Chavez.

The United States coordinated with Philippine government officials to return the fishermen safely to the Republic of the Philippines.

Professional and vigilant watch standing procedures enabled the crew to locate and recover the distressed fishermen quickly and safely. Cesar Chavez conducts routine logistics and resupply missions in support of the U.S. 7th Fleet.

26th Hot Air Balloon Festival to boost economy, tourism in Tarlac



Present during the press conference were BCDA Officer-in-Charge and Senior Vice President for Conversion and Development Group Engr. Mark P. Torres, PIHABF Event Director Capt. Joy Roa, Provincial Government of Tarlac Investments Promotions Officer Frances Canlas, and PSC Commissioner Edward Hayco. BCDA photo

New Clark City has geared up to welcome the 26th Philippine International Hot Air Balloon Fiesta (PIHABF) from February 13 to 15, 2026, promising not only stunning balloon displays but also a boost to Tarlac's economy, tourism, and youth aviation education.

Held annually, the festival has consistently drawn large crowds, filling hotels and restaurants in the Clark area and providing a significant economic lift to the area.

Governor Christian Tell Yap underscored the economic and social benefits of the festival in the province.

"This will help the province economically and socially. There is a trickle-down effect on hotels, tour operators, and cottage industries. We want to promote this for better tourism and economic activities in Central Luzon," he said.

Known as "A Weekend of Everything that Flies," the 2026 festival will feature 22 special-shaped hot air balloons from seven countries.

During the event, visitors can enjoy free morning flights, a night glow experience, a 550-drone show, and a Hoverbike demonstration (flying man-carrying drone) by Filipino inventor Kyze.

The festival will also host competitions in Paragliding Accuracy, Paramotor Beach, FPV Drone Racing, Drone Soccer, Paper Airplane, and Kite Flying.

Additional attractions included RC Airplanes, Games, Ultra Lights Flying, and a helicopter flight demonstration by the Philippine Coast Guard and the Philippine Navy, offering both entertainment and educational value.

PIHABF Lead Organizer Captain Joy Roa said that the event also aimed to inspire young people to consider careers in aviation.

"We need to start young kids to think of aviation as a career—whether in management or administration. It educates us, helps build the industry, and creates a better career," he said.

Bases Conversion and Development Authority President and Chief Executive Officer Joshua Bingcang added that the festival has become a highlight for the public each year.

"It reinforces our facilities as a venue not just for sports but also for tourism. Every February of each year, people would look for balloons. Nakatatak na ito sa isip nila (It has really stuck in their minds)," he said.

The 26th PIHABF is expected to bring color and excitement to the skies over New Clark City, reaffirming its status as a widely known aviation sports event in the Philippines. (PIA Region 3-Tarlac)

Cebu landfill collapse death toll rises to 22, 14 still missing

The death toll from the Binaliw sanitary landfill trash slide has climbed to 22, with 14 people still missing as of 8 a.m. Thursday, according to a report by the Cebu City Police Office (CCPO).

At least 18 others were injured and are receiving medical treatment, while search, rescue, and retrieval operations are ongoing.

The Philippine Air Force (PAF) has been assisting ground operations since Jan. 9, following the incident, through its 505th Search and Rescue Group, providing manpower in coordination with the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) Region 7, which leads on-site operations.

"Hindi po tayo titigil hanggat hindi mag-stabilize and makuha o ma-extricate na po natin lahat at ma-identify nga po lahat ng na-trap po doon (We will not stop until everything is stabilized and we have recovered or extricated everyone and identified all those trapped there)," PAF Public Affairs Office Chief Ma. Christina Basco said in an interview over AFP Radio on Thursday.

She added that PAF teams are on a daily rotation basis to ensure continuous support and adequate rest for its personnel.

She said the PAF is hands-on in assisting with the digging and victim recovery together with the BFP, Philippine Army, Philippine Navy, the police, and local disaster offices.

"Mahalaga na well-equipped ang ating mga rescuers para hindi sila mismo ang maaksidente habang tumutulong (It's important that our rescuers are well-equipped so they don't get into accidents themselves while helping)," she said.

The Philippine National Police (PNP), meanwhile, has intensified police assistance in the ongoing search and rescue operations.

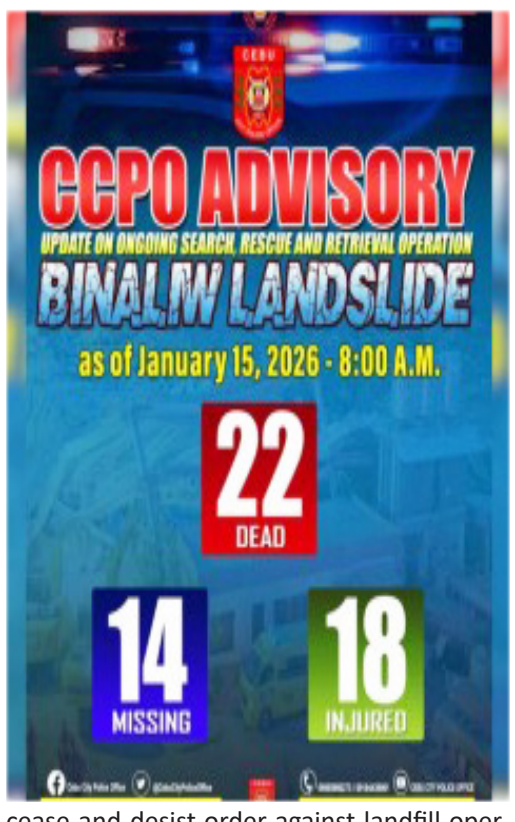
"Our goal is to account for all the missing victims in this tragedy," acting PNP chief Lt. Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said in a statement Thursday.

"The reports of signs of life only encourage our teams to do more in providing assistance to expedite the search and rescue efforts."

Nartatez added that he has directed the local police to facilitate medical, psychological and logistical support for the affected families.

He also said the PNP will support inquiries into the incident, including looking for possible negligence on the part of the firm managing the landfill as well as compliance safety or environmental laws.

On Monday, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources issued a cease-and-desist order against landfill operator Prime Integrated Waste Solutions Inc. while ensuring a thorough, impartial, and evidence-based investigation to determine the causes of the incident.



The DENR also vowed to hold those responsible accountable.

Cebu City Mayor Nestor Archival Sr. earlier said that potential contributing factors include the earthquake that hit the province in September and Typhoon Tino in November.

On Tuesday, the Sangguniang Panlungsod of Cebu City approved a resolution declaring a state of calamity, allowing emergency funds and assistance to affected families.

"The declaration of a State of Calamity is necessary to authorize the utilization of the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (LDRRMF), including the Quick Response Fund, facilitate emergency procurement, and enable the City Government to carry out urgent relief, rehabilitation, and recovery measures," the resolution read.(PNA)

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