



9 780116 505408



manilastandard.net



@ManilaStandardPH



@mnstandardph



@manilastandard



@ManilaStandardYT

Missed your copy of Manila Standard? Call or text our Circulation Hotline at 0917-8848655 or email: circulation@manilastandard.net. For advertisement: email: advertise@manilastandard.net • 09173382170 / 85646229

New grad shot outside school

3 individuals linked to shooting arrested, 1 suspect still at large

By Vince Lopez, Gabriel Oliva, Maricel V. Cruz, Vito Barcelo and Kaian Isaac Duran

A FRESH college graduate was shot outside the Kolegio de Pantukan in Davao de Oro, just after his graduation rites, police said.

Three individuals reportedly linked to the shooting were arrested yesterday.

Pantukan Municipal Police Station officer-in-charge Lt. Col. Irish Hezron Parangan said the shooting appeared to be an isolated case, with “personal grudge” eyed as a possible motive behind the crime.

“This may fall under what we call ‘crime of passion,’” Parangan said.

“As a result of our hot pursuit operations, we have successfully apprehended three personalities, including the alleged principal, the gunman, and an accomplice. Our pursuit operations are continuing because one suspect was able to escape,” he added.

Firearms were also recovered from the suspects, including a .45-caliber, police said.

Next page

Risa eyes German help to summon Gorebox maker

By Joel E. Zurbano and Vince Lopez

THE Senate will ask the German Embassy in the Philippines to urge the developer of Gorebox to shed light on the video game after he declined an invitation to attend an inquiry into the Tacloban City school shooting that claimed three lives and injured 20 others.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) on Friday also backed calls for a government review of violent video

Next page

SECURING STUDENTS. Students of Bagong Silangan High School in Quezon City undergo routine bag inspections by school security personnel before entering the campus for classes. The inspections are part of the school's enhanced security measures aimed at maintaining a safe and secure learning environment amid heightened safety protocols in educational institutions. Inset shows screenshot from the official trailer of Gorebox released on November 13, 2024. Edd Castro, F2Games via YouTube



MORE DIALYSIS MACHINES. President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. briefs media about the on-going construction of the 13-story building National Kidney and Transplant Institute (NKT) in Quezon City that will house around 200 advanced dialysis machines. The project is expected to be completed by December 2027. With the President are DPWH Secretary Vince Dizon, Ted Herbosa, and National Kidney and Transplant Institute Executive Director Dr. Jose Dator. **Revoli Cortez**

PBBM touts push to build PH's largest dialysis center

By Charles Dantes

PRESIDENT Ferdinand "Bong-bong" Marcos Jr. on Friday said the government is expanding treatment and financial support for Filipinos with chronic kidney disease (CKD), highlighting the construction of what he said will become Southeast Asia's largest dialysis center by early 2028.

Speaking during an inspection of the facility, Mr. Marcos said the project responds to the growing burden of CKD in the country, citing estimates that more than 11 percent of Filipinos are living with the disease.

Next page

Desperate race to dig up trapped Venezuelans in earthquake rubble

DESPERATE Venezuelans raced Thursday to find and rescue loved ones trapped alive beneath the rubble of collapsed buildings after two major earthquakes that killed at least 235 people.

Buildings cracked, crumbled, and tilted precariously after the quakes, which the United States Geological Survey measured at magnitudes 7.2 and 7.5, hit northern Venezuela within less than a minute of each other on Wednesday night.

Powerful aftershocks could still be felt Thursday, and

Health Minister Carlos Alvarado reported the death toll had risen from 188 to at least 235.

More than 1,500 people were injured as the earth shook and roared in what many Venezuelans called a terrifying display of nature's raw power.

Rescue efforts moved slowly, with bodies still visible under debris hours after the quakes, while time ran out for some of those who were trapped and injured.

In a city in the worst-hit state of La Guaira, north of

Next page

CIDG recommends hazing raps vs. Baldwin, Ateneo team staff

By Vince Lopez, Jeremiah Sevilla, and Pot Chavez

AUTHORITIES have recommended filing charges for alleged violations of the Anti-Hazing Act against resigned Ateneo Blue Eagles men's basketball head coach Tab Baldwin and 10 others

over a team-building activity in Aurora that claimed the lives of student-athletes Rene Baterbonia and Divine Adili.

The Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG) recommendation was referred yesterday to the Department of Justice (DOJ), which will first

Next page

No more obstacle to impeach trial; gag order on counsels eyed

By Maricel V. Cruz and Ram Superable

WITH the Senate impeachment court having wrapped up pre-trial proceedings, the House prosecution panel on Friday expressed confidence that

nothing now stands in the way of the July 6 trial of Vice President Sara Zimmerman Duterte.

Meanwhile, Senator Panfilo Lacson said the Impeachment Court should direct both the prosecution and defense

Next page



RACE AGAINST TIME. Volunteers search for possible victims in a collapsed building following twin earthquakes in Caraballeda, La Guaira state, some 40 kilometers northeast of Caracas, Venezuela on June 25, 2026. **AFP**

New...

From A1

Parangan noted that one of the suspects tried to resist arrest by using his own child as a “human shield.”

He said police had to chase the suspect, who eventually let go of his child before he was arrested.

The victim was boarding a mini-van with his parents outside the school premises on Thursday, June 25, when the suspects attacked.

Authorities said the victim sustained multiple gunshot wounds and was taken to a hospital for treatment. He is now reportedly in stable condition.

“We assure the public that the safety of our students and residents remains a top priority. We encourage everyone to remain calm and refrain from spreading unverified information,” the Pantukan local government said in a statement.

The attack happened days after two ninth graders – alias Nash, 14, and alias Rod, 15, opened fire inside the San Jose National High School in Tacloban City, killing three students and wounding 20

others on Monday.

A day after the June 22 shooting spree in Tacloban City, a Grade 10 student stabbed a Grade 9 student in San Carlos City in Negros Occidental.

Seven students were wounded on June 16 in a knife attack by an older student in a private school in Cavite. Three days later, a student sustained injuries after being stabbed by a fellow Grade 11 student in a public school also in Cavite.

As this developed, the Department of Education has launched an initiative directing members of the community, including schools, parents, local government units and law enforcement agencies to cooperate in strengthening safety and anti-bullying measures in school campuses nationwide.

DepEd Secretary Sonny Angara said the department is moving with urgency to ensure the school tragedies do not happen again.

DepEd also aims to equip schools with CCTVs, implement strict visitor management systems, bag inspections, and deploy in-campus security personnel, Angara said.

“DepEd is (also) setting up accessible, confidential reporting channels for bullying, violence, and other learner protection concerns,” the department said.

For his part, Department of Social Welfare and Development Secretary Rex Gatchalian said the two minor suspects in the school shooting incident in Tacloban City will not be treated differently, but will instead be handled through age-appropriate interventions in accordance with the country’s Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act.

“This is not humanitarian but rather age-appropriate handling. When they reach the age of majority, especially 15-year-olds, the response or handling of them will still be age-appropriate,” Gatchalian said.

For the 15-year-old suspect, Gatchalian if he is found guilty, the suspect may be given a suspended sentence and remain at the Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY), a DSWD-managed center where an appropriate plan will be implemented.

He said the minor’s progress will be regularly evaluated, with periodic re-

ports submitted to the court.

Gatchalian said the 14-year-old suspect, despite being below the minimum age of criminal responsibility, will also remain under the custody of the DSWD.

“Even if he has no criminal liability, he will not be allowed to return to his community. For his safety and for the community’s safety, he will be with the DSWD,” he said.

As this developed, Manila Mayor Francisco “Isko” Moreno Domagoso on Friday warned that students who will be caught carrying weapons to school, engage in riots, or are officially found guilty of bullying will face expulsion from Manila’s public schools under a proposed city ordinance aimed at strengthening campus discipline and safety.

Speaking during the “Kapihan ng Samahang Plaridel,” Domagoso said: “I believe in the rights of the individual, but we also have a responsibility to our community.”

Domagoso also fiercely defended the idea against anti-poor criticisms, saying poverty is never an excuse for delinquency.

CIDG...

From A1

evaluate the evidence before deciding whether to proceed with a preliminary investigation.

"The Department of Justice confirms that it received today, 26 June 2026, the referral from the CIDG/PNP recommending the filing of charges for violation of Republic Act No. 11053, or the Anti-Hazing Act, and such other offenses as the evidence and applicable law may warrant, which may include Homicide and/or Reckless Imprudence Resulting in Homicide, if appropriate," Justice spokesperson Polo Martinez said.

He said the DOJ would not disclose further details while the referral undergoes evaluation.

Martinez explained that the department would first determine whether the evidence submitted is complete and sufficient.

"Procedurally, two courses of action are possible: first, if the evidence is found to be incomplete, the matter may be referred for further case build-up by the DOJ in coordination with the CIDG, pursuant to DOJ Department Circular No. 20; or, second, if the referral is found sufficient, the matter may be docketed for preliminary investigation before the DOJ," he said.

Ateneo coaching staff on list

The CIDG recommendation names Baldwin, Ateneo strength and conditioning coaches Grant Dearns and Ceasar Vincent Javellana Elumba, assistant coaches Dean Caesar

Castaño, Sandro Nicholas Romero Soriano, and Reynaldo C. Jacinto Jr., student managers Paolo Manuel Maceda Adevosos and Andrew Lorenzo Bondoc Salud, physical therapist John Eric Quiambao Rueca, and utility-ball boys Aris Ramos Ponce and Joel Palmiano Rapa.

Interior Secretary Jonvic Remulla said the recommendation is based on the expanded provisions of Republic Act No. 11053.

"The Anti-Hazing Act has already been revised. We used to think of hazing as something that occurred only during initiation rites. But in this case, the team-building activity and training crossed the line into hazing," Remulla said during a press briefing.

He explained that under the law, hazing includes acts that inflict physical or psychological suffering, harm, or injury on a recruit, applicant, or member, including forced calisthenics and exposure to the elements.

Baterbonia, 18, and Adili, 21, drowned after being swept away by strong waves during a seawater training exercise at a resort in Dipaculao, Aurora on June 8.

Exercise done to determine final UAAP roster

Department of the Interior and Local Government Assistant Secretary Brian Tomas said the CIDG investigation found the activity was intended to determine which players would make the final roster to be submitted by Baldwin to the UAAP Board.

"The CIDG found that the seawater-based activity constitutes hazing because there is a deliberate intent to

cause suffering among players. This is evident in the fact that Tab Baldwin, in his own testimony with the CIDG, admitted that they intentionally chose the dates June 7-12 to coincide with the low tide," Tomas said.

He said players were awakened at 4 a.m. by a siren, required to run four kilometers, and then subjected to physically demanding games in which losing participants were punished.

"All these circumstances show that the elements of violation of the anti-hazing law may be present," Tomas said.

Remulla said investigators also noted inconsistencies in statements given by players and members of the coaching staff and would continue the investigation.

He added that Ateneo de Manila University and Smart Communications, a major sponsor of the team, were unaware of the Aurora training activity.

"According to multiple testimonies, (Ateneo athletics) director Em Fernandez learned about it only after the fact. (Ateneo president) Fr. Bobby Yap also learned about it only after the fact," Remulla said.

"Smart's role in this was strictly that of a sponsor. The company had no knowledge of what happened or of the planning of this kind of activity," he added.

Ateneo ‘respects’ CIDG recommendation

Later, Ateneo de Manila University said it respects the CIDG's recommendation and will continue to cooperate with authorities.

Desperate...

From A1

Caracas, residents listened helplessly as a young girl cried out for help for hours.

"We need people..., military personnel, to come and help so we can get her out," said resident Dani Rizo, 48.

Not long after, the girl died, local residents told Agence France Presse (AFP).

Elsewhere in La Guaira, three people could be heard in the rubble of a collapsed building.

"They're still alive... There's nothing more we can do," said one resident, Antonio Bermudez. "We don't have any tools. We have no way to help."

A doctor at the Domingo Luciani Hospital in the city, speaking on condition of anonymity, said children were arriving in ambulances alone after being pulled out of the rubble.

"Some children provide their names, while others arrive with identification tape on their arms," he said.

Global rescue teams on way

A rescue worker, speaking off the record, told AFP conditions were precarious, with a shortage of trained personal and significant technical limitations.

Interim president Delcy Rodriguez visited La Guaira on Thursday after the area was declared a "disaster zone."

AFP reporters witnessed residents

looting a local supermarket in the city.

Venezuela's director of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Nicole Kast, described the situation as catastrophic.

Offers of support poured in from around the world, with Switzerland, Spain, France, Portugal and Mexico among those sending specialists and rescue teams to Venezuela.

The United States said it was deploying two warships, transport planes and helicopters as well as mobilizing \$150 million in aid.

"We have a whole-of-government response. It'll be big, it'll be fast, and it'll be effective," said US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Washington is closely involved in oil-rich Venezuela after US forces ousted and arrested president Nicolas Maduro in January.

China, India, Brazil and even war-battered Iran offered help, while Pope Leo XIV has sent an initial 100,000 euros in aid to the country.

UN chief Antonio Guterres said he was "deeply saddened" by the disaster as the global body vowed to assist Venezuela.

The strongest quake to hit Venezuela in 126 years will require "massive collective efforts," UN aid chief Tom Fletcher said in a statement.

Threatening to complicate relief efforts, the international airport is in La Guaira and has been closed after suffering serious damage.

An Italian and a Portuguese citizen were among the dead, officials from both countries confirmed. **AFP**

Risa...

From A1

games amid concerns over their possible influence on vulnerable minors.

Investigators cited Gorebox -- a chaotic, physics-driven sandbox video game developed by Felix Filip of F2Games -- as being played by the teenaged male suspects in the Tacloban shooting.

The game also allegedly influenced another young girl in Tolosa, Leyte who attempted a copycat incident at her local high school but was foiled by authorities after a tip from Senator Bam Aquino.

As a video game, Gorebox is known for unrestrained destruction, allowing players to build and destroy custom maps, use firearms and explosives, and test realistic ragdoll physics and graphic gore systems on "Gore-dolls" (blocky humanoid avatars).

The Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center on Tuesday ordered the temporary blocking of Gore-Box online after the shooting.

Its chief, Undersecretary Aboy Paraiso, said: "We cannot ignore possible online influences that may have contributed to this tragic incident."

Gorebox developer declines invite

Senator Risa Hontiveros said Filip, who identified himself as an independent game developer based in Germany, informed her committee through email that he would not participate in the July 1 hearing, either in person or via Zoom.

Hontiveros said she would seek the assistance of the German Embassy in the Philippines to facilitate Filip's participation in the Senate inquiry.

"It is disappointing that Mr. Filip has chosen not to attend our upcoming hearing, especially since there are many things I would like to learn directly from him," said Hontiveros, chair of the Senate Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations, and Gender Equality.

"My committee remains willing to assist in enabling his attendance and participation in our investigation should he reconsider. Our desire to hear from him does not end here," she added.

‘Issue extends beyond a single game’

Hontiveros said she wanted to question the developer about Gore-Box's safety measures, including its age safeguards, content moderation policies, and the possible exposure of young users to harmful online communities or behavior.

The senator stressed that the issue extends beyond a single game or developer and involves establishing standards for online platforms operating in the country.

"Any developer or online company that wants to operate here, profit from Filipino users, and reach Filipino children must respect our laws and our institutions. This should be the bare minimum for them to do business here," she said.

"Kung ayaw nilang kilalanin, mananagot din sila (If they refuse to acknowledge it, they will also be held accountable)," Hontiveros said.

The Senate inquiry will also examine whether online platforms may have contributed to the June 22 shooting through possible grooming, radicalization, or the normalization of violence.

"We are not saying that this tragedy was caused by a single game. But if there is an online environment that may have been part of the children's exposure to violence, it is our duty to investigate that," Hontiveros said.

Nartatez backs review of violent games

Meanwhile, PNP chief General Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. expressed support for an evidence-based government review of violent video games following the Tacloban shooting.

"We believe any proposal, including restrictions or a ban, should be carefully evaluated by Congress and relevant agencies to ensure that policies are grounded in research and the best interests of our youth," Nartatez said.

Earlier, Interior Secretary Jonvic Remulla urged Congress and concerned government agencies to study possible measures against violent video games, including a potential ban on titles such as GoreBox.

Nartatez said the PNP recognizes concerns that repeated exposure to violent content may influence vulnerable individuals, particularly minors, while cautioning against drawing conclusions without sufficient evidence.

"The PNP recognizes concerns that repeated exposure to violent content may influence some vulnerable individuals, particularly minors," he said.

"While violent behavior is often driven by multiple factors, we cannot ignore the possibility that certain forms of content may contribute to the normalization of violence and increase the risk of imitation or copycat behavior," he added.

To strengthen prevention efforts, Nartatez directed all Police Regional Offices and local police units to coordinate more closely with schools, school administrators, and local government units on campus safety and threat monitoring.

PBBM...

From A1

"There is a great need because, based on statistics, over 11 percent of Filipinos have chronic kidney disease, so we need to strengthen and expand our services for the treatment of CKD," President Marcos said.

The President said the facility is expected to become the largest dialysis center in Southeast Asia once

completed. He added that the government is also focusing on preventing kidney disease through public health interventions, alongside expanding treatment services.

"We are also looking not only at treating CKD but also at what we can do to help our fellow Filipinos avoid developing chronic kidney disease," he added.

He said the government continues to increase assistance for CKD patients through the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth).

He noted that PhilHealth has expanded its hemodialysis coverage from 90 to 156 sessions annually, while the benefit package per session has increased from P4,000 to P6,350.

The president also said the Z Benefit Package for peritoneal dialysis has been raised to between P389,640 and P500,140 annually for adults, and from P510,000 to as much as P1.2 million per year for pediatric patients.

Mr. Marcos added that the country now has 904 accredited dialysis cen-

PNP ensures peaceful June 28 rally



ACTIVE FAULT LINE. This image prepared by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology shows the West Valley Fault Line painted on the pavement along A. Bonifacio Avenue in Barangay Barangka, Marikina City to raise public awareness about the potential danger posed by the so-called Big One, a major earthquake that could potentially leave a wide swathe of destruction in Metro Manila. Manny Palmero

By Vince Lopez

THE Philippine National Police (PNP) on Friday gave assurance it is ready to provide full security for the planned “White Ribbon Movement” rally at the EDSA People Power Monument on June 28 to ensure peace and order, as well as safety of the public in general.

PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. ordered National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) director Maj. Gen. Anthony Aberin and concerned regional offices to conduct a comprehensive security threat assessment of the EDSA People Power Monument environs and nearby critical infrastructure.

“While we respect the public’s right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, the Philippine National Police will remain completely apolitical and focused solely on maintaining public order and safety during the scheduled June 28 mobilization,” Nartatez said in a statement.

“We have already initiated strategic security assessments and directed the National Capital Region Police Office, alongside concerned local units, to exercise maximum tolerance while strictly enforcing traffic management and civil disturbance protocols,” Nartatez said.

“Our priority is to ensure that the ‘White Ribbon Movement’ march at the EDSA People Power Monument remains completely peaceful, prevents any form of lawlessness, and causes minimal disruption to the commuting public and nearby business establishments,” he added.

The NCRPO said that a total 9,533 police officers will be deployed across Metro Manila for the June 28 rally.

“There is no threat. This is our proactive deployment,” NCRPO spokesperson, Maj. Hazel Asilo said in a text message sent to reporters.

Religious and civil society groups led by the Interreligious Leaders Council for National Transformation (IRCNT) have called for the nationwide march to push electoral reforms, stronger accountability in government, and action against corruption and political dynasties.

The gathering is expected to draw participants from faith-based organizations and civil society groups.

Eastern Police District (EPD) director, Brig. Gen. Melecio Buslig Jr., said that they implemented comprehensive security operations to ensure the safe, orderly, and peaceful conduct of the Faith-Based Rally dubbed “White Ribbon March” on Sunday.

Buslig emphasized the EPD’s commitment to balancing public safety and security with the protection of constitutional rights.

“The EPD remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring a peaceful and orderly White Ribbon March. Our personnel are directed to exercise maximum tolerance, uphold human rights, and work closely with our partner agencies and local government units to guarantee the safety of all participants and the public while respecting every individual’s constitutional right to peaceful assembly,” said Buslig.

PNP chief orders probe on gun-toting policeman

PHILIPPINE National Police (PNP) chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. on Friday ordered the conduct of administrative proceedings against a police corporal caught on video allegedly pointing a firearm at a civilian in Dapitan City, Zamboanga del Norte.

Nartatez strongly condemned the action of the police officer who was assigned to the Sapang Dalaga municipal police station in Misamis Occidental.

“The actions displayed in the viral video are a complete betrayal of the badge and the trust our citizens place in us. We hold our officers to the highest standards of professional conduct,” the PNP chief said.

“There is no room in the PNP for anyone who uses their position to intimidate or threaten the very public we are sworn to protect. I have zero tolerance for such display of arrogance,” he added. **Vince Lopez**

Former brgy councilor shot dead in Hermosa

HERMOSA, Bataan — A former barangay councilor in this town was shot dead in ambush by unidentified gunmen in Barangay Culis, Hermosa, at around 9 a.m. on Friday.

Bataan police director Col. Maritess Salvadora identified the victim as Norman Dalit, 42, a resident of Sitio Maligaya, Barangay Culis.

Initial investigation showed that the suspects, who were reportedly aboard a white vehicle, opened fire on the victim before fleeing toward the Roman Superhighway.

Investigators are reviewing available evidence and pursuing leads to arrest the killers. **Butch Gunio**

QC gov’t gets 6th COA Unmodified Opinion

THE Quezon City government has received its sixth consecutive “Unmodified Opinion” from the Commission on Audit (COA).

Mayor Joy Belmonte welcomed the recognition, stressing that the achievement has reflected the city government’s steadfast dedication to protecting public resources and ensuring that every peso is used for programs and services that benefit QCizens.

The consecutive highest audit rating reinforces the Belmonte administration’s commitment to responsible governance and sound fiscal management.

An Unmodified Opinion signifies that the city’s financial statements fairly present its financial position and compliance with applicable government accounting and reporting standards. It reflects the accuracy, reliability and integrity of the city’s financial records and transactions. **Rio N. Araja**

Source says volatile oil rates create unpredictable pump prices

By Alena Mae S. Flores

WORLD oil prices remained volatile during the first four days of the week, resulting in a possible rollback or increase in pump prices next week.

An industry source said diesel may see a rollback of P0.70 per liter or an increase of P1.20 per liter. Gasoline may see a rollback of P0.50 per liter or an increase of P1.50 per liter, based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) and foreign exchange averages from June 22 to 25.

“The MOPS settlement today is important, but the final movement next week would depend on other factors like the premium, freight, biofuels, etc. We just estimated the range using the Department of Energy computation,” the source said.

World crude oil prices have eased despite tempered optimism over the U.S.-Iran interim peace deal and ongoing negotiations. The decline is driven by

an improving broader supply outlook as physical flows through the Strait of Hormuz gradually recover, and the return of disrupted Middle Eastern barrels as Gulf producers ramp up production, the source said.

“Despite the political agreement, physical flows through the strait and shipping activity have yet to normalize,” the source said. “Uncertainty still remains over the durability of the U.S.-Iran accord. The recent incident of a suspected

attack on a cargo vessel in the Strait of Hormuz has reignited fears that the preliminary deal would not hold.”

The source added that the sanctions waiver on Iranian oil, which will allow Iranian-origin crude oil and other petroleum products into the market, also weighed on global oil prices.

Meanwhile, Asian diesel and middle distillate price benchmarks are relatively weaker as the market expects a gradual rise in regional availability.

Climate advocates, allies stage anti-fossil fuel march in Makati

CLIMATE justice advocates, labor groups, and front-line communities on Friday marched Ayala Avenue in Makati City, in a massive show of protest against Japan’s three largest private banks that continue to fund fossil fuels.

Led by the Asian Peoples’ Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD), the protest action coincided with the annual general meetings (AGMs) happening in Tokyo for Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG), Mizuho Financial Group, and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC). Simultaneously, allied grassroots organizations staged parallel demonstrations in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Jakarta, Indonesia, signaling unified regional outrage.

According to the 2026 Banking on Climate Chaos report released earlier this month, global fossil fuel financing

jumped eight percent last year, with Japan’s megabanks driving much of the surge. MUFG alone vaulted into the top three worst climate funders globally, boosting its fossil fuel financing by 21 percent to \$47 billion in a single year, while Mizuho poured in \$46.5 billion. Together with SMBC, the trio channeled over \$124 billion into coal, oil, and gas projects in the last analyzed fiscal cycle.

In the Philippines, advocates are targeting these institutions for backing a massive domestic liquefied natural gas (LNG) expansion. The Japanese banks are major financiers of developers behind LNG import terminals and gas power complexes in Batangas—infrastructure that critics say locks the developing nation into decades of expensive, imported fossil fuels, the protest organizers said in a statement.



NO TO FOSSIL FUEL. Environmental advocates, labor groups, and militant organizations stage a rally along Ayala Avenue in Makati City to demand cessation of investments in fossil fuel. Led by the Asian Peoples’ Movement on Debt and Development, the protest action coincides with the annual general meetings in Tokyo, Japan of giant financing institutions mostly involved in fossil fuel.

BuCor disproves rumors inmate Palparan fled NBP

By Rex Espiritu

THE Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) said it allowed the families of two “desaparecidos” (disappeared persons) and their lawyers to meet with convicted former Army general Jovito Palparan at the New Bilibid Prison (NBP) in Muntinlupa City to dispel doubts about his whereabouts.

In a report to BuCor director General Gregorio Pio Catapang Jr., NBP superintendent Gary Garcia said complainants Erlinda Cadapan and Concepcion Empeño, accompanied by their lawyers, were allowed to personally meet Palparan for more than one hour.

Garcia said the request letter was received and acted upon the same day, reflecting the agency’s prompt response.

“They should have made the request much earlier to avoid confusion, because the Bureau of Corrections was willing to accommodate it, and our agency is transparent when it comes to matters like this,” Garcia said.

He also clarified that Palparan had already been housed at the NBP’s minimum security facility before Catapang assumed office as BuCor chief.

Garcia said the placement was based on security considerations, as inmates with different political affiliations are detained at the maximum security compound.

Following the meeting, a team of special investigators from the Commission on Human Rights, composed of Delfin Banluta, Kirsten Phoebe Bautista, and

Marie Bernadette Mirandilla, arrived at the NBP to conduct a separate investigation into Palparan’s status.

Catapang said BuCor remains transparent and is willing to accommodate visitors and investigators, provided they comply with established rules and protocols.

“Guaranteeing the safety of our persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) is a priority—not only for Palparan but for everyone entrusted to our care,” Catapang said.

He added that the Bureau remains committed to fairness and security in its operations, ensuring that no inmate receives preferential treatment while safeguarding the welfare of all persons deprived of liberty under its custody.



PROOF OF LIFE. New Bilibid Prison superintendent Gary Garcia (seated, right) presents to the complaining families of two alleged victims of involuntary disappearance, their lawyers, and Commission on Human Rights investigators convicted Army Gen. Jovito Palparan to prove that the prisoner has not fled the penitentiary. **BuCor photo**



RAINBOW BANNER. A day before the annual Pride March today, Akbayan Party and its youth members unfurl a giant rainbow pride banner with the slogan ‘Love All’ at the Philcoa footbridge along Commonwealth Ave. on Friday, June 26, 2026. in Quezon City. Manny Palmero

CHED, UP Manila launch mental health literacy training program

By Rex Espiritu

THE Commission on Higher Education and the University of the Philippines Manila launched a mental health literacy training program among higher education institutions as a response to the youth’s increasing mental health needs.

Departing from traditional or reactive crisis interventions, Sulong Institusyon sa Napapanahong Aksyon at Ginhawa or “Project SINAG” aims to train 724 core leaders across 181 State, Colleges, and Universities (SUCs) and Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) to institutionalize awareness of mental health issues and provide systematic support in academic settings.

Each participating university or college will form a four-member team that will train for the program: A faculty representative, a student leader, a mental health focal person (school clinic personnel or guidance counselor), and a top campus official or administrator (president or vice president) to ensure that a change in school leadership will not affect the delivery of mental health services.

The key participants of Project SINAG will undergo a 12-month online training, and each will assume distinct but complementary responsibilities: the campus official will lead policy formulation and resource allocation; the mental health focal person will provide clinical oversight and crisis intervention; the faculty representative will foster classroom psychological safety; and the student leader will lead stigma reduction initiatives and peer support on mental health concerns.

Bill bars expiration of prepaid load

By Maricel V. Cruz

HOUSE Senior Deputy Minority Leader Leila de Lima on Friday pushed for the passage of a bill prohibiting all public telecommunications entities and providers from imposing an expiration period on prepaid load credits.

De Lima’s House Bill 9903 or the “Prepaid Load Forever Act seeks to make it unlawful to impose an expiration period for unused prepaid load credits, forfeit unused load in active accounts, and refuse to refund forfeited

credits without a valid reason.

The bill was a counterpart measure to Senate President Sherwin Gatchalian’s Senate Bill 1095.

“It is unfair and inequitable to put expiration dates on prepaid load credits,

as it forces consumers to use up their load or data prematurely to avoid forfeiting them,” De Lima said.

“It’s clearly not fair to consumers. Why is there an expiration on the use of load that they have already purchased and owned?” she added.

Under the current regulatory framework, telecommunication companies are permitted to impose expiration dates on prepaid load credits, resulting in the annual forfeiture of billions of pesos in consumer assets.

To address legitimate operational concerns, the bill includes a provi-

sion on dormant accounts or those that have been inactive for at least one (1) year. Under this measure, an amount of P1 may be deducted from such accounts per day of inactivity until credits are fully consumed. This allows providers to reclaim and reassign inactive numbers while preserving the vast majority of consumer assets.

“Telecom companies should help protect consumer rights, and must not engage in practices that exploit consumers for the sake of profit,” De Lima said.

IN BRIEF

Absence alone not proof of work abandonment—SC

AN EMPLOYEE’S absence from work is not enough to prove abandonment, the Supreme Court said on Friday.

In its decision, the SC’s Third Division reiterated that abandonment, or the deliberate and unjustified refusal of an employee to resume his work, requires proof of two elements.

First, the employee must be absent without a valid reason; and second, the employee clearly intended to end the employer-employee relationship.

The High Court underscored the importance of the second element, noting that it must be shown through the employee’s actions.

“Absence from work, in itself, cannot generate a finding of abandonment, absent any overt act from the employee clearly manifesting his or her desire to end the employment. The Court repeats that mere absence from or failure to work is not tantamount to abandonment,” the High Court said. **Pot Chavez**

Heatwave prompts embassy warning to Pinoys in France

THE Philippine Embassy in Paris has advised Filipinos in France to exercise extra caution amid an unprecedented heatwave gripping the country, warning of the health risks posed by prolonged exposure to extreme temperatures.

In an advisory, the embassy urged Filipinos to stay hydrated and limit outdoor activities.

“Exposure to high temperatures poses a significant risk to everyone and particularly to the most vulnerable: the elderly, young children, pregnant women, people with disabilities or chronic diseases or those taking certain medications and people in precarious situations,” the advisory read.

Reports indicate that Western Europe is experiencing record-breaking heat this week, with red alert warnings issued in the UK, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, and France.

On Wednesday, France recorded one of its highest temperatures, with Nantes in western France reaching 42°C. **Katrina Manubay**

2026 Shari’ah Special Bar exam results out on July 1

THE results of the 2026 Shari’ah Special Bar Examinations (SSBE) are set to be released on July 1.

The Supreme Court (SC) Office of the Spokesperson said Friday it will be held at the En Banc Session Hall at the SC Main Building in Manila.

SC Associate Justice and 2026 SSBE chairperson Henri Jean Paul Inting will present the results and provide examination statistics and key announcements.

The localized and digitized examinations took place May 24 and 27, 2026 across four testing centers in the country.

These include New Era University in Quezon City, Mindanao State University–Iligan Institute of Technology in Iligan City, Ateneo de Davao University in Davao City, and Ateneo de Zamboanga University in Zamboanga City. **Pot Chavez**

FASTEST WATER BUFFALO.

Farmers participate in carabao races in honor of St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of farmers, at Aliaga, Nueva Ecija. **Dave Leprozo**



Senators cite key reforms under new education access law

By Ram Superable

SENATORS Bam Aquino and Camille Villar on Friday welcomed the transformative potential of expanding educational access following the bicameral conference committee’s approval of the unified private basic education voucher system the previous day.

“The purpose of this proposal is to reduce overcrowding in public schools and to give families more choices, especially in areas lacking school capacity... giving priority to students from vulnerable sectors and strength-

ening support for teachers teaching in private schools included in the program,” Aquino said.

Once signed into law, the reconciled policy will deliver financial voucher subsidies spanning Kindergarten through Senior High School to permit student enrollment in accredited private academies.

“We believe that education is the key to a better future for every child, their family, and the entire community. That is why we will continue to push for reforms that will expand access to quality education and provide more opportunities for every Filipino

child,” he added.

Villar, for her part, said establishing a pathway to high-quality instruction directly serves as a gateway to enhanced career prospects and a more promising future for the youth.

“We will continue to push for programs that will provide more opportunities for every Filipino youth,” she said.

The bicameral conference committee resolved the differing provisions between Senate Bill No. 1981 and House Bill No. 4744 during a legislative session at the House of Representatives.

Bills seeks reservist enrollment for 18-25

By Ram Superable

A BILL seeking to modernize the military registration system by automatically enrolling eligible Filipinos into the reserve force database was introduced on Friday by Senator Robin Padilla to boost national preparedness.

Senate Bill No. 2042 proposes to amend the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines Reservist Act by requiring the continuous and automatic enlistment of citizens aged 18 to 25 through current government records, such as the Philippine Identification System.

“Whenever there is a calamity, earthquake, typhoon, flooding, or any national disaster, the first question we always hear is: do we have enough people and is our readiness sufficient? This proposal is part of the answer to that question,” Padilla said.



GOOD CUP. Shops at the Clark International Airport sell elegantly packaged coffee products sourced from coffee producing communities across the country. **Dave Leprozo**



Grinding Grains
Honor Blanco Cabie

Muted masks, faded crowns

KOMEDIA, for scores the highlight of many town fiestas in Northern Philippines, has faded out with the last sound of the wind instruments accompanying the battle between the brightly robed stage performers.

Komedia had been undoubtedly the greatest and most popular theater during the last 100 years – 1798-1898 – of the Spanish rule, which began in 1521.

That was the year Portuguese navigator Fernando Magallanes discovered the islands – later to be called Las Islas Filipinas in honor of King Philip II – for Europe, 141 years after an Arab sheikh established the first Muslim mosque in the country’s far southern island of Simunul in the province of Tawi Tawi.

Also known among Ilokanos as the Moro-moro, a common Spanish identification for Muslim, the stage drama had reference to Moors who once invaded Spain.

Abruptly interrupted during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines in the 1940s, komedia resurfaced in the 1950s and used to be staged at the center of each largely agricultural town of the Ilocos, split on Feb 2, 1818 into Ilocos Norte and Ilocos Sur by the promulgation of a royal decree due to rapid population growth.

Hundreds, even thousands, trooped to the improvised theater soon before sundown so they would not miss a line from the performers from the time the curtains were raised.

There they waited for the stage prompter and his performing artists, all garbed in colorful costumes.

Near the performance site, the well heeled and better dressed members of the town’s social class, many returning students from the metropolis, attended formal programs at the amphitheater or open air auditorium.

For three or four nights in those bubble gum years, young Ilokanos — and surprisingly even adults and those in their senior years — enjoyed listening to the stories that usually revolved around tales of love and conquest between Christians and Muslims during the medieval period in Europe.

The ear of listeners in those years could compete with the tympanic membrane of today’s patrons of telenovelas, mostly imported from overseas.

For nights on end during the town fiesta, the “Muslims” at the performance site were always beaten and ended up embracing the Christian faith.

Unlike in better off towns of the archipelago, the duels between the two sides were not choreographed.

But the lighting – from a 350 candle power Coleman or Petromax gas lamps at the time – was sufficient to sustain the en-

thusiasm and energy of the crowd who preferred the theater to the plaza or the ferris wheels nearby.

The dialogues – thanks to the indefatigable prompter who hid very discreetly behind the plywood wall near the hat-wearing musicians – were delivered in rhyming verses.

That, while the participants leisurely strutted across the elevated stage as though digging their brains for an appropriate line of response.

“

The komedia Ilokana was enough to soften the impact of the season’s scorching humidity in any northern town

It is not clear when the first komedia was staged in the different towns of northern Philippines. Debate has been going on as regards the first such performance in the country.

But many historians agreed that the first komedia script was written by Jesuit Geronimo Perez which was staged in Manila on July 15, 1637.

It was obviously ushered in to mark the triumphant campaigns of Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera against Muhammad Dipatuan Kudarat, better known as Sultan Kudarat, who ruled the sultanate of Maguindanao from 1619 to 1671.

At the time of his death in 1671, he was, by historical accounts, probably between 80 and 90 years old.

Earlier in 1598, or 77 years after the arrival of Magellan and his fleet, Jesuit students performed komedia in Cebu, now described in picture cards as the queen City of the South.

While the debate breathes every now and then on the exact place where the komedia was first staged, which is beyond the ear-split range of the Ilokanos of the country’s far north, what is clear is that the komedia was for decades a favorite show among different generations.

It used to mark religious festivals or cap an agro-industrial fair and town fiesta. Ilokanos celebrated their fiesta in April or May in honor of their patron saint San Isidro Labrador.

It was enough to soften the impact of the season’s scorching humidity in any northern town, caressed by the warm sun of northern Philippines during summer.



PH’s and China’s United Front Work Dept.

By Rommel Banlaoi

CHINA’S United Front Work Department is often flagged as a driver of sharp power, wielding narrative shaping, network building, and cultural or economic ties to extend influence.

But the Philippines is no passive recipient. From colonial legacies to Cold War alignments, our history shows resilience in navigating external pressures.

Today, our institutions, civil society, and media continue to contest foreign influence whether from China, the United States, or others.

Engagement with China, even amid maritime disputes, does not erase sovereignty.

The Philippines retains authority to cooperate, resist, or recalibrate. Safeguarding national interests requires transparency, independent media, and public awareness of influence tactics with strategic use of diplomacy, trade, and cultural exchange.

Sharp power exists, but so does Philippine self determination. The challenge is to engage on our own terms and guard against manipulation.

The UFWD is often described as Beijing’s instrument of influence abroad. In the Philippines, its activities range from diaspora outreach and cultural exchanges to business partnerships and academic collaborations.

Critics view these as covert attempts to shape narratives.

Yet, not all engagement is malign. Educational exchanges, investment dialogues, and community outreach can build bridges if handled with transparency and reciproc-

ity.

To dismiss everything as manipulation oversimplifies reality and closes doors to opportunities that can benefit Filipinos.

Philippine Independence Matters

The Philippines is far from powerless in the face of sharp power. Our institutions, civil society, and media have proven their independence in exposing and scrutinizing foreign influence.

“

Sharp power exists, but so does Philippine self determination. The challenge is to engage on our own terms and guard against manipulation

The challenge is not withdrawal, but control. Partnerships must be transparent. Cultural exchanges must be reciprocal. Foreign investments must align with national development priorities.

By setting the terms, the Philippines can engage constructively with China and other nations while safeguarding sovereignty. This demands vigilance and confidence in our ability to negotiate outcomes that advance our interests.

Major Power Rivalry and the Power of Middle Ground

The Philippines stands at the crossroads of U.S.–China rivalry. Washington warns of sharp power; Beijing promises win win cooperation.

EDITORIAL

The cosmic drifter

AN ASTEROID flyby at 7:14 tonight, Philippine time, offers stargazers a rare observation window while reminding us of the cosmic forces that shape our universe.

As we ponder the heavens, this mile-wide cosmic traveler designated as (152637) 1997 NC1 will make a harmless, close approach to Earth, suggesting echoes in the expanse with its flyby, which connects our ancient fascination with the stars to modern astronomy’s mission of planetary defense.

Since its founding 39 years ago, the Manila Standard has chronicled the rapid evolution of human history. But this weekend, our gaze turns not to earthly affairs, but to the deep, silent tapestry of our solar system.

Zooming through the void at a breathtaking speed of nearly nine kilometers a second, this asteroid – estimated to measure between 750 and 1,650 meters wide – poses absolutely no threat of impact.

Instead, it provides a breathtaking opportunity for sky watchers. Traveling at roughly 6.6 times the average distance between the Earth and the Moon, it will safely weave its path through the cosmos.

For stargazers and astronomy enthusiasts based in the Philippines, the event is particularly intriguing.

At its closest approach – about 2,560,000 kilometers away from Earth – the asteroid is geometrically

visible from the country, reaching an altitude of roughly 28° above the east-southeast horizon., according to astronomers.

“

The rock serves as a bridge between the physical and the metaphysical – a celestial prompt for us to look inward and expand our collective consciousness

While it will remain a faint pin-point of light – requiring a small telescope or large binoculars to catch in the dark evening skies – the endeavor is highly rewarding.

First discovered in 1997, this rock is a true relic of the early solar system. Throughout history, asteroids and comets have held profound meaning in our collective consciousness.

This close encounter serves as a brilliant reminder of why we must

continue to invest in planetary defense and astronomical research, transforming the unknown threats of yesteryear into a well-understood, charted frontier.

Beyond the cold physics of speed and trajectory, this asteroid’s passage carries deep spiritual and esoteric significance.

For thousands of years, sky watchers have viewed celestial wanderers not as mere space rocks, but as harbingers of profound shifts and catalysts for spiritual awakening.

In esoteric astrology and mysticism, asteroids like 1997 NC1 symbolize sudden revelations, cosmic disruptions, or the manifestation of hidden truths bursting into our conscious awareness.

As it passes, the rock serves as a bridge between the physical and the metaphysical – a celestial prompt for us to look inward and expand our collective consciousness.

Whether one finds meaning in the cutting-edge science that tracks our path through the galaxy, or the spiritual symbolism of the cosmos communicating with humanity, one thing remains certain: we are active participants in a vast, unfolding universe.

As we look to the night sky, both disciplines – space exploration and spiritual ascension – urge us to transcend the mundane, embrace our celestial roots, and keep reaching for the stars.

Viral bullying videos test Bhutan’s digital transition

THIMPU, Bhutan – In the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, which has long limited outside influence, viral videos of school bullying have triggered debate over social media’s erosion of traditional values.

Footage of fighting pupils circulated across Facebook, X, Reddit and Telegram in early June, sparking outrage and probes by police and education authorities.

Filmed by classmates as others looked on, the videos showed secondary school girls slapping and punching another student to the ground.

Bhutan carefully controls tourism and foreign access, and only introduced television and the internet in 1999 under a cautious modernization program designed to protect its distinct culture.

At the same time, social media has become increasingly popular, acting as a bridge to the outside world for the population of around 800,000.

For many, this month’s incident felt at odds with Bhutan’s self-cultivated image as a peaceful Buddhist nation that has sought to prioritize social well-being over material growth through its “Gross National Happiness” philosophy.

The school, Lungtenzampa Middle Secondary School in the capital Thimphu, said the situation was being treated with “the utmost seriousness”.

Students have been suspended and the videos taken down after the incident, which has raised broader questions about youth behaviour, digital responsibility, misinformation and how technology shapes society.

Disturbing’

Bhutan’s National Commission for

Women and Children urged the public not to share the footage, warning that it “may cause further harm, trauma, stigmatization, and victimization of the children concerned”.

For Sangay Dema, a 32-year-old who found the video on her feed, it was deeply upsetting.

“As a mother myself, I couldn’t even fall asleep at night and images kept flashing in my memory,” she said. “It was that disturbing.”

“

Children in Bhutan ‘face new challenges as the traditional layers of protection offered by families and communities are weakened’

Bhutan has an overall internet penetration rate of 88 percent, and 485,000 social media user identities, according to analytics site DataReportal.

There has been no indication that the nation -- where more than half the population is under 28 -- is considering banning young teens from social platforms, a move taken by an increasing number of governments.

“Social media has democratized access to information, civic participation and opportunities for youth,” said Tandin Wang-

mo, head of the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy, a rights group.

“But it also has the potential to amplify outrage, public shaming and hate speech,” she told AFP. “Everybody is a judge.”

Dorji Gyeltshen, a 24-year-old content creator who saw the footage on Telegram, said that children with access to phones and tablets can be easily influenced.

“The content we consume has a significant impact on our lives,” Gyeltshen said.

‘Becoming bullies themselves’

Bhutan has embraced technology -- including hydropower-backed cryptocurrency mining -- as it seeks to create jobs and curb the migration of its young people to countries such as Australia.

Yet its digital transformation has also brought new social challenges.

Children in Bhutan “face new challenges as the traditional layers of protection offered by families and communities are weakened” amid rapid modernisation, economic development and increasing urbanisation, according to the UN children’s fund.

Six out of 10 children in Bhutan have experienced some form of physical violence, Unicef says, using data from a 2016 government study.

“A lot of what we see now is not new behaviour, but things that were once hidden behind closed doors,” said company employee Srijana Giri, 31.

“The kind of online culture I would like to see in Bhutan is one where adults actually behave like adults -- not acting like judges or gods trying to punish others, while becoming bullies themselves in the process,” she said. **AFP**

Reconciling Interests Without Complacency

Engaging China is inevitable being our permanent neighbor, a major trading partner ever since, and a key player in the region. Thus, a reconciliatory approach is imperative. It does not mean ignoring risks but recognizing opportunities instead.

Diaspora outreach can strengthen people-to-people ties.

Business partnerships can be structured to promote technology transfer and local employment. Dialogue can build trust even amid differences. Engagement must serve Philippine priorities.

Managing Sharp Power

Sharp power can be managed through policy innovation. Industrial policy should ensure foreign investment contributes to local value-add and technology transfer.

Diplomacy should leverage multilateral platforms to balance foreign influence. Civil society must expand initiatives to counter disinformation, ensuring that narratives remain grounded in Philippine realities.

Defense cooperation should also be negotiated with economic offsets, turning se-

curity partnerships into engines of growth. Diversification of external partnerships is also essential to avoid overdependence on any single power. These measures do not eliminate sharp power, but they make it manageable.

Conclusion

China’s United Front Work Department may have activities in the Philippines, but these should not be viewed solely as a threat.

With firm policies, independent institutions, and proactive diplomacy, the Philippines can turn this challenge into an opportunity by approaching UFWD initiatives with transparency and reciprocity.

The Philippines just needs to ensure that engagement with China remains conciliatory rather than hostile, while staying firmly aligned with the advancement of Philippine national interests.

(The writer, holder of a PhD, the Director of Philippines-China Studies Center at Diliman College and President of the Philippine Society for International Security Studies, is the Chairman of the Board of Advisers of the China Studies Center at New Era University.)

100 flights canceled as storms approach

TOKYO – Japanese airlines cancelled on Friday more than 100 flights as two tropical storms barrelled towards the archipelago, with authorities advising evacuations in some areas because of possible flooding and landslides.

Severe tropical storm Mekkhala, downgraded from a typhoon, was packing gusts of up to 144 kilometers per hour, according to forecasters, with heavy rain already pounding parts of southern and western Japan.

The weather system was expected to skirt the islands of Kyushu and Shikoku over the weekend and potentially converge with tropical storm Higos which was also swirling further out into the Pacific.

This could result in the atmospheric phenomenon known as the Fujiwhara effect when two storms interact, making forecasting their movements and strengths more difficult.

Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways cancelled 70 and 50 flights, respectively, from and to the southern regions of Okinawa and Kagoshima. **AFP**

Hezbollah says Israel killed 3 civilians

BEIRUT – Iran-backed Hezbollah on Thursday accused Israel of a “flagrant” ceasefire breach, saying it launched a drone and killed three civilians in southern Lebanon.

The group said the strike was a “direct attack” on “civilians,” while Israel had earlier said it had killed fighters from Hezbollah ranks.

Hezbollah said it was the third “flagrant violation” by Israel “of the ceasefire to which it has committed itself so far”.

Lebanon’s state-run National News Agency earlier said “three people were killed and one person was wounded when an enemy drone targeted a... vehicle on the road between Zawtar and Mayfadoun”.

It was the third deadly incident since Tuesday, bringing the number of people killed in Israeli attacks this week to at least seven. **AFP**

Trump compensation lawsuit ‘can proceed’

WASHINGTON, DC – A US judge has said a lawsuit filed against a \$1.8 billion compensation fund for President Donald Trump’s political allies can go ahead after administration officials declined to certify that the plan was dead.

District Judge Leonie Brinkema ordered the Trump administration earlier this month to confirm in a sworn statement that it has abandoned the program denounced by critics as a “slush fund” for Trump loyalists.

Brinkema, in an order released on Thursday, said she had not received the requested assurances from the administration, and the suit challenging the fund can move ahead.

“Defendants were offered the opportunity to end this litigation by filing written declarations under the penalty of perjury... that the Fund will not proceed in any manner or under any other name,” the judge said. “Defendants have filed a Notice declining to provide such assurances.” **AFP**

Ex-first lady gets 7 years in jobs-for-gifts

SEOUL – A South Korean court sentenced former first lady Kim Keon Hee, already serving time for graft, to another seven years’ imprisonment on Friday in a jobs-for-gifts scandal.

Kim, 53, was found guilty of accepting “high-value precious metals” in exchange for favours in personnel appointments, according to the livestreamed ruling.

The court said she “unhesitatingly accepted valuables of a kind that the average citizen would struggle to acquire even once in a lifetime”.

Kim is already serving a four-year sentence for stock manipulation and bribery.

She was indicted in December on additional charges including accepting jewelry worth a total of 103 million won (\$67,000).

They included a Van Cleef & Arpels necklace, a Tiffany brooch and Graff earrings, from a construction magnate in 2022.

In return, she offered to secure a position for his son-in-law.

Kim was also found guilty of accepting a gold turtle figurine worth 2.65 million won from a politician and a Vacheron Constantin wristwatch worth 39 million won from a “robot dog” business entrepreneur.

At her final trial hearing on May 15, prosecutors demanded she serve a prison sentence of seven-and-a-half years for “trading in offices and favours.”

She was accused of repeatedly accepting money and valuables by leveraging her status as the spouse of then-president Yoon Suk Yeol, himself behind bars for a short-lived and disastrous attempt to impose martial law in 2024. **AFP**

Alert up as heatwave slams Europe

PARIS – French authorities banned public alcohol consumption in Paris and warned hospitals faced “saturation”, echoing warnings from health authorities around Europe as it baked in a deadly heatwave Friday.

At least 101 million Europeans faced temperatures of over 35C, with scores of people thought to have been killed by the record-breaking heatwave.

French and British health services reported a surge in emergency calls and visits as the merciless heat struck the elderly and the ill.

France and Spain counted the toll from the extreme temperatures, including a three-year-old boy who got trapped in his family’s car.

“We are reaching a saturation point in hospital facilities,” Paris police prefect Patrice Faure said. “The number of hospitalisations keeps increasing.”

In Paris, 25 cardiac arrests were recorded over 24 hours on Wednesday, compared with fewer than 10 usually, Health Minister Stephanie Rist’s office said.

At the national level, she said a four-fold increase in emergency room visits for heat-related reasons had been recorded.

London Ambulance Service said the extreme heat on Wednesday had led to the highest number of life-threatening emergency calls in a day.

AFP calculations based on forecasts from the German weather service and 2025 population projections from the European Joint Research Centre indicated that more than 380 million people would face temperatures of over 30C.

The UN’s climate chief Simon Stiell said the heatwave -- made worse by buildings and infrastructure unsuited to such temperatures -- “has the fingerprints of the climate crisis all over it”.

“Until humanity stops burning colossal amounts of coal, oil and gas, extreme heat will keep getting worse,” he added.

At a community cooling centre in West London, Alley, a 45-year-old man

with a disability, fanned his face, complaining that outside it was “baking”.

Last month when temperatures hit record levels, “I was in hospital because my blood pressure medication stopped working,” he said.

“This time around, I’ve kept more hydrated and I come and I bring my water bottle here.”

Three deaths in northern France’s Pas-de-Calais region were “likely” caused by the heat while a prosecutor said a three-year-old boy was found dead in a car in the suburbs of Paris, where temperatures topped 40C on Wednesday.

Two other children died in similar circumstances in France this week.

Faure said public alcohol consumption and sales would be banned in the French capital from Friday. **AFP**



HEAT DOME. Youths cool down along the Canal Saint-Martin as France experiences a heatwave, in Paris Thursday. Due to the ongoing heatwave sweeping across France -- the Bassin des Recollets -- a portion of the Canal Saint-Martin in the French capital has been opened for swimming from June 17. The deputy director of the EU’s Copernicus Climate Change Service, Samantha Burgess, said the hot weather was due to a “heat dome” of trapped air from north Africa in a low-lying high-pressure system, preventing cooler air from moving in. **AFP**

Kim hails weapons tests that threaten Seoul

SEOUL – North Korean leader Kim Jong Un oversaw tests of upgraded artillery and missile systems, state media said Friday, in what an analyst described as a “show of force” against the South Korean capital.

Kim supervised the tests of “major weapons” including a multiple rocket launcher and a warhead for a ballistic missile, state news agency KCNA said.

He pointed to the need for “national defence development” to make sure “no enemy dare to confront” North Korea, which remains technically at war with its

southern neighbor.

The diplomatically isolated nation is under multiple sets of sanctions over a nuclear program its leaders have vowed to pursue as a deterrent to the United States and South Korea.

Pyeongyang has made several defense-related declarations in recent days, after South Korean President Lee Jae Myung discussed the situation on the peninsula with US counterpart Donald Trump at a G7 summit in France.

Trump had told him it was time to “pay attention to the North Korea issue”,

Lee said after arriving home.

KCNA said Thursday’s tests “analysed and evaluated the combat characteristics of the upgraded 240mm-calibre 24-tubular multiple rocket launcher system, the power of special mission warhead of tactical ballistic missile, and the hit accuracy of shells with an extended firing range of the 155mm self-propelled gun-howitzer”.

It said the rocket launcher system included a new self-steered precise guidance system, and its firing range had increased to 90 kilometers. **AFP**

German court to deliver verdict in Christmas market car attack

BERLIN – A German court was scheduled to hand down its verdict Friday for a Saudi psychiatrist who drove an SUV through a crowded Christmas market in 2024, killing six people and injuring more than 300.

Prosecutors have sought a sentence of life in jail for Taleb Jawad al-Abdulmohsen, 51, and a ruling on the “particular gravity” of the crime that would help ensure he stays behind bars for the rest of his days.

During the months-long trial, Abdulmohsen -- an anti-Islam activist and adherent to right-wing conspiracy theories -- admitted to driving the car through the market in the eastern city of Magdeburg but denied deliberately running people over.

Prosecutors described that claim as preposterous.

A psychiatric expert diagnosed the accused with narcissistic personality disorder, but found that he is fully criminally responsible and remains dangerous.

The trial required the construction of a massive temporary courtroom on the outskirts of Magdeburg to accommodate the hundreds of victims, relatives and others.

More than 100 witnesses and around 40 lawyers representing 200 civil parties to the case appeared during the proceedings.

Thomas Klaus, a lawyer representing more than 100 victims or their relatives, told AFP about the defendant that it is “expected that he will, in fact, serve this sentence for the rest of his life”.

According to the indictment, Abdulmohsen drove a rented BMW X3 compact SUV with over 340 horsepower through the crowd in the city’s historic central market square on December 20, 2024. **AFP**



MARKET CAR ATTACK. Flowers and candles have been placed in tribute to the victims outside the Johanniskirche (Johannes Church) at a makeshift memorial near the site of a car-ramming attack on a Christmas market in Magdeburg, eastern Germany, in this file photo taken on Dec. 22, 2024. A verdict for a Saudi psychiatrist who drove a car through a crowded Christmas market in the German city of Magdeburg in 2024, killing six and injuring more than 300, is expected shortly. **AFP**

‘Very strong’ nuke verification needed in Iran after war—IAEA

TOKYO – “Very strong” verification is needed in Iran following the Middle East conflict to ensure that it does not develop nuclear weapons, the UN atomic watchdog chief said on Friday.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) head Rafael Grossi’s remarks come as the United States and Iran negotiate a broader agreement to end the war, with Tehran’s nuclear programme a key sticking point.

“I think the objective of this (recent US-Iran preliminary) agreement is to ensure that there is no development of nuclear weapons in Iran. The government of Iran has declared quite clearly that this is not their intention,” Grossi told reporters in Japan.

“But of course intentions are not enough. We have to have a very strong verification system in place... as soon as

is practicable,” the IAEA chief said.

Grossi said the watchdog had also “barely initiated” talks with Iran following its preliminary agreement with the United States about what to do with Tehran’s uranium stockpile.

“Initial conversations have taken place... We expect this work to pick up soon,” Grossi said.

Before the conflict, the IAEA estimated that Iran had 440 kilograms (970 pounds) of uranium enriched to 60 percent.

That is close to the 90 percent needed to make a bomb and well above the 3.67-percent limit set by a now-defunct 2015 agreement with Iran.

Iran suspended cooperation with the IAEA after Israel and the United States launched a previous wave of attacks in June 2025, and its inspectors have not seen the material since. **AFP**

Ecuador's midfielder Gonzalo Plata (center) celebrates with teammates after scoring his team's second goal during the 2026 World Cup Group E football match between Ecuador and Germany at the New York/New Jersey Stadium in East Rutherford. AFP



Ecuador stuns Germany to enter World Cup final 32; Curacao out

EAST RUTHERFORD—Ecuador upset Germany to squeeze into the last 32 of the World Cup on Thursday while the Netherlands, Japan and the Ivory Coast advanced safely as the draw for the knockout rounds began to take shape.

The Netherlands wrapped up their first round campaign with a 3-1 victory over Tunisia to top Group F, just ahead of Japan, who drew 1-1 with Sweden to finish in second place.

Sweden also advanced as one of the best third place finishers.

The Dutch will now face 2022 World Cup semi-finalists Morocco in the last 32, while Japan will take on Group C winners Brazil for a place in the last 16.

A nailbiting Group E game between Ecuador and group winners Germany at the MetLife Stadium was settled 13 minutes from time, when Gonzalo Plata jabbed home from close range to set up a 2-1 win.

Plata's winner came after Ecuador had recovered when Germany took

the lead from a controversial Leroy Sane goal after two minutes before equalising through Nilson Angulo.

The result means Ecuador finished Group E with four points, guaranteeing them a place in the last 32 as one of the eight best third-placed teams.

"The significance of this is not for me, it is for the people," Ecuador coach Sebastian Beccacece said after the win.

"The players gave a huge happiness to the people. We have to enjoy it and celebrate, please," the Argentine coach added.

Germany had already been assured of winning the group after wins over Ivory Coast and Curacao.

But coach Julian Nagelsmann was left dismayed at what he described as "tactical suicide" against Ecuador.

"We got off to a great start," Nagelsmann said. "Unfortunately, right after scoring, we started committing tactical suicide with our positioning. That makes things difficult."

"Ecuador had everything to play for, and you could tell -- they had their foot on the gas."

Ivory Coast meanwhile sealed the runners-up spot in Group E after eliminating Curacao in Philadelphia, Nicolas Pepe scoring twice in a 2-0 victory. It is the first time that the west African nation have reached the knockout stage.

Curacao, the smallest country by population ever to play in the World Cup, depart the tournament with one point to finish bottom of the group.

A packed slate of six games across the tournament on Thursday wrapped up in California in Group D.

The United States, who had already secured first place in the group after wins over Paraguay and Australia, fielded a heavily rotated line-up in a 3-2 loss to already eliminated Turkey at

the SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles.

Mauricio Pochettino made nine changes to his starting line-up and looked to have secured a draw until Kaan Ayhan popped up in stoppage time to grab a consolation win for the Turks in a game watched by a host of celebrities including Brad Pitt.

In Santa Clara, Australia ground out a 0-0 draw with Paraguay to clinch second place in the group and a ticket to the last 32.

Paraguay are also poised to advance as one of the best third-placed third-placed teams.

Dutch attack firing

The Netherlands meanwhile will head into next week's duel with Morocco in Monterrey brimming with confidence after another impressive attacking display in Group F with a 3-1 defeat of Tunisia in Kansas City.

An Ellyes Skhiri own goal was followed by goals from Brian Brobbey and Jan Paul van Hecke as Ronald Koeman's men marched on against the woeful North Africans who depart without a point. **AFP**

Japan coach hopes football success can inspire Asians

ARLINGTON—Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu hopes his side's World Cup exploits will inspire other Asian countries after AFP footage showed Chinese football fans celebrating the success of their traditional rivals.

Japan and China have often had fraught political ties, but some Chinese supporters in Shanghai put that aside to cheer Japan's 4-0 win over Tunisia.

Japan sealed their place in the last 32 on Thursday following a 1-1 draw with Sweden in Texas and face Brazil next.

Asked afterwards by AFP if his team felt their success was not only for Japan, but for Asia as a whole, Moriyasu said: "We are representing Japan, but we're proud to be representing Japan towards the world."

"And of course, now we are representing Asia."

"I know that other Asians teams are not as successful."

"Even if today we couldn't get the win, I would like us to be able to encourage other Asian teams as well, and we would like to be their hope."

"Also, if we're having good competitions among Asian teams, that can get the level up."

Among other Asian Football Confederation teams, South Korea hope to still reach the next round as one of the best third-placed finishers.

Iran and Australia are also among the AFC sides still in contention.

China failed to reach the World Cup once again, having made it only one time, back in 2002. **AFP**

WNBA suspends Thomas for fist to Clark's throat

NEW YORK—The WNBA has suspended six-time All-Star Alyssa Thomas for one game after the Phoenix Mercury forward jammed her fist into Indiana guard Caitlin Clark's throat.

Indiana Fever coach Stephanie White was incensed that no foul was called on the play in which Clark was driving to the basket and fell and Thomas, diving for the ball, appeared to knee Clark in the groin before pressing her closed fist into Clark's throat.

"We have a generational talent and a WNBA superstar who had two cheap shots right there that weren't called," White said after the Mercury's 111-109 victory.

The league office reviewed the incident and on Thursday handed Thomas a level two flagrant foul and the one-game suspension "for recklessly making contact with her fist to the throat area of Indiana Fever guard Caitlin Clark."

Clark scored 19 points before she departed the game in the third quarter with back pain. She missed a game last month with back trouble.

Her early departure saw her league record streak of six straight games with at least 20 points and five assists come to an end.

White didn't blame the foul for Clark's injury. But the coach said that Clark, the 2024 WNBA Rookie of the Year whose arrival as a collegiate star drew a host of new fans to the league, is not officiated the same as other players.

"I still say the one thing that we keep asking for is consistency," White said. "(Clark) is not called the same way that everybody else is called." **AFP**

Ng to attend ISF General Assembly in Belgrade

By Graham C. Lim

INTERNATIONAL School Sport Federation (ISF) president Zeljko Tanaskovic has formally invited Mary G. Ng, president of the Philippine Inter-School Sport Association (PISSA), to participate in the ISF General Assembly scheduled for July 20–21, 2026, in Belgrade, Serbia.

Ng, whose leadership has consistently been ahead of its time, has formally recognized the unwavering support of key federation partners by acknowledging four Honorary Presidents — Alvin Tai Lian, Angel Ngu, Edwin C. Fabro, and Yang Hua Hong. This gesture reflects her deep respect for their contributions and her commitment to honoring those who have strengthened PISSA's mission and unity.

A respected businesswoman and philanthropist, Ng has been a leading figure in Philippine school sports. She previously served as the Philippines' Head of Delegation to the 2024 World School Games in Bahrain and the 2025 World School Games in Zlatibor, Serbia, where she played a pivotal role



ISF president Zeljko Tanaskovic

in elevating the country's participation on the global stage.

ISF, an affiliated organization of the International Olympic Committee, currently counts 124 member countries, including the Philippines. Its mission centers on promoting education through sport and fostering global youth engagement.



Mary G. Ng

Joining Ng in Belgrade are PISSA Secretary General Joseph Sy and David Ong, Special Assistant to the PISSA President.

One of ISF's most influential global events is the Gymnasiade, also known as the World School Games. Established in 1974, the Gymnasiade has grown into a premier multi-sport gathering featuring

more than 20 disciplines and attracting approximately 4,000 student-athletes from around the world.

A key agenda item for the ISF General Assembly is the discussion on the upcoming World School Games, with Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as the emerging potential host from December 3 to 8, 2026. The competition events are athletics, judo, karate, taekwondo, beach volleyball, wrestling, and chess.

Beyond the Gymnasiade, ISF also organizes the ISF World School Championships (WSC) and ISF World Cups, which highlight team and individual sports such as archery, athletics, basketball, volleyball, futsal, orienteering, table tennis, and more. The WSC traces its origins to 1972, when ISF first staged international school football and volleyball competitions—events that laid the foundation for today's global school sport movement.

The participation of Ng and the PISSA leadership underscores the Philippines' continued commitment to advancing youth sports and strengthening international cooperation within the ISF community.

A small win that matters for Filipino fighters



In The Red Corner Nissi Icasiano

THE recent announcement from the Games and Amusements Board (GAB) and the City Government of Makati may not generate the same headlines as a championship fight, but it could have a meaningful impact on the lives of professional fighters.

Under the program, qualified Makati residents who hold a valid Makati Health Plus or Yellow Card can undergo the medical, diagnostic, and neurological examinations required for GAB licensing at no cost. It is a simple initiative on

paper, but one that addresses a very real burden carried by athletes.

This is a step in the right direction.

Not every boxer, mixed martial artist, or contact sports athlete is from Makati. Many competitors come from provinces and cities that do not offer similar assistance. Still, any effort that reduces the financial strain on athletes deserves recognition and should serve as a model for other local government units.

What many fans do not realize is that obtaining a professional license requires more than simply showing up and competing. The standard GAB medical panel for combat sports includes a brain CT scan, 12-lead ECG, chest X-ray, drug testing, Hepatitis B screening, funduscopy or eye examination, and neurological clearance. HIV and Hepatitis C screening are also typically required for world title bouts.

When these tests are obtained through private facilities, costs can add up quickly. A

brain CT scan alone can range from ₱1,200 to ₱4,500. If an MRI is required, expenses may increase to between ₱4,500 and ₱6,500. Bloodwork and drug testing can cost another ₱1,000 to ₱2,000, while cardiovascular and X-ray examinations may add ₱800 to ₱1,500.

In practical terms, a fighter paying out of pocket can spend anywhere from ₱6,000 to more than ₱10,000 before even stepping into the ring or cage.

That amount may not sound significant to some. But not every athlete is earning the purses associated with boxing icon Manny Pacquiao or MMA world champion Joshua Pacio.

For many competitors on local cards, those costs come directly from their earnings. A substantial portion of a modest fight purse can disappear before training expenses, coaching fees, transportation, nutrition, and recovery costs are even considered.

It is important to note that the program does not eliminate all licensing expenses. Athletes must still pay the standard GAB administrative fees. Professional boxer licenses range from approximately ₱160 to ₱860, depending on classification and round count, while professional MMA fighters pay ₱760.

Even with those fees remaining, free access to the required medical examinations represents meaningful savings.

Combat sports continue to grow in the Philippines. If stakeholders are serious about developing the next generation of champions, reducing barriers to entry is a good place to start.

Makati has taken an encouraging first step. Hopefully, others follow.

(For comments or questions, reach the author at nissi.icasiano@gmail.com or visit his Facebook page at www.facebook.com/nissi.icasiano.)

Cole grabs PGA Travelers’ lead with Scheffler one stroke back

NEW YORK—Eric Cole, seeking his first PGA Tour title, fired a seven-under par 63 to seize the lead after Thursday’s opening round of the Travelers Championship with top-ranked Scottie Scheffler lurking.

Cole’s bogey-free round gave him a one-stroke edge over six rivals through 18 holes in the \$20 million signature event at TPC River Highlands in Cromwell, Connecticut.

“It was a good way to start the tournament, for sure,” Cole said. “We had really good conditions to start the day, limited wind, greens were pretty soft, so there were birdies to be made out there.

“I felt like I played solid and kept giving myself chances and a few of ‘em went in, so that was nice.”

Sharing second on 64 were Scheffler, fellow Americans Bud Cauley and Ben Griffin, England’s Matt Fitzpatrick, Norway’s Kristoffer Reitan and Colombian Nico Echavarria.

Cole, a 38-year-old American whose parents are pro golfers Bobby Cole and Laura Baugh, has four top-10 finishes in his past six starts, including second at last month’s Charles Schwab Challenge.

“It was just a lot of the hard work that I put in earlier in the year and while it didn’t necessarily yield any results, I just had faith I was working on the right stuff and eventually some results would come from it,” Cole said.

“It’s a longer process than maybe I would have hoped for. Winning is something I want to do, but I’m just trying to get myself in that spot where I have more opportunities and then hopefully just the more I do that, the more likely it is I’ll win.” **AFP**



Rhinwill Yambing of Batangas

Batangas defeats Quezon in MPBL

THE Batangas City Tanduay Athletics bled for points, but survived the Quezon Huskers’ final lunge, 65-62, on Thursday in the SportsPlus MPBL (Maharlika Pilipinas Basketball League) 2026 Season at the Quezon Convention Center in Lucena City.

Held to six points in the fourth quarter, Batangas courted disaster when Ino Comboy lost ball possession with 10.5 seconds left, only for Quezon’s Christian Pagaran to commit an errant pass stolen by Jhan Nermal, who got fouled in a penalty situation.

Nermal sank both charities with 5.6 to go for the final count as Quezon gunner Judel Fuentes missed a triple before the final buzzer sounded.

Batangas notched its eighth straight win and climbed to 12-2, surpassing Quezon’s 9-2, and trailing only Gensan (13-2) in the race for playoff spots in the South division.

Rhinwill Yambing tallied 17 points, 4 rebounds and 2 steals to edge Nermal, with 17 points, 7 rebounds and 2 steals, for the SportsPlus best player honors.

Dawn Ochea, who accounted for Batangas’ lone field goal in the fourth quarter, Abdul Sawat and Mark Cruz contributed 6 points each.

Quezon’s Cyrus Tabi could have knotted the count at 63, but missed the second of three free throws off a Nermal foul with 32.7 seconds to go.

The Huskers, the reigning back-to-back South champions, surged ahead, 17-7, behind back-to-back triples by Fuentes and Tabi, but Nermal, Yambing, Ochea and Comboy combined to catch up at 21.



Alexandra Eala (left) and Venus Williams praise each other after a memorable Bad Homburg doubles run. AFP

Venus to Eala: The best partner!

By Jeremiah Sevilla

FILIPINA ace Alexandra Eala and American tennis great Venus Williams had nothing but praise for each other as their dream doubles run ended in the Bad Homburg Open 2026 in Germany.

Eala and Williams crashed out of the WTA 500 Bad Homburg quarterfinals after surrendering a 3-6, 2-6 defeat to Slovakia’s Tereza Mihalikova and Great Britain’s Olivia Nicholls on Thursday night, cutting short their first partnership on the court.

In an Instagram post on Friday, the 21-year-old Pinay stalwart expressed her gratitude to the 14-time Grand Slam doubles champion and seven-time singles major winner for the

opportunity to team up with her and learn lessons from one of the sport’s all-time greats.

“Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that I’d have the privilege of competing alongside you on court, Venus Williams!” Eala wrote in the caption for the photos that captured their notable moments.

“Immensely grateful to learn from you,” she added.

For her part, the 46-year-old

Williams also tipped her hat to the Filipina rising star following her grass-court comeback appearance in Bad Homburg.

“The best ride, the best tournament. The best partner!” Williams said in an Instagram story.

The Filipina-American tandem made it to the last eight after posting a victorious debut against Australia’s Alexandra Osborne and USA’s Catherine Harrison, 6-3, 6-4, in the opening Round of 16 early Thursday.

Eala and Williams put up an early fight versus the second seeds Mihalikova and Nicholls despite entering the match less than a day after their first outing, although they eventually lost steam against the experienced duo.

Carrying valuable lessons

from Bad Homburg, Eala now sets her sights on Wimbledon Championships in England, where she is set to compete in the main draw after becoming the first Filipino tennister to be seeded in a Grand Slam singles event.

The Birmingham Open titlist will also join the doubles tilt with previous partner Nikola Bartunkova of the Czech Republic.

Williams will see action in Wimbledon doubles as well, reuniting with her sister Serena after receiving a wildcard entry.

Recognized as one of the most legendary pairings in tennis history, the Williams sisters won six Wimbledon doubles titles and 14 major trophies overall with an unbeaten record, along with three Olympic gold medals.

PH whips 3-time champ Brazil at World Beach Handball

By Randy M. Caluag

THE Philippines staged a major upset at the International Handball Federation (IHF) Beach Handball World Championships on Thursday, recovering from a period down to defeat three-time champions Brazil 2-1 in their main round opener.

Competing in Zagreb, Croatia, the Philippine women’s team — nicknamed the Amigas — bounced back from a 26-14 defeat in the opening period to edge the second 23-22, before sealing the victory 7-6 in a dramatic shootout.

“Our team showed so much pride today,” Philippine Handball Federation President Ernesto Jay Adalem said. “The crowd and officials were glued to the court because they were delight-



The Philippine women's handball team

fully surprised by how tough we played against the three-time world champions. This is how we

gain respect on the international scene.”

The victory marks the Philip-

pinés’ first-ever win in the main round of the World Championships, signaling a competitive breakthrough for the Southeast Asian nation in the sport.

The Philippines advanced to the 12-team main round from the initial 16-nation preliminary stage with a 1-2 record, securing their progression with a victory over Benin despite losses to Sweden and Argentina.

Following the upset over Brazil, the Philippines later suffered a 2-0 defeat to Greece. They are scheduled to face Norway next in Group 2 of the main round as they look to improve upon their 12th-place finish at the tournament two years ago in China.

“There are no easy teams here,” head coach Jana Franquelli said, reflecting on the caliber of competition in the tournament.

PH bags silver, 3 bronzes in 11th Asia-Oceania Sambo meet

PITTED against a two-time world silver medalist, Pinoy rookie Sophia Nicole Novino gallantly held her own for nearly four minutes before tapping out in losing to Kazakhstan’s Karakat Rakhybay in the women’s youth -47-kilogram finals of the 11th Asia-Oceania Sambo Championships presented by the Philippine Sports Commission last Wednesday night.

Appearing in her first major international meet, Novino was fearless against Rakhybay, fighting to a 1-all standoff early in the match before finally succumbing to her more experienced rival at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium.

A back-to-back silver medalist in the world youth meet in the 2024 and 2025 editions held in Larnaca, Cyprus and Bogor, Indonesia, respectively, the Kazakhstani pinned her foe down with 24 seconds left in the four-minute bout, forcing the Pinay grappler to surrender.

Still, Novino’s silver medal was the best performance for the hosts, who had earlier secured three bronze medals on the opening day of the competition held organized by the Pilipinas Sambo Federation Inc.

Three more bronzes were added to the Philippine medal collection yesterday from Johan Matthew San Miguel, Daniel Justin Virtudazo and Julian Henry Flores in junior men’s combat sambo in the -58kg, -88kg and -98kg classes, respectively.



Filipino grappler Aeon Lauren Lim (right) get tangled up with Mongolia’s Sogbileg Sadsuren in the men’s -64k men’s sport division of the 11th Asia Oceania Sambo Championships at the Ninoy Aquino yesterday.

“Hindi lang po ito malaking news sa akin pero malaking learning po,” said Novino, who sobbed after losing to her rival, unaware at first that she battled a world-class grappler in the meet also held under the aegis of the National Sports Tourism Inter-agency Committee led by PSC Chairman Patrick Gregorio.

“Pero at least nakakuha rin ako ng isang point sa isang magaling na kalaban. First step pa lang ito at hindi ako susuko,” added the 17-year-old UE judo varsity team campaigner.

“This is her first major sambo international tournament, but Sophia did very well. Maganda ang ipinakita niya against a very strong opponent. She put on a good show so I am proud of her,” noted national sambo team coach Jerry Legaspi.

“She is relatively new to the sport so naninibago pa coming from a judo background, but she will learn from this experience and definitely will do better next time,” Legaspi added.

Scheduled to see action today is top gold medal bet and defending women’s sport sambo +80kg division champion Sydney Sy in the four-day tournament backed by Victory Liner.

Live action of the 11th Asia-Oceania Sambo Championships can be watched by video streaming on www.sambo.live and the official PSFI and PSC Facebook pages.

WHAT'S
INSIDE?



Bounty Fresh
cuts production

B2

RCOA

100-kW power
choice rule
takes effect

B3



Del Monte Pacific
bounces back

B4

Monde M.Y. San
to build P5-b
Pampanga plant

THE Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) approved a registration agreement for a manufacturing project of Monde M.Y. San Corp. worth more than P5 billion at an economic zone in Central Luzon.

PEZA director-general Tereso Panga and Monde M.Y. San general-manager Keng Sun Mar signed the agreement on June 23, 2026 for the facility inside the TECO Industrial Park-Special Economic Zone in Malabacat, Pampanga.

The new production facility will manufacture Monde M.Y. San's flagship SkyFlakes crackers and sandwich products.

Monde M.Y. San said the facility will begin commercial operations in 2027. The project aims to generate direct jobs, increase domestic manufacturing output and strengthen the food manufacturing value chain in Central Luzon.

The commitment marks the entry of one of the country's most recognized food brands into the TECO Industrial Park, reflecting the growing appeal of PEZA economic zones for large-scale manufacturing projects.

PEZA said the decision of Monde M.Y. San to locate its new facility within the ecozone highlights the competitiveness of Philippine economic zones in attracting both local and foreign investments.

Othel V. Campos



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION. Manuel Pangilinan-led Manila Electric Company (Meralco) marks its third consecutive year of celebrating Pride Month with vibrant activities that reaffirm its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Anchored on its #Mbrace Diversity & Inclusion program, Meralco continues to champion women empowerment as well as LGBTQIA+ and PWD inclusion.

P92.3 billion

Mynt's target
IPO size

9.23 billion
shares

Mynt shares to be
sold

P10

Mynt's target
IPO price

Firm behind GCash eyes
P92b from public offering

By Jenniffer B. Austria

MYNT Inc., the financial technology company behind mobile wallet GCash, plans to raise up to P92.3 billion (\$1.5 billion) in what could become the largest initial public offering (IPO) in Philippine history.

The company plans to offer up to 9.23 billion shares, including an over-allotment option, at a price of P10 per share, Bloomberg News reported, citing people familiar with the transaction.

The proposed offer size would surpass the country's biggest IPO to date, currently held by Monde Nissin Corp. Monde Nissin raised P48.6 billion when it listed on the local bourse in June 2021.

The planned listing comes as Mynt continues to expand GCash from a mobile wallet into a digital financial platform offering payments, lending, savings, investments and insurance services.

GCash has become the country's largest e-wallet, serving millions of consumers and merchants as demand for digital financial services continues to grow.

Globe Telecom Inc. board members approved the filing of a registration

statement for the IPO last week. Under the plan, the offered shares will be equivalent to 12 percent of Mynt's outstanding common stock after the debut. Globe Telecom, Ayala Corp., Ant Group and Mitsubishi Corp back the fintech firm.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) relaxed rules on minimum public ownership for companies planning to conduct an IPO earlier this year in a bid to attract more listings.

Under the new rules for IPO applicants, companies with a market capitalization of not more than P500 million should meet a minimum public float of 33 percent. Firms valued at over P500 million up to P1 billion should maintain a 25 percent float and a minimum offer size of P165 million.

PH disposable
income rose
to P34t in 2025

THE Philippines recorded a gross national disposable income of P34.04 trillion in 2025, up 7.5 percent from the previous year, the Philippine Statistics Authority said in its annual report.

Total gross saving in the country reached P8.40 trillion during the same period, led by the corporate sector. Non-financial corporations posted the highest gross saving at P5.16 trillion, followed by financial corporations at P2.29 trillion.

Households and non-profit institutions serving households accounted for P973.14 billion of the total savings. The general government sector dragged on the total figures by recording a dissaving of P23.61 billion.

The multi-trillion peso savings came amid P21.40 trillion in household final consumption expenditure and P4.24 trillion in government final consumption expenditure.

Meanwhile, gross capital formation reached P6.20 trillion, which helped the Southeast Asian economy post a net lending position of P2.20 trillion for the year.

The Philippine Statistics Authority based the report on its annual Consolidated Accounts and Income and Outlay Accounts.



The Board of Investments convenes an inter-agency meeting to fast-track permits for the 300-megawatt San Jose Wind Power Project, a renewable energy investment backed by Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners in Nueva Ecija province.

BOI moves to fast-track 300-MW wind power project

By Othel V. Campos

THE Board of Investments (BOI) convened an inter-agency meeting to resolve permitting issues and accelerate the development of the 300-megawatt San Jose Wind Power Project.

The renewable energy investment, which is in its pre-development stage, spans the municipalities of Lupao and Carranglan and the City of San Jose in Nueva Ecija.

Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners Philippine subsidiary San Jose On-shore Wind Power Corp. is developing the project.

The project secured strategic investment status under Executive Order No. 18 in January 2026, which recognizes its significance to the en-

ergy security and sustainable development goals of the country.

The meeting focused on expediting the processing of critical permits, including land conversion, land reclassification and the environmental compliance certificate. Participating agencies aligned on immediate action points, clarified documentary requirements and committed to streamlining regulatory processes to facilitate the timely implementation of the project.

Danish Ambassador Franz-Michael S. Mellbin expressed Denmark's support for the clean energy transition of the Philippines, recognizing the contribution of Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners Philippines in advancing the renewable energy agenda of the government.

BOI Investments Assistance Service director Ernesto Delos Reyes Jr. underscored the importance of translating policy into tangible investments that generate employment, strengthen energy security and promote sustainable economic growth.

"Executive Order No. 18 institutionalizes a whole-of-government approach that strengthens coordination across national government agencies and local government units. Through this framework, we can accelerate the implementation of priority infrastructure projects - particularly those that advance energy development and investment facilitation - while ensuring full compliance with statutory requirements and environmental safeguards," Delos Reyes said.

Business outlook improves, consumers worry

By Thony Rose Lesaca

PHILIPPINE businesses grew less pessimistic in May amid expectations of higher consumer spending, favorable corporate earnings and lower energy costs, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said Friday.

The BSP reported that the business confidence index improved to -25.2 percent in May from -35.8 percent in April, as firms expected a pickup in consumer spending and a decline in oil prices.

Companies also turned optimistic for the next three months, with the confidence index shifting to 0.6 percent from -7.5 percent in the previ-

ous month. Firms anticipate better business prospects in manufacturing, construction and business process outsourcing in August 2026.

Expectations of declining oil prices and increased public works spending also supported the improved outlook, the BSP said.

Respondents also became more optimistic for the next 12 months, as the confidence index rose to 27.8 percent from 19.5 percent.

The BSP attributed the positive year-ahead outlook to easing inflation and oil price pressures, the possible resolution of the Middle East conflict and expectations of a recovery in investor confidence.

RICE PROGRAM.

Santa Rosa City Mayor Arlene Arcillas leads the launch of the 'Bawat Bayan Makikinabang: Bagong Pilipinas Rice Program.' The initiative is funded through the local government support fund (LGSF) and is part of the priority programs of the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. aimed at strengthening food security and extending direct assistance to Filipino families. During the kick-off ceremony at the Santa Rosa Sports Complex, the first batch of beneficiaries received 10 kilograms of rice each. These included members of the city's vulnerable sectors and frontliners such as solo parents, pedicab and e-bike drivers, barangay tanods, Lupon Tagapamayapa members, persons with disabilities (PWDs), farmers, barangay health workers (BHWs), barangay nutrition scholars (BNS), health coordinators, day care aides, volunteer teachers, women's center volunteers and VAWC desk officers.

Roy Tomandao



Stock market closes flat in quiet trading session

By Jenniffer B. Austria

PHILIPPINE share prices closed nearly unchanged Friday, as investors opted to remain on the sidelines amid continued global uncertainties.

The benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) edged up 1.18 points, or 0.02 percent, to close at 6,072.24, while the broader all-shares index slipped 0.74 point, or 0.02 percent, to 3,330.35.

“The PSEi ended nearly unchanged for the week as investors waited for fresh catalysts to provide market direction,” said Luis Limlingan, head of sales at Regina Capital Development Corp. “Trading remained cautious and thin as participants assessed the global AI sector sell-off alongside domestic economic developments.”

“Market sentiment stayed mixed as investors tracked corporate updates and key

macroeconomic indicators,” he added.

The financial sector led the gainers, advancing 1.06 percent, followed by holding firms, which rose 0.71 percent.

Among the sectors, mining and oil stocks posted the steepest decline, dropping 2.78 percent, followed by services, down 1.06 percent; property, down 0.87 percent; and industrials, down 0.29 percent.

The market traded within a narrow range as investors weighed mixed sector performance and opted to stay on the sidelines after recent gains.

Value turnover was thin at P5.21 billion. The Philippine market ended with 97 gainers and 80 decliners, while 66 stocks were unchanged.

Foreigners were net sellers, with net outflows at P481.57 million.

GT Capital Holdings Inc. was the day’s index leader, climbing 4.30 percent to P499.60, while DigiPlus

Interactive Corp. was the main index laggard, falling 5.34 percent to P12.40.



CELEBRATING ENVIRONMENT DAY. Youth leaders plant trees during a gathering dedicated to youth-led environmental advocacy at the La Mesa Ecopark in Quezon City. Hosted by the Manila Water Foundation and La Mesa Ecopark in celebration of World Environment Day, the event was anchored on this year’s theme, #NowForClimate. The series of targeted eco-activities highlighted the role of the younger generation as future climate champions.

Position title – Mandarin Customer Service Supervisor	
Job Description: - is responsible for overseeing the daily operations of the customer service team to ensure excellent service standards, respond efficiently to customer inquiries, and maintain high customer satisfaction. This role includes supervising staff, monitoring performance, and implementing service procedures to optimize productivity and quality through the use of Mandarin native language, to senior professionals in China, Taiwan and other Mandarin speaking counterpart and clients.	
Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training): -College or University Graduate -Bilingual in Mandarin and English - Customer Service related experience	Company/ Employer PH GLOBAL JET EXPRESS INC. 20 th and 21 st floor ECOPRIME BLDG 32 nd ST Cor. 9 th Ave. BGC Taguig 1630
Applications may be sent to: PH GLOBAL JET EXPRESS INC. hqrecruitment@jetexpress.ph	Nature of business: Other Services Activity
Company hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at 967 Maligaya Street Malate Manila	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position Name: YANG WENJIE Address: Bonifacio Global Taguig BGC Nationality: CHINESE Intended period of employment: Three (3) year/s
Any Filipino jobseeker who is competent, able and willing to perform the services for which the foreign national is intended to be hired for, may file an objection at National Capital Region located at 967 Maligaya Street Malate Manila	Please inform DOLE NCR if you have any information on criminal offences committed by the foreign nationals.

Career Opportunity in CHINA SOUTHEAST ASIA ELECTRIC POWER CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION	
Position Title: Machinery Management Expert (2 Vacancies)	
Job Description: The Machinery Management Expert is responsible for overseeing the operation, maintenance, utilization, and lifecycle management of machinery and equipment. The position ensures that all machinery is operated safely, maintained efficiently, and utilized effectively to support operational and project objectives.	
Qualifications: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong negotiation, communication, and interpersonal skills.• Excellent analytical and problem-solving abilities.• Fluent in Mandarin in written & spoken and English language• Strong leadership and team management skills.	
Application may be sent to: CHINA SOUTHEAST ASIA ELECTRIC POWER CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION Maria Sunny Taguing rvcgbi@gmail.com	
Company/Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
China Southeast Asia Electric Power Construction Corp. Address: Mariveles, Bataan Nature of Business: Construction	Name: HOU, LJUN Address: Mariveles, Bataan Nationality: Chinese Intended period of employment: Two (2) years Name: TAN, NA Address: Mariveles, Bataan Nationality: Chinese Intended period of employment: Two (2) years
CHINA SOUTHEAST ASIA ELECTRIC POWER CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION hereby declares that the above-named foreign nationals, Hou Ljun and Tan Na, are able willing and qualified to perform the services and job description for this positions, Engineering Specialist, Construction Specialist Chinese Procurement. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign nationals and apply for an Alien Employment Permit -Department of labor and Employment -DOLE Central Office Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Building, Murala Wing cor. General Luna St., Intramuros, Manila, 1002, after this publication. If there are any objections or inquiries, please contact the concerned DOLE Regional Office... Any Filipino jobseeker who is competent, able and willing to perform the services for which the foreign national is intended to be hired for, may file an objection at the Department of labor and Employment - DOLE Central Office Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Building, Murala Wing cor. General Luna St., Intramuros, Manila, 1002, after this publication. Please inform Department of Labor and Employment- Dole Central Office, If you have any information on criminal offenses committed by the foreign national	

Career Opportunity in TOYO CONSTRUCTION CO., LTD.	
Position Title: Construction Manager	Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training):
Job Description: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for monitoring and overseeing construction work progress and ensure compliance.• Advice on technical matters when the project sites encounter problems• Report to Project Manager regarding the status of the project during implementation of the works• Handle other supporting works for the construction at site• Reports daily progress, site issues, and delays to the project manager• Assist in planning site activities and scheduling deliveries• Ensure efficient use of labor and equipment to minimize waste and cost!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excellent written and verbal communication skills in Japanese and English language• Knowledgeable in using construction management software is a plus• Bachelor's degree in civil engineering, Construction Management, or a related field.• 5+ years of experience in construction project management• Professional certifications such as PMP, CCM, or equivalent are a plus.• Proven track record of managing medium to large-scale construction projects.
Company/ Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: Toyo Construction Co., Ltd. Complete Address: 3 rd Floor, Planters Products Inc. Building, 109 Esteban St., Legaspi Village, San Lorenzo, Makati City Nature of Business: Construction	Name: Akio Eto Address: Pasig City Nationality: Japanese Intended Period of Employment: Two (2) Years
Applications may be sent to: Gina Andres - HR Supervisor Email Address: andres-gina@os.toyo-const.com	
Company hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Bureau of Local Employment (BLE) located at 6 th Floor, Banco Filipino Condominium, Solana Street, Intramuros, Manila.	

Career Opportunity in Oriental Power Equipment Corporation	
MANDARIN SPEAKING ACCOUNTING DIRECTOR	
One (1) Vacancy	
Job Description: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides financial projections by coordinating budget/forecast preparation, collecting, analyzing, and consolidating financial information, and advising departments on the collection and analysis of data.	
Qualification: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graduate of BS or BA in accounting• Accounting management experience• Experience supervising accounting staff• Experience in accounts payable and accounts receivables.	
Applications may be sent to: orientalpower1020@gmail.com	
Company/Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: Oriental Power Equipment Corporation	Name: YU HUAIKUO
Company Address: San Marcelino St., 1717, Brgy. 694, Malate Manila	Address: QUEZON CITY Nationality: Chinese
Nature of Business: Buying, Selling, Importing And Exporting Or Disposing Of Power Equipment.	Intended period of employment: Two 2(years)
Oriental Power Equipment Corporation hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at 967 Maligaya Street, Malate, Manila.	

boi BOARD OF INVESTMENTS

dti DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

SEC SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that **KOU FU PACKAGING CORP.**, with office and plant address at Lot 4-5, Blk 3, Phase 2, and Lot 3-4, Blk 4 Mountview Industrial Complex, Bancal, Carmona, Cavite, is applied for registration with the Board of Investments (BOI) as New Export Producer of Printed Packaging Materials with an annual capacity of 4,000 MT under Tier 1 "Export Activities" of the 2022 Strategic Investment Priority Plan and under RA 11534, or the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Act (CREATE Act), as amended by RA 12066, or the CREATE to Maximize Opportunities for Reinventing the Economy (CREATE MORE).

Any person with valid objection/s on the above-mentioned project may file his/her objection in writing, under oath, with the BOI within three (3) days from the date of this publication .

(SGD.) DR. ROSE MARIE O. MENDOZA
Acting Director
Manufacturing Industries Service

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
NATIONAL CAPITAL JUDICIAL REGION
OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF COURT
& EX-OFFICIO SHERIFF
Email: rtc1mdlcc@judiciary.gov.ph
Hotline: 639952598147/8-2876702

BDO UNIBANK, INC.,
Mortgagee,

--versus-- **FRE-MC26-2211**
EXTRA-JUDICIAL FORECLOSURE
OF REAL ESTATE MORTGAGE
UNDER ACT 3135 AS AMENDED
BY 4118

ANALIE ENRIQUEZ SIGUE, MARRIED TO MARK PLAPERLYN ELLAMA SIGUE, AS REPRESENTED BY HER ATTORNEY-IN-FACT, JOHN MAR FERRERA ENRIQUEZ, Debtors/Mortgagors

X-----X

2ND NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

Upon Extra-Judicial petition for sale under Act 3135 as amended by Act 4118 filed by **BDO UNIBANK, INC.,** Mortgagee, against **MARK PLAPERLYN ELLAMA SIGUE, and John Mar Ferrera Enriquez, as Attorney-In-Fact of ANALIE ENRIQUEZ SIGUE, Debtors/Mortgagors,** with postal address at (a) Block 28, Welfare Compound, Brgy. Addition Hills, Mandaluyong City 1550, (b) Unit 1403, 14th Floor, Tower 3, Avida Towers Centera, East Edsa, Mandaluyong City 1554 to satisfy the mortgaged indebtedness which as of April 6, 2026 amounts to **FOUR MILLION FIVE HUNDRED NINETY-FOUR THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED FIFTEEN PESOS and 59/100 (Php 4,594,515.59) ONLY,** Philippine Currency, including interest, penalties and expenses incidental thereto, the Ex-Officio Sheriff of Mandaluyong City or his duly authorized deputy will sell at PUBLIC AUCTION to the HIGHEST BIDDER FOR CASH OR MANAGER'S CHECK and in Philippine Currency on the **21st day of July, 2026 at 9:00 o'clock in the morning or soon thereafter but not later than 12:00 o'clock in the afternoon** at the main entrance of Mandaluyong City Hall, Maysilo Circle, Mandaluyong City, the Condominium Unit/s together with all the improvements existing thereon to wit:

CONDOMINIUM CERTIFICATE OF TITLE
NO. 008-2023002807
Registry of Deeds – City of Mandaluyong

IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED that the unit identified and described as:

FLOOR: 14
UNIT CALLOUT : 1403
UNIT TYPE : 1 BEDROOM
UNIT AREA (SQ.M.) : 36.30
TOTAL AREA (SQ.M.) : 36.30

OF THE "AVIDA TOWERS CENTERA TOWER 3" CONDOMINIUM PROJECT

In the diagrammatic floor plan appended to the enabling or master deed of the condominium project annotated on TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE 2012000746 which embraces and describes the land located at MANDALUYONG CITY with an area of (ELEVEN THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED EIGHTY FOUR (11,584) Square Meter, xxxxxx

"All sealed bid must be submitted to the undersigned on the above stated time and date."

"In the event the public auction should not take place on the said date, it shall be held on **July 28, 2026** at the same time and place without further notice."

Prospective bidders or buyers are hereby enjoined to investigate for themselves the title of the said real property and the encumbrances thereon, if any there be.

Mandaluyong City, Philippines, May 19, 2026.

FOR THE EX-OFFICIO SHERIFF

BY:

(Sgd.) **GERMAN R. REYES**
Sheriff IV

Publication: **MANILA STANDARD TODAY**

Copy furnished:
BDO UNIBANK, INC.
Consumer Remedial Management Unit
33rd Floor BDO Corporate Center Ortigas
#12 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City

ANALIE ENRIQUEZ SIGUE, MARRIED TO MARK PLAPERLYN ELLAMA SIGUE, as rep. by her Attorney-In-Fact, John Mar Ferrera Enriquez
(a) Block 28, Welfareville Compound, Brgy. Addition Hills, Mandaluyong City 1550
(b) Unit 1403 14th Floor, Tower 3, Avida Towers Centera, East Edsa, Mandaluyong City 1554

WARNING:
It is absolutely prohibited to remove, deface or destroy this Notice of Sheriff's Sale on or before the date of Auction Sale under penalty of the law.

(MStandard - June 20, 27 & July 4, 2026)

Bounty Fresh cuts back production amid ME conflict

By Othel V. Campos

BOUNTY Fresh has scaled back poultry production and recalibrated spending plans this year as conflict between Iran and the United States, coupled with elevated inflation, weighed on consumer spending and clouded the economic outlook.

“We always knew 2026 was a little bit tougher, so we were ready. But when the Iran war happened, we didn’t see that, so we had to right-size,” Bounty Fresh chief executive Kenneth Cheng said during a media briefing Thursday.

Cheng said the company lowered production and adjusted its spending plans to match softer demand amid heightened global uncertainties.

“People are a little bit cautious about spending because of the oil crisis and the spike in inflation,” he said.

Cheng did not disclose the extent of the production cut but stressed that the company’s operations remain on a growth trajectory compared with 2025.

Bounty Fresh avoided overproduction

by closely aligning output with demand, he explained, adding that the company has no intention of building up inventories that may end up in cold storage.

Even as it recalibrates its near-term plans, Bounty Fresh remains committed to long-term investments as the company marks its 40th anniversary in 2026.

Cheng said the company continues to invest billions of pesos in expanding capacity, improving efficiency and advancing innovation across its operations.

He added that investments in research and development, animal health and modern production systems are critical to ensuring a stable supply of poultry products and safeguarding the country’s food security.



SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT. Rob Kaplan, founder and CEO of Circulate Capital; Jonas Leones, undersecretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources; Antonio Del Rosario, president of Coca-Cola Philippines; René van Berkel, co-convenor of the ASEAN Circular Economy Business Alliance; and Chris Humphrey, executive director of the EU-ASEAN Business Council, participate in a panel discussion during the ASEAN-EU Sustainability Summit in Cebu. Organized by the EU-ASEAN Business Council and the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines in partnership with the Philippines as the ASEAN chair, the summit discussed policy alignment, implementation realities and investment conditions.

PLDT, major telcos launch alliance to fight cable theft

By Darwin G. Amojelar

PLDT Inc. is intensifying its fight against cable theft to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of connectivity and digital services across Filipino communities.

Through its Asset Protection and Security Risk Governance group, PLDT is leading a tighter industry-wide collaboration to protect telecom infrastructure. Alongside fellow members of the National Telecommunications Security Council (NTSC), the company recently launched “Oplan Balikatan.”

Originally formed by the PLDT security team in June 2021, the NTSC is a nationwide alliance of corporate security professionals from the country’s major telecom players, including PLDT, Smart,

Globe Telecom, DITO and Converge ICT Solutions.

“Oplan Balikatan” expands on PLDT’s existing Bayanihan campaign, which strengthens ties between telecom operators and local barangays to foster community vigilance against cable thieves and vandals.

“Keeping our communities safe and connected is an effort that needs all of us,” said Wilfredo Gonio, head of PLDT and Smart’s Security Central Command and Administration Center. “By standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our colleagues from other telcos and our partners from the local government, we can embody the true spirit of Balikatan, and empower our respective communities as well.”

Cebu Pacific launches OFW service hub

By Darwin G. Amojelar

CEBU Pacific has launched a new service hub at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport Terminal 2 to streamline essential travel and government services for migrant workers.

The Overseas Filipino Worker Facilitation Center will allow workers to process their overseas employment certificates and access other travel-related services directly at the airport before departure and upon arrival. The one-stop center is a joint initiative between the airline, the Department of Migrant Workers, and airport operator Aboitiz Infra-Capital Cebu Airport Corporation.

The facility aims to ease the pre-departure and arrival burdens on millions of Filipino migrant workers who serve as a backbone of the domestic economy. Cebu Pacific operates flights to 35 domestic and 26 international destinations across Asia, Australia and the Middle East.

“We recognize the invaluable contributions of overseas Filipino workers to our nation and remain committed to supporting their journey every step of the way,” Cebu Pacific chief marketing and customer experience officer Candice Iyog said.

“The opening of this facility reflects our ongoing efforts to provide more accessible and responsive services that address the unique needs of OFWs and their families,” she said.

The initiative marks part of a broader push by the Philippine government to decentralize services away from the capital city of Manila and bring administrative support closer to regional economic hubs.

Department of Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac said the initiative aligns with agency efforts to bring government services closer to migrant workers and make them easier to access.

“Our responsibility begins not only when an OFW encounters a problem but also before departure, giving our OFWs the assistance they need and remaining active until their return,” Cacdac said.

Del Monte Pacific bounces back

By Jenniffer B. Austria

DEL Monte Pacific Ltd. said Friday it posted a net profit of \$10.1 million in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2026 ended April 30, or more than three times higher than the \$2.9 million posted in the same period a year earlier, as stronger international sales and higher margins offset inflationary pressures.

The company said in a disclosure to the stock exchange fourth-quarter sales rose 11.4 percent to \$213.7 million from \$191.9 million a year earlier, led by higher international sales. Overseas revenue increased 16.5 percent to \$118.4 million, on 18.1-percent rise in fresh pineapple sales.

Domestic sales also improved 3.8 percent to \$75.1 million on higher de-

mand for beverages, culinary products, dairy and snacks as well as price increases implemented to offset inflation.

“The strong results for FY2026 demonstrate the strength and growth momentum of DMPL’s business in the Philippines and international markets. Following a strong FY2026 performance, DMPL expects the business to achieve profitability in FY2027

although it may experience volatility from the impact of the US-Iran war,” the company said.

Gross profit margin expanded to 33.4 percent from 29.7 percent a year ago, supported by pricing initiatives and a more favorable sales mix.

Operating profit reached \$38.9 million. Excluding a \$40.8-million gain from an India share swap transaction booked in the previous year’s quarter, operating income increased 73.8 percent from the comparable period.

DMPL posted a net profit of \$48.4 million in its latest full year, reversing the \$796.4-million net loss recorded a year earlier after the company booked a \$703.5-million write-down on its investment in its US business. Annual sales climbed 13.5 percent to \$896.1 million.

Philippine sales rose 7.5 percent to \$397.8 million during the fiscal year, led by growth in packaged fruit, beverages and culinary products. International revenue increased 15.6 percent to \$417 million on strong demand for fresh pineapple in China, Japan and the Middle East.

DMPL completed the sale of its remaining stake in India’s Sundrop Brands Ltd. on June 4, generating gross proceeds of about \$14.1 million for working capital and debt repayment.

To sustain its growth momentum, the company said it would continue expanding its Asian operations, with subsidiary Del Monte Philippines Inc. expected to remain a key growth driver, supported by resilient consumer demand and a strong supply chain.



FOOD PACKS.

Alsons Power Group distributes 1,500 food packs to families in Barangay Kamanga, Maasim, Sarangani as part of its continuing relief and recovery efforts following the magnitude 7.8 earthquake that struck Mindanao on June 8, 2026. Immediately after the magnitude 7.8 earthquake that struck Mindanao, Alsons Power mobilized resources and personnel to provide assistance to employees, their families and communities impacted by the disaster.

Top Line raises P1.5b from preferred share offering for Visayas fuel expansion

FUEL distributor and retailer Top Line Business Development Corp. raised P1.5 billion from an issuance of perpetual preferred shares to finance the expansion of its fuel importation and storage facilities in the Visayas region.

The offering consisted of P1 billion worth of firm Series A perpetual preferred shares and P500 million in oversubscription shares. The preferred shares, which trade under the ticker symbols TOPA1 and TOPA2,

listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange on Friday.

TOPA1 carries an annual dividend rate of 9.1325 percent, while TOPA2 offers an annual dividend rate of 9.5981 percent.

Top Line said it will use up to P1 billion of the net proceeds to fund working capital requirements related to petroleum importation, including fuel purchases, shipping and freight costs and other importation-related expenses.

The company allocated about P440 million for the construction and reno-

vation of fuel depots with a combined storage capacity of up to 40 million liters, and it will use the remaining proceeds for general corporate purposes.

“With this successful offering, we intend to help address gaps in the Visayas fuel supply chain by ensuring that we have sufficient supply, storage capacity and distribution capabilities to meet the region’s growing demand,” Top Line chairman, president and chief executive Erik Lim said.

Lim said the company remained focused on expanding its presence in the Visayas despite challenges facing

the fuel industry.

He said the company banks on the region’s long-term growth and rising demand for a more reliable and resilient fuel supply chain.

The Cebu-based firm last month acquired a 30-million-liter fuel depot facility in Cebu, a move that will triple its existing fuel storage capacity.

Top Line primarily engages in commercial fuel trading, depot operations and fuel retailing in the Visayas through its subsidiaries Topline Logistics and Development Corp. and Light Fuels Corp. **Jenniffer B. Austria**

IN BRIEF

BSP tightens rules for digital marketplaces

THE Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has tightened regulations for digital financial marketplaces to safeguard consumers and manage cybersecurity risks amid a surge in the use of online platforms.

Under a new circular, financial institutions supervised by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) that operate these digital marketplaces should comply with stricter standards on risk governance, data privacy, consumer protection and customer due diligence.

Operators should also maintain a minimum capital of P1 billion to fund ongoing technology upgrades and robust cybersecurity measures.

Digital financial marketplaces allow users to browse and purchase loans, insurance, investments, and other financial products from multiple providers. Some platforms also feature non-financial offerings like travel, retail, and lifestyle deals when they add value to a bank or digital wallet service.

The new rules explicitly define the responsibilities of both platform operators and third-party financial service providers. The guidelines cover provider accreditation, continuous performance reviews, platform security, data protection, and dispute resolution mechanisms.

To foster fair competition and expand consumer choice, the regulation requires platforms to present financial products neutrally and impartially. It also mandates the participation of at least 3 independent service providers that are not affiliated with the marketplace operator’s corporate group or conglomerate. **Thony Rose Lesaca**

Asialink launches loans for medium enterprises

ASIALINK Finance Corp. (AFC) launched a new loan program for medium-sized businesses on June 1, offering up to P100 million in financing to celebrate its 29th anniversary.

The Medium Enterprise Loan Program features flexible repayment terms of up to seven years tailored for business expansion and operational needs. It aims to bridge a persistent financing gap for growing companies that face barriers from stringent requirements and lengthy credit evaluations.

The financial institution has expanded from a single office at its founding in 1997 into a nationwide network serving more than 47,000 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). As of March 2026, the company operated over 255 branches across the Philippines.

AFC recorded a 35-percent growth in its loan portfolio from 2024 to April 2026. The company has released a cumulative P37 billion in loans to support individuals and enterprises nationwide since its inception.

“As we celebrate our 29th anniversary, we remain deeply grateful to our clients, employees, partners and stakeholders who have been part of our journey,” AFC president and chief executive Anna Katrina Bañez said.

“Our growth over the years reflects the trust that Filipino entrepreneurs have placed in us and reinforces our commitment to helping them achieve their business aspirations,” she said. **Thony Rose Lesaca**

Industry supports fight vs. substandard cement

THE Cement Manufacturers Association of the Philippines (CeMAP) commended the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) after the Bureau of Philippine Standards (BPS) ordered the destruction of about 12,500 metric tons of substandard Portland Cement Type 1 worth around P60 million.

The shipment failed to comply with the requirements of Philippine National Standard (PNS) 07:2018. The action underscores the government’s commitment to protecting consumers and ensuring that only quality-assured construction materials are used in critical infrastructure projects like homes, schools and bridges.

CeMAP executive director Renato Baja said strict compliance with national quality standards is essential, particularly for products that directly affect structural safety.

“CeMAP strongly advocates mandatory compliance with Philippine National Standards. Cement is a critical structural product and must meet PNS requirements to ensure quality and safety. We therefore welcome the DTI’s issuance of Memorandum Circular No. 26-02, which requires imported cement to be tested in the Philippines before it can be sold in the local market. This is an important step in protecting consumers and ensuring a level playing field for all industry participants,” Baja said.

The industry group said the country cannot afford to take risks with substandard construction materials. It noted that while sound design, engineering and construction practices are vital to structural integrity, the quality of construction materials remains equally indispensable.

CeMAP fully supports the DTI-BPS efforts to prevent the entry and distribution of substandard cement and other non-compliant construction materials. **Othel V. Campos**



GROUNDBREAKING SCANNER. St. Luke’s Medical Center-Global City unveils the Siemens Naeotom Alpha. Peak, the world’s first photon-counting CT (PCCT) scanner. With this, St. Luke’s becomes the first private hospital in the Philippines to house this groundbreaking technology, reinforcing its leadership in medical innovation. Unlike conventional CT scans that rely on Energy Integrating Detectors (EID) and a two-step conversion process, the PCCT directly detects each X-ray photon and its energy level. This eliminates data loss and image ‘noise,’ resulting in sharper, more precise scans.

ICTSI secures 26-year extension for Melbourne terminal operations

INTERNATIONAL Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) said Friday it secured all regulatory approvals to extend its operating agreement for the Victoria International Container Terminal until 2066.

It said with all conditions met, the 26-year extension of the concession to operate and manage the Webb Dock East terminal at the Port of Melbourne is now effective. The deal pushes the contract expiry from 2040 out to 2066, increasing the remaining life of the contract to a total of 40 years.

ICTSI operates the site through its wholly owned subsidiary, Victoria International Container Terminal Ltd., which signed the extension with Port of Melbourne Operations Pty. Ltd.

An ongoing investment program due for completion in late 2026 will increase the estimated capacity of the facility to 1,600,000 twenty-foot equivalent units.

As Australia’s first fully-automated container terminal and one of the most technologically advanced in the world, coupled with the ability to accommodate larger container ships, VICT remains positioned as the premier gateway to Melbourne and the state of Victoria.

The contract extension follows strong financial growth for the parent company.

ICTSI earlier reported a net income of \$293.57 million in the January to March period, up by 23 percent from \$239.54 million in the same period last year. **Darwin G. Amojelar**

Yuchengco Group gets approval for three RE projects

By Alena Mae S. Flores

THREE renewable energy projects owned by the Yuchengco Group have advanced toward commercial operations after securing key regulatory approvals to help meet the power demand of the Philippines, a company official said.

The approvals bring the projects closer to full commercial operations, which will add capacity to the renewable energy portfolio of PetroGreen Energy Corp (PGEC).

“These approvals over the past two months bring these three projects of PetroGreen subsidiaries closer to full commercial operations, further strengthening our company,” PetroGreen assistant vice-president for power markets Dave Gadiano said.

“Their full operation will add capacity to our RE portfolio, increase PGEC’s revenue stream and deepen our reliability for meeting service contract and GEA commitments to the Department of Energy,” Gadiano said.

PetroWind Energy Inc. (PWEI) secured market commercial operation date status on June 25 from the Independent Energy Market Operator of the Philippines for its 13.56-megawatt Nabas-2 wind project in Aklan. The status takes effect on June 26.

The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) granted provisional approval for the Nabas-2 project to operate on May 21. The Green Energy Auction (GEA)-1 qualified project carries an approved tariff of P5.755 per kilowatt-hour.

MORE THAN JUST AI

HONOR 600 Series redefines what users expect from a smartphone

IN A market flooded with devices pushing artificial intelligence as their biggest selling point, Global AI device ecosystem company HONOR Philippines is taking a different approach with its latest release. While the HONOR 600 boasts cutting-edge AI capabilities, the device represents something much bigger — a complete smartphone experience designed to elevate everyday life of Filipinos.

Since its launch, the HONOR 600 Series has generated massive buzz among consumers, creators, and tech enthusiasts, thanks to its revolutionary AI features. But beyond the headlines surrounding AI Image-to-Video generation and intelligent editing tools lies a smartphone engineered to excel in every aspect that matters. “Complementing its top-notch AI Image To Video 2.0 and other AI tech is a vibrant display designed for immersive viewing, making content consumption, gaming, and productivity more enjoyable. Backed by a long-lasting battery and fast-charging technology, the HONOR 600 Series keeps up with today’s fast-paced lifestyle without compromise,” said Stephen Cheng, Vice President of HONOR Philippines. **More than just HONOR AI**

Underpinning the entire experience, the HONOR 600 runs on the



From photography powerhouse to lifestyle companion, HONOR 600 Series proves it’s more than just an AI smartphone

Snapdragon 7 Gen 4 with 27% CPU and 30% GPU gains for powerful gaming and fluid daily performance. The HONOR 600 Pro steps up to the Snapdragon 8 Elite on 3nm process technology, achieving 45% CPU and 44% GPU improvements — true flagship-level responsiveness across demanding applications and multitasking. A comprehensive suite of AI night algorithms enhanced by AI Cloud Enhancement ties the system together: AI Enhanced Night Photography across 0.6–10x zoom, AI Enhanced Night Portrait with multi-form bokeh

effects (Pro), AI Super Zoom 2.0 with expanded activation range, and SuperMoon 2.0 on the Pro model for dramatic lunar compositions with foreground clarity. Within this slim profile, industry-leading stacking technology enables a 7,000mAh battery — the largest battery in Number Series history — without adding thickness or weight over the previous generation. An AI Battery Scheduling Engine dynamically optimizes power distribution across communication, processing, and touch response, enabling genuine two-day endurance

under demanding use. Designed to suit different needs and budgets, the HONOR 600 5G is offered at Php 28,999 (8GB+256GB), Php 32,999 (12GB+256GB), and Php 37,999 (12GB+512GB), while the flagship HONOR 600 Pro 5G with 12GB+512GB storage retails for Php 49,999. Run to any HONOR Experience and Partner Store or online via Lazada (https://bit.ly/Laz_H600_PR), Shopee (https://bit.ly/Shop_X9d_Media) or TikTok Shop (https://bit.ly/TikTok_H600_PR). For more exciting announcements, visit HONOR’s website www.hihonor.com, and follow HONOR Philippines on Facebook ([Facebook.com/Honor-Philippines](https://www.facebook.com/Honor-Philippines)), Instagram ([Instagram.com/honorph/](https://www.instagram.com/honorph/)) and TikTok: ([Tiktok.com/@honorphilippines](https://www.tiktok.com/@honorphilippines)).

Fitness tracking more accessible with Weofly smartwatches

AS wearable technology becomes increasingly mainstream, consumers are looking for smartwatches that offer meaningful fitness and wellness features without stretching their budgets. Leading the lineup are the Weofly Edge 2, Curve 2, and Vive 2 smartwatches, each designed to deliver essential health monitoring, sports tracking, and smart lifestyle features at accessible price points. Whether users are starting their fitness journey, upgrading from a basic fitness band, or looking for a rugged companion for outdoor adventures, Weofly offers options tailored to different lifestyles and needs. **Weofly Edge 2: Premium Style Meets Everyday Fitness** Designed for users who want premium aesthetics without compromising functionality, the Weofly Edge 2 combines a sleek design with practical fitness and wellness tools. The smartwatch features a large 1.85-



Weofly Edge 2

inch Curved AMOLED display with Always-On Display support, housed within an aluminum alloy full-metal body protected by Asahi high-hardness glass. Its 3ATM water resistance rating provides protection for everyday activities, while a 400mAh battery delivers up to 7 to 10 days of usage on a single charge. Fitness enthusiasts can take advantage of more than 100 professional sports modes and conveniently sync workout data to Strava through the Weofly FitPro app. The Edge 2 also comes bundled with two interchangeable straps—a liquid silicone strap and a nylon woven strap—allowing users to switch seamlessly between active and casual settings. **Weofly Curve 2: Wellness Tracking in a Timeless Design** For users who prefer a more classic watch-inspired look, the Weofly Curve 2 offers a balance of style and functionality. Featuring a vibrant 1.43-inch

AMOLED display, a full-metal unibody construction, and durable Asahi high-hardness glass protection, the Curve 2 is designed for everyday wear while delivering the essential smart features modern users expect. The smartwatch supports more than 100 sports modes and offers 24/7 health monitoring capabilities, helping users keep track of their daily wellness goals. Combined with 3ATM water resistance and a comfortable liquid silicone strap, the Curve 2 is built to accompany users from workdays to workouts. **Weofly Vive 2: Built for Adventure** For outdoor enthusiasts and active individuals, the Weofly Vive 2 is engineered to withstand more demanding environments. Featuring a rugged body with a stainless-steel bezel and buttons, the smartwatch is backed by 13 U.S. MIL-STD-810H certifications and 5ATM water resistance. It is equipped with precise



Weofly Vive 2

GPS tracking and a built-in compass to support hiking, trail running, cycling, and other outdoor activities. The Vive 2 also supports smart workout recognition and more than 60 professional sports modes while continuously monitoring key health and fitness metrics throughout the day. **Expanding Access to Smart Wearables** As more Filipinos embrace healthier and more active lifestyles, wearable technology continues to play an increasingly important role in helping users monitor their progress, stay motivated, and remain connected throughout the day. With the Weofly Edge 2, Curve 2, and Vive 2 now available exclusively through DataBlitz, consumers have easier access to feature-packed smartwatches that combine modern design, fitness tracking, wellness monitoring, and outdoor-ready durability without the premium price tag often associated with wearable technology.

Signify Philippines helps shape circular economy at Innovation Day 2026

SIGNIFY Philippines, the world leader in lighting, convened industry leaders, sustainability advocates, media representatives, customers, channel partners, and specification professionals at Signify Innovation Day 2026, a thought leadership event focused on accelerating the adoption of Circular Economy principles across industries. Held in Bonifacio Global City, the event underscored the growing importance of circularity in helping organizations navigate increasing sustainability demands, regulatory requirements, and resource constraints while driving long-term business growth. As governments, investors, and customers place greater emphasis on environmental performance, businesses are increasingly challenged to rethink traditional linear models of production and consumption. Against this backdrop, Signify highlighted how circular economy principles can enable organizations to reduce waste, optimize resources, extend asset lifecycles, and create lasting value.

Circularity as a Strategic Business Imperative The event centered on Signify’s circularity framework, Use Less, Use Longer, Use Again, which serves as the foundation of the company’s approach to sustainable innovation. Through this framework, Signify demonstrated how businesses can move beyond conventional sustainability initiatives and embed circularity into every stage of the value chain from product design and manufacturing to installation, maintenance, upgrades, and end-of-life management. Attendees explored the latest global sustainability trends, including the increasing adoption of Science-Based Targets (SBTi), the growing focus on Scope 3 emissions reporting, and the rising demand for solutions that deliver both environmental and economic benefits. While sustainability commitments continue to increase worldwide, studies show that global circularity rates remain low, highlighting the need for businesses to transform ambition



Signify products on display

into action. Signify emphasized that circularity is not only an environmental responsibility but also a competitive advantage that can help organizations improve efficiency, reduce operating

costs, and build resilience in an evolving business landscape. **The Future of Lighting** The day began with an exclusive Executive Breakfast session titled

Sophos joins OpenAI Daybreak Cyber Partner Program

SOPHOS, a global cybersecurity leader, announced it has joined the OpenAI Daybreak Cyber Partner Program, bringing the company’s latest AI cyber capabilities to defenders. Sophos is applying that capability within its products and services, turning frontier models into protection for the more than 625,000 organizations it defends worldwide. Frontier models are reshaping cyber conflict. They can find vulnerabilities at scale, generate working exploits, and compress the time between a flaw being disclosed and exploited. The same capability that helps defenders find and fix weaknesses lets attackers discover and exploit them faster than traditional defenses can respond. While access to frontier AI for defense is advancing quickly, these models are most effective when an organization has the architecture to operationalize them safely at scale and the reach to deliver that benefit broadly. Sophos has both. Through the program, OpenAI is expanding from internal testing to defensive tools and workflows delivered through trusted partners, scoped product integrations, and managed services for end customers. The goal is to bring OpenAI’s cyber capabilities into the tools, services, and workflows that defenders already use. Sophos is adopting these in a deliberate, phased way, beginning with defensive workflows and scoped outputs, with Sophos analysts and controls in the loop rather than direct customer access to the models. Early focus areas include accelerating MDR threat investigation, deepening the security assessments delivered by Sophos Advisory Services, and strengthening how customers discover, validate, and remediate exposure. The companies are also working to codify standards for safety and abuse prevention, along with the controls needed to monitor and prevent unsanctioned activity. “Frontier AI only protects customers at scale when you have the architecture to deploy it,” said John Peterson, Chief Technology Officer at Sophos. “Sophos runs the world’s largest agentic SOC, built on a broad portfolio of products engineered to stop AI-enabled attacks. Joining the Daybreak Cyber Partner Program lets us deliver frontier cyber-model capability through those products and services, so customers get that protection without the risk of direct model access. The combination, not access alone, is how defense stays ahead of an adversary that is also using AI.” These capabilities integrate into a defense system to stop advanced threats. Sophos Endpoint blocks AI-generated zero-days by targeting the techniques an attack must use, not the specific vulnerability it exploits, so new flaws cannot complete an attack without triggering mitigations already in place. Sophos managed detection and response (MDR) operates as an agentic security operations center (SOC), resolving 52% of cases end to end with AI, with an average response time of 89 seconds, and human analysts maintaining oversight throughout. Together, Sophos’ agentic SOC and prevention-first architecture provide a trusted enterprise context for OpenAI’s cyber capabilities, helping frontier AI translate into measurable protection for every customer Sophos defends.

CULTURE MEETS CANVAS

TCL launches A400 Series via exhibit: Heritage in every frame

AWE-INSPIRING. That was the vision behind TCL’s recent “Heritage in Every Frame” event recently held at the Centro de Turismo Intramuros Manila, which masterfully celebrated the intersection of cutting-edge technology and rich local culture.

As the top-panel TV brand and a global leader in home electronics, TCL has proven that seamlessly blending premium innovation with everyday Filipino lifestyle is not only possible—it is the new standard for modern home entertainment.

The celebration serves as the perfect backdrop for the arrival of the TCL A400 Series QD-MiniLED TVs, a breakthrough lifestyle innovation designed to completely reinvent home aesthetics by seamlessly blending next-generation features with the elegance of a true work of art.

Timed perfectly with the nation’s 128th Independence Day, the launch beautifully mirrors the synergy between classical heritage and modern innovation. Attendees got to experience the timeless masterpieces of legendary Filipino maestro Fernando Amorsolo, brought to life through seamless digital animation on the pristine canvas of the TCL A400 Series.

“The TCL A400 Series represents our vision of what home entertainment can become, not simply a device for viewing content, but a centerpiece that enhances the living space even when



Shown here are (from left) TCL Field Force Manager Mary Grace Hernandez, Deputy Marketing Director Shae Yu, Senior Product Manager of Brownline Maxi Chen, Intramuros Administration’s Business Management Division Chief Ms. Dang Mendoza, Administrator Atty. Joan Padilla, TCL Director of Sales Cyd Montebon, Brand Manager Joseph Cernitchez, and Retail Manager JayR Calubaquib.

not in use,” says TCL CEO Peter Chen.

Cutting Edge Meets Stunning Display

The TCL Heritage in Every Frame event brilliantly highlighted the cutting-edge features of the TCL A400M and A400 Pro TVs. Using the ultra-crisp displays of the new A400 Series, the showcase breathed new life into the timeless masterpieces of legendary painter Fernando Amorsolo through seamless, high-definition digital animation.

A curated collection of masterpieces by Fernando Amorsolo, celebrating the richness of Filipino life and herit-

age, graced the advanced screens of the TCL A400 Series TVs stationed throughout the venue.

Among the featured works are Carabao Riding in Sunset, a peaceful depiction of rural life at day’s end, and Noonday Meal, which captures farmers sharing a well-deserved break during the harvest. The collection also includes Tinikling, a vibrant portrayal of the beloved traditional dance that embodies the joyful spirit of community, alongside Dalagang Bukid, a timeless celebration of the Filipina and the serene beauty of the countryside.



Amorsolo’s Bataan on TCL A400M and Noonday Meal on TCL A400 Pro



A dose of the AstraZeneca/Oxford Covid-19 vaccine is prepared at a vaccination center. **AFP**

‘Master key’ vaccine may prevent next pandemic

CAMBRIDGE, United Kingdom—Known by acronyms that need no explanation, viruses like Covid, Sars and Ebola conjure up images of medics in protective suits and spark fear in populations worldwide.

Vaccines for individual viruses have provided some relief, but new strains pose a constant challenge.

Now, new AI-aided vaccine technology developed by scientists at Cambridge University offer potential immunity against whole families of viruses and could even prevent the next pandemic, according to researchers.

Professor Jonathan Heeney of Cambridge University likened the new technique to having the “master key” for an apartment block.

The main problem with vaccines, he said, was that they were “all historic” so the strain you are vaccinated with might not be the one you end up being exposed to in six months time.

Vaccines were “always chasing the virus”, the project lead researcher told AFP in an interview.

“So we’re getting rid of that variability by making something that’s across the board recognisable by your immune system that should cover you from all these eventualities ... a real big paradigm change,” he said.

Canadian Heeney, of the lab of viral zoonotics at Cambridge University’s Department of Veterinary Medicine, began work on the project after the 2013-16 Ebola outbreak in west Africa where he was then based.

‘Horse bolted’

Ebola had previously been seen in the central African Democratic Republic of Congo, not in west Africa and it was initially misidentified as lassa fever, gastroenteritis or cholera.

The west African outbreak eventually claimed around 11,300 lives, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

But Heeney said three or four months were spent trying to discover what it was before work could even begin on a vaccine. **AFP**

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Globe, Ayala Foundation, and the WeAreAyala Business Club (WAABC) Davao provided relief assistance to 1,300 families affected by the recent earthquakes in Mindanao.

Through the #GlobeOfGood initiative, the partners distributed relief packs to these families in Barangay Ligaya, General Santos City, and Alabel, Sarangani. Beyond immediate aid, the initiative also offered digital literacy and psychosocial wellness activities to support affected communities.

Recognizing the need for trusted information during emergencies, Globe conducted anti-fraud and online scam awareness sessions for parents and senior citizens through its #SeniorDigizen program. Participants learned how to identify online threats, verify information sources, and practice responsible digital citizenship, helping them stay safe from scams and misinformation.

Children affected by the earthquake also received psychosocial support through Project Aruga, led by volunteers from the psychology community in General Santos City. Through play-based activities and guided group sessions, the program created a safe space for children to express their emotions, process their

Globe, Ayala Group Volunteers support earthquake recovery in GenSan, Sarangani



Through the #GlobeOfGood and Brigadang Ayala initiative, Globe and its partners helped strengthen recovery and resilience efforts in communities across General Santos and Sarangani.

experiences, and reconnect with their peers.

The relief mission brought together 110 volunteers from Globe, Ayala Foundation, Makati Development Corporation, and other Ayala Group companies. Their collective effort helped deliver assistance on the ground while demonstrating the spirit of volunteerism and collaboration that

Experts say tech-enabled trafficking demands innovation

AMID the Philippines’ retention of Tier 1 status in the 2025 U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report for the 10th consecutive year, anti-trafficking advocates warn that a decade of top-tier status is not a reason for complacency, as technology-enabled crimes continue to outpace traditional law enforcement responses.

The International Justice Mission (IJM), in a related website post, said gaps remain in the work against trafficking in the Philippines as tech-enabled crimes remain stubbornly persistent.

Released in late September 2025 by the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (<https://www.state.gov/reports/2025-trafficking-in-persons-report/philippines/>), the report commends the Philippine government for continuing to fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of sex and labor trafficking, as well as for prescribing “sufficiently stringent” penalties for offenses.

Although the government meets the minimum standards, the TIP report said: “The lack of a centralized database tracking illegal recruitment and human trafficking hindered the government’s efforts to prevent trafficking and hold traffickers accountable.”

It cited the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police-led investigative efforts, while the Department of Justice prosecuted cases through 25 interagency anti-trafficking task forces.

“Despite these achievements, the persistence of tech-enabled crimes remains a significant challenge,” the IJM said.

It added that a 2022 prevalence study it conducted with



The Philippines needs a nationwide Artificial Intelligence/biometric/real-time border system beyond the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

the University of Nottingham Rights Lab estimated that nearly half a million Filipino children—approximately 1 in 100—were trafficked to produce child sexual exploitation materials for profit.

“The path forward requires continuous technological innovation and collaborative efforts, including among technology companies, law enforcement, and anti-trafficking experts,” the study states.

It added: “Prioritizing victim protection and technological accountability, we can leverage AI as a powerful tool in combating human trafficking, transforming potential threats into strategic opportunities for interven-

tion to reduce risks, address vulnerabilities, and prevent the crime.”

Global trends in technology, trafficking

The main section of the IJM study highlights how traffickers are increasingly exploiting technological innovations to expand their operations.

It specifically notes that traffickers have capitalized on the shift to digital communication to increase online commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, including of children.

Artificial intelligence reportedly presents a dual-edged challenge. While traffickers are increasingly using AI to make exploitation more scalable and harder to detect, technology also offers powerful tools to combat trafficking.

AI can detect harmful content and suspicious activity on digital platforms in real time, support multilingual awareness campaigns, and help law enforcement analyze online sex ads, identify trafficking patterns, and process digital evidence more efficiently.

The road ahead

As the TIP report makes clear, maintaining this ranking requires continuous adaptation to emerging threats and critical trafficking vulnerabilities, such as tech-enabled and online crimes and unprotected Filipino migrant labor, through a robust border security defense.

Data shows Asia holds an estimated 59% of victims (29.3 million) of global human trafficking, often referred to as global modern slavery, driven by forced labor, sexual exploitation, coerced marriages, and proliferating cyber scam syndicates exploiting trafficked workers.

'90s comic icon Combatron gets animated film comeback

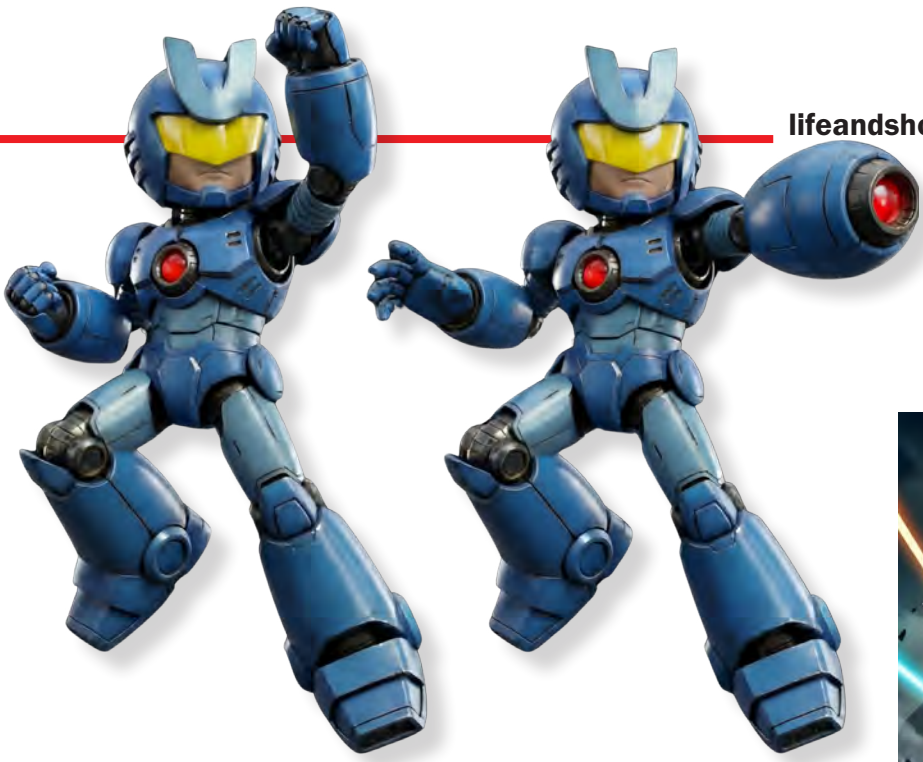


From left: Julius Katanyag, Erwin Blanco, Trisha Dee, Jac Ruby, and Berlin Manalaysay move forward with the planned animated adaptation of one of Philippine comics' familiar heroes

By Nickie Wang

AS familiar stories continue to find new life in Philippine entertainment, MAVX Productions is turning to one of the most recognizable Filipino comic book characters of the 1990s for its next project: an animated film adaptation of *Combatron*. Created by veteran comics artist **Berlin Manalaysay**, *Combatron* became a favorite among young readers in the '90s for its mix of action, humor, and socially relevant stories. Its return to the screen points to renewed interest in homegrown comic book properties that left a lasting impression on a

generation of Filipino readers. The planned animated adaptation is expected to appeal to longtime fans who grew up with the comic while introducing the character to younger audiences unfamiliar with one of local comics' enduring heroes. Reviving well-known stories is not new to MAVX Productions. The company has leaned into emotionally driven storytelling in recent releases, including *The Journey*, starring **Kaye Abad**, **Paolo Contis**, and **Patrick Garcia**, with special participation from **Ogie Alcasid**, **Ogie Diaz**, and **Jimmy Santos**. That film reached Netflix's Top 10 in 27



Berlin Manalaysay's 1990s comic book hero gets a planned screen revival as interest grows in homegrown animation and local pop-culture properties



'Combatron' returns as MAVX Productions develops an animated adaptation aimed at longtime readers and a new generation of Filipino viewers

countries, underscoring how emotionally resonant stories can connect with viewers across borders. With *Combatron*, MAVX appears to be banking on that same connection, drawing in audiences who followed the comic in its early years while widening the character's reach to younger viewers. Details about the cast and release date have yet to be announced. Still, the

project has already stirred interest among fans who see the film as a timely boost for the Philippine animation industry and a chance to reintroduce a beloved Pinoy hero to a new generation.

By Angelica Villanueva

YOU do not need to be a longtime *Game of Thrones* fan to feel the pain in *House of the Dragon* Season 3.

HBO Max Philippines invited members of the press, content creators, celebrities, and fans of the series for an exclusive screening of the first episode of the third season. The HBO Max series returns with dragons in the sky, ships burning at sea, and a death that makes the war feel personal right away. In its first episode, the fight for the Iron Throne is no longer just about power. It is about a family breaking apart. Based on **George R.R. Martin's** *Fire & Blood*, *House of the Dragon* takes place nearly 200 years before the events of *Game of Thrones*. The series follows the Targaryens, a ruling family whose internal struggle over succession has erupted into a civil war known as the Dance of the Dragons. Season 3 wastes little time showing the consequences of that conflict. The premiere centers on the Battle of the Gullet, a large-scale clash that brings dragons, fleets, and rival forces into direct confrontation. For viewers who have spent years following the series, the battle delivers one of the story's most anticipated moments. For newer viewers, it offers a quick understanding of what is at stake. Beneath the spectacle are parents trying to protect their children, heirs trying to prove themselves, Rhaenyra Targaryen faces the cost of a widening civil war as the new season pushes the fight for succession into deadlier territory

'House of the Dragon' returns with a brutal Season 3 opener



Dragons, rival fleets, and family grief drive the Season 3 premiere as the 'Dance of the Dragons' reaches a deadlier stage

and families paying the price for decisions made by those in power. That reality hits hardest through **Jacaerys Velaryon**, portrayed by **Harry Collett**. The eldest son of Queen Rhaenyra Targaryen enters the battle carrying both responsibility and expectation. His death becomes the emotional turning point of the episode and a reminder that no character is protected from the cost of war. The series has never lacked visual scale, and the premiere continues that tradition. Dragons dive across the battlefield, ships are torn apart, and the fighting unfolds on a much larger canvas than in previous episodes. Yet the strongest scenes are often the quiet ones that follow the destruction. **Emma D'Arcy** returns as Rhaenyra, alongside **Matt Smith**, **Olivia Cooke**, **Tom Glynn-Carney**, **Ewan Mitchell**, **Steve Toussaint**, and the rest of the ensemble cast. **Ryan Condal** continues as showrunner, with Martin serving as executive producer. What makes the premiere work is not the size of its battle but the weight of its consequences. By the end of the episode, the war for the Iron Throne feels less like a struggle for power and more like a story about what families lose while chasing it.

GMA Regional TV unveils refreshed Hiligaynon newscast

GMA Regional TV is launching *Ratsada Balita* on June 29, introducing a rebranded Hiligaynon newscast aimed at strengthening local news coverage in Panay and Negros Occidental. Previously known as *One Western Visayas*, the unified regional newscast takes on a new name and format as GMA Regional TV seeks to deliver faster and more community-centered reporting across Western Visayas and Negros Occidental. *Ratsada Balita* will be anchored by **Gerthrode Charlotte Tan**, with reports from **Adrian Prietos**, **Kim Salinas**, **Zen Quilantang-Sasa**, **John Sala**, and **Aileen Pedreso**. The program will introduce several new segments, including *Tatak Ratsada*, a mini-documentary feature focusing on major issues, human-interest stories, and emerging concerns in the region. Another segment, *Ratsada Exclusive*, will feature exclusive reports, special investigations, and firsthand accounts of key developments. Public service remains a key focus through *Ipa-Ratsada Mo!*, a segment that addresses complaints and concerns from residents and local communities. The newscast will also feature *Mga Istorya ni Alyas Kanor*, a lighter segment centered on everyday stories, while *Ratsada Express* will deliver quick updates on police reports, breaking



'Ratsada Balita' expands local reporting in Western Visayas and Negros Occidental with Gerthrode Charlotte Tan leading the rebranded regional program

news, and community activities. Coverage of jobs and sports will also expand through *Money-Obra* (*May Trabaho Ka*), which features local and overseas job opportunities along with foreign exchange updates, and *Isports Lang*, which focuses on regional sports stories. Several existing segments from *One Western Visayas* will remain part of the program, including *Tsapa Report*, *Hayop sa Balita*, *Kapuso Serbisyo*, *Lakat sang Panahon*, *Astig*, *Fiesta!*, *Namit!*, *Kuwento ng Pilipino*, *Health Watch*, *#SpreadKindness*, and *Showbits*. *Ratsada Balita* will air weekdays at 5:10 p.m. on GMA TV stations in Iloilo, Guimaras, Roxas, Kalibo, Tablas, Bacolod, Kanlaon, and Sipalay.

By Angelica Villanueva

P-POP powerhouse **SB19** is set to perform at the Grammy Museum later this month as part of its *Global Spin Live* series ahead of its Lollapalooza performances. According to the Grammy Museum's website, the five-member group will visit the Los Angeles museum on July 28 for an interview about their music and a special performance for the online series, which spotlights artists from around the world. The museum described SB19 as one of Southeast Asia's most influential music acts, citing its more than one billion career streams and its global fan base, A'TIN. It also highlighted the group's history-making achievements, including becoming the first Filipino and Southeast Asian act to be nominated for the Billboard Music Awards Top Social Artist category in 2021. SB19's appearance follows **BINI**'s debut on the Grammy Museum's *Global Spin Live* series in April, making the group the second P-pop act to be featured. The Grammy Museum event comes ahead of another milestone for SB19 as the group prepares to perform at Lollapalooza in Chicago, becoming the first Filipino act booked for the event. Composed of **Pablo**, **Josh**, **Stell**, **Ken**, and **Justin**, SB19 debuted in 2018 and has since emerged as one of the Philippines' leading music acts.

SB19 to perform at Grammy Museum's Global Spin Live



SB19 continues to widen P-pop's reach overseas with a Grammy Museum appearance



Kyle You, the company's country director, wants to make better sleep more accessible to Filipinos through online purchasing, nationwide delivery, and practical customer guidance



Smart bed frames point to growing demand for home products that combine comfort, function, and easier delivery



Mattress shopping moves further into e-commerce as Filipino buyers look for convenience and practical sleep solutions

How online shopping changed the way Filipinos sleep

By Nickie Wang

CHANGING lifestyles, smaller living spaces, and the growing use of online shopping have reshaped what comfort means in many Filipino homes. Even buying a mattress, once limited to showrooms, is now increasingly done online.

This was evident as Comfort Living Philippines celebrated its 13th anniversary on June 17 at Crowne Plaza Manila Galleria, gathering business partners, media, and digital creators.

What began as a digital startup has grown into a recognized player in the country's e-commerce space, specializing in mattresses, sleep accessories, and smart furniture designed for modern homes.

For years, buying a mattress in the Philippines often meant visiting several stores, dealing with aggressive sales pitches, and trying to make sense of a wide range of products with little guidance. The process could be time-consuming and, for many buyers, overwhelming.

Comfort Living Philippines saw an opportunity in that gap.

"We saw an opportunity to redefine mattress shopping by moving it entirely online, offering a seamless, transparent, and convenient experience



Online furniture shopping continues to reshape how Filipino buyers choose mattresses, sleep accessories, and smart home pieces

right from the comfort of one's home," said **Kyle You**, the company's country director.

His observation speaks to a wider shift in consumer behavior. Filipino shoppers have grown more comfortable making major

purchases online, including items traditionally tied to physical retail. The rise of e-commerce has also raised expectations, with consumers now seeking not only convenience but speed, flexibility, and reliable after-sales support.

Sleep, once treated as an afterthought in many busy households, has also become part of a larger conversation around health and recovery.

"We believe that better sleep should be accessible to every Filipino," You said, adding that the company aims to make sleep products more accessible through online purchasing, customer support, and nationwide delivery.

The company has adapted its products to urban realities. Many of its mattresses are compressed and vacuum-packed, making them easier to transport through stairways, elevators, and condominium hallways, a practical solution in dense cities such as Manila. Some products are also available for same-day delivery within Metro Manila.

Yet convenience alone does not guarantee trust, especially for a purchase as personal as a mattress.

Consumers often weigh factors such as sleeping position, body type, comfort preference, and budget before making a decision. That is why digital-first retailers increasingly pair online shopping with personalized guidance through chat, phone, and customer support channels.

This combination of technology and human assistance may explain why online retail continues to expand across categories once considered difficult to digitize.



The local beauty brand marks its first year with a Metro Manila billboard campaign focused on skincare, confidence, and daily self-care

Brand ramps up visibility through towering billboard campaign

A TOWERING billboard along a busy Metro Manila highway is hard to miss. Against a stream of buses, cars, and glowing city lights, Skintessential's campaign stands out with a simple message centered on skincare, confidence, and daily self-care.

For the Filipino skincare brand, the billboard launch comes as it celebrates its first year in business, which the company sees as a sign of growing consumer trust and wider reach.

"Skintessential is celebrating its first year, and we felt this was the perfect time to take a bigger step in sharing our story with more Filipinos," the company said in a statement.

The campaign aims to introduce the brand to more Filipinos while reinforcing its focus on accessible and effective skincare.

Skintessential said skincare has become more mainstream in the Philippines, driven by social media

and growing consumer awareness, with consumers becoming more selective about products that address uneven skin tone, dullness, and sun protection.

"I hope consumers see Skintessential as a brand that promotes confidence, self-care, and consistency," the company said. "Beauty is not about perfection or instant results."

Customer trust has fueled the brand's growth, with many consumers discovering its products through social media, referrals, and customer testimonials. Demand has also grown beyond Metro Manila, with increasing consumer interest in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

As competition grows, Skintessential said maintaining quality and affordability remains a priority.

"We believe effective skincare should be accessible," the company said. "Affordability and quality should go hand in hand."

PEOPLE

Sweet success How entrepreneur Oyos Mendoza turned his brand into a household favorite

By Nickie Wang

DESSERTS hold a special place in many Filipino homes. They are often part of family gatherings, celebrations, and simple moments around the dining table.

That idea is central to entrepreneur **Oyos Mendoza**, the man behind Purple Yam Homemade Cakes & Pastries, whose business began with a simple goal: making affordable desserts available to Filipino families.

Known in Mindanao as the "Pambansang Tatay ng Pasalubong at Panghimagas," Mendoza has built a reputation not only as a businessman but also as a family-oriented entrepreneur whose story resonates with many aspiring business owners.

His path to building Purple Yam did not begin with large-scale operations or major investments. It started in a home kitchen, where a passion for baking slowly turned into a growing enterprise.

As one of the early Bisaya entrepreneurs to expand a homegrown food business into a nationally recognized brand, Mendoza's journey shows how regional businesses are increasingly finding space in the wider Philippine market.

Business has always been closely tied to family for Mendoza. Apart from running a growing company, he is also a father, a role he says influences how he leads both at home and at work.

Those who work with him often describe him as a mentor, someone who values discipline, patience, and care for people. His leadership style is rooted in the same principles that guide his business: consistency, accessibility, and attention to everyday needs.

Purple Yam's growth has come at a time when consumers are increasingly drawn to products that balance quality and affordability. Desserts remain small but meaningful comforts for many households, especially during family occasions.

Mendoza understands that connection.



Oyos Mendoza builds his company from a homegrown dessert business into a brand shaped by family, affordability, and regional entrepreneurship

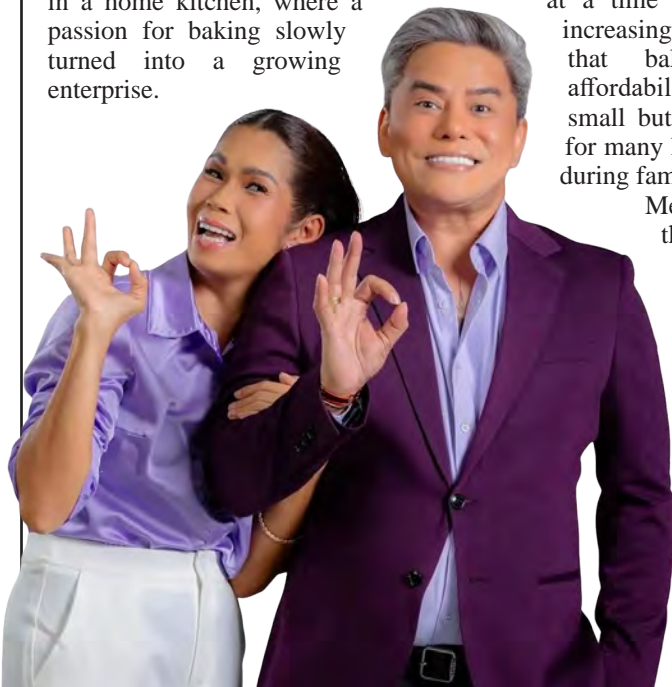
"A simple cake shared with family can create memories that last a lifetime," he said.

His success story also shows how Philippine entrepreneurship is becoming more diverse, with more founders from outside Metro Manila building brands with national reach. In Mindanao, Mendoza's rise carries particular significance, showing that successful businesses can emerge from regions often overlooked in mainstream business narratives.

Even as Purple Yam expands, Mendoza says his priorities remain unchanged: keeping products affordable and accessible to ordinary families.

He measures growth not only through sales or expansion but also through the role his products play in people's lives.

"If our cakes can help bring families together and put smiles on their faces, that's already the greatest reward," he said.



Comedienne Pokwang (left) and Oyos Mendoza bring Purple Yam's family-centered dessert story to a wider Filipino audience