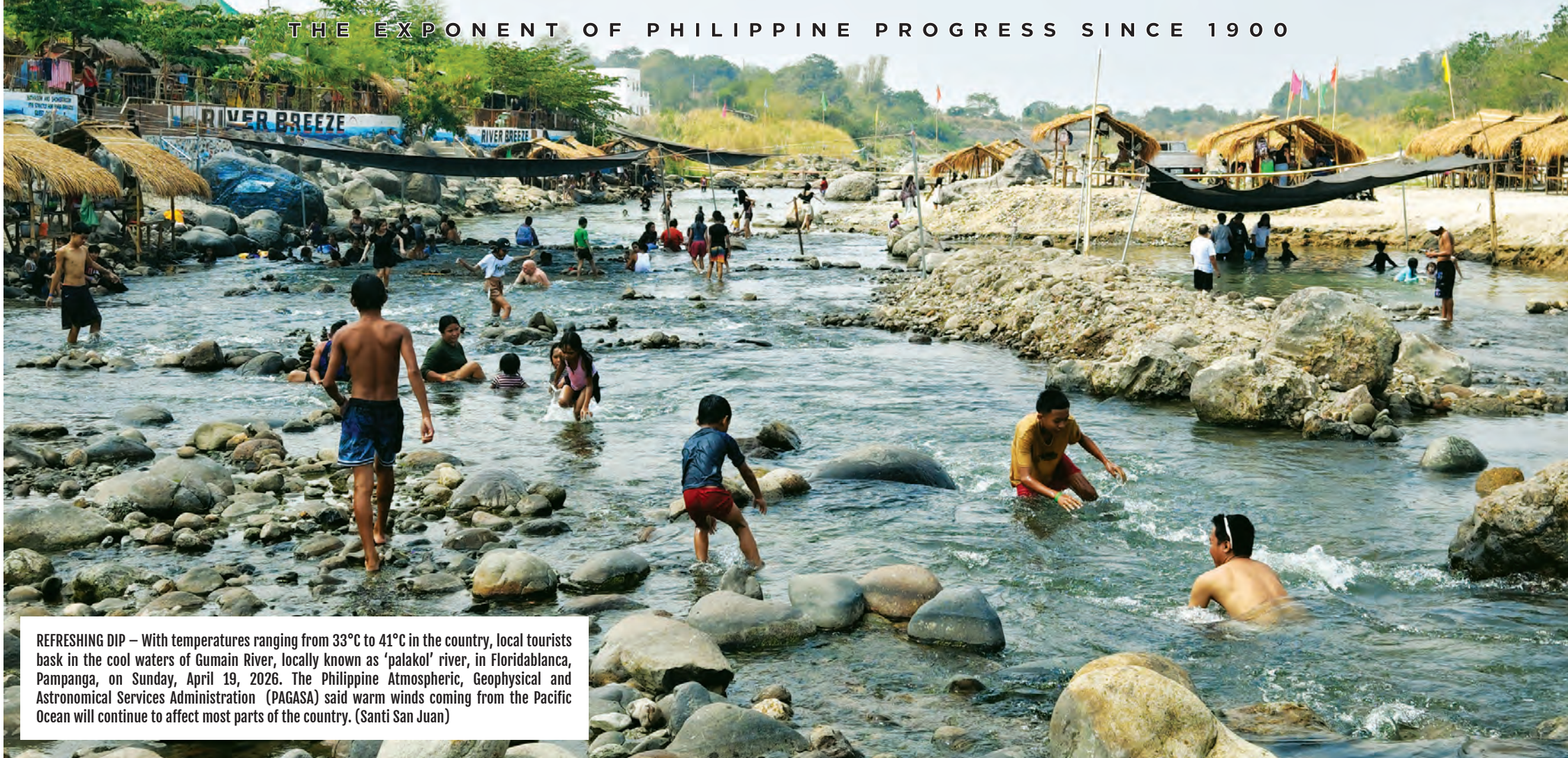


MANILA BULLETIN

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS SINCE 1900



REFRESHING DIP – With temperatures ranging from 33°C to 41°C in the country, local tourists bask in the cool waters of Gumain River, locally known as ‘palakol’ river, in Floridablanca, Pampanga, on Sunday, April 19, 2026. The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said warm winds coming from the Pacific Ocean will continue to affect most parts of the country. (Santi San Juan)

Biggest Balikatan drills start today

By MARTIN SADONGDONG

The largest iteration of Exercise Balikatan will kick off on Monday, April 20, with around 17,000 troops from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and counterparts from the United States and five other nations taking part in an “expanded” set of war games designed to test modern defense capabilities across land, air, sea, and cyberspace. The opening ceremony is scheduled at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City and AFP spokesperson ▶7

Iran fully closes Strait of Hormuz over US blockade

British military says a cargo vessel was attacked

CAIRO (AP) — The standoff over the Strait of Hormuz escalated again Saturday as Iran reversed its re-opening of the crucial waterway and fired on ships attempting to pass, in retaliation after the United States pressed ahead with its blockade of Iranian ports.

The strait is closed until the U.S. blockade is lifted, Iran's Revolutionary Guard navy said Saturday night, warning that "no vessel should make any movement

from its anchorage in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, and approaching the Strait of Hormuz will be considered as cooperation with the enemy" and be targeted.

New attacks on the strait, through which roughly one-fifth of the world's oil normally passes, threatened to deepen the global energy crisis and push the countries into renewed conflict as the war entered its eighth week.

A fragile ceasefire is due to run out by Wednesday. Iran ▶7



RICE AND SHINE – China's Ambassador to the Philippines Jing Quan (middle, in black cap) gives the thumbs-up sign with farmers while holding harvested rice in Sta. Cruz, Laguna, on April 16, 2026, to highlight the successful localization of Chinese hybrid rice technology in the country. (Photo from Chinese Embassy Manila FB page)

Rider dies in queue for ₱5K fuel aid in QC; solon calls for more humane payout system

By DIANN CALUCIN, ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ, and ELLSON QUISMORIO

A motorcycle taxi rider collapsed and died while waiting in line to receive ₱5,000 in fuel subsidy from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City on April 18, the agency confirmed.

In a statement, DSWD Spokesperson Assistant Secretary Irene Dumlao said Secretary Rex Gatchalian immediately directed the agency to coordinate with the family of the deceased and

ensure that necessary assistance is extended without delay.

The agency did not immediately disclose the identity of the rider, while further details surrounding the circumstances of the incident are still being verified in coordination with concerned authorities.

The fuel assistance program drew a large number of applicants at the Quezon Memorial Circle, where beneficiaries reportedly queued for several hours under hot weather conditions.

Some riders shared accounts of long waiting time and exposure to intense heat while lining up for the distribution.

Quezon Memorial Circle ▶7

Chinese envoy touts hybrid rice gains in Laguna visit

By ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

The Chinese Embassy in Manila lauded what it described as the successful localization of Chinese hybrid rice technology in the Philippines, saying the efforts could boost farmers' income and safeguard the country's food security.

This developed as Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Jing Quan joined farmers in Sta. Cruz,

Laguna, during a harvest activity on April 16, to showcase the localized use of hybrid rice.

In a Facebook post, the embassy said the technology has significantly increased rice yields and farmers' income.

"By boosting yields from 4–5 to 7–8 tons per hectare... [it] has driven a 50 percent surge in net income," it said.

This translates to an additional ₱40,000 to ₱60,000 ▶7



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