

PHILIPPINES



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Tuesday, May 23, 2017

MARINE SAFETY NEWS

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The IMO Legal Committee has approved a draft Assembly resolution to allow for the delegation of authority to issue certificates of insurance under the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage, 1992 (the 1992 Civil Liability Convention) and the 2010 HNS Convention. Unlike the Bunkers Convention 2001, the 2002 Athens Convention and the 2007 Nairobi Wreck Removal Convention, the 1992 Civil Liability Convention and the 2010 HNS Convention do not provide an explicit framework for the delegation of authority to issue certificates of insurance.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The trouble with jogging is that the ice falls out of your glass." - Martin Mul

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Duterte arrives in Moscow; meeting with Russian PM set

MOSCOW - President Rodrigo Duterte arrived in Moscow, Russia, at past 11pm on Monday (past 4am on Tuesday) together with 19 high-level officials.

Among the officials who joined the President's official visit to Russia were Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano, National Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, and National Security Council Secretary Hermogenes Esperon Jr.

On Wednesday, Duterte is set to have a bilateral meeting with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev.

A wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is scheduled on Wednesday afternoon before the President will be conferred for an honorary doctorate degree at Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University).

The meeting between Duterte and President

Vladimir Putin is set for Thursday in Kremlin.

The country's economic development chiefs are also in Moscow including Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez, Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade, Public Works and Highways Secretary Mark Villar, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi, Tourism Secretary Wanda Corazon Tulfo-Teo, and Science and Technology Secretary Fortunato De La Peña.

Duterte and Putin will also witness the signing of various memoranda of understanding between the two countries. There will also be meetings with the business community and Filipino community in Russia.

In a previous interview, Lopez said about 200 to 300 businessmen are attending the Philippines-Russia business fora in Moscow and St. Petersburg from Wednesday to Friday. (PNA)

EU should respect Duterte goal to be self-reliant: Gordon

The European Union should respect that the Duterte administration is aiming for self-reliance, Sen Richard Gordon said on Tuesday.

Gordon made the remark to support the administration's decision, stressing that it did not mean that the Philippines was cutting ties with the foreign bloc.

"It is commendable that we show self-reliance vis à vis the EU assistance. The Philippines and Europe have very strong ties - economic, historical, and cultural. It doesn't mean we are throwing Europe away," Gordon said in a statement.

"They should respect that we're aiming for self-reliance. It's a country's way of gaining dignity. When we say we do not accept aid, it only means that we are moving towards self-reliance and less dependence," he added.

The senator said that self-reliance meant that the Philippines had "a credible defense, a credible air force and a navy that can protect our territory."

"That's the only way we get respect from the world," Gordon said. (PNA)

Senators back Carpio's call to take China threat to UN

Two senators on Monday said that they support the call of Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonio Carpio to bring to the United Nations China's threat of war if the Philippines drills for oil in its exclusive economic zone in the disputed West Philippine Sea.

In a speech in Davao City last week, President Rodrigo Duterte said that Chinese President Xi Jinping warned of war if the Philippines will insist on its rights to the exclusive economic zone.

Carpio said that the threat was a "violation" of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia to which China and the Philippines are parties.

"Justice Carpio is right. We should bring this up to the attention of UN. After all, China is a member. We should pursue this because it's not good," Lacson told reporters.

On the other hand, Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon said that China's threat was a "serious case" that should not be taken lightly. (PNA)

DOTr suspends implementation of anti-distracted driving act

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) has suspended the implementation of the Anti-Distracted Driving Act (ADDA) that prohibits motorists from using mobile devices and electronic gadgets, Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) board member and spokesperson, Aileen Lizada, said on Tuesday.

Lizada said that for the meantime, the DOTr will conduct an information campaign.

No definite date has been set for the reimplementation of the ADDA.

The move comes after various sectors, such as members of Congress and transport groups and some drivers of public and private vehicles, called for its suspension due to confusion in its implementing rules and regulations (IRR).

Among the concerns raised are the banning of rosaries, figurines and other accessories on dashboards that distract the view of drivers, as well as the use of navigational apps, such as Waze, while driving.

Republic Act 10913 or the Anti-Distracted Driving Act prohibits motorists from making or receiving calls, writing, sending or reading text-based communications, playing online games, watching movies, surfing or browsing the Internet, among others, while vehicles are in motion or temporarily stopped on a traffic light or an intersection. (PNA)

Poe wants Roxas to show up in next Senate MRT-3 hearing

Sen Grace Poe would like to see former Liberal Party (LP) president Manuel Roxas II present in the next Senate hearing into the problems concerning the Metro Rail Transit (MRT-3).

Roxas was the predecessor of Joseph Emilio Abaya as transport secretary and both are LP members. Roxas was also one of Poe's rivals in the May 2016 presidential election.

"I think it is about time he is called to attend. This is his chance to explain himself," Poe told reporters in an interview after the second hearing into the MRT-3 mess.

"Was this done on purpose or were they negligent? Both of them are mistakes. It would be an opportunity for him to air his side," she added.

Poe made this remark after former MRT-3 General Manager Al Vitangcol revealed during the Senate hearing that Roxas failed to reply to a letter he sent him reminding of the expiration of the contract of the MRT-3's maintenance provider at that time, Sumitomo.

Vitangcol claimed that he sent Roxas a letter on May 2012 reminding him of the expiration of the Sumitomo contract and the need to get a new provider, however, Roxas did not respond. (PNA)

PALAWENA TO RECEIVE AMPHIBIAN CONSERVATION AWARD

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY, Philippines - Jessa Garibay, a petite Palawena working for the protection of a critical habitat in Palawan and its amphibian residents, is set to be given the 2016 Sabin Award for Amphibian Conservation next week in New York, USA.

Garibay is the project manager of the Center for Sustainability (CS) based in this city that protects the critical habitat of Cleopatra's Needle, which extends across the famous Puerto Princesa Underground River, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The award, which was established in 2007, according to its website, recognizes valuable contributions of individuals to amphibian conservation. It provides an exceptional chance to salute and commend pioneering works to undertake the reduction and loss of amphibians in the world, and to obtain a sense of true passion and commitment of the individuals responsible for saving species.

Since it was established, only seven had been awarded from countries like Ecuador, Guatemala, Colombia and the US.

Garibay is going to be awarded for her "undying passion for amphibians and an incredible drive to see these fragile creatures protected." (PNA)

PH tax effort improves to 13.41% in Q1

The government's bid to ensure funds for its programs continues to stride in the first quarter.

The Department of Finance (DOF) reported on Tuesday that tax effort in the first three months of the year was at 13.14%, an improvement from the 12.99% in end-March 2016.

Tax effort, which is the ratio of taxes to gross domestic product (GDP), is among the primary figures investors look at in an economy vis-a-vis its credit worthiness.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran, in his report to Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, traced the improvement of the tax effort to rising tax collection efficiency.

The government targets to further improve the tax effort to at least 15% of GDP, a level seen before the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

In particular, tax effort of the main revenue collections agencies in the first quarter of the year got better to 10.36% for the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and to 2.91% for the Bureau of Customs (BOC).

These were at 10.09% and 2.76% same period last year for the BIR and BOC, respectively.

During the same period, ratio of the public debt to GDP went down to 41.87% from year-ago's 43.56% and the 42.06% as of last December. (PNA)



REGIONAL NEWS

Northern Mindanao & Zamboanga Peninsula in Focus

News from around Northern Mindanao & Zamboanga Peninsula over the past seven days. (In tomorrow's issue: Eastern and Central Visayas)

Reds mull release of captive soldier in Bukidnon

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY - The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) said the New People's Army (NPA) is considering releasing a soldier they captured recently in time for the fifth round of peace negotiations between the government and communist rebels later this month.

In a statement released to the media Friday, the NDFP said the NPA would release Technical Sergeant Joseph Paredes, a member of the Army's 8th Infantry Battalion, as a gesture of support to the peace talks between the government and the Communist Party of Philippines.

The NDFP has also appealed to church leaders, who are acting as third party facilitators, to intervene in the eventual freedom of Paredes.

The rebels have asked the military and the Philippine National Police to stop their respective combat operations within the region as one of its demands.

Bishop Felixberto Calang, of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, also a co-convenor of the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform, one of the third party facilitators, said they will coordinate with Bukidnon Governor Jose Maria Zubiri Jr. for the release of Paredes. (PNA)

MisOr village chief nabbed with 'shabu,' guns

BALINGASAG, Misamis Oriental - A village chief and his brother were collared during an anti-drug raid at their residence in Balingasag, Misamis Oriental, on Thursday morning, an anti-illegal drug agent said.

Jing Fox, the head of the raiding team of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in Misamis Oriental, identified the suspects as Robert Anthony Valmores, village chief of Cogon, and his brother Rey Valmores, alias "Tutak."

Fox said that agents swooped down on the residence of Valmores armed with a search warrant issued by Executive Judge Dennis Alcantar of the Regional Trial Court.

He said that the operatives recovered from the possession of the suspects 40 grams of suspected methamphetamine hydro-chloride or shabu, a loaded 0.45 caliber pistol and one AK-47 with live bullets.

MARKET DATA

STOCK INDEX

(May 23)
PSEI 7,812.14 (5.57)

EXCHANGE RATES

USD 1 = PHP49.75
GBP 1 = PHP64.68
JPY 1 = PHP0.447
EUR 1 = PHP55.92
Source: Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
EUR 1 = USD1.1243
Source: European Central Bank

The seized shabu has an estimated street value of PHP400,000, Fox said.

"Perhaps, the pregnant wife prevented the suspect from resisting arrest because the operatives found out that the firearms of the suspect was already loaded when recovered," Fox said. He said that it took some time for the suspect to come out of their room and surrender peacefully.

According to Fox, the suspect has been in the order of battle since 2014, and has been warned many times by his constituents to stop his alleged illegal drug trade.

"As a public official, we find it hard to arrest the suspect, but PDEA would enforce the anti-illegal drug drive as mandated by President Rodrigo Duterte at all cost," Fox said. (PNA)

Troops uncover 'NPA recruitment' in Z Norte school

PAGADIAN CITY - The military has uncovered alleged recruitment activities by the New People's Army (NPA) rebels in schools in remote areas in the nearby province of Zamboanga del Norte.

Lt. Col. Virgilio Hamos Jr., Army's 53rd Infantry Battalion commander, on Friday said the recruitment by NPAs in schools was discovered by soldiers participating in the conduct of "Brigada Eskwela," or the National Schools Maintenance Week.

Brigada Eskwela brings together concerned stakeholders in repairing and preparing schools for the school opening in June.

Hamos said troops from the battalion's Alpha Company, led by 1Lt. Sotero Abrito III, on Wednesday found a sack full of books and NPA propaganda materials at the elementary school in Barangay Bagumbayan, Sergio Osmeña, Zamboanga del Norte.

At first, Hamos said the troops dumped the sack mistaking it contained trash left by the Brigada Eskwela participants. However, the soldiers opened the sack when they noticed it contained books and other reading materials, including "Primer Para sa Gawaing Paralegal Sa Kanayunan," "Special Nga Kursong Pangmasa," "Demokratikong Rebulosyon Sa Katawhan," and, "Araling Aktibista."

"These (books) and reading materials are known to be used by the NPAs in indoctrinating and training new recruits and mass bases," Hamos said. (PNA)

DOH Caraga campaigns for AIDS Candlelight Memorial

BUTUAN CITY - The Department of Health (DOH) this year will observe the AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day with the global theme: "End AIDS Together."

The event aims to give tribute to those who died from the diseases and continuously provide platform for HIV and AIDS awareness.

The Department of Health Caraga joins the purpose through a "Walk for A Cause" on May 25, 2017. The activity is scheduled to start at 4pm from Agusan del Norte Provincial Capitol and ends at Guingona Park at the central part of the city. A program proper will follow thereafter with the lighting of candles as the highlighted event. The event will be participated in by otherinvited national government agencies, representatives from the local government units, private and public hospitals and other identified stakeholders.

According to the DOH the about 36.7 million people living with HIV today, the AIDS Candlelight Memorial serves as an initiative for global solidarity while shattering the barriers of stigma and finally giving hope to the future generation.

As of February this year, DOH said, 849 cases have been tallied at the national level through the STD/AIDS Cooperative Central Laboratory. This is 13 percent higher compared to the same period last year with a record of 751. (PNA)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Terror blast hits Ariana Grande pop concert in UK

MANCHESTER, United Kingdom - Twenty-two people, including children, were killed and dozens injured when a man detonated a bomb at a pop concert by US star Ariana Grande, in Britain's deadliest terror attack in 12 years.

Screaming fans, many of them teens, fled the venue in panic after the bomb blast at the end of the concert in the northern English city of Manchester on Monday evening.

"There was heat on my neck and when I looked up there were bodies everywhere", Elena Semino, who was waiting for her 17-year-old daughter, told the Guardian newspaper.

Semino, who was herself injured, said she had been standing by the ticket office of the 21,000-capacity indoor Manchester Arena when the explosion went off.

"A huge bomb-like bang went off that hugely panicked everyone and we were all trying to flee the arena", said Majid Khan, 22, who was at the show with his sister.

Ambulances and bomb disposal teams rushed to the venue, as family members frantically searched for their loved ones, and residents opened their doors to stranded concert-goers after trains were cancelled. (AFP)

GIMMICK PLACES

HOMESTAY PROGRAM OPENS IN TABUK'S BRGY NANENG

TABUK - Join Kalinga's Life Community Tours and immerse into the lifestyle of one of the oldest villages in the province, Barangay Naneng.

Homes in the Tabuk City village have weathered storms despite being made of wood, with some of them first erected in the 1920s and just strengthened as years went along. Starting this year, the tours feature a homestay program where nine families have allotted the spare room of their homes to tourists who'd like to stay in the community overnight. Village chief Rommel Balunggay said that only 40 visitors can be accommodated at a time.

The tour includes a visit to the Saint Joseph Parish church built in 1927 and a demonstration on traditional back strap weaving by women elders as well as inandila (local rice cake) cooking.

Visitors can also head to a coffee plantation in Naneng and watch how organic and civet coffee is processed and packed. They can also refresh themselves by going to Guilom Spring.

The homestay and tour are part of a bigger program called "Kalinga Village Hopping" that takes visitors to the neighboring towns of Lubuagan and Tinglayan.

Eurozone economy holds at six-year high in May

BRUSSELS - The eurozone economy grew at its fastest pace in six years in May as job creation in Europe picked up to its highest level in a decade, a closely watched survey showed on Tuesday.

Data monitoring company IHS Markit said its May Composite Purchasing Managers Index came in at 56.8 points, unchanged from April which was also the best for six years.

The PMI measures companies' willingness to invest in their business and so gives a good idea of how well the underlying economy is performing.

Any reading above the boom-bust 50 points line indicates the economy is expanding.

IHS Markit said the 19-nation eurozone economy was doing well on all fronts.

"Job creation... perked up to one of the strongest recorded over the past decade amid improved optimism about future prospects," it said in a statement.

Broken down, the figures showed the services sector - which accounts for the bulk of economic activity - remained unchanged at 56.2 points in May. (AFP)

 WEATHER

Partly cloudy to cloudy skies with rainshowers or thunderstorms will prevail over Metro Manila and the rest of the country.

 SPORTS NEWS

McKines to play for SMB in Governors Cup

MANILA - The PBA Commissioner's Cup eliminations is just winding up and some teams are getting ready for the playoffs but San Miguel Beer (SMB) is looking ahead for the season-ending Governors' Cup.

Returning import Wendell McKines was tapped by the Beermen, as the three-time Philippine Cup champions try to stretch their luck in the Governors' Cup, according to a report from the PBA website.

McKines, who played for Alaska and Rain or Shine (RoS) in his first two PBA stints, is determined to claim his first PBA title and help the Beermen grab multiple championships for the season.

McKines described his new team as one having "a lot of weapons. It's a very talented team."

"It's a very experienced team. Everbody's in their prime. I like my chances of winning my first championship in the PBA. I'd like to have that similar feeling of being a champion, similar to the one I had when I won a championship in Venezuela," he added.

McKines recalled getting a call from RoS to provide an inside presence and match SMB's 6-foot-10 center June Mar Fajardo.

With McKines playing alongside Fajardo this year, the Beermen have better chances of snatching the Governors' Cup crown away from reigning champion Barangay Ginebra.

"He (Fajardo) is probably the best player in the PBA ever. Having him makes my job easier. Not only me, but everybody," McKines said.

Beermen coach Leo Austria also spoke highly of McKines.

"We beat them in the semifinals when we had AZ (Reid). We're having a hard time defending him (McKines) because he's a good post up player," Austria said.

"He's going to give the other teams problems because he's so athletic and double threat na naman kami sa post. (And) at least may pantapat na kami kay (Ginebra import Justin) Brownlee," the SMB coach added.

E-Painters' Cruz gets PBA Player of the Week nod

MANILA - Rain or Shine (RoS) guard Jericho Cruz emerged among the many heroes in the E-Painters' last victory, but his exploits were recognized after he was named Player of the Week by the PBA Press Corps on Monday.

The 6-foot-1 former Adamson University stalwart made his presence felt in RoS' 118-112 victory over Barangay Ginebra last Friday after he scored 11 of his 19 points in the fourth quarter to help the E-Painters boost their quarterfinals bid with a 5-4 win-loss record, Spin.ph reported.

Cruz actually shared the limelight with import Duke Crews and Jay Washington in leading RoS over Ginebra, but the 26-year-old Filipino-Northern Mariana Islander gave the most impact with his outside shooting and strong drives to the basket that had the E-Painters snapping the Gin Kings' five-game winning streak.

The 2016 Most Improved Player also contributed five rebounds, three steals and two assists in Friday's win.

Cruz topped San Miguel Beer pointguard Alex Cabagnot and forward Arwind Santos, Star combo guard Paul Lee, GlobalPort guard Stanley Pringle and TNT KaTropa spitfire Jayson Castro for the weekly citation. (PNA)

Curry's 36 points leads Warriors in sweep over Spurs

San Antonio Spurs 115 - Golden State Warriors 129: Stephen Curry scored 36 points and the Golden State Warriors closed out the Western Conference Final against the injury-ravaged San Antonio Spurs with a victory on Monday night, becoming the first team in league history to start the playoffs 12-0.

Golden State led by as many as 22 points in cruising to its third straight NBA Finals. The Warriors await a possible third straight championship matchup with Cleveland, which leads Boston 2-1 in the East finals.

"It's great to be one of the last two teams standing, we'll see how it goes," said Kevin Durant, who had 29 points and 12 rebounds.

San Antonio's only lead came on the opening possession when Manu Ginobili tossed in a left-handed scoop shot. The Spurs started Ginobili in what could be his final game with the team. The 39-year-old had maintained he will not ponder whether to retire or return until after the season.

Unsure if the beloved veteran will return, the crowd serenaded Ginobili with "Manu, Manu" chants as the game came to a close.

"An amazing competitor, even more fun playing against him," Durant said of Ginobili. "He was phenomenal this series."

Kyle Anderson scored 20 points to lead the Spurs, who were without Kawhi Leonard, Tony Parker and David Lee. San Antonio didn't go down without a fight despite the injuries.

Spurs forward LaMarcus Aldridge closed out a disappointing series with his second eight-point effort against the Warriors.

Ginobili finished with 15 points in 32 minutes. (AP)

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Melindo eyes Olympic shot after winning IBF title

MANILA - Milan "El Metodico" Melindo is not out to rest on his laurels after recently crowning himself as the International Boxing Federation (IBF) lightweight champion, as he is not setting his sights on playing in the Olympics.

Melindo, who was coming off his sensational knockout victory over Akira Yaegashi of Japan in the first round to claim the IBF title, welcomes the chance to play for flag and country and get a chance to give him and the Philippines its first Olympic gold, Manila Bulletin reported.

"Bago pa mag-pro, talagang gusto ko sumali sa Olympics. Dream ko na hindi lang maging Olympian kung di manalo 'din ng gold," Melindo said.

Association of Boxing Alliances in the Philippines Secretary-General Ed Picson welcomed Melindo's statements, saying he will get his chance of earning a place in the national team after the two sides meet.

PH optimistic on Asian Women's Club c'ship stint

MANILA - The Philippines hopes to come up with a better performance in the 18th Asian Women's Club Championship which will kick off on Thursday in Ust-Kamenogorsk in northern Kazakhstan.

The Philippines is represented by the Rebisco-Philippine Super Liga (PSL) Manila team, which is composed of Rachel Anne Daguin, Jovelyn Gonzaga of Cignal, Aiza Maizo-Pontillas, Rhea Dimaculangan, Mika Reyes and Ces Molina of Petron, Abby Marano and Kim Fajardo of F2 Logistics, Denden Lazaro of Cocolife, Jaja Santiago of Foton, Gen Casugod and Bia General of Generika-Ayala and Lourdes Clemente of Sta. Lucia. Francis Vicente is coaching the team.

The Philippines, which will be playing without an import this year, finished seventh in the 2016 edition of the tournament sanctioned by the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC), the Philippine News Agency reported.